

The Academy of Plumbing 32

That was the boom that was

The Digital Plumber

By Paul Ellis



It's December, the economy's in the toilet and you've decided to give upgrading to a P60 a miss this year.

Nevertheless, Christmas is unavoidable and even if you're Bob Cratchit you're going to have it foisted upon you, so you may as well prepare yourself for it. Here are some hints to be dropped to potential present-givers for gifts that are unlikely to break the bank (unless it's Lehman Brothers) and will actually be useful. Of course, there are always socks, too.

BOOKS



The Jonathan Meades Collection. Actually a DVD, but Meades' combination of erudition, intelligence, wit and Blues Brothers delivery puts this right at the top of my wish-list.



The Adobe Photoshop Lightroom 2 Book: The Complete Guide for Photographers by Martin Evening. tinyurl.com/5npepn. Lightroom

is coming on by leaps and bounds, to the extent that it's becoming many snappers' primary working tool. You'll have a thorough understanding of it after reading this.

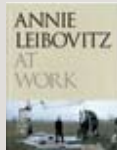


The Adobe Photoshop CS4 for Photographers by Martin Evening. Unless you're one of the few who

will really benefit from CS4's new features, if you already have CS3 I think you can probably give CS4 a miss. However, if you've already upgraded you may as well get the best out of CS4 and Martin's books are generally acknowledged to be both exhaustive and approachable.



Mac OS X for Photographers by Rod Wynne-Powell. tinyurl.com/56vy7y. Still want to mug up on nerdy stuff? Rod knows what he's talking about.



Annie Liebovitz at Work. Not everyone's favourite portraitist, but fascinating nonetheless. A very good review of this book can be found at tinyurl.com/5rs5zw.



Africa: Altered States, Ordinary Miracles by Richard Dowden. Many members are photojournalists; of those a good few frequently find themselves in Africa on

behalf of NGOs. If you're one of them I think this book is required reading. There's an excellent review at tinyurl.com/5n5rrs, worth a read in itself whether you're interested in this subject or not.



Fifty People Who Bugged Up Britain by Quentin Letts is simply a good, funny read if you're feeling seasonally sphenetic.

SOFTWARE



Adobe Photoshop Lightroom 2. tinyurl.com/6lssn9. is starting to make Photoshop look like optional rather than essential software.

Coupled with Martin Evening's book (above), use the season's enforced leisure time (yeah, right) to bone up and transform your working environment for next year.



Adobe Photoshop CS4. tinyurl.com/6lssn9 in my view can be given a miss unless you're one of the few who will really benefit from CS4's new features tinyurl.com/3to3dy.

Then again, if you're still running CS or CS2 on an Intel Mac, the upgrade is worthwhile. To my eyes, though, Photoshop's user interface gets uglier with every iteration. Note to Adobe: please try not to make CS5 look quite as much like Microsoft Office 1997 as CS4 does. Thanks.



Undercover. Let's not forget that the festive season is also a tealeaf's paradise. If your laptop or iMac is nicked when running Undercover you stand a better-than 70% chance of getting it back.



1Password is the password manager to have. It integrates seamlessly with browsers and your iPhone, too.



Talking of iPhones, I've found **Vicinity** tinyurl.com/6eqxzj to be very useful. It's just what you want when face down in the gutter after that agency party and you need a cab. Or Casualty.



Last.fm does a very clever Genius Playlist-like trick with Internet radio, finding tracks similar to those you're listening to. So there you are on Christmas Day with the in-

laws and you're clean out of Frank Sinatra. Put Last.fm on the iPhone or iPod Touch and get Matt Munro, Dean Martin and Perry Como for free!

HARDWARE



A new **MacBook Pro**.

I reckon I'd give these a miss too. They're beautifully made, but functionally not much of an improvement over the old models for us. They will run OS X 10.6 Snow Leopard faster than the previous generation but that's not due for another six months, by which time these laptops will be getting an update which many hope might include a fix for the over-glossy screen. If you can I'd skip these and find a previous model at a discount. There are still a few about.



Good fresh **hard disks** are always among the top priorities because that's where your valuable back catalogue is stored. No data, no business.

Microdirect tinyurl.com/58roro are among the cheapest vendors that I've discovered

with bare Samsung 1TB disks available for around the £65 mark.



Of course, unless you're going to mount these internally you'll need **hard disk enclosures** to put them in. May I respectfully

suggest Sonnet or Wiebetech as being among the best buys?



Got a new MacBook or MacBook Pro anyway? Can't stand the mirror-like screen?

Photodon do an anti-glare overlay to dampen the reflections.

FREWARE

This is the season for charitable thinking – or it would be if so many charities weren't so uncharitable themselves, especially regarding photographers' fees and copyright, whilst simultaneously being perhaps rather too charitable with regard to their top managements' remuneration. There are also problems with how that charity money is spent, as discussed in Africa: Altered States, Ordinary Miracles, referred to above.

How are you supposed to be charitable if you're not particularly inclined towards giving to charities because you're sick of seeing your Oxfam contributions being hoovered up by Mugabe and his pals? One possibility is to *lend* your money to the needy rather than actually *giving* it to them. I came across this fascinating snippet the other day:

'An amazing piece of financial analysis has been circulating by email recently.

If you had purchased \$1,000 worth of AIG stock a year ago, you would have \$44.34 left.

With Wachovia, you would have had \$54.74 left of the original \$1,000. With Lehman, you would have had \$0.00 left. But if you had purchased \$1,000 worth of beer one year, drunk all of the beer, then turned in the cans for the aluminium recycling refund, you would have \$214 cash.

Even better, if a year ago you had decided to entrust your \$1,000 to the needy rather than the greedy, you would have ended up today with \$1,000.

This market-beating 0 per cent rate of return is available through a website called **www.kiva.org**. It's a site dedicated not to charitable giving but to charitable lending – and to the refreshingly entrepreneurial idea that if you want to feed a man, the best thing isn't to give him a fish, or even to teach him to fish, but to lend him the money to buy a net. Or perhaps a fridge.'

You can read more about it at tinyurl.com/6n4h7a. I know where my charity money is going this year.

So, who knows what 2009 may bring? Whoever did? We'll just have to weather it anyway and it won't be all bad. Meanwhile, mine's an Emva Cream. See you next year.

PDFs of this and all my other IMAGE articles are available to download at www.thedigitalplumber.co.uk, each with live weblinks for your browsing pleasure. Go and get 'em.

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