

# EQ

## Confidential

### CONFESSIONS OF AN ELECTRIC QUILT® NOVICE

By *McCall's Quilting* Senior Editor, Kathy Patterson



#### How It All Began

I approached the half-darkened room with more than a little anxiety. Faint sounds of electronic equipment mingled with excited female voices and wafted into the hallway. Today, I was going to learn Electric Quilt 7 (EQ7), the just-released version of the best known quilt-designing software in the business. Or at least, I was going to try. As an avid quilter, I'd had brief encounters with previous EQ versions. A disappointing affair with EQ5, in which I'd received a copy as a gift, then struggled to get enough time in on my neighbor's PC to learn and retain



anything about it. An exciting but doomed fling with EQ6 in a workshop at International Quilt Market in Houston...those out-of-town romances never work out. In fact, neither of these ultimately frustrating experiences had led to the meaningful relationship with EQ that I craved.

But today was going to be different. I was ready to try again, hopeful of finally making EQ7 my very own. My *McCall's Quilting* coworkers and I were embarking on two half-day training sessions designed to teach us the program. With experienced instructor Mary Ellen Kranz as our guide, we wanted to learn the basics of the software and come up with a plan to integrate it into our daily work. In our mix of editors and artists, from tech-wary to tech-savvy, I was somewhere in the middle. Learning new software was intimidating and far from natural to me. But I also appreciated its power and potential. In short, I was ready to embrace EQ7, if only it would embrace me back.

#### A Terrible Secret

After introductions all around, Mary Ellen's next order of business was to find out how this skilled group of quilters had managed to remain EQ-free for so long. We looked at each other sheepishly, knowing it was time to reveal our dirty little secret. All right, we admit it...all the patterns published by *McCall's Quilting* begin as...gulp...colored-pencil drawings on 8-to-an-inch graph paper. When a quilt arrives from a designer, an editor is assigned to write the pattern, and she starts by creating hand-drawn block drafts and construction diagrams. Same thing when we work on our own original designs. How was this possible at a cutting-edge quilting magazine in the year 2010? Simple, we explained. Up until a year ago, we all worked on Macs, and our company infrastructure did not allow for installing Windows operating systems on them to run EQ software. But in 2009, the editorial staff moved to PCs, making the installation of EQ7 as easy as popping a disc into a drive. No more excuses. We were ready to divorce ourselves from manual drafting and enter a paper-free designing world.



**Eager EQ7 students, left to right, Kathy Patterson, Laura Roberts, Sherri Driver, teacher Mary Ellen Kranz, Kathy Hannah, and Beth Hayes.**



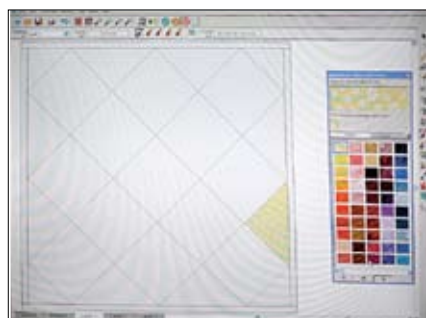
**One quilt designed... more to come.**

## Romance Blooms

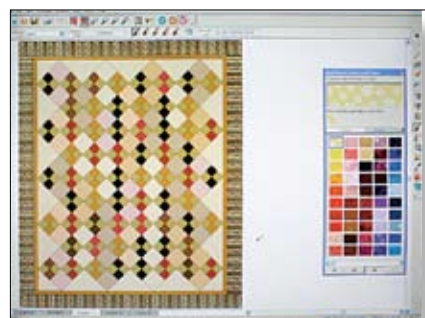
We took our places around the table. After the training, we would install EQ7 on our desktop PCs, but for now we worked on an assortment of laptops. Those lucky enough to own a PC laptop were able to work on their own computers. I'd tried to get my home MacBook ready for the EQ challenge, but was still struggling with finding a copy of a Windows operating system that was compatible with both EQ7 and my Mac operating system. Words can't describe how ill-equipped I was to make that marriage work, but I was determined. Today, though, I was working on an older Dell laptop. We all started up our software, and looked expectantly at Mary Ellen.

"Before we begin, let's have a signal for everyone to take their hands off their keyboards and listen," she started. "When you see me do this," she continued, raising both hands high in the air, "you'll know we're at a teaching moment. Raise your hands, too, and when everyone's paying attention, we'll go on." Really? She thought we were going to get so engrossed in this scary software that she'd need a physical signal to get our attention? We'll see about that, I thought. We're motivated, attentive learners, not restless kindergartners.

