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First Exposure by Jack and Sue Drafahl
Photoshop Plug-in Update



Venturing into the world of Adobe Photoshop-compatible plug-in filters, is much like surfing the web. As you navigate from menu to menu, your creative potential expands exponentially. Just when you think you know everything there is to know about plug-in filters, you discover a new one or uncover a different application.

Plug-in filters come in two basic types—image enhancement and image manipulation. The filters used for image enhancement correct for problems that can degrade the quality in your original image. You will find plug-in filters to aid in color correction, sharpness, tonal gradations, removal of scratches and grain, restoration of faded images and more.

The plug-in filters used for image manipulation provide you unlimited creative potential. There are literally hundreds of these filters that allow you to posterize, melt, freeze, solarize, streak, add lens flare, texture, shadows, create 3D effects, lightning storms, and even set your image on fire. With the aid of these filters, you can create new images that may not even vaguely resemble your original image. Amazing, huh?

The first photo-editing programs came loaded with the basic image correction plug-in filters. As programs became more sophisticated, third-party vendors started to create their own filters to supplement filter choices. Since the industry standard for image editing seemed to be Adobe Photoshop, most plug-in filters were designed for compatibility. Even other image editing programs allowed the use of Adobe plug-in filters. The result is a pretty stable system of plug-in filters that can do just about anything you can dream of. To stay ahead of their competitors, third party plug-in manufacturers are constantly upgrading their filters, so you can find filter plug-ins to satisfy most any creative whim.

In this article we present the tip of the plug-in iceberg with a brief explanation of some of the more popular plug-in programs that are Adobe Photoshop 6-compatible. We can't even begin to cover all the companies, or all their plug-in filters, but hope that this brief excursion will plug you in the right direction.

Alien Skin Software—Eye Candy 4000 is their much-anticipated upgrade from Eye Candy 3. We're not sure just how you can jump from version 3 to 4000 in one step, but that's marketing for you. This group of 23 very high quality special effects plug-in filters offers something for everyone. There are Chrome or Smoke Filters, Bevel Boss for creating web page buttons, Shadowlab allows you to make drop and perspective shadows, and Gradient Glows provides halo effects in any color. They have even included five new filters—Marble, Wood, Drip, Melt, and Corona. Wow!

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Motion trail edit menu with selected baseball and motion trail added. Eye Candy.



Basic shapes are created in an edit program or imported from other shape-drawing programs. The Chrome Filter is then applied with adjustments to lighting angle, reflection, shadows, and bevel types. Alien Skin Eye Candy.



Magic wand was used to select various portions of the barn. The fire filter was then applied to the selected areas. Eye Candy fire filter.

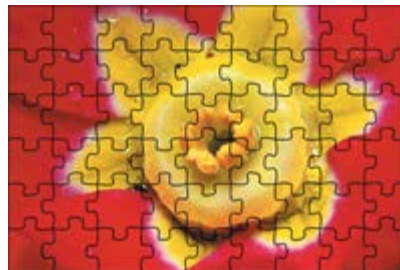
Eye Candy 4000 is easy to use and now features a huge preview window that allows you to see underlying layers. You can adjust the filters on your own or select from the hundreds of presets with the click of a mouse. With unlimited “undo” and “redo” capability, modification is effortless.

The most creative aspect of these filters is that you can easily select the specific part of your image to apply the special effects filter. For example, we used the magic wand to select only certain parts of an old barn, before setting it on fire. The magic wand selected adjoining similar pixels which gave a better feel of fire rather than torching the entire building.

Alien Skin also has another set of 16 plug-in filters called Xenofex. Most of these filters add effects to the entire image. You can crumple the image, add fluffy clouds, lighting, or break your image up into a puzzle. These filters are less complex than Eye Candy 4000, but can still help you create some dazzling effects.



Wax model was selected and then altered with melt filter from Eye Candy.



Puzzle filter from Alien Skin, Xenofex.



Lightning filter from Alien Skin, Xenofex.

Andromeda Software—Andromeda Filters feature a wide variety of phenomenal effects. The Photography set of 10 plug-in filters resembles the traditional glass and gelatin filters you carry in your camera bag. Now you can create reflections, star effects, velocity, multi-image, prism, rainbow and more photographic effects with a keystroke.

If you like more complex special effects filters, you can select from a wide assorted of specialized filters designed to create some high quality special effects. The 3D Shadowing provides absolute control over shadows using either sliders or direct mouse control. The 3-D Luxe filter allows you to take a 2D image and wrap it around basic 3-D objects with full lighting control. The De-focus filter enables you to set specific areas to be out-of-focus, and the Velociraptor filter provides a variety of styled motion effects. The Photo Tiler loads and labels images automatically so it is perfect for web image organization.



3D filter menu with original at top, texture and bevel menus in the center, and the thumbnail image of filter. Andromeda.



Original 2D image wrapped around a sphere using 3D filter. Shadow added with shadow filter. Andromeda.



Final render of 2D image wrapped around a sphere and beveled. Andromeda.



Wood texture wrapped around sphere with reverse star bevel effect. Andromeda.

Andromeda continues to add new filters that are fully compatible with Adobe Photoshop. Their most recent addition is the EtchTone Filter which simulates the look of a steel etching. You have total control over the amount of etching, contrast, brightness and sharpness. Previously, they introduced the Perspective filter that uses a camera example to enhance depth or perspective distortion in your images.

