cam eras

CAMERAS

With the technology in this day and age it has never been simpler to capture our own images, and this undeniably provides a cheaper, more satisfying alternative to purchasing ready-made photography online

The art of photography has been replaced by 'have-a-go' hobbyists keen to experiment with the range of manual controls in an attempt to learn a new skill.

This is mainly down to the wealth of electronics manufacturers churning out affordable, easy to use quality cameras. The high street shelves are stocked with a wide spectrum of digital cameras, saving traditional photographers valuable pennies on film and developing. The bonus here is that compared to working on analogue, you miss out the middle man so no scanning device and lengthy process is necessary. It's a case of point, click, plug and upload.

However, when it comes to choosing a digital camera, the challenges consumers face are plentiful. The complicated terminology coupled with the range of styles to suit varying purposes – not to mention the numerous brands – are bound to have most newbies flustered. So to give you a helping hand, we've taken a look at eight of the most popular models across the board from various manufacturers.

The first factor to consider when choosing your new camera is – who made it. Canon, Nikon, Konica Minolta, Sony and Pentax largely produce the elite range of professional cameras known as dSLRs; although they're now facing stiff competition from reputable prosumer and compact brands such as Panasonic, Fujifilm and Olympus. Kodak, Casio, Sanyo, and Samsung are all reputable brands, mainly concentrating on the beginner market with their ranges of Compact cameras, but have lately diversified marginally into the higher ranks.

Largely speaking, there are three types of cameras: dSLR, Prosumer and Compact. Compacts are small (roughly the size of a cigarette packet), have an all-in-one design embodying the lens, host an LCD screen of around 2.5inch on the reverse and offer user friendly buttons and menus to aid new digital photographers. This type of camera is the cheapest, has the largest number of auto features and can offer a megapixel rating of between three and ten. A Prosumer literally means a 'professional consumer', and gives the users a larger scope for controlling the manual settings, as it's more technically advanced than a Compact. But unlike a dSLR is slower and doesn't have the option for alternating lenses. A dSLR (digital Single Lens Reflex) produces high quality pictures, exhibits full manual control, creates large file sizes, can shoot in RAW – but can be staggeringly expensive.

Megapixel count isn't everything. Be sure to also look at its zoom capabilities, whether it has an image stabiliser, the number of shooting modes, its ability to alter exposure, whether it's Mac or PC compatible based on what computer you have and whether it meets the specs and what type of memory card it requires. For a more comprehensive checklist of what to look for when purchasing a camera, try reading our sister title *Digital Camera Buyer*.

E-400

Name of company: Olympus
Type: dSLR
Web: www.olympus.co.uk
Price: £850
Megapixels (effective): 10.8MP
Max resolution: 3648 x 2736 pixels
Zoom: By lens
Dimensions: 129.5 x 91x 53mm
Weight: 375g

The Olympus E-400 struts into the digital camera market at the enthusiastic dSLR-user entry point, adequately competing with rivals such as the Nikon D80, Canon EOS 400 and Sony Alpha 100. These models exhibit all the necessary trademarks that make dSLRs the top quality devices that they are, but with a more user-friendly interface and ability to rely on auto settings as well as manual ones.
The E-400 stands out from the rest as the world's lightest ten-megapixel dSLR and controversially lacks the hallmark dSLR grip, offering users with smaller hands a reprieve. The camera is blessed with two EISA winning lenses, 32 preset modes, one touch white balance and a handy depth of field preview function. Ideal for action or sports photography, the buffer modestly deals with three frames per second for ten consecutive JPG images, and five RAW file sizes at the same speed.

Lumix DMC-L1

Name of company: Panasonic
Type: dSLR
Web: www.panasonic.co.uk
Price: £1,500
Megapixels (effective): 7.5
Max resolution: 3136 x 2352
Zoom: By lens (f2.8-3.5, 28-100mm, with kit lens)
Dimensions: 146 x 86 x 64mm
Weight: 530g

This sturdy beast is actually Panasonic's first dSLR launch. The Lumix DMC-L1 is becoming a very popular camera, in part due to its design, which exudes the classic sophistication of an analogue dSLR attracting SLR photographs looking to transcend their work into digital. Among the wealth of its high calibre skill set lie several gems standing out to grab an enthusiast's attention. The model comes with an all-important image stabiliser and anti-dust technology, combating two of the main problems dSLR photographers have to deal with. A controversial but effective design facet is the bright LCD that offers users a live view, potentially repelling those who prefer the viewfinder, but attracting those used to working with a compact.

