

Helpdesk

Our Photoshop pro tackles your editing woes and sets you on the path to image enlightenment **BY JULIE EASTON**

LENTICULAR PRINTING

I run my own clothing company and I am looking to design some promotional material with a twist. One thing I'm keen to try is to use lenticular printing on some of my graphics for use as postcards. I love the effect, but have no idea where to start finding out more about the process and where I can get it done. Any ideas?

Antony Baker, Southampton

Lenticular printing is a great technology that can work exceptionally well for promotional material. It uses a number of lenses over a two-dimensional image to create depth and motion. The technology is often confused with holograms, but these are achieved using lasers rather than lenses.

A great place to start finding out more is at www.edmonds.co.uk/lenticular-faq.html#1, which answers most frequently asked questions in an easy-to-understand manner. Another good site to take a look at is www.big3d.com, which has some great examples of how lenticular printing can be used. It also has estimates of prices, although these are in US dollars. The price is usually determined by size, quantity and lens material and thickness, so you'll need to obtain a quote once you have the specifics worked out. For a UK service and further examples, check out www.riotofcolour.co.uk.



FOR LENT: Lenticular printing has some well-known uses



SELF-PROMOTION: Portfolios.com is a great place to start putting your work online

PORTFOLIO NEEDED

I have only been a digital artist for a year, and I'm keen to explore methods of getting my work noticed so that I may one day begin selling my art.

I've done some research and feel that my best option is to use an online portfolio, but I'm not sure which one to go for. There seem to be so many options – some that charge and some that don't. Any advice you could offer would be much appreciated.

Simon Banks, Richmond

One of the best sites that you can use to showcase your work is www.portfolios.com, which has been online for ten years now. There are four packages available, covering all price ranges. If you're starting out with an online presence for the first time, the basic package is free and enables you to show off five images. You can then upgrade as you need more space and are willing to put money into the site.

Other sites worth checking out are www.photoportfolios.net, www.pbase.com and www.foliolink.com, all of which offer various price levels. It's a very personal decision, so take a look around these sites to get a feel for them. Always start with the free versions to find out if a site is right for you.

“MANY DIGITAL ARTISTS ARE SELF-TAUGHT, AND PRACTISING IS ONE OF THE BEST WAYS TO LEARN”

DIFFERENCE DILEMMA

I'm a fan of Pentax products and have been using an Optio compact, along with my film SLR. I want to upgrade to a DSLR, but am wondering what the difference is between the *ist DL and the *ist DS. I've also seen an *ist DS2, which confuses me even more.

Sarah Broomfield, via email

*You've got to love camera manufacturers and their insistence on naming products in a confusing way, where it's not clear which came first. The *ist DS was Pentax's first DSLR and offers 6.1 megapixels, compatibility with Pentax lenses, a full range of manual exposure and scene modes, as well as a two-inch LCD screen. This has been upgraded in the *ist DS2, which makes minor improvements. The *ist DL came out later but was aimed at the mass market, with a lighter body, a 2.5-inch LCD and lower price tag. The *ist DS2 offers better image quality overall and there are more options, but the *ist DL offers better value. It comes down to what you need, but you won't be disappointed with either of these models.*



CAMERA PUNCH: The Pentax *ist DL is a smaller, lighter version of the *ist DS aimed at the mass market

TABLET ISSUES

I'm looking at getting a graphics tablet, but all I ever hear about is Wacom. Is that because they are the best out there, or are some hidden gems being overlooked?

Chris Smith, Truro

Wacom tablets are considered by Photoshop users to be the best around, thanks to the wide range offered, innovative technologies such as Bluetooth built into newer models, and practical benefits like exceptional sensitivity and stylish design. There are prices and designs to suit every level of user and every pocket; see the range at www.wacom-europe.com.

However, there are other manufacturers out there making good graphics tablets who've been overshadowed by Wacom. Check out models by Trust (www.trust.com), Genius (www.geniusnet.co.uk) and Aiptek (www.aiptek.com). You will get better prices from these ranges, but some would argue that you get what you pay for with Wacom.



TRUST ME: Trust – another manufacturer of graphics tablets, though not an option for Mac users

PHOTOSHOP ON THE CHEAP

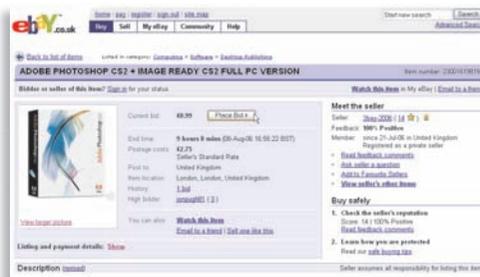
I use Photoshop CS and want to upgrade to CS2, but being a penniless student, money is tight. There are listings on eBay offering a full CS2 package for under £20. What's the catch?

