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Sony® Alpha SLT-A65/A77

FOR

DUMMIES®

Sony® Alpha SLT-A65/A77 FOR DUMMIES®

by Robert Correll

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About the Author

Robert Correll is the author of several books about digital photography and imaging, including *Digital SLR Photography All-in-One For Dummies.* His most recent titles include *Sony Alpha SLT-A35/A55 For Dummies; Photo Retouching and Restoration Using Corel PaintShop Pro X4,* Third Edition; *HDR Photography Photo Workshop,* Second Edition (with Pete Carr); *Canon EOS Rebel T3/1110D* and *Canon EOS 60D For Dummies* (both with Julie Adair King); and *High Dynamic Range Digital Photography For Dummies.*

When not writing, Robert enjoys family life, photography, playing the guitar, grilling, and recording music. Robert graduated from the United States Air Force Academy and resides in Indiana.

Dedication

To my family.

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Introduction

The story of the Sony A65/A77 begins with two other camera manufacturers, Konica and Minolta. These storied names in camera history merged in 2003, but soon thereafter (2006) decided to leave the camera business and focus on other, more business-oriented technologies. Go figure. They transferred all their camera assets to Sony, which has continued developing the Konica Minolta dSLR line under the Sony Alpha brand name. Since 2006, Sony has established itself as a serious player in the dSLR community, offering both entry-level and full-frame professional models.

Recently, Sony has upped the technological ante by introducing cameras, including the A65/A77, with translucent mirrors: *dSLTs* (digital single-lens translucent). Traditional dSLRs, like their SLR forefathers, use a reflex mirror to bounce light coming through the lens up into the viewfinder so you can compose the scene and focus with the assurance that you're seeing what the camera sees. Just before the shutter opens to take the photo, though, the mirror has to flip up out of the way to expose the film or sensor as the shutter opens,. That's the loud "clunk" you hear when you take a picture with a dSLR and why the mirrors are called reflex mirrors. They move. The translucent mirror in the A65/A77 doesn't have to flip up out of the way when you take a picture. The light bounces off it *and* goes right through it, whether you're framing, focusing, or taking the picture. Having a stable, translucent mirror makes the camera quieter, faster, lighter, and more mechanically reliable.

Another new-to-dSLR feature of the A65/A77 is the electronic viewfinder. Instead of seeing light bounced off a mirror, through a prism, and out the viewfinder (a lot of light was bouncing in the old days), you look at a high-contrast, high-resolution electronic display. The electronic viewfinder functions like its optical counterpart in many ways, but it has some major advantages. You can look at camera menus, view photo and movie playback, check shooting functions, turn on a histogram, and see other displays impossible for normal viewfinders.

About This Book

This book's purpose is to put the right information in your hands so you can take advantage of the technological prowess of your A65/A77. You don't need to know anything about photography before opening these pages. In classic *For Dummies* style, I explain everything in easy-to-understand language and use plenty of color photos to show off the cameras and make the photographic concepts easier to understand.

How This Book Is Organized

This book is organized into four parts. Each one has a particular focus. They flow from what you need to start out to more advanced subjects. You can read the book from start to finish and progress from beginner to advanced user — or you can jump to any section in any chapter and dig right in. Use the table of contents, the index, and the chapter cross-references to jump to sections with related information.

Here's a quick look at what you can find in each part.

Part I: Pictures Worth Keeping

This part contains four chapters designed to familiarize you with your A65/A77 and get you started taking pictures and movies as quickly as possible. Chapter 1 is where you get to know your A65/A77. You'll see where all the buttons and dials are, what they do, and how to use them. You find steps for navigating the menu system, the shooting functions, and how to decode the viewfinder and LCD displays. Chapter 2 covers the necessary first settings. You read about the basic shooting modes, other important settings, how to use the flash, how to set picture quality, size, and aspect ratio, as well as which settings make the most sense for you. Chapter 3 is devoted to explaining, in practice, all of the basic shooting modes. Chapter 4 is all about making movies: how to configure the camera, which options are best for you, and how to shoot and review them.

Part II: Playing with Pixels

In this part, you read about what to do after you take a photo. This includes playing back photos on your camera as well as transferring them to your computer. In Chapter 5, you'll see the ins and outs of photo playback. Review pictures, look at the settings you used, change the display to include more or less information, delete photos, rotate photos, set up a slide show, and show off your photos on an HDTV. Chapter 6 is where you read how to transfer what you've stored on your memory card from the camera to a computer. Once there, you can process, print, and share photos and movies.