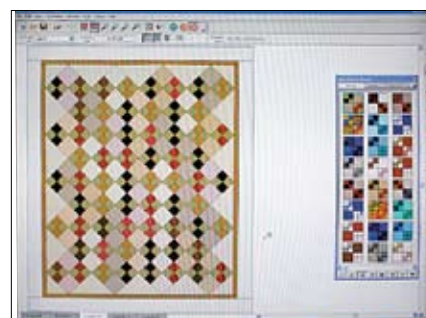
Mary Ellen quickly led us through the basic features and commands used to make an EQ drawing. This was going great! Everyone was getting it, and it all made sense. Before I knew it, I had drawn an actual quilt design,



**A basic design screen shows at start up.**



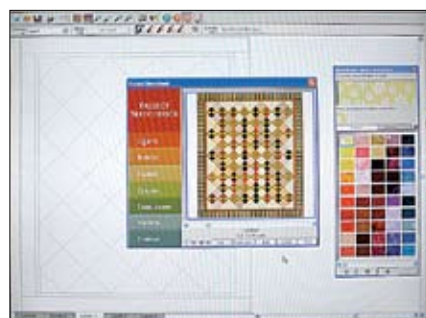
**The Stash palette has many current fabric collections to use in quilt design.**



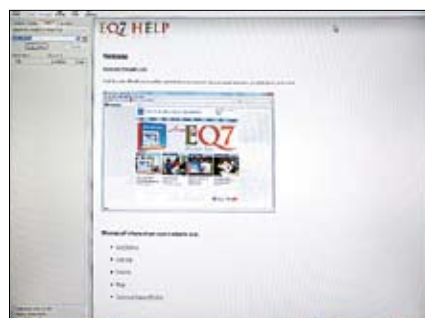
**The Sketchbook Block palette allows you to easily select ideas.**



**You may easily replace fabrics in a design to create a new look.**



**The EQ Sketchbook allows easy editing of blocks, quilt tops, and more!**



**The Help function is readily available and easy to use.**





as had each one of my colleagues. Next stop: coloring! Mary Ellen showed us how to fill in our line drawings with selections from a huge range of solid colors. And then we moved on to fabrics. I couldn't believe how easy it was to audition loads of different fabrics in my blocks and borders. Endless additions to the included fabrics were also available on discs and online, and Mary Ellen showed us how to access and use them. My fingers flew across the keyboard...would an orange polka dot look better than the yellow stripe I'd just tried in that sashing? Could I electronically fussy-cut that cool print and drop the squares into my block centers? Yes, I could! As I was about to rotate an appliqué shape and place it on the border, I realized the room had gone silent. Looking up, five sets of upraised arms and grinning faces greeted me, along with Mary Ellen's "Great, now that we're all paying attention..." Yes, I'd lost myself in EQ7. I was having fun, and feeling confident. I was in love!

## A Passion Fulfilled

I learned so much during those two half-days. What buttons to push, which keys to massage. Even how to import photos and design quilts with them...the possibilities were endless. As soon as I got back to my office, I installed the program on my PC. It



### A teaching moment!

was a breeze! But would the passion I felt carry me through the difficulties ahead, in getting my home Mac to run EQ? It was a tough journey, but yes, I succeeded in single-handedly partitioning my hard drive, installing Windows 7, and then, joy of joys, installing EQ7 and watching it boot up for the first time. Now my EQ passion knows no bounds. At work or at home, I'm able to quickly draft designs, check yardages, audition fabrics, and share files with all my quilting friends and coworkers. EQ7, for me, is a match made in heaven (well, actually Bowling Green, Ohio), and my dream of a fulfilling relationship with quilt-designing software is finally a reality. I know we'll live happily ever after together...at least until version 8 comes along!



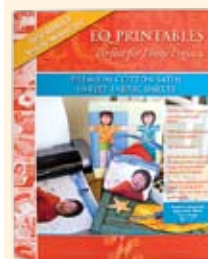
Visit

[McCallsQuilting.com](http://McCallsQuilting.com)

and click on Bonuses to see one way the *McCall's* editors are using EQ7. We've got 3 alternate colorways ready for this issue's Southern Grace quilt (page 76)!

## Further Information

Electric Quilt software and companion products can be purchased at quilt shops nationwide, or online at [electricquilt.com](http://electricquilt.com). The website is also a great place to meet other EQ quilters, share designs, see demo videos, download fun stuff like web buttons, and get answers to your questions.



Mary Ellen Kranz is a quiltmaker, teacher, and author. Look for her book, *Blending Photos with Fabric 2* (The Electric Quilt Company, 2008), at your quilt shop or at [electricquilt.com](http://electricquilt.com). Contact Mary Ellen at [mekranz@gmail.com](mailto:mekranz@gmail.com), or visit her website at [quiltingimages.com](http://quiltingimages.com).