" MEGAPIXEL COUNT ISN'T EVERYTHING. BE SURE TO ALSO LOOK AT THE ZOOM "

P712

Name of company: Kodak
Type: Prosumer
Web: www.kodak.com
Price: £349.99
Megapixels (effective): 7.1
Max resolution: 3088 x 2310
Zoom: 12 x optical, 5 x digital
Dimensions: 108 x 84.2 x 72 mm
Weight: 403g

The slightly elongated P712 offers users looking to step up from a digital compact, an accessible and reliably accurate bridge model.

The P712 is perfect for users wishing to execute a higher standard of imagery, while they get to grips with the ropes of a more technically proficient camera. It's maker, Kodak, claims that this unit sets a benchmark for the prosumer 'super zoom'. Kodak heralds its 12 x optical zoom lens (which features image stabilisation), as the best in its class for capturing exquisite detail and sharpness.

The click-to-capture rate, at less than one tenth of a second (0.07 seconds), is one of the fastest of its genres. Couple this with the abundance of auto and manual opportunities, such the Scene mode, Program mode and Shutter priority mode and the results you'll get with this camera are up there with the best of them. Other factors in this piece of equipment's favour are the Histogram feature and Panorama stitch mode. For the full low down of features check out the Kodak website.

FinePix S9600

Name of company: Fujifilm
Type: Prosumer
Web: www.fujifilm.co.uk
Price: £399
Megapixels (effective): 9.0
Max resolution: 3488 x 2616
Zoom: 10.7 x optical, 2 x digital
Dimensions: 128 x 93 x 129 mm
Weight: 650g

At just under £400 this feature-heavy bridge is only slightly more expensive than some high-end Compacts, and its arsenal of accessible functions make it an ideal model for hobbyists eager to learn the ropes. The S9600 comes stacked with assets, one of the most attractive is its intelligent flash, mastering illuminated backdrops while accurately lighting the subjects in the foreground, which many fail to achieve. The design equates to a sturdy finish, with its lighter nature and smaller size offering a comfortable hold. However it lacks the robustness of other bridge cameras in the S9600's price range. Plus the fragility of the pop up flash, as well as battery and card doors are a worry. Furthermore the two-inch screen, albeit emitting a first-rate clarity and manoeuvrability, could cause durability concerns in crowd situations.

Xacti VPC-E7

Name of company: Sanyo
Type: Prosumer
Web: www.sanyo.co.uk
Price: £199
Megapixels (effective): 7.0
Max resolution: 3680 x 2760
Zoom: 3 x optical 4 x digital
Dimensions: 91 x 55 x 21mm
Weight: 116g

Sanyo may not be as heavyweight a brand as market leaders Canon, but it's making ground as an up and coming digicam manufacturer. The E7 is one of the latest compacts to come flying off its conveyer belt on to the supermarket shelves, but its average performance means they're unlikely to fly off them in a hurry. The E7 is a lightweight, point and shoot, simple to use camera with video capability. Noise creeps into night shots and at full zoom, but on the whole it copes well with most situations. What's more, the product's Touch Sensor autofocus is a refreshing shortcut that will save newbie photographers the hassle of manually focusing on objects.

K100D

Name of company: Pentax
Type: dSLR
Web: www.pentax.co.uk
Price: £399
Megapixels (effective): 6.1
Max resolution: 3008 x 2000
Zoom: By lens
Dimensions: 92.5 x 129.5 x 70mm
Weight: 560g

When it comes to reputable dSLRs, Pentax is up there with the top dogs. The K100D is a sophisticated, but entry-level dSLR that makes it an ideal candidate for photographers looking to step up from a prosumer model. Featuring the company's own brand of technology, the model is kitted out with a Shake Reduction (SR) system that can be a great aid to users who are just getting used to the basic principles of capturing images with SLRs. Another key selling point for the inexperienced is the K100D's high-precision autofocus and auto sensitivity control.

