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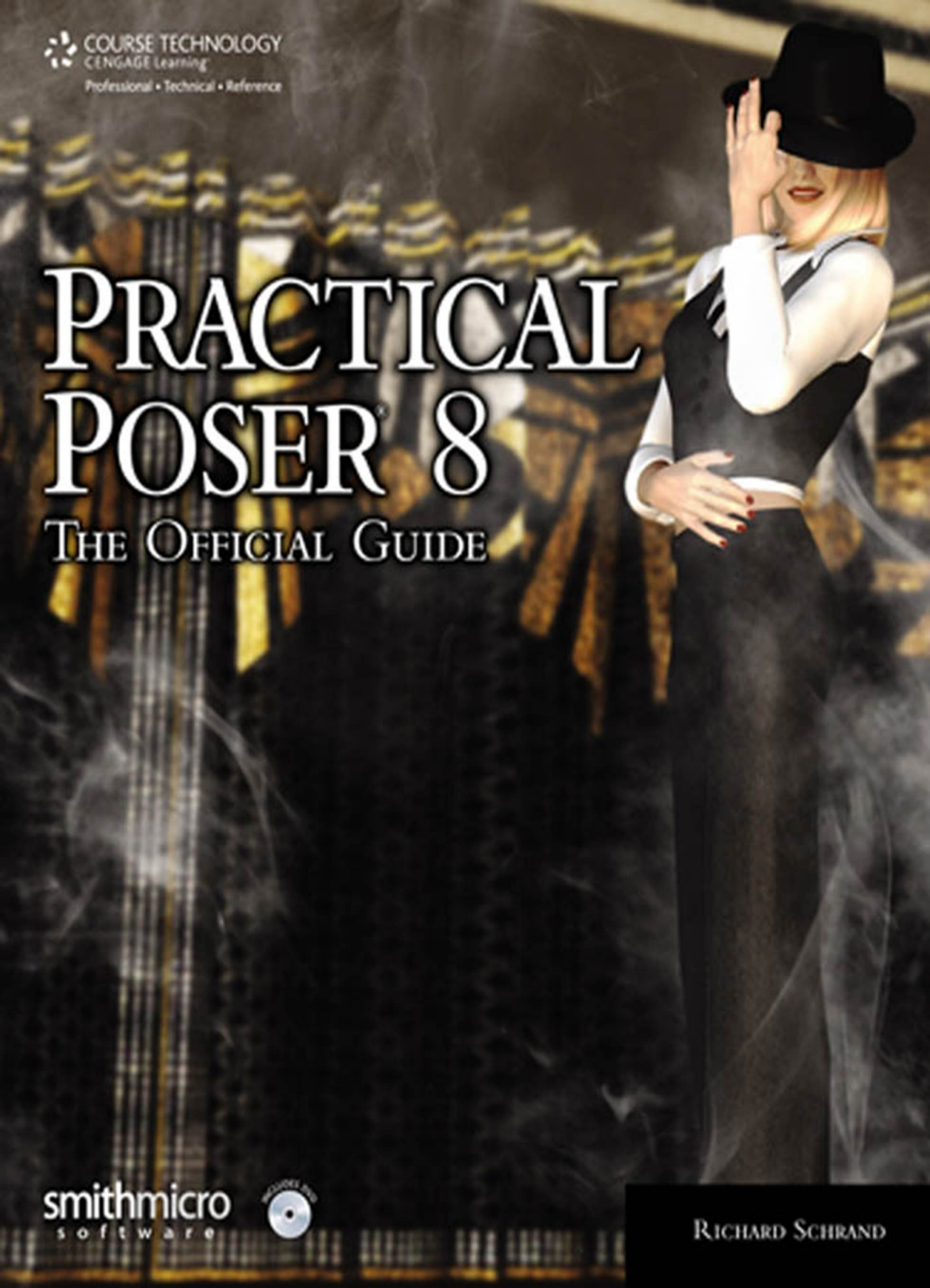

PRACTICAL POSER® 8

THE OFFICIAL GUIDE

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software

INCLUDES DVD

RICHARD SCHRAND

Practical Poser® 8: The Official Guide

Richard Schrand

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Richard Schrand

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To all my students past and present:
You persevered through what probably felt
like endless hours of tweaking poses, lights, and
camera positions until they were perfect.

