Adobe Photoshop CS3 One-on-One
Deke McClelland
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"Read the lesson, watch the video, do the exercises" — these three steps deliver an effective combination for learning the basics of Photoshop CS3. Deke McClelland adds "Pearls of Wisdom," "Extra Credit," and "Extra Credit Extreme" to challenge even the most avid beginner. Throughout the book, he explains the logic of his choices, discusses the effects of command order, and suggests when the least powerful command is good enough and when a more complex choice is preferable.

The first lesson includes a very helpful introduction to the Bridge, Adobe's full-blown digital asset manager, an absolute necessity for anyone managing more than a few dozen images. The second lesson covers the "powerhouse" commands of Levels, Curves, and Shadow/Highlight for image adjustment with a high degree of precision. McClelland deems Levels the "best of the bunch" for its ease of use with a great deal of power.

Lesson 3 on color balance includes correcting a pervasive color cast such on a photo which is too blue, for example, increasing the saturation of a drab photo, colorizing a black-and-white photo, and using Camera Raw to edit digital photos with more information and a wider range of colors than typical JPEG files.

Isolating image elements for independent editing is the critical Photoshop skill of making selections. Lesson 4 illustrates that selections can be based on continuous color, edges of high contrast, irregular portions captured with lasso tools, and precise outlines drawn with the pen tool, for example.

Straightening photos and sizing them are deferred to Lesson 5 because they throw away pixels and make up new ones using interpolation. It seems logical to straighten and size as first steps, but in most cases, interpolation is best performed after color adjustments because it often smoothes out rough transitions of color commands.

Lesson 7 on masks, erasing a background with the Extract filter, and matching the lighting of a masked image with its new background builds on selections for combining two photos into a single image with seamless blending and without the "fringing" that screams "composite."

The remaining six lessons on such topics as filters, layers, text, shapes, smart objects, and printing and output are chockfull of the information needed to produce professional quality graphics and art as well as manipulate photos.

Good job, Deke McClelland!