

SS's "Digital Designs for Scrapbooking 2: Making your own" by Renee Pearson

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Monday, 02 July 2007
Last Updated Monday, 02 July 2007

Digital Designs for Scrapbooking 2: Making your own
By Renee Pearson
published by Simple Scrapbooks

148 pages
\$19.95
spring 2007

This book is organized into 5 chapters:

1. Creating Backgrounds: use patterns, type, and layered images to create gorgeous backgrounds
2. Creating Digital Embellishments: make your own color-coordinated digital brads, tags, bookplates, and chipboard
3. Using Brushes & Other Special Effects: design stunning special effects using digital brushes and edge treatments
4. Remind Me!: a handy quick-reference to the key tasks in this book
5. Gallery: 5 digital divas share their Renee-inspired designs

Just like Renee's first book, the spine is spiral-bound and there's an outer plastic cover. (Attention scrapbook book publishers: we want ALL books to be like this!!!)

The directions, which are accompanied by helpful screenshots and examples, are for Photoshop Elements 4.0 or 5.0. Renee assumes you already have a basic understanding of getting around in Photoshop Elements.

Before I start, two things:

1. I had help with this review: friend 1 and I spent some time in Starbucks looking over the book and discussing it, and friend 2 took the book home for the weekend and, along with her husband, experimented in Photoshop with the directions.
2. Since I have a website about digital scrapbooking, I often get e-mails from total strangers, asking me random questions. (Which I'm totally ok with. It's fun. Usually.) The two questions I get the most are (1) how do I PRINT my layouts once I'm done, and (2) how do I get started learning how to make my own digital kits?

Based on that second question (which I seriously get ALL the time), I believe that there is a very specific audience for this book, which is growing all the time. Friend 1 agrees whole-heartedly with this statement. (Ok, I might have stolen it from her.) This is the first book I've seen of its kind -- one that sits down with you and says "Ok, so when it comes to digital scrapbooking . . . let's talk about how to create this stuff."

Renee uses one color scheme for all the examples (the cover of the book is an example of those colors) and the tutorials rely heavily on the book's accompanying CD, with files to work from as a starting point. (Friend #2 said that to follow the directions in the first 3 chapters you HAVE to use the files on the CD, but that if you follow the directions from the "Remind Me" chapter, you can mostly get by on your own. She also said she had slight problems sometimes following the directions and terminology that Renee uses -- and she has been using Photoshop Elements for like 2 years -- but her husband didn't seem to have a problem with it.)

For me, reading through the steps is enlightening -- I usually have a hard time learning anything complicated in Photoshop. I'm excited to now be able to customize elements like brads and alphas that I already have. There are SO many tricks in Photoshop that I'm completely clueless about, and it's fun to discover some in this book with Renee.

The book doesn't have layouts throughout the book (like Jessica Sprague's special issue does.) Instead, this book's pages are filled with directions and screen shots (but that's the point of the book, right?) The last chapter makes up for the book not being layout intensive -- there are three layout or project examples from each of 5 scrappers, using Renee's kit which is included with the CD. Those scrappers are: Anna Aspnes, Holly McCaig, Kate Teague, Kristie David (Shabby Princess), and Tia Bennett.

Friend 2's husband has been very interested in learning to create scrapbook papers and elements in Photoshop from scratch, but has been unsuccessful in finding any tutorials online that explain how to do this. And aside from DigiScrapDesigner.com, a membership-based website (\$35 a year) that has vast numbers of such tutorials, I don't know of any other sources. So for the people who really want some step-by-step Photoshop directions geared toward creating for digital scrapbooking, this book is a first. And I think that for people like my friend's husband, after reading the tutorials they will be able to continue to experiment in Photoshop and figure out even more cool tricks, once they have the

basics down.

Disclaimer: It's important to keep in mind that if you buy this book with the intention of learning to be a digi designer and **SELLING** your work, this book gives only an intro to creating papers and elements. You won't be ready to start selling in a week. Also, please educate yourself about copyright laws and the use of others' materials (such as templates, overlays, shapes, clip-art, fonts, etc) in creating your own. This is fine for personal use, but gets complicated when it comes to selling.

But for your personal use? The sky's the limit. Once you read the directions in this book, I think you'll have a better understanding of the design possibilities in Photoshop and be able to continue further on your journey of creativity.