

SCUM Book Review

“Photoshop Elements 2 Hands-On Training”

By Shane Rebenschied

Review by Fred Offenbach, SCUM

The author’s technique of presentation of the subject/task is excellent: he tells you what he is going to do, and then he does it step-by-step. But what makes the book superior is that he has a number of sidebars to expand on the steps being taken. This makes the book come close to a classroom experience because many of the sidebars answer those nagging questions. As an example, most of the tools have an associated option bar, which is unique to that tool. Each button or value in the option bar is usually shown in a table that details the action and consequences of the factor (larger numbers will make it darker, for example). Without this type of guidance, I have had to make changes and then by observation decide how to adjust the parameter.

The book is in full color, and printing is very good—nearly every page has a screen shot or photo! This makes it easier to do A vs. B comparisons in the examples.

There are some things that are worth criticizing. The index, which consists of 9 pages, could be expanded by 50%; I think that it is a good reference book, and indexes are never big enough. The author does embed references to repetitive actions that have been previously covered, and that helps somewhat, but the sidebars are so full of bits of information that I doubt that they are adequately indexed. As an example, I went to the index for information on the ‘lightness’ slide on the Hue Saturation panel. I eventually got to the information, but an additional input in the index for lightness but have been helpful.

The book is written for both Windows and Mac, since the program is likewise cross-platform. I had no problem with any of the screen shots, even though most of them are shown in Windows. Since the program is not for a novice, I see no problem with any user having a problem.

I think that most of us want to learn more about layers, probably because the subject is not really intuitive. I was a bit disappointed in the scope of coverage for layers, even though the basic functions are covered very well. I think that what I am looking for is beyond the scope of this book; I would like to see some projects with layers using the same step-by-step technique in a second book.

If you are struggling with getting started with PSE, I strongly recommend this book. I was evaluating this book as an adjunct to my teaching at the Senior Center, and I have decided that it will be a required text for all students. I think that we can go through some of the more difficult sections together and that should be very effective for both teacher and student. And another bonus is that as a member of SCUM you are entitled to a 20% discount, making it \$24 net plus shipping.