Darren Stamp, Bournemouth

Software on eBay is a tempting option, but it can lead to trouble. Sometimes eBay does stock the real deal at incredibly low prices – usually when a seller's acquired a large quantity of software and is able to pass it on cheaply. Check out a seller's ratings and number of sales to get an idea of how trustworthy

they are. If they've had thousands of sales and their user rating is over 95 per cent, you might be on to a good thing.

Another possibility is they're selling OEM software which came bundled with a high-end computer or scanner. In this case you're unlikely to get a box or manual, but the price will be low. This is a grey area – while the software is genuine, the legality of selling it on separately is hazy. Finally, it could be illegal pirated software, especially at that price. This will come with a random generation key to activate the product, and it will probably work. However, you'll be unable to get support and there are cases where products have stopped working. At worst, the products might contain bugs and viruses that can damage a computer. We advise you to proceed with caution, and would always recommend the official Adobe version.



BARGAIN HUNT: Be wary of 'bargain' CS2 prices on eBay and students on a shoestring can check out Adobe's Educational prices via their website

LEARNING PHOTOSHOP

I'm new to Photoshop, but I am really enjoying learning all the tools. I picked up your magazine hoping that it would help me to get on with more complex projects, but I am finding it a little too advanced for my level of experience. Is it worth getting a course in Photoshop to teach me all the basic skills, or should I rather just carry on teaching myself?

I will continue to buy your great magazine for inspiration, and hopefully at some point in the future I will be able to complete all the tutorials!

Helen Thomas, via email

Most of our tutorials rely on a degree of knowledge about basic skills such as cutting out with the Pen tool and

managing layers. Until you've mastered these you will find Photoshop more difficult. Many digital artists and imagers are self-taught, and practising on your own is one of the best ways to learn. Arm yourself with step-by-step guides and online tutorials, and devote a couple of hours a week to getting to grips with the software.

As well as reading through our magazine, check out the Adobe website which offers some great tutorials and tips, and there are a number of options available from the start screen when you load up Photoshop.

If you learn better in a classroom environment, there are courses that will help you get to grips with the program. Pop along to www.systematix.co.uk/photoshop-training-courses.htm for a list of courses (and prices) held at the company's training centre in Reading. Check out local colleges for options nearer home.

There is no right or wrong way to learn Photoshop – just pick the method that suits the way you like to learn and hopefully you'll be mastering our tutorials in no time.



HERE'S A TIP: Use the tutorials and tips built into Photoshop to get to grips with the main tools

HELPDESK

CALL FOR QUESTIONS

Want help with your Photoshop problems? Then let our team of experts sort you out.

Send your emails to us at:
advancedpshop@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Remember to specify whether you are using a PC or Mac and the version number of your edition of Photoshop.

hard
drives



HARD DRIVE

ROUND UP

For those who have too many files and too little memory, an extra hard drive is the ideal solution. We round up the best of the bunch

An excessive number of files eating up computer memory seems to be a common problem for most creatives. Whether it's the multiple layering in Photoshop or umpteen variants of your latest project, hard drive space gets gobbled up quicker than turkeys at Christmas. That's why more and more pro creatives are opting for an additional hard drive to back up files and store countless bytes of information. Furthermore, small, portable hard drives are being snapped up in their dozens, perfect for presenting potential clients with your portfolio.

The key elements to look for when deciding which hard drive to buy depends upon the use you have for it. The two most important factors are drive capacity (how many bytes it holds), and speed (how fast it transfers data). A 'fast' hard drive is one that has a rotational speed of around 7,200 revolutions per minute or higher, but the majority of hard drives will offer 5,400 rpm, which is adequate. As for data transfer rate, anything slower than 15 megabytes per second will become annoying. Experts recommend that you buy a hard drive that gives you more storage than you actually need, as you cannot accurately account for all future requirements. It's always best to go for a well-known brand (like the five we've rounded up on these pages) but compare prices across the board to get the best deal.

LACIE

LaCie is an American corporation, which began manufacturing in 1992. Today it produces and sells hard drives, DVD recorders and players, displays, computer accessories and computer software. Unlike many companies, LaCie does not outsource its tech support or repair centre. About half of LaCie's workforce (approximately 400 employees) are part of the technical teams, to ensure consumers get top-notch merchandise.

Web: www.lacie.com

Brick Desktop Hard Drive 500GB

The Brick is fun as well as functional as it is possible to stack these brightly coloured Lego-style blocks together expressing playfulness in a user-friendly high-performance hard drive. The Brick is a perfect storage system for users seeking to store digital photos, save MP3s or transfer home videos from a camcorder. The hard drive is available in white, red and blue.