NV10

Name of company: Samsung
Type: Compact
Web: www.samsung.com
Price: £279
Megapixels (effective): 10.1
Max resolution: 3648 x 2736
Zoom: 5.0 x optical
Dimensions: 96.5 x 60 x 18.5mm
Weight: 148.7g

Samsung's NV Series was developed following a two-year study into the lifestyle and needs of consumers. The result was a variety of mini dSLR-style compacts with informal user interface and practical technology. Samsung's Advanced Shake Reduction (ASR) system, gives the NV10 the ability to snap clearer pictures indoors or in lower light conditions. Its 10.1 megapixels image sensor makes the quality an acceptable standard for this price. Additionally, its 2.5inch wide-view LCD, offers one of the best sharp outputs in a camera of this style. It comes with a rechargeable battery and can also be charged via USB.

Digital IXUS 850 IS

Name of company: Canon
Type: Compact
Web: www.canon.co.uk
Price: £369
Megapixels (effective): 7.1
Max resolution: 3072 x 1728
Zoom: 3.8 x optical, 4 x digital
Dimensions: 58 x 89 x 25mm
Weight: 100g

The IXUS brand has been Canon's flagship line for a decade now and its desire to be perceived as innovative and elegant has not been negated in the pursuit of consumer compromise. The 850 IS exhibits a chrome and silver exterior, which is subjectively one of the classiest designs available, and it weighs in as one of the most petite of its race.

Its technology is greatly advanced compared to that of its predecessors and the majority of its market competitors. Therefore producing image-processing algorithms that deliver a higher degree of detail and colour reproduction, while delivering faster response times, advanced Noise Reduction Technology and current industry favourite – Face Detection AF/AE technology.

plug-ins

Revolutionise your Photoshop tinkerings with these invaluable plug-ins

SiteGrinder 2

Developer:	Media Lab
Price:	$129 (Basic)
Web:	www.medialab.com

SiteGrinder 2 is an impressive piece of work and will generate complete websites from Photoshop files. It's ideal for designers who have mastered Photoshop, but have yet to master the concepts of web design.

SiteGrinder builds graphics, text and interactivity using modern web standard technologies, and deals with issues like cross-platform browser compatibility. The program utilises CSS, HTML and web image formats JPG and GIF, along with layers from Photoshop. It also takes into consideration Photoshop type layers turning directly into styled CSS text. Buttons can become interactive with a few layer hints, galleries and forms can be created – and all with one click. Background colour and images are available, plus pages automatically resize for different resolutions. To finish, there's the option to add personalised code for the perfect page.

Rating: **4/5**

Fluid Mask

Developer:	Vertus
Price:	£149
Web:	www.vertustech.com

Fluid Mask is a popular and highly desired design tool that really does make your Photoshop life much easier.

In essence, the plug-in is a cutout tool, but its set of features make it much more than that. A key addition to the already impressive collection is the new Edge Overlay. This shows object images within an image, making it possible to select, group and mask objects in images. This in turn creates accurate and smooth cut outs. The software uses several key features to achieve its end product, including the Edge Detection Tool. The position and number of objects/edges in the workspace can be adjusted using the Edge Detection Options panel. This will then replace the Image Information Layer in the first version. To make sure your work is up to scratch, preview your work with the easy-to-use Test Render Tool.

Advanced Photoshop Recommends

Rating: **4/5**

Mystical Lighting

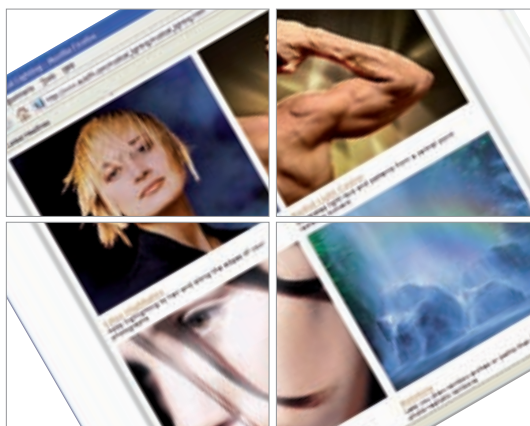|	
Developer:	Auto FX Software
Price:	$179
Web:	www.autofx.com

Mystical Lighting is more than just a single lighting effect, it combines a selection of tools to create mystical pictures.

