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Plug-Ins Page: nIK Multimedia dFINE by Jack & Sue DrafaHL



The Dfine CD on the left, and Dfine camera profile CD on right

If there was any doubt as to the power of plug-in filters for Adobe Photoshop, the new Dfine filter is absolute proof. This high tech digital camera filter, from nIK multimedia, Inc., corrects just about every problem you could have with your digital camera files. Dfine uses a variety of methods to reduce digital camera noise, correct lighting problems, and enable advanced contrast and color controls, as well as JPEG reduction.

Since each digital camera has its own set of problems, nIK multimedia has researched them all and created specific profiles for each camera model. These profiles can be purchased separately from nIK multimedia and loaded when images taken on that specific camera are loaded into Photoshop. You then can use one of five eyedroppers to select problem colors in the image and adjust the noise for that specific color.

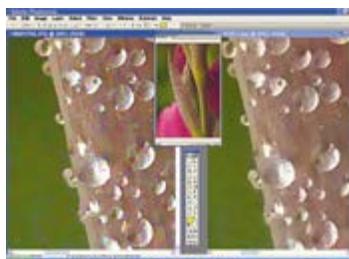
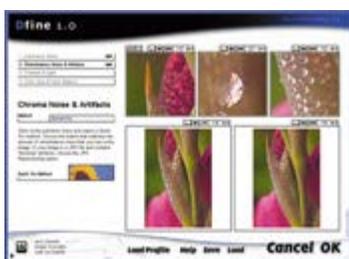


Zoom split screen showing the before (left) and after use of the Dfine selection menu. The blue sky tab was first selected in the menu, followed by the use of the paint brush on the sky area. The noise in the blue sky area was reduced without affecting the rest of the image.

The first unique aspect of this filter is how it is used with Adobe Photoshop or Elements. During the installation process, the Dfine filter is placed in the filter directory, and a Selective module is installed in the File > Automate menu. When you click on this Selective module, a toolbox is temporarily installed on the editing screen where you can launch Dfine, or access any of the noise-reduction brushes.

If you want to reduce the noise in specific areas in the image, you can use one of the Dfine Selective tools found in the toolbox. You can then selectively correct problems with skin, backgrounds, sky, hot pixels, shadows, JPEG artifacts, strong noise, hair and fine structures, and normalize specific areas in the image. After you select one of these tools, the Dfine program takes a few seconds to create a special adjustment layer that floats on top of the main image. You can then use any of the brush sizes and styles to adjust the specific areas needing repair. For those using drawing tablets, you have the option of using the pressure effects of the pen to vary the Dfine pen effects from one area to the next.

Once you have completed all the necessary edits, you can use the opacity setting in the Layers menu to reduce or increase the effect on the overall image. When all the tasks have been completed, simply press the "Apply" button, and all your editing is applied to the image.



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Dfine quickfix menu showing three zoomed in sections at the top of the menu, and the before (left) and after (right) screens at the bottom of the menu. Tools at the top of each menu allow you to turn the effect on/off, zoom in/out, histogram preview, and select affected areas.

Dfine quickfix menu showing the before (left) and after (right) correction for color noise in a digital camera image.

Dfine quickfix of digital camera noise. Navigator image in center shows entire image. Left pane is before the quickfix, and the right pane is after the Dfine quickfix.

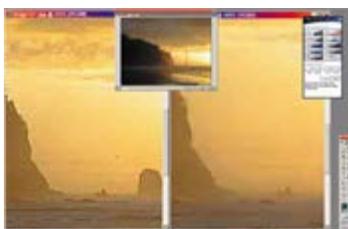
If you decide to use the primary Dfine filter, which affects the entire image, a large menu appears that includes a list of the four basic problems, a list of methods for problem solving, and thumbnails that preview before and after effects.

The four primary problem groups include Luminance Noise (removal of light or dark specks in highlights or shadows), Chrominance Noise (reduction of color artifacts and JPEG reduction), Contrast and Light adjustments, and Color Cast and Balance (color corrections, saturation and color temperature problems).



The Dfine selection menu is at the top of the screen. The Dfine CD on the left, and Dfine camera profile CD on right.

When you decide which group will solve your problem, move to the Method menu, which provides a variety of solutions, including a quick fix. If you decide to use the quick fix, a secondary menu displays varying solutions in thumbnail form. The other solutions are controlled with several sliders that generally increase and decrease the intensity of the effect. There are multiple preview modes to enable the user to view multiple variations.



Digital file from older low megapixel camera resulted in visible JPEG artifacts. Center navigator image shows overall image and red cropping of zoomed-in section. Left pane shows the original zoomed-in section, and the right pane shows the same section with the Dfine JPEG artifact removal at work.

The Dfