

nik Color Efex Pro

by Jack and Sue Drafa

Photographers have some exciting new digital tools for recreating traditional photographic filter effects, thanks to Color Efex Pro 2.0 from nik multimedia; a set of 75 Adobe Photoshop plug-ins. These plug-in filters enable you to easily create special photographic effects that mimic popular camera lens filters.

After installing the filter set into Photoshop, Photoshop Elements, or another Photoshop-compatible program, you will see that they are stored in the Filter pull-down menu where most third-party plug-in filters are located. Because Color Efex Pro 2.0 is so expansive, the filters are installed in two nik multimedia submenus. The first is labeled Styling filters and the second is called Traditional filters.

To apply any of these filters to an image, you simply select the effect from either of the two filter lists, and a special thumbnail menu will open. You

then have the option of previewing a before-and-after version, or just the new effect. Each thumbnail preview can be enlarged for enhanced viewing and the submenu produces a histogram to facilitate the process.

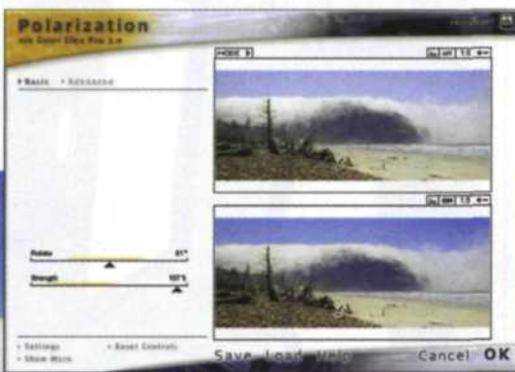
To the left of the thumbnail you will find a toggle for basic or advanced image control. The basic controls include a variety of sliders for adjusting the effect. The advanced controls provide additional options that can protect certain portions of the highlights and shadows from the overall effect. At the bottom of the thumbnail menu you will also find a Settings submenu, a Reset button, and a submenu for saving out custom filter variations that you create by modifying the filter's factory presets.

You can also access the Color Efex 2.0 filters via the Automate menu in Adobe Photoshop and Elements. When you activate its Selective menu, a large

floating Color Efex selection menu appears. You can then select any of the effects found under the Filters menu and the thumbnail menu will appear on the screen.

After you make adjustments and select the OK button, the program will process the image. To the uninitiated, it may appear as though nothing is happening, but not to worry: The program has created a layer with the effect, and is waiting for you to decide if you want to apply it to the entire image, or just specific sections. You can select Fill to apply the effect to the entire image, or you can choose to apply it to specific areas.

This selective choice is one of the more exciting aspects of Color Efex 2.0. You can select a brush in the floating Color Efex palette and apply the effect to a small area. If you have a graphics tablet, you can use its pressure-sensitive qualities to vary the effect as you drag



Left: The Polarization Filter mimics a polarizing filter on a camera lens. Right and Below: The effect was applied to this Oregon beach scene.



2.0

your pen across the areas to which you want to apply the effect. This is a very creative function, as you can brush any of the Color Efex filters on a portion of an image, while leaving the rest untouched. Better yet, you can apply several different effects to the same image.

The combination of the 75 filters, the various adjustment sliders for each menu, up to 1024 pressure levels with a pen and tablet, and numerous selection tool variations adds up to millions upon millions of possible filter variations just from the base set of 75. The versatility and creativity potential of these filters is virtually limitless.

Now that you see how these filters are installed and how they work, let's take a look at some of the dynamic effects they can create. If you like camera lens filter effects, there are



several graduated filters included. You can even use a custom filter that enables you to select colors from more than 17 million options. There are vignette filters, polarizing filters, bi-color filters, fog filters, and filters that simulate the use of silver and gold reflectors.

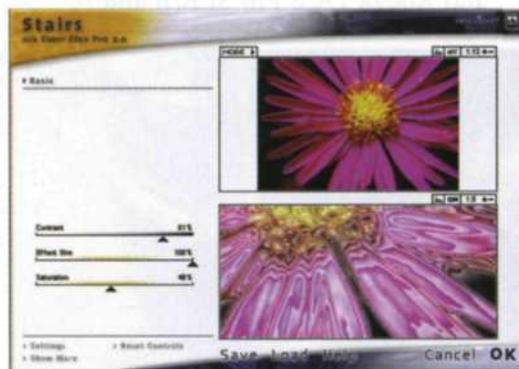
If you enjoy working with infrared films, there are filters for both color and black & white. There are even different filter variations for the color infrared film effects. These are very effective on a wide variety of subjects

from landscapes to portraits.

Darkroom filters include solarization for both color and black & white, cross processing between E-6 and C-41, as well as sepia and brown-tone effects. There are computer filters for modifying white balance, correcting color shifts, and reducing overexposed images. There is even a dynamic skin softener to help smooth out lines and wrinkles in your portraits.

Color Efex 2.0 works with both 8- and 16-bit color per channel. It is designed for Adobe Photoshop 5.5 and higher or Adobe Photoshop Elements 2. Both Microsoft Windows and Macintosh (OS 9 and OS X) systems are supported.

Three versions of the program are available and range from \$99.95 for a partial set of filters to \$299.95 for the full set of 75 filters. For more information nik multimedia filters, log onto www.nikmultimedia.com. ■



Above: The "Stairs Effect" filter reduces the number of colors in an image, and creates a stepping of tones. **Right and Inset:** After testing a variety of images in our stock photo library, we found that flowers were an ideal subject for experimenting with this particular effect.