The software allows the user to apply photo-realistic lighting and shading effects to digital images. The 16 visual effects include over 400 presets for instant results and an infinite variety of looks. The set itself includes Edge Highlights, Ethereal, Fairy Dust, Flare, Light Brush, Light Caster, Mist, Rainbow, Shadow Play, Spotlight and Wispy Mist.

Each element of the set brings a new angle. Our personal favourite is Fairy Dust, which adds an assortment of creative fantasy patterns and content to the shape of a path you draw. Plus, with this brilliantly childish plug-in you can add twinkles, sparkles, snowflakes, stars, glowing embers, light flares and confetti to your creation.

Rating: **4/5**

---

plug-ins

Shadow Control Pro

Developer: Chroma Software,
Price: $69.95
Web: www.chromasoftware.com

Shadow Control Pro is a tool that utilises the company's DaVinci technology for improving image quality and control.

It operates by selectively increasing brightness in shadows and blending the result with the rest of the image. It can also be used to selectively brighten the overall image. Shadow Control Pro boasts a number of features including a live preview of the final image and accurate previews across its extended zoom range. Elements users will be pleased to know that they're included in the product support as are Photoshop 6 users and above. To try before you buy, a fully featured demo is available from the website.

Rating: **3/5**

Light!

Developer: Digital Film Tools
Price: $50
Web: www.digitalfilmtools.com

This clever little plug-in presents a very effective solution to a problem, that has bothered us for ages.

It'll add light to a scene where none existed before, but gives the impression that the light was in the original shot. The GAM Pattern Library provides the realistic lighting and shadows. The patterns can be applied to an entire image, or simply inside a selection. At present there are 567 patterns available including Blendables, Christmas, Cityscapes and towns, Clouds, Fire and water, Flags, Flowers, Foliage, Moons, Natural elements, Religion, Sky and stars, Spirals, Spotlights, Stones and brick, Structures and sets, Themes, Trees and windows, to name a few!

Rating: **4/5**

Lunar Cell

Developer: Flaming Pear
Price: $20
Web: www.flamingpear.com

Advanced Photoshop Recommends

Install Lunar Cell and it'll bring you instant planets with realistic planetary terrains.

Alternatively, you can create strange imaginary worlds that normally only ever appear in the outer galaxies of Star Trek. The plug-in comes complete with atmospheric effects, live downloadable clouds from weather satellites for those who want the real deal, plus fully composite planetary bodies. The software is intuitive and easy to use with a selection of parameters that feature a simple slider for instant results. The parameters include Planet, Climate, Air, Clouds, Cities and Synth Clouds, and can create limitless and unique varieties of textures. Rendering them then as planetary bodies or as terrain/atmosphere maps.

Rating: **4/5**

plug-ins

Paint Alchemy
Developer: Xaos
Price: $99
Web: www.xaostools.com

Paint Alchemy takes the digital edge off your creations, and gives them a touch of the artist, the designer and the person.

The software provides the option to transform your digital creations with unique paint-like effects such as Coloured Pencil, Impressionist or even Pastel. Users get to choose from 75 built-in brushstroke effects and over 30 brush styles. Plus, there's the option to modify the look, and create your very own styles or brushes and add them to the style menus. Precision controls give great accuracy for brush angle, density and colour. Alternatively, create your own brushes from any black and white PICT file. ▦

Rating: **3/5**

PSD2FLA
Developer: Media Lab
Price: $89
Web: www.medialab.com

From Photoshop to Flash, this is exactly what the PSD2FLA plug-in has in mind.

