

Photoshop CS4 Channels & Masks

one-on-one

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Most of us *Photoshop* users have dabbled with channels and masks, or at least attempted to. Personally, I really need a lot of explanation plus examples for a deeper understanding of the subject. Author Deke McClelland does a fine job of explaining the technologies of channels, masks and selections, as well as leading you through the hands-on exercises. The companion DVD contains the lesson videos, a color settings file, dekeKeys keyboard shortcuts, a Channels & Masks *Photoshop* extension, and all the project files for working through the exercises in the book.

But first, the book begins with an explanation of Deke's "one-on-one" approach to learning: READ the book's chapter material; WATCH the corresponding video(s) on the companion DVD; DO the exercises at the end of the chapter. Next are some recommended *Photoshop* preference settings to maximize performance, instructions for playing the videos, and an explanation of what to expect from this book.

The beginning chapters (lessons) explain how the various image modes (RGB, LAB, Grayscale, & CMYK) work, what channels are all about, how to create and modify alpha channels and masks, as well as how to refine selections. There are multiple ways to create and finesse selections. Selections, floaters and layers are the subjects of Lesson Three. This includes selection calculations, modifications, distortions and transformations.

Working with selections is continued in combination with applying quick masks. By lesson five (of 12), we are learning to use channels to create a selection and a mask when dealing with complex images. In this chapter we also get to work with some of Deke's actions (automation!) that we load into *Photoshop* from the companion DVD, as well as learn how to composite multiple images into one.

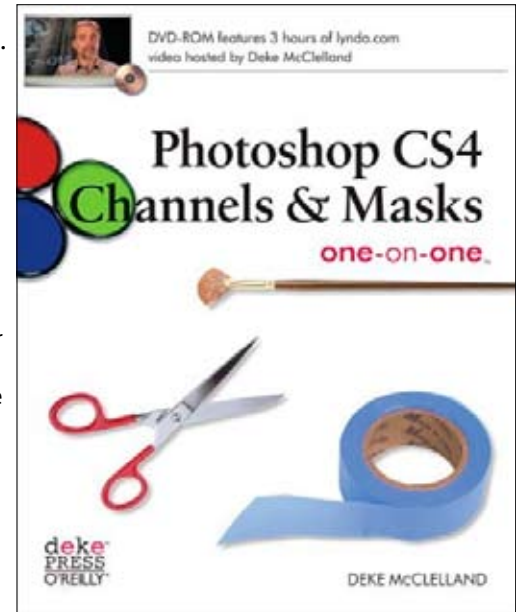
Continuing on, we delve deeper into blends and composites. I've used layer blend modes extensively to create image magic without a lot of knowledge or understanding of how they work (or what I'm doing). Lesson Six begins

with a nice chart displaying how the various blend modes behave with respect to the underlying layer. The DVD movie for this lesson provides an introduction to the 25 standard blend modes. There is a whole page devoted to "Blend Mode Math." It's really fun playing with the provided image, combining the layers via blend modes and seeing what results. More *Photoshop* magic!

Layer masks are the topic of Lesson Seven. I'm familiar with applying Adjustment Layers to a base image, but masking an adjustment layer was new territory for me. The exercise on masking translucent objects such as glass requires selecting and manipulating highlights and shadows using blending modes and applying a gradient to a mask. This gets quite complex, but the results are impressive. There is also an exercise for assembling the "Perfect Group Photo" using four images as source material and then working with a knockout mask.

Six of the many specialty masks, considered the most useful by Deke, come with a step-by-step exercise to illustrate their use and application. They are Luminance Mask, Corrective Mask, Color Mask, Density Mask, Depth Mask, and Edge Mask.

There is almost a complete lesson devoted to using the Channel Mixer to transform a color image into a striking



B/W rendition. Deke tells us how he actually created the original channel mixer from *Photoshop 3's* Filter Factory just "a few years" ago. By the way, CS4 is code for *Photoshop 11*, just to give you an idea of how long ago this was. The last pages of this lesson provide the better solution for correcting red-eye (**not** the red-eye tool).

Lesson Ten is Calculations, the way to blend one channel with another and why you would want to. Within this chapter lies the promise of how to create better masks with Calculations. Is your head spinning yet? There is a two page inset spanning pages 366 and 377 titled "How to Add and Subtract Work." The first sentence says it all:

"To fully understanding masking in *Photoshop*, you have to come to terms with the Calculations command."

I kind of stopped at the end of the previous chapter, but I know that I have to continue on! The two other lessons I have not worked through, YET, are titled the Pen Tool and Paths Palette, and Masking Tough Stuff. Huh? What have we *been* doing?

In Summary

Working with channels and masks offers infinite variety and opportunities for developing unique skills. This opens the door for true creativity in manipulating and compositing images. So this book seems the most current must-have, authoritative source for learning all thing Channels and Masks. Deke has outdone himself on this one!

About: *Photoshop CS4 Channels & Masks one-on-one*

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