Part III: Expressing Your Creativity

Part III explains the concepts you need to operate your camera in the more advanced modes, which allows you to make creative decisions on your own. You see how to make exposure and flash decisions in Chapter 7. Use the advanced exposure modes and decide what exposure settings you want to use to create the photos you like. Change the metering mode, use the histogram, and use other advanced exposure tools on the A65/A77. You also

read more about the flash. Chapter 8 is about working with focus and color. Explore the autofocus options, depth of field, and color issues such as setting the right white balance. You also see how to apply creative styles and choose a color space. Chapter 9 is a putting-it-all-together chapter. With this information you can take pictures in advanced exposure modes. Review good general settings, come up with a plan, then photograph portraits, landscapes, close-ups, and more.

Part IV: The Part of Tens

Always a favorite, The Part of Tens concludes the book with two chapters of essential non-essential information. In Chapter 10, you read about how to customize your camera. Feel free to experiment with features like using the save mode, turning off the Live View effects, using peaking to help you manually focus, and configuring the displays you want to see. Chapter 11 concludes the book with a list of ten more interesting features that you might want to check out on a rainy day. These include using picture effects, GPS, and options like wireless flash and the smart teleconverter.

Icons Used in This Book

If this isn't your first *For Dummies* book, you may be familiar with the large, round art (aka *icons*) that decorate its margins. If not, here's your very own icon-decoder ring:

Danger is lurking. Pay attention and proceed with caution. You know, as though you were about to open a hatch you shouldn't (Locke) or be so foolish as to be a minor character lecturing people about the dangers of dynamite while wrapping an old stick of it in a shirt on a deserted island (so long, Artz).

This icon should trigger an immediate data download for storage in your brain's long-term memory. The information is something important that rises above the level of a cute tip but not quite to the danger of a warning. As Spock would say, *Remember.*

Here lies helpful information that's likely to make your life easier. It may save you time, effort, or sanity. (Your mileage may vary.) I love tips. If I could, I would make every paragraph a tip.

Some of the information in this book is pretty technical. If it's not necessary for you to understand, it's marked with this icon. Use the information to impress your family and friends. Or skip it completely.

Conventions Used in This Book

I should point out a few other details that will help you use this book:

- **Margin art:** Small versions of menu graphics appear in the margin next to relevant material. They will look like what you see to the left.
- **Software menu commands:** In sections that cover software, a series of words connected by an arrow indicates commands you choose from the program menus. For example, if a step tells you, "Choose File➪Print," click the File menu and then click the Print command on the menu.

eCheat Sheet

You can find an electronic version of the famous *For Dummies* Cheat Sheet at `www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/sonyalphaA65A77`. The Cheat Sheet contains a quick reference to all the buttons, dials, switches, and exposure modes on your camera. Log on, print it out, and tape it to the wall above your desk or bed. If you need to, carry it with you when you're out shooting.

Where to Go from Here

Knowing how to operate sophisticated cameras like the A65 and A77 can seem like a daunting task. Both cameras have a plethora of buttons, features, displays, functions, modes, and procedures. In the beginning, you may be assault yourself with negative thoughts such as, "I will never master this!"

Don't panic!