Transferring your favourite Photoshop file into Flash is often an tedious task, but the Save As Flash function wipes away the gloom. The plug-in doesn't save your Photoshop file as a Flash movie file ('.swf') file, but instead the more useful '.fla' file. Layered Photoshop files are ready to edit immediately. Head to Flash, open the newly saved file and start to modify and create. The conversion supports Photoshop layer effects, layer positions and keeps all names in their original state. Plus Windows users get support from PS4 while Mac OS X users get PS7 onwards. ▦

Rating: **4/5**

Carrara 3D Basics 2
Developer: DAZ Productions
Price: $249
Web: www.daz3d.com

The 3D Basics version of Carrara is not so much a Photoshop plug-in, but more of an add-on.

Once a creation is finished it's then time for Photoshop to step in and do its job. The program lets users change the reality of digital photos with 3D objects and special effects. A new terrain editor gives users the ability to create landscapes, plus the Scene Wizard gives immediate access to 30 fully-developed landscapes to modify as you please. Finally, there's the option to export images and animations directly to the web in popular formats such as GIF, JPG, PICT, BMP, plus QuickTime and AVI. ▦

Rating: **3/5**

Blow Up

Developer: Alien Skin software
Price: $199
Web: www.alienskin.com

Resizing images with any type of quality is a bonus, but picture-perfect scaling is what is really needed. The Blow Up plug-in offers just that.

The software makes advanced image scaling easy, preserves smooth, crisp edges and lines and creates four times (1600% area) enlargements from any image without jagged artifacts or halos. However, the fun doesn't stop here, Blow Up is also capable of enlargements up to six times (3600% area) in certain scenarios, again without the jagged artifacts. The plug-in boasts some impressive features with photo grain controls, enlargement-specific sharpening and support for most image modes, including CMYK. Plus, 16 and 32-bit image support and optimisation for multi-core and multi-processor systems. Blow

Advanced Photoshop Recommends

Up is only available to Windows and Mac users with Photoshop CS or above, or Elements 3.0 or above. ▦

Rating: **4/5**

Aurora 2

Developer: Digital Element
Price: $179
Web: www.digi-element.com

The moon, the stars and the sun can all be yours with this nifty little plug-in from Digital Element. Aurora 2 can be used to add stunning backgrounds, crisp skies, reflective water, stormy clouds or a bright sun, to any scene in a few steps.

The software can define multiple suns and moons of any colour, with any size body and halo. It can also add a selection of star clusters, again giving users the option to define size, number and colour. Improve scenic skies with the addition of white, puffy Nimbus clouds, or for a more sinister scene add the stormy Stratus. Add water and change the size and direction of waves and adjust the colour and depth. Give light beams a new lease of life with colour and intensity across three dimensions. And to get

a look at your creation, Aurora provides the nifty plug-in preview and zoom. ▦

Rating: **4/5**

Corel KPT Collection

Developer: Kai
Price: $99.99
Web: www.corel.com

This collection brings together a selection of Kai's power tools plug-in filters from KPT 5, KPT 6 and KPT effects.

The set gives Photoshop users a great collection of creative tools. One highlight we love is Fluid, a tool that treats your entire image as a fluid to create a variety of distortions, including controlling the thickness of the liquid and the size and speed of the brush stroke, a bit like Corel Painter. There's also Ink Dropper, which adds drops of liquid to a surface to create everything from water spots to smoky swirls. Lightning will customise and create realistic lightning effects by controlling every aspect of the bolt and path, including its colour and number of forks. Materializer creates dynamic surface textures, using bump maps

and advanced controls to bend an image over the contours of a surface texture. ▦

Rating: **3/5**

fonts

Brighten up your Photoshop endeavours with a quick browse of these font resource sites

FontFont

Web: www.fontfont.com

The FontFont home page is a mixture of news and events, a selection of featured fonts and the latest collection of freebies.

