

Adobe Photoshop Elements 6-9 tutorial DVD

by Jack and Sue Drafaahl

Reviewed by Paul Colley

Regular UWP readers will know that Alex Tattersall reviewed the Lightroom 3 and Photoshop CS3-5 DVDs in UWP 64, but he does not use Photoshop Elements. Fortunately, I do use Elements 7.0 in conjunction with Lightroom 2.7 and was very happy to take up Peter Rowlands' request to review the remaining DVD.

I do nearly all of my post-processing in Lightroom, but have occasion to jump across to Elements for tasks that are still more efficiently done in Photoshop. Although I have an excellent in-depth manual that has helped me to unleash the power of Lightroom, I am largely self-taught through experimentation on Photoshop Elements, so I rather relished this opportunity to see if I could learn more. I was not disappointed and have immediately changed or enhanced many of my Photoshop routines as a result of following through these excellent tutorials.

Alex covered Jack and Sue Drafaahl's credentials in UWP 64 and I will not repeat them here, save to say that Jack, who narrates this DVD, knows his post-processing onions. At \$100, I thought that the Elements 6,7,8 & 9 DVD price seemed a smidgeon steep, but it has over 15 hours of tutorials in 134 lessons; the DVD cover claims 136, but I think somebody's maths is slightly adrift! I still conclude good value for money for the reasons set out below.

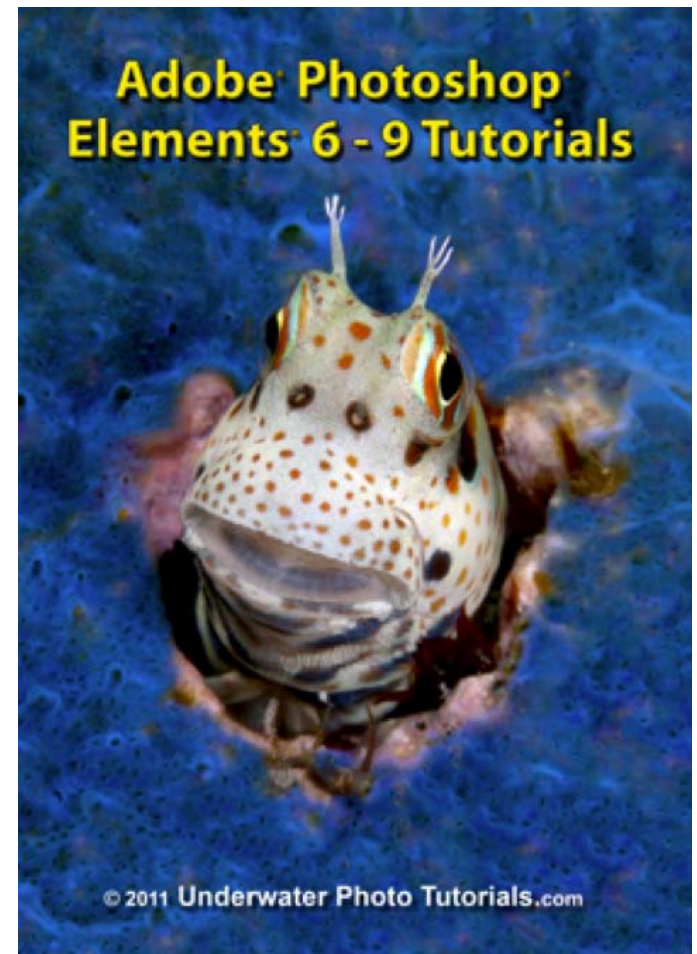
You need the right computer software interfaces before launching this DVD. I tried with

Windows Explorer (which should work according to the instructions), but it failed. But after downloading Mozilla Firefox and Adobe Flash 11, all was well.

The DVD user interface is very intuitive and I ran through all of the modules in sequence, skipping only a few for Elements 8 and above (as I use Elements 7). I found the introduction a bit slow and just wanted to get onto the substance of the techniques and tools. However, persistence paid off, because I picked up some tips that helped later on, so I would recommend going through the package patiently from top-to-bottom of the menu. I also found that there was some repetition, for example unnecessary references to Adobe ID in the introduction, over-repeated tips for using the clone and healing tools, and a mildly-irritating sequence about lens flare under the third party plug-in tutorial, which had Jack (perfectionist that he obviously is) repositioning a lens flare over and over, long after the instructional point had been made.

On the other hand, you could not accuse Jack of skipping over detail. He covers every drop-down menu item in a tour de force of this powerful software, which most of us have never exploited in full. Consequently, I learned so much about Elements that I doubt I will ever upgrade to CS3, 4 or 5 – I can now really make Elements sing and it more than meets my needs for post-processing.

There is really helpful detail about the nuances



of making selections, about how sharpening works and how to use the keyboard to best advantage. It's the small things that helped me. I particularly liked the tip for holding down the space bar in just about any mode to let you navigate around an image without de-selecting the tool in use. It makes such a difference and, despite my reasonable prior proficiency in Elements, I just did not know this simple tip.

There is a very good range of plug-in tutorials at the end of the DVD including, for example, introductions to NIK software Silver Efex Pro (for black & white conversions), Define 2.0 (for noise reduction) and Sharpener Pro 3.0 (for pre-printing sharpening). And I was really pleased to see the Lightroom 3 interface addressed, which is

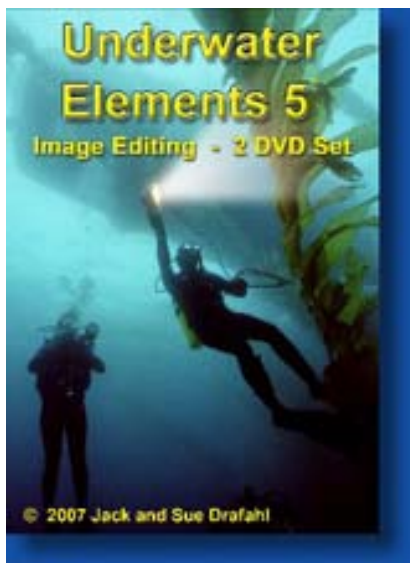
something that I use regularly.

In summary, despite a frustrating start due to downloading the optimum software to run this DVD, and after wading through a rather slow introduction, I found this package remarkably effective and good value. It has without doubt enhanced my skills in Photoshop Elements and I take my hat off to the creators for what was obviously a huge investment of time in working through every corner of this important software. And it was great to see that done properly in the underwater photography context and by an accomplished underwater photographer. Well done Jack & Sue!

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More information can be found
at

Jack and Sue Drafaht's web site
www.underwaterphototutorials.com



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