



KEVIN O'NEILL / STAFF ARTIST

Sharp shooting

Website focuses on digital photography

Say cheese, because there's a good chance that somebody has a camera nearby. The proliferation of digital cameras on cell phones, computers and small, point-and-shoots means that nearly everybody is taking pictures of nearly everything all the time. I have a friend, Eric, who takes pictures of everything he eats, though I'm not exactly sure why.

With photo-sharing Web sites like Flickr; and social sites like Facebook, people are instantly sharing all these photos with the rest of the world. I'm pretty sure that somewhere online you can see what Eric had for breakfast this morning.

All of this is a mixed blessing. It's wonderful when distant friends and relatives can see pictures of their newborn niece or nephew. It's not so wonderful when these pictures are out of focus, poorly lit or have half of the back of the delivery room nurse's head in them.

Learn the ropes

Just because everyone has a camera, it doesn't mean that everyone is a good photographer. That's where the Digital Photography School (digital-photography-school.com) can help save the day.

The site is geared to new and semi-experienced digital photographers who want to improve their skills. A lot of the information is for digital single-lens reflex (DSLR) cameras, but there are also items dedicated to point-and-shoot, and cell phone cameras. A good portion of what the site covers deals with lighting, composi-

tion, post production and other areas that are common to all cameras.

There are three main areas on the site: "Photography Tips & Tutorials," "Cameras & Equipment" and "Post Production." Each of these areas is broken down into three subcategories: "Recent," "Popular" and "Featured," which will take you to a short list of topics. Clicking on one of the main headings takes you to a much longer list of topics. There's also a slide show above the three main areas featuring photos that link to lessons.

Tips and tutorials

The lessons in this section go from very basic, such as "How To Hold a Digital Camera," to very technical, like "16-bit vs. 32-bit vs. 64-bit: What Does it All Mean?"

There's a subsection labeled "For Beginners" that covers:

- The basics of exposure
- Camera settings and features
- Camera handling and care
- Beginning tips and tutorials
- Common problems and questions

Another subsection covers composition tips, including "The Rule of Thirds," "Finding Fresh Angles to Shoot From" and "The Importance of Focal Points." There's also a section devoted to tips for specific situations, such as weddings, fireworks, sunsets, etc.

Cameras and equipment

This section is a little bit tricky. Some of the links take you to informative articles and reviews, similar to the rest of the site. Other links take you to pages that have a completely different look than the rest of the site. They're still branded Digital Photog-

raphy School, but with a different logo, and the content is a mix of suspiciously "advertorial," and outright commercial content, where you can buy cameras and related equipment.

Post production

The last section of the site deals mainly with the software used to edit and manipulate digital images. Adobe products, such as Photoshop, Lightroom and Bridge dominate this field. There are also articles on digital file management and mimicking certain photographic styles.

This site also has forums where members post and critique each others work, share techniques, discuss equipment, business strategies and other things. There are also links for those who want to write for the site, and for those who want to advertise on it.

The site is the work of an Australian amateur photographer named Darren Rowse. Most of the content is free, but there are some eBooks for sale, and there is advertising on the site. You can sign up for a free weekly e-mail newsletter of photo tips. There is a registration option on the site if you want to contribute to or participate in the forums, which is also free.

The site is fairly well done with good organization and easy navigation. The writing is by different contributors but is mostly decent, with an easy-to-read, informal style. I came across a few bad links, and he could really use an editor to catch the numerous typos and grammatical errors.

The only thing missing is a tutorial for Eric on how to light and photograph hummus.

KEVIN O'NEILL is a graphic artist for The Times-Tribune. Contact him at koneill@timesshamrock.com with links to your favorite websites.



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