The FontFont Online Shop is a well conceived, intuitive and easy to use eCommerce experience. The chosen font makes an instant impact with a selection of variations of the font to view and all the accompanying information you could possibly need. If you like what you see simply click Add to Basket before heading off to your favourite designer. For the less informed, the site is categorised and well-formatted. Or you can use the extremely useful TypeNavigator. This is an interactive visual font search system that'll uncover high-quality text faces, distinctive display fonts and new typographic trends. ▦
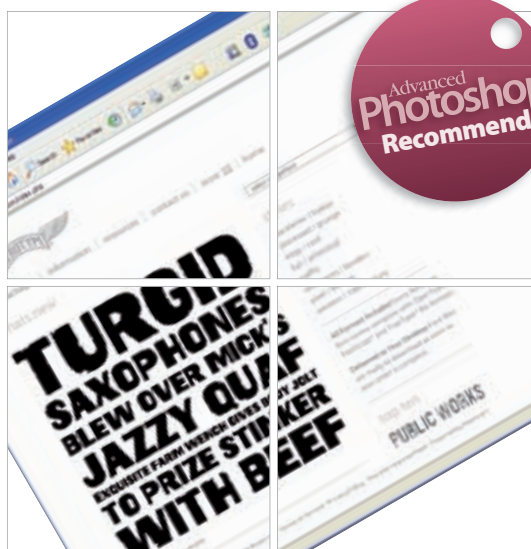
Rating: **4/5**

Aerotype

Web: www.aerotype.com

Centre stage on this site is given over to what's new in the world of Aerotype fonts, with big bold representations. But, if you like what you see, hit See More for an in-depth view of the entire typeface, a cheeky description and the all-important price. Heading back to the home page, a more subtle selection reveals a list of adjective endorsing styles, the latest Top Ten and the ubiquitous navigation bar. Try Resources for distributors and utilities before hitting Information for formats, downloads and installation. For expanded searches try a style that grabs your attention. Get a taste of Distressed, Grunge, Edgy, Cool, Whimsical, Graffiti, Pixel and Fraktur to name just a selection. One of the clearest font sites we've seen in a long time. ▦

Rating: **5/5**

Blambot

Web: www.blambot.com

The heading on this site: 'Blambot – Comic Fonts and Lettering' gives a strong indication of what lies ahead.

The site is dedicated to all that is comic creation, with Blambot's designs appearing in industry leaders, *Marvel Comics* and *DC Comics*. The home page offers titbits of information, teasing the viewer into making a decision. Take a quick peek at the Latest Free Font or Latest Pay Font. Alternatively, check out the Bargains or see what's Out Now. The more obvious route is to head straight to Fonts where a mammoth selection is ready to be viewed. Take your pick from Fonts, where you can take a closer inspection of the latest offerings, or look at the Font menu, which is an extended list of Free Fonts, Pro Fonts and Limited Edition Fonts, all accessible with one quick click. ▦

Rating:**4/5**

fonts

Font Haus

Web: www.fonthaus.com

Font Haus is more than just a site that boasts fonts, it incorporates clipart, illustrations and royalty-free photography.

However, it's the font that takes precedence. Font Haus has been selling digital fonts since 1990, with an online presence since 1994. Since then the company has built up an impressive resource of more than 70,000 high quality fonts from a respected list of font designers and foundries. These include Adobe, Bitstream, Carter & Cone, ITC, Linotype, Monotype and URW. FontHaus now ranks as the fourth largest digital font resource in the world. And if you need one, as an added incentive to visit this already worthy site, a free font is offered with every font download. ▦

Rating: **4/5**

Miniml Fonts

Web: www.miniml.com

This site is very much a niche offering, and doesn't provide the standard sets that you would expect from the other resources we're got here on review.

The site design sets it apart from your popular layout with mobile sites obviously in mind. It's purely functional, with a text only persona. The site provides fonts that are vector-based pixel font emulations and specifically designed to be used in Flash. The fonts bring with them improved legibility by virtue of increased contrast, making them especially good at small sizes. Guidelines are provided to make sure that you get the best from the fonts. ▦

Rating: **3/5**

Abstract Fonts

Web: www.abstractfonts.com

This is a simple site, with its main focus squarely aimed at the font, and free ones at that – bonus!

Since its inception in 1998, Abstract Fonts has accumulated thousands of fonts with its present day total well over ten thousand. The front page boasts an obvious collection, which with one click, reveals the complete set in its many guises. Here you'll find lower case, upper case, numbers, punctuation and extended characters. Further sets can be found via Categories, Pop Charts, A to Z and Designers. While there are decent fonts a-plenty, the sheer scale of the site means that it may take a while to find what you want. ▦

Rating: **3/5**

art stockists

Not forgetting you traditionalists out there, take a look at these sites for materials

PicStop

Web: www.picstop.co.uk

Pic Stop brands itself as 'the digital accessory specialist', a boast that it fills with gusto. You can find everything from MP3 players to photo paper.