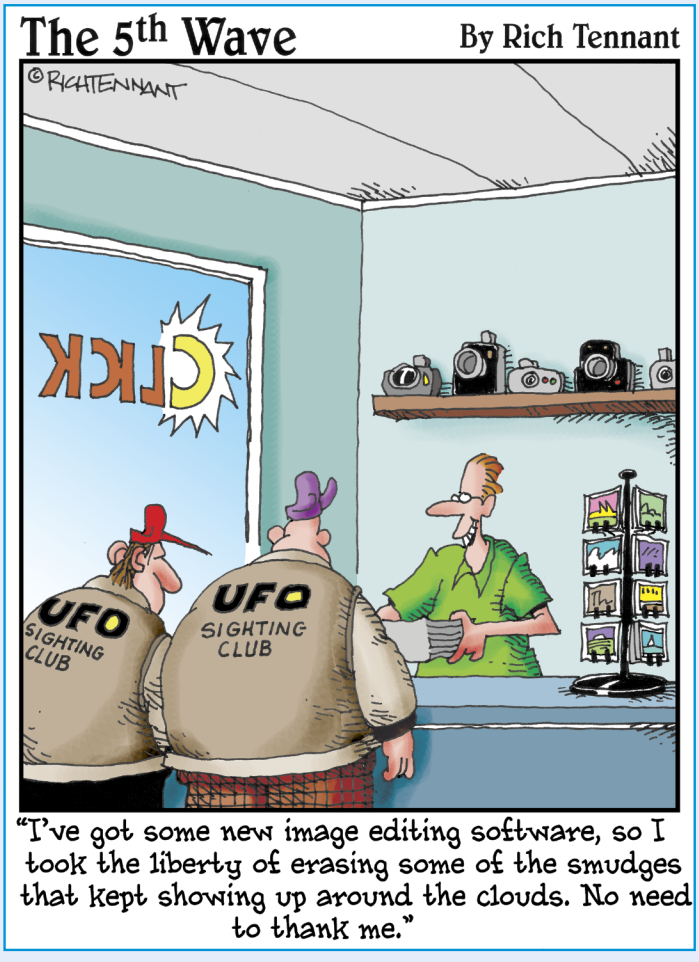
Put the camera in Auto or Auto+ mode and concentrate on feeling the camera in your hands. Take pictures. Take lots of pictures! Become *comfortable* with it. If you don't want to use the flash but it keeps trying to pop up, put the camera in Flash Off mode if you're using the A65. If you're using the A77, turn off the flash in auto mode from the shooting functions. Then take more pictures!

The hands-on experience that you accumulate will sink in. I know. If you practice and don't give up, you'll accomplish what you set out to do. I've put the information in this book that I think you need to get started, and more. Have fun! Slap on the back. Graduation ceremony at 11.

Occasionally, we have updates to our technology books. If this book does have technical updates, they will be posted at `www.dummies.com/go/sonyalphA6577updates`.

Part I

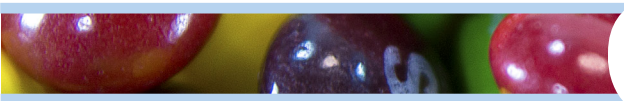
Pictures Worth Keeping



"I've got some new image editing software, so I took the liberty of erasing some of the smudges that kept showing up around the clouds. No need to thank me."

Very simply, this part gets you up and running.

It explains all the buttons, bells, and whistles on your A65/A77. See how to set up the camera, navigate the menus, select shooting modes, choose functions, and decide on photo quality and size. Read all about the basic shooting modes so you can start taking amazing photos right off the bat. See how to use scenes, how to Sweep Shoot your way to panoramas, and how to use the super-fast photo-taking mode. The last chapter in this part covers how to shoot movies in full HD.



1

Meeting the A65 and A77

In This Chapter

- Comparing cameras
- Using batteries and memory cards
- Dialing in the viewfinder
- Figuring out the displays
- Taking care

The A65 and A77 are complicated cameras. They have lots of buttons, displays, dials, and knobs. You must know how to attach and remove lenses, insert and remove the battery and memory card, and work the menus and shooting functions. Whether you're upgrading from a simpler digital SLR/SLT or replacing a sophisticated but older camera, this chapter has the information you need to start making full use of your machine.

Comparing Super and Duper

Despite being similar, the two cameras have several key differences. I note them here and explain them more fully where appropriate.

- **LCD monitor:** The A65 sports a fancy tilt/swivel monitor, shown in Figure 1-1. The A77 sports an even fancier three-way tilt/swivel LCD screen, also shown in Figure 1-1. I cover both later in this chapter. After that, it's up to you to tilt, swivel, and turn your monitor when you need to.

A65 A77

Figure 1-1: These LCD monitors can twist and shout in their own unique ways.

- **Buttons and dials:** The A65 and the A77 have physical similarities. Their differences are most obvious in the type, number, and layout of their buttons and dials. The A77 has more buttons on top, as well as a second control dial and a multi-selector instead of a control button. In addition, some buttons that share primary functions, like the AEL and Smart Teleconverter buttons, have different alternate and tertiary roles. All these differences, and the similarities, are covered in detail in this chapter.
- **Information display:** The A77 has a cool-looking pro-style information display on the top of the camera, as shown in Figure 1-2. It displays important shooting information and is helpful when you're looking down on the camera.
- **Pro-level features:** The A65 has a number of pro-level features, but the A77 has more. You can store your shooting settings in memory (covered in Chapter 11), have fun with more creative styles (see Chapter 8), take advantage of more AF areas

Figure 1-2: Pro-style accoutrements set the A77 apart.