Corel Corporation—Kai's Power Tools or KPT plug-in filters have been around for some time, but were purchased in 2000 from MetaCreations by the Corel Corporation. Many of the KPT5 filters require only a blank image to create an entirely new fractal image, texture, or 3D art. Others add warps, spheres, or change objects into 3D buttons for use on the web.

KPT 6 is not an improved version of KPT 5, but an entirely new collection of plug-in filters. KPT6 is designed to better interface with image selections and layering. It features image filters like Goo, Gel, Equalizer, Materializer, Projector, Reaction, and Turbulence. You can also add realistic sky and sun backgrounds with Scene Builder and Sky Effects to take creativity to a new level.



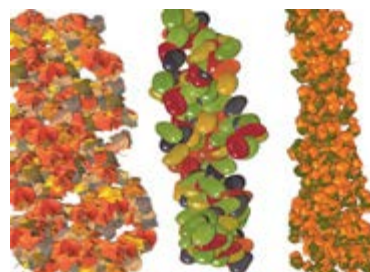
Wood texture wrapped around sphere with reverse star bevel effect. Andromeda.



Velociraptor filter. Andromeda.

One of the most impressive effects is the Lens Flare. You have your choice of lens, light source, intensity and you can vary the amount of lens flare in the image. The interface menu uses both sliders and large thumbnail representations of the final image, so it is easy to view what you design. You can also create your own special set of preferences and save them out as a new plug-in setting for each filter.

Human Software—The folks at Human Software have designed a full line of innovative plug-ins to make creative design a breeze. PhotoSpray is a plug-in that sprays groups of photo-realistic images like leaves, flowers, candy, fruit, clouds and more. You can vary the pattern, size, opacity and random placement of the spray on any background or image layer.





Sun added with Scene Builder filter from Corel KPT 6.



Lens flare filter from Corel KPT6.

Three different types of photosprays and their associated drop shadows are sprayed on a white background. Spray filter from Human Software.



Door was selected with magic wand and then warped with Squizz filter. Human Software.

If you like to work with text layers, the Textissimo plug-in filter features more than 750 text effects so you can create whatever your heart desires. Simply type your text, select the desired effect and click to preview. You can flow and warp text along a path using OttoPaths and flow images on paths using MagicTrack. Masking is a breeze with the AutoMask plug-in, and image warping and distortion can easily be done using the Squizz plug-in filter. A thumbnail version of the final image is available so you can reset the image if you don't like the effect.

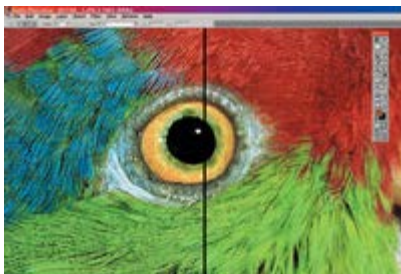
Select filter allows color correction without involved image masking. MagicFrame enables you to create more than 420 frames for your images and ClassicFrame provides traditional picture frames to hang around your photos.

nik Multimedia—If you like to use graduated filters on your camera, you can now do it in your computer with the nik Color Efex Pro plug-in filter. If the sky is too light or off-color, you can easily darken it using these filters. Some are graduated with gray tones, while others can control color in the sky or the foreground. If you have light fall-off when using a long lens, or purposely want to darken or lighten the center of the image, you can use the darken/lighten center filters. The filter set also includes black-and-white filters and contrast control filters.

The nik Sharpener Pro provides a consistent tool for effective image sharpening. It is designed to sharpen an image while maintaining optimum final output. No more having an image look sharp on the screen, only to have it fall apart when printed. The sharpener menu will ask you for image size, printer type, printer resolution, and viewing distance before assigning a specific sharpening filter to your image.

In order to satisfy the varied users in digital photographic marketplace, nik offers both a standard and pro version of Sharpener and Color Efex software. Other plug-in collections include nik Type Efex for creating special effects using text, and a base collection of 126 plug-in filters called nik Efex.

Right Hemisphere USA—Finally, we come to a Photoshop plug-in that in reality is a full-blown paint program by itself. When you select the Deep Paint filter in Adobe Photoshop, you can create realistic painting effects. The extensive brush selection and paint choices allow you to easily convert photos and illustrations using artistic tools. You can use oils, watercolors, pastels, charcoals, felt pens, crayons and more to simulate any painting effect. You can easily change brushes, add editing layers, change the percentage of the effect, or apply it only to certain image sections.



Comparison image with and without sharpen filter. Before on right and sharpen on left. nik Multimedia.



Orange to clear graduated filter was applied to sky. nik Multimedia.



Solarized filter from nik Multimedia



Deep paint menu with original in upper left and two paintbrush variation in center and lower left. Paintbrush filters. Right Hemisphere.

Deep Paint allows 3-D lighting and texture control for added realism. You can control paint thickness and reflectivity to enhance your creative endeavors. The image sprayer can also be used to apply variations of a single selected object onto a scene. When you have finished with

your painting effects, the altered image can be sent back to Photoshop for further editing.

As we mentioned, there are so many Adobe Photoshop compatible plug-ins, that we couldn't truly give them all their deserved recognition. We just selected a handful of our favorites to share with you. Once you learn how to effectively use them, they will provide you a very powerful creative edge. Are you ready to experience the power of plug-ins?

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