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Acknowledgments

There are times in life when a person can get away with taking full credit for a project. Authoring a book is not one of those times. There are so many people who are involved with the creation of a book, from the layout people to the editors and the big boss person—the one who hires and assigns the people who keep everything on track.

So I would like to thank (in no particular order) Kim Benbow, my editor, whose insight and knowledge have made this a better book. Denise Tyler, whose knowledge of Poser helped keep me on track and who allowed me to update her *Practical Poser 7* book. My thanks to everyone who worked on laying out the book and who took my ideas and turned them into reality. And to Heather Hurley, acquisitions editor extraordinaire, who, during SIGGRAPH 2009 in New Orleans, twisted my arm to write this book. (It still hurts, by the way!!!)

Okay. I'm kidding about the arm twisting. Really.

And then to all my friends, students, and family who continually asked, "Haven't you finished that dang thing yet?" All I can say is, "Yep. I have."

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About the Author

Practical Poser 8: The Official Guide is the 14th book by **Richard Schrand**, and the second book he has written that covers this program. His other books include *Vue 6 Revealed* and *Vue 7: Beyond the Basics*, as well as books covering web design, Adobe Photoshop, video editing, and 3D modeling techniques. When not writing, he has been instrumental in helping to create two bachelor's degree programs for Nossi College of Art in Tennessee—one in graphic design and the other in video production.

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Introduction

It's an interesting challenge I have been given: Update a book that is considered the epitome of Poser knowledge written by arguably one of the most respected Poser users there is—Denise Tyler. That's the conundrum I was faced with when first approached by the publisher of *Practical Poser 7*. So I did what any rational person in my position would do. I read the book and cogitated and cogitated, and then cogitated some more. Satisfied that I had sufficiently engulfed myself in the material, I re-read the book, and then thought about it some more. Then it finally came to me. I couldn't do it. I couldn't rewrite what is already a staple in many users' libraries. What I could do was carry the torch; I could add to and augment what was already there. This is Poser, after all. No matter the updates, there is still a comfortable familiarity with the program that has been meticulously retained by everyone involved in its production. By becoming involved with this book, there is almost a feeling of coming home. I have been involved with Poser since version 1. One of the first books I ever wrote was *Poser 4 Pro Pack fx and Design*, which was fairly well received and the first one produced covering the program. It's amazing how far Larry Weinberg's brainchild has come since then (see www.larryweinberg.com/gallery2/v/PoserHistory/).

Having started as an experiment in creating posing references for comic book artists, Poser has become a program that many artists use to assuage their artistic muse on a daily basis. I look back at my history with the program. I initially bought it due to curiosity. After I opened it and played around for a while, I decided that maybe I could use it with my new company. Back then, those first-generation models looked amazing, and there had to be some way for me to incorporate them in the layout work I was doing. Unfortunately, just about that time a local auto dealer put out a commercial with a 3D-generated giant that was so horrendously not good that it turned the entire community off of anything 3D. So I was limited to using Poser as a previsualization tool. And I still had to tell clients that, no, I wasn't using 3D for their ads. Oh, how times have changed.

As the program gained popularity with the general public, an entire support industry grew. Entire companies were created to supply professional-quality products, and individual artists began making content for the program—some free and some low cost. Entire websites emerged where Poser users could show their artwork or supply their original creations. From the most conservative to the most erotic, Poser created a phenomenon unheard of in the computing world. Yet there was, and still is, a stigma surrounding the program.

Some consider Poser a mere toy—something that isn't worthy of serious 3D artistic expression. Part of this could be equated to a purist mentality: "Unless I build and rig it myself, it ain't worth its weight in pixels." Or it could have been the 3D artists' difficulty with importing models into Maya, Max, LightWave 3D, or Cinema 4D. The latter problem was alleviated with Poser 8, the version of the program that will be covered in this book. With Poser 8, 3D artists are able to import the PZ3 (the native Poser format) or PZZ (the compressed Poser format) files into their modeling program of choice and have an extremely high-quality still or animated figure in their scene. This can now save hours of work while producing high-quality figure animations perfect for web, television, or movie productions. Poser, therefore, is much more than its humble beginnings would ever have indicated.

What About This Book's Content?

It is assumed that you have a strong working knowledge of Poser. While many introductory aspects are covered in the HTML files included on the accompanying DVD, you will be best served to review the Poser Reference Manual and the Poser Tutorial Manual that came with your software. In these pages, you will be taken further into the program, find out more about the new features, and discover just how powerful Poser 8 has become.

