

September 2008 Cablegram book review, by Karen Jo Gustafson

DVDs - Knitting Essentials 1 and Sock Techniques1 by Lucy Neatby

Cat Bordhi called Lucy Neatby "one of our most innovative knitting wizards." Coming from the woman whose mind came up with Moebius knitting and revolutionary sock structures, that's very high praise. Besides her ability to look at knitting in new ways and come up with real improvements on traditional techniques, with a minimum of fuss Lucy can teach others things they never thought they could learn. In the last couple of years she has filmed 13 DVDs to share these techniques and her teaching skill with knitters everywhere.

The most helpful feature of the series comes from the way the techniques are filmed from the knitter's viewpoint. You get to watch Lucy's well-manicured hands execute the processes from the same vantage you'll have when you hold the needles and yarn yourself. The focus does blur often as the camera moves in or out for a better view, but it clears very quickly.

Lucy's website lists the titles and contents of all of the DVDs. I'll review the first ones on sock knitting and on general techniques.

The DVDs can be watched end to end. I like to run them on my laptop while I'm knitting. The day after I'd had a 'why didn't I think of that' moment when, in her section on three-needle bind-off, Lucy showed that you can slip the stitches of a bind-off after knitting all of them, I used the information to confirm I had enough of a sticky yarn left to complete the row without having to unpick a bind-off if I didn't.

The excellent chaptering allows you to find a section on something you need to know right now and get to it easily. I did find it took a bit of practice to fast forward or reverse rather than skipping to the beginning or end of a chapter, but I think that's more a function of how my computer plays the DVDs.

Lucy produced *Sock Techniques 1* when knitters asked for a more visual form of communicating some of the innovations in her book *Cool Socks, Warm Feet*. Because the DVD was originally intended to accompany this book, if you have not read it some of the presentation can seem truncated. But all of the information you need is there in a logical form. Cast-ons and offs, edgings from both directions, and finishing techniques all apply to other knitting as well as socks. So do the sections on methods of knitting in the round with various kinds of needles: double point, one long circular (AKA Magic Loop), or two circular needles. Lucy gives you lots of information on the function and structure of knitting methods so you can make good decisions about things such as which type of heels to use on a sock.

I almost didn't buy *Knitting Essentials 1* as I thought it might be too basic. After taking one of Lucy's classes at the Madrona Winter Retreat, I figured there would be enough of her wonderfully helpful little asides, like the bind-off tip above, to warrant the purchase. I found it worth every bit of my \$29. I think once I practice it, Lucy's method of combining the two movements of a bind-off into one process will be worth the entire cost. I plan to run sections this one occasionally while I knit just to absorb some of Lucy's insights - like the long-tailed cast-on essentially being an e-loop that you knit as you go. In fact, she shows separating the two steps for those times that works better for you, making the structure obvious in a way I never saw myself.

The DVDs also contain a Garment Gallery where Lucy shows completed items that feature different techniques. Some sections contain links to the relevant Gallery section at the end. She also included a printable Glossary in the addendums on each disk.

Lucy's DVDs and books will be available for sale by Churchmouse Yarns and Teas when she speaks at the special meeting on October 1, 2008. Besides, on Lucy's website, the DVDs are not often offered. I intend to complete my collection.