Beginning GIMP: From Novice to Professional

A Book Review

Amye Wombles
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Beginning GIMP: From Novice to Professional, written by Akkana Peck and published by Apress in 2006, is an instructional book designed to provide guidance for those who wish to learn how to effectively edit images using the GNU Image Manipulation Program. As stated in the title, the content strives to satisfy any level of GIMP user: those who are beginning to learn and those who have used the GIMP but want to explore all of the editing details available in this open-source program. The book fulfills its purpose; the intricate detailing of each aspect of the GIMP program along with the logical sequencing of content and examples of creative editing projects combine to produce a must-have instruction resource for anyone interested in quality image editing and open-source software.

The structure of the information in the book is a definite tribute to its title. As Peck states in the introduction to her writing, “...the first few chapters assume no knowledge at all of the GIMP or any other editing program. Later chapters will assume you've picked up the basics, and will build on them. (xix).” Chapter one through six are the building blocks of learning the GIMP program.

“Chapter 1: Get to Know the GIMP” is a solid introduction. It answers all of the basic questions about GIMP in the forms of a definition section, a “tour” with labeled screen shots of windows and menus, information on customizable GIMP settings, and instructions on completing a first GIMP project in which, on completion, the user combines two images into one.

Chapter two introduces the GIMP user to the basics of image editing. After reading and following the instructions included in this chapter, one should be able to utilize GIMP features to correct any problems that a digital photo may have, such as red-eye. Also, one can rescale the size of the photo, brighten or darken the image, and crop or rotate the image. Especially helpful to beginners is the section on image file types; each type is defined in detail and an experimental section of JPEG and GIF settings follows.

For image editors who wish to delve deeper into creativity, the information in chapters three
through six provide ample details in image operations: layers, drawing, selection, and touching up. Each chapter includes a thorough view of each operation and allows the user to implement the step-by-step instructions by editing a personal photograph. For example, “Chapter 3: Introduction to Layers” begins with an explanation of the layer concept while providing helpful diagrams, and ends a hands-on activity that allows the user to animate an object. In each chapter, the user is introduced to additional GIMP tools, such as the “move” tool and a “color chooser.”

The remaining content of the book builds upon the basic elements and tools of the GIMP. Chapter seven presents special effects, such as noise, artistic, and map filters. Advanced topics are covered in chapters eight through ten, including color theory, perspective, and shading. Chapter eleven presents scripts and plug-ins, which encourage the user to explore by stating “...there's a lot you can do with GIMP scripts, even if you have never written a line of code before (426).” Chapter twelve is titled “Additional Topics” and covers miscellaneous information, such as how to print using GIMP Print and details about configuration files. Chapter twelve ends with a resource section with valuable content including “The WIKI” and “How to Report Bugs.” There are six appendix sections after the conclusion of chapter twelve, which explain how to install the program and even instructions on how one can individually build the program.

Although at first glance of the table of contents containing the massive detailing of the GIMP features seems overwhelming, Akkana Peck achieves the purpose she states in the introduction to the book: satisfaction for those who wish to use this image editor. Moreover, the reader understands that the GIMP is not a limited program; a user can incorporate as much or as little of the program as he may wish, but the ultimate goal is to produce the image one desires. The book is authored is such as way that the user realizes the benefits of utilizing each feature of the GIMP to produce creative elements in personal photographs. The premise that “all things are possible” with this program is an underlying
theme throughout each chapter.

**Beginning GIMP: From Novice to Professional** is a must-have resource for anyone who desires to use an open-source image editing tool. Peck ensures that one can easily move from a beginner to a “seasoned veteran” when utilizing the information provided in this manual.