Nearly everything in Poser 8 has been upgraded. In many cases, these upgrades are under the hood. On the other hand, there are numerous changes that will immediately jump out at you. The first chapter will deal with the most apparent update, the graphical user interface (GUI). I then move to higher-level topics, mainly covering the features that you'll find in the Poser rooms. You'll learn how to prepare photographs so that you get the best results in the Face Room. You'll also learn how to create and save custom faces in the Face Room. You'll learn how to use the Hair Room to add hair to Poser clothing or props and how to pick up hair colors from underlying textures. You'll also learn how to work with the various types of Poser clothing and the differences between Conforming clothing, Dynamic clothing, and hybrid Conforming/Dynamic clothing. Finally, you'll learn how to decipher and build materials in the advanced Material Room.

Some of the most frequently asked questions involve creating and customizing Poser clothing. Although these are advanced-level skills that often require software other than Poser, it is a topic of great interest and need to Poser users; I will address this in the later chapters. First, you'll learn how to use magnets to create morphs in Poser. You'll also learn the steps involved to export and import morphs to and from an external morphing program. Through several chapters, you'll learn the procedures involved in modeling a simple piece of clothing, how to create UV maps for common clothing articles (shirts, skirts, and pants), how to assign materials in clothing, and how to group them correctly so that your models work properly in Poser. You'll also learn how to save different types of Poser content into the Poser libraries so that they also work properly. In addition, you'll learn what makes the Poser rendering engine work and how you can enhance your Poser renders so that they look their best.

Who Will Benefit from This Plethora of Information

As previously mentioned, a lot of information is going to be covered. A lot of thought went into how to present the content so you can easily find the feature you want to learn about when you are ready to learn it.

Practical Poser 8: The Official Guide, in conjunction with Poser's user manuals, will be invaluable learning tools. If you're an intermediate user you will find helpful tips and tricks that could take you to that next level. And, if you are an advanced user, this book will help you quickly discover how to use many of Poser's new features.

The Conventions

Being a cross-platform application—Poser is available for both the PC and the Mac—there are slight differences in the way the program is operated. If you have read any of my other books, you know that I bring up quick key commands whenever they are available. With Poser, the biggest difference is in how to accomplish those quick key commands. So throughout the book, quick key commands will be written using the following conventions: PC/Mac+x. For instance, to open an existing file, the quick key command would be Ctrl/Cmd+O. Continuing with the differences between Macs and PCs, when I talk about right-clicking, that pertains to both operating systems. Some people forget that Macs can use multi-button mouses (mice? meeses?) and have been able to for about a decade. But, if you don't have a multi-button mouse—first off, why not?!?—instead of right-clicking, hold down the Control (Ctrl) key on the Mac's keyboard.

Digging In

With all of this said, it's now time to dig in and begin working with Poser 8. There's a lot to explore and discover. The techniques that you learn in this book will help you get up to speed very quickly with the questions that Poser users ask most. I am also open to suggestions and additional questions that can be covered in future editions of this book, and I will watch the various forums in the online Poser communities for questions or comments from readers.

DVD-ROM Downloads

If you purchased an ebook version of this book, and the book had a companion DVD-ROM, we will mail you a copy of the disc. Please send ptrsupplements@cengage.com the title of the book, the ISBN, your name, address, and phone number. Thank you.

1 Everything Old Is New Again

In This Chapter:

- Poser's New Features
- Tutorial 1.1: Make the GUI Your Own
- Where Your Content Lives
- Tutorial 1.2: Searching for Content
- Tutorial 1.3: Saving Your Favorite Content
- Tutorial 1.4: Creating Runtime Folders on Your Hard Drive
- Tutorial 1.5: Adding a New Runtime Folder to the Poser Library

One thing that can be said about Poser is this: it has retained and honored its roots from the days when Kai Krause first designed its graphical user interface (GUI). Krause was one of the preeminent user interface designers back in the 1980s. According to Wikipedia, "Krause significantly broadened conventional notions of the graphical user interface by applying innovative design principles and providing realtime interaction for the user, neither of which were widely deployed in the 1980s because most users found them too oblique to learn and remember." Of course, these are now common elements in all GUIs on all operating systems—rounded corners, drop shadows, transparent backgrounds. Amazing how far we have come, isn't it?