

Reader Reviews

DSLR readers deliver definitive verdicts on photo courses, kit and services

Portrait and lighting course

Lights, camera, action – Robin Claydon (right) takes his first steps into lighting by attending a one-on-one studio-based lighting and portrait workshop at Paul's Studio in Reading



Where? Reading **How much?** £180 (three-hour course) **Details:** www.pauls-studio.co.uk

A Although I have been interested in photography and taking photographs since childhood, it is only since buying my first DSLR camera three years ago that I have been truly bitten by the bug. I now own a couple of Nikon DSLRs and an Elinchrom studio lighting kit.

I am interested in all aspects of photography but natural history is my passion. However in the later part of last year I was asked by friends and family if I could take some group and individual portrait shots. Keen to expand my experiences, I couldn't resist. The results were surprisingly good but the lighting seemed a bit flat. It was clear that I needed ideas of different lighting set-ups to achieve more pleasing results. So, when I was given this opportunity to attend this portrait and lighting course with Paul's Studio by Roger, the editor of *Digital SLR*, I snapped his hand off! This is just one of a range of courses that the studio has to offer.

Paul contacted me prior to the day to talk through my level of experience and what it was that I wished to achieve from the course. Having identified that I already owned studio flash equipment he invited me to bring it along so that we could use my kit instead of his. This was so I could replicate the techniques learned when I returned home. He also asked me to research and take along examples of portrait photographs and different lighting techniques that I would like to achieve.

All of this was confirmed by e-mail and I felt that Paul was keen to adapt the course time to teach me the things that I wanted to learn.

RIGHT Digital SLR reader Robin reviews his images with Paul and model Ashlea looking on.

FAR RIGHT Robin was given plenty of time to perfect the newly-learned techniques.



I was greeted with coffee on arrival at the studio and after introductions Paul explained that for the first part of the course we would be using only my equipment to try and reproduce the lighting techniques identified by me from the examples I had taken along. He explained that this would enable me to get the best from my equipment and use it to best effect.

Later in the course we added some of Paul's equipment to demonstrate what could be achieved by using a few more accessories. Paul was very knowledgeable and helpful throughout, allowing me ample time to ask questions. I did not feel pressured to stick to a timetable and flexibility was the nature of the day.

Ashlea, the professional model hired by Paul, was very patient as she was subjected to different techniques and lighting. She was pleased to help and assist me and needed no input from me on posing for my shots so that I could concentrate on the lighting techniques.

The course lasted around three hours and as it was on a one-one basis. This provided ample time to try out as many techniques and to ask as many questions as I wanted. Paul tailored the input to what I needed to achieve the results I wanted. I feel much more confident now in using different lighting set ups from one light up to four, with accessories such as umbrellas, soft boxes, honeycombs and snoots. What I found most useful was to be able to use my equipment so that I could be confident in replicating the results shown here.

VERDICT

I thoroughly enjoyed the course and I will now go away and buy a few accessories to add more diversity to my set up. I enjoyed using my own equipment, but if I had not taken my own gear, I still would have learnt the techniques using the kit at Paul's well equipped studio.

RATING ★★★★★

“Paul invited me to bring my own lighting kit along so I could replicate the techniques I learned when I got home”



INSETS This is a small selection of images that Robin took on the day. As you can see, he soon got to grips with a wide range of lighting techniques!