Price: £142.70 / \$269.99

Capacity: 500GB

Transfer Rate: 34 MB/s

Size (LxHxD): 112 x 188 x 44mm

Weight: 990 g



Hard Drive ROUND UP

WESTERN DIGITAL

Western Digital produces many varieties of hard drives, from the ones in your personal computer, to those being carried around in people's bags. The company designs and engineers hard drives that employ Serial ATA technology, to equal or exceed the performance and reliability of the SCSI hard drives that are common in high-demand computing environments.

Web: www.westerndigital.com

Media Center

The attractive Media Center is the only storage peripheral to incorporate an external hard drive, built-in 8-in-1-memory card reader (compatible with eight major media card formats) USB 2.0 hub and versatile backup system. Furthermore a button glows blue to confirm that files will be backed up automatically.

Price: £132 / \$249.99

Capacity: 320GB

Transfer Rate: 400 - 480 Mbits/s

Size (LxHxD): 154.43 x 44.2 x 218.75mm

Weight: Not Listed



My Book Premium Edition

This easy to use external hard drive features a dual interface for all-out high-speed performance. The drive comes complete with backup software that ensures data is stored as easy and safely as possible. The unit also features a neat capacity gauge to show users at a glance how much space is available.

Price: £174.40 / \$329.99

Capacity: 500GB

Transfer Rate: 400 Mbits/s

Size (LxHxD): 56.7 x 172.2 x 143 mm

Weight: 1.32 kg



Passport Portable Drives

The Passport Portable Drive is an asset for creatives seeking portable storage for business files, music, video, and games. It boasts capacities from 40 to 120 GB and is simple, light and easy to carry.

Price: £105.70 / \$199.99

Capacity: 120GB

Transfer Rate: 480 Mbits/s

Size (LxHxD): 89.1 x 21.1 x 144.3 mm

Weight: 0.2778 kg

“FOR CREATIVES
ON THE ROAD”



Biggest F800

This is the ideal storage centre for audio and visual professionals who require high-end performance at an affordable price. Offering a titanic 2TB of space, with a rapid transfer rate of up to 55MB/s and secure RAID technology, it's great for protecting your data too.

Price: £1,003 / \$1,899

Capacity: 2 TB

Transfer Rate: 55MB/s

Size (LxHxD): 298 x 153 x 176mm

Weight: 6.65 Kg

Rugged All-Terrain Hard Drive

This is the storage system for creatives on the road. Delivering up to 120GB in a small portable unit with an orange rubber bumper and scratch-protected aluminium shell for shock-resistant protection. The drive inside can sense motion, so if your drive takes a fall the drive head will stop moving to further protect your data.

Price: £148 / \$279.99

Capacity: 120GB

Transfer Rate: Between 30 - 50 MB/s

Size (LxHxD): 90 x 25 x 145 mm

Weight: 250 g





FREECOM

Freecom has been in business for over 15 years, developing mobile external storage products that are reliable and convenient, and allow data to be backed up at the touch of a button. The company offers a full two-year warranty and support hotlines so customers get the full package of after-sales care.

Web: www.freecom.com

FSG-3 Storage Gateway

A perfect all in one network storage solution for professionals or small companies who crave space to store high resolution files on a server. The product claims to act as a "Storage Server with 1001 possibilities" including: File server, Backup server, Webserver, FTP server, Network router, USB server, USB print server and AV server.

Price: £426 / \$805.87 / €629

Capacity: 500GB

Transfer Rate: 480Mb/s

Size (LxHxD): 17.5 x 14 x 4.4cm

Weight: 950 g



Hard Drive 3.5"

This is a nippy little unit, which doesn't absorb desk retail space and emits next to no noise, thanks to the fact there is no fan; instead the device simply uses a small LED indicator to communicate with its user.

Price: £121.20 / \$229.30 / €179

Capacity: 80 to 400 GB

Transfer Rate: 480Mbit/s

Size (LxHxD): 20 x 11.5 x 4 cm

Weight: 750 g



“ THE HARD DRIVE FOR MEDIA MAKERS AND CREATIVE PROS ”

MAXTOR

Seagate was founded in 1979 and was the first company to build 5.25-inch hard disc drives for the PC. Since then Seagate has been developing the technology and manufacturing products to help Creatives store data. Maxtor is part of the company build up and specialises in hard drives.

Web: www.maxtor.com



FireLite USB 2.5"

This lightweight silver compact hard disk allows Photoshop artists to store information on the move as it is extremely portable, and ready to work after the cable is connected. Additionally it can be daisy-chained to meet the most demanding storage requirements.