Alongside the music and memory, other digital needs also get a look-in. Mobile and VoIP phones, card readers, cameras, film, batteries and chargers all have dedicated sections. The individual categories are well stocked with a wide range of related material. For example, if you're on the lookout for a USB Flash Drive, PicStop offers over 30 samples. Try Ink Cartridges, and you'll need to select a brand before you proceed. A quick sample from the Epson range brings forth over 50 options. Try Epson Inkjet paper and you will find a scaled down operation still enough for most needs. ▥

Rating: **3/5**

Seawhite

Web: www.seawhite.co.uk

Seawhite produces sketchbooks and polyholdalls, and has established itself within the UK educational materials market.

Its product range is geared primarily towards the art education and design technology sectors. On offer is a large sketchbook and pad range, plus an assortment of own specification drawing/painting papers and the original polyholdall plastic art hold-all range. However, the site has so much more to offer and at good prices. If you're after pads, papers, card, canvas, mountboard, foamboard, easels, brushes, paints, drawing media or glue, then you really must take a trip to Seawhite. Plus, it ships across the UK – free with orders over £100 – and abroad. ▥

Rating: **4/5**

Pixmania PRO

Web: www.pixmania-pro.co.uk

Pixmania PRO is a company that provides for the B2B market offering a range of consumer electronics, IT products and office equipment.

It boasts a catalogue of over 25,000 products. The website brings together its vast product range under various categories including: Camera, Camcorders, IT Products and Consumables. A comprehensive camera category not only dedicates itself to digital but brings with it memory cards, traditional cameras, film and flashes. IT Products embraces an interesting selection of goods, hosting thousands of products from PCs, printers and scanners to external storage and network components. Photoshop enthusiasts will be pleased to hear that leading graphics tablet manufacturer Wacom is featured. ▥

Rating: **4/5**

---

art stockists

Daler Rowney
Web: www.daler-rowney.com

Daler Rowney has been a manufacturer of fine art materials for more than 200 years and has built up a reputation to match.

A visit to the Product Catalogue reveals its range of stock, from a selection of viewable colour charts to oil colours, watercolours to artboards and card to coloured papers, to name just a few of its huge product range. The site itself does not stock items, but it does provide a useful Art Supplies UK link found at the bottom of the page. This opens a Search facility, powered by ViaMichelin that allows visitors to search world wide for online and major stockists. ▥

Rating: **3/5**

Cheap Joe's
Web: www.cheapjoes.com

Not the most endearing name for a company, but one that does stress what the website is all about.

Apparently, Cheap Joe is crazy about art supplies and employs an in-house committee of artists who not only look at, but examine each art material for overall quality, durability and value. Now you know everything is tried and tested, what does the site actually sell? Joe's divides its product range in a very 'it does what it says on the tin' type of way. For example, one category is titled 'Stuff to Paint With'. However they're named, each section provides plenty of art stuff, eg, brushes, paper, canvas, frame and furniture, plus instructional DVDs and a range of books. ▥

Rating: **3/5**

Artpaper
Web: www.artpaper.com

There's often a clue in a title and Artpaper gets straight to the heart of the matter.

The site sells art paper in many different forms and guises. The following is just the some of the available categories, Book Art Papers, Bookbinding Supplies, Calligraphy Papers, Drawing & Printmaking Papers, Inkjet Papers, Restoration Papers, Imported & Decorative Papers and Paper in Rolls. Plus, it does provide a selection of stationery and envelopes. To assist you in making the often difficult paper choices, there's a glossary of related terminology and detailed descriptions of paper applications. As if this is not enough, Artpaper states that it loves to answer technical questions. So at least now there is an outlet for all your burning paper-related dilemmas. Phew. ▥

Rating: **4/5**

Advanced **Photoshop** **Recommends**

Advanced **Photoshop** **Recommends**