



Software *round-up*

What's new in the world of Photoshop plug-ins, iPhone, iPad and Android apps? Read on to see what the team has found this month



Tiffen DFX 3 Digital Filter Suite

Everything all in one place from noise removal to creative filters and film stock emulation options



Instead of buying a film pack, a set of clean up filters, some lighting plug-ins and so on, why not just buy one package that does everything? That's the premise of the Tiffen Dfx 3 suite, which works as a standalone program or as a plug-in for a variety of creative software packages. In this update alone there are ten new filters for optical effects, multi-core support, colour overlays, debanding, JPEG compression cleanup, noise removal, 113 film stocks, key lighting, texture application, image tone overlays and rays of light.

On launching the package, it actually looks very similar to DxO FilmPack3 with the same kind of grey interface, preview and original image in the middle, stocks and effects on the bottom strip with a mini preview and any presets for that effect on the right. It also has an effect stack on the left, where the opacity of the effect layer can be reduced and more besides.

The selection of topics that runs across the bottom includes Film Lab, HFX Diffusion, HFX Grads/Tints, Image, Lens, Light, Special Effects and Favorites. Each one then has a selection of effect types. Click on any of these and the presets for that type are displayed on the right-hand side. In the case of Film Lab, it has a range of nine processes from adding grain to split-toning and includes the Film Stocks section. Click on that to get the large range of stocks available - all the usual favourites are there. For black and white fans there's Neopan, Delta 3200, Tri-X 400 and lots more. Handily, a filter at the top of this box can be used to split the stocks into the categories of print, slide and cross processed. Having selected a film stock, clicking on Parameters in the same content box switches things to show all the settings for that option. It means you can tweak a stock to give a specific result and then save that as a customised favourite for later use.



CREATIVE DIGITAL EFFECTS

A large collection of film stock and glass filter emulations, plus lens, diffusion and lighting effects makes for a dazzling array of options.

Effects, such as blurring half the picture, or some of the distortions aren't that useful, but will keep old film using fans of Tiffen happy. Lots of the other filters that are based on Tiffen's glass range are handier. Put it this way, glass special effects filters have no place in digital photography, but by doing it in Photoshop you can control how subtle or strong the effect is and how it is applied. A number of the effects in the Diffusion category can be done in Photoshop, whereas others require a couple of layers to recreate so here it does make the job a little quicker. The grads and tints are more useful, although should be used with care, but they can be fine-tuned to give good results.

What sets Dfx 3 apart from plug-ins like Exposure 3 is that there are also light and lens effects. The lighting ones allow simple additions to the picture by adding halos and rays. The Rainbow filter is something best forgotten about, but the light and gobo sections are interesting because they add a huge range of preset shapes as bright highlights. Used well they can enhance otherwise flat images and can be applied to both portraits and landscapes too. The fun really

starts when you begin stacking the effects up in a layered process and then tinker with how they interact and work with each other. ●

Price: \$229.95

Purchase: www.tiffensoftware.com/products/dfx-photo-plug-in

Web: www.tiffensoftware.com/

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Requires Windows XP, Vista, 7 with a 1GHz CPU, 2GB RAM, 1GB hard drive space. Mac version runs on OS X 10.6+ and needs an Intel dual core CPU. It works on Photoshop CS+, Elements 6+, Lightroom 3+ and Aperture 3+ in either 32-bit or 64-bit versions.

VERDICT

There's a great range of film stocks here, although they don't have as much appeal as Alien Skin's Exposure 3 or the DxO FilmPack. However, that's only part of the Dfx 3 story as there are lots of emulations for Tiffen's glass filter range, as well as lighting and image processing functions and effects. The fact that they can be stacked and blended and all the filters have adjustable parameters makes the package much more flexible and powerful. A very good all-in-one collection.

Total ★★★★★★★★☆☆