Price: £130.42 / \$246.70

Capacity: 100 GB

Transfer Rate: 400 Mb/s

Size (LxHxD): 84mm x 129mm x 18mm

Weight: Not Listed



SMARTDISK

SmartDisk manufactures portable, network and multimedia storage products and technologies that enable users to share and preserve digital content and information.

The company's top products include: FlashTrax XT, (palm-sized multimedia storage/player), PhotoBank (portable disk drive), FireFly (an ultra-portable hard drive) and the two models featured below.

Web: www.smartdisk.com

CrossFire

The CrossFire external hard drive is a high-performance storage device and is presented in an attractive design. The product is powered by a 7200 RPM hard drive, and blazes through demanding applications allowing you to work more and wait less.

Price: £99.99 to £154.99 / \$189 to \$293.21

Capacity: 250GB

Transfer Rate: 400 Mb/s

Size (LxHxD): 221 X 127 X 39 mm

Weight: Not Listed

“ BLAZES THROUGH APPLICATIONS ALLOWING YOU TO WORK MORE ”



Hard Drive ROUND UP

OneTouch III FireWire 800

This is the hard drive for media makers and creative pros as it easily allows users to tap into the speed of FireWire 800 for lightning fast access to files. Preformatted for the Mac, with enough capacity to back up and store files for the entire studio, you will find that it easily formats for Windows too.

Price: £132.12 / \$249.95

Capacity: 300GB

Transfer Rate: 33- 73 MB/s

Size (LxHxD): 136 x 65 x 217 mm

Weight: 1.45 Kg



OneTouch III Mini Edition

The Mini Edition encourages its creative owners to hit the road and bring their portfolio in its small, lightweight, and highly portable hard drive. It is automatic-syncing so users can always work with current files, and the USB connection makes life even simpler.

Price: £79.20 / \$149.95

Capacity: 60GB

Transfer Rate: 480Mb/s

Size (LxHxD): 5.24 x 3.54 x 0.79cm

Weight: 205 g

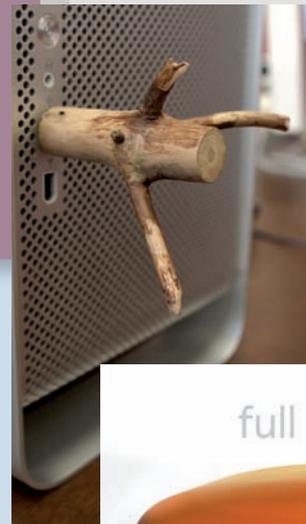


QUIRKY USBS

If you're after something a little smaller, then a run of the mill USB pen can do the job just fine. However, where there's a market there's a gimmick.



The crazy inventors of the SushiDisk www.sushidisk.co.uk, are manufacturing and peddling these sushi styled plastic USB pens including restaurant faves: kappa-maki (cucumber roll), ikura (salmon roe), tekka-maki (tuna roll), uni (sea urchin), and maguro (tuna). The prices range from £29.99 to £99.99 (\$56.70 to \$189) depending on how much memory you require.



If you're more of an eco-friendly fan, then maybe these 'Sticks' will be more up your street (or tree). The Netherlands www.oooms.nl have taken the 'memory stick' one step further and quite literally fashioned an usb from an actual 'stick'. The 2.0 devices have been inserted into a real branch with dimensions of approximately 2 x 10 x 2cm, and are on sale from €39 (£26/\$59) for 128mb, and stagger up to €90 (£70/\$115) for 1G.



There are many USB pens on the market now, but what about the future of Hard Drive space? Dima Komissarov has created an original style of USB pen, currently a design concept, the Russian has invented the 'Flashbag with Micro Pump'. The USB inflates as the device's memory is used acting as a visual reminder of how much space is left. For more information visit www.plusminus.ru.

Glossary of terms

Access Time

The amount of time it takes for the device to seek and connect to the storage device to retrieve information.

Buffer

A storage area to temporarily allow for different rates of data transfer.

Byte

A sequence of eight binary digits, which acts as the unit of measurement for how much storage a hard drive can hold.

Capacity

The amount of information, measured in bytes that can be stored on a hard drive. A megabyte (MB) as 1,000,000 bytes and a gigabyte (GB) as 1,000,000,000 bytes.

Data transfer rate

The rate that digital data transfers from one point to another, expressed in bits per second or bytes per second.

Hub

A device joining communication lines at a central location, providing a central connection to all devices on the network.

USB

Universal serial bus connects external drives, printers, modems, mice, keyboards, etc, through a single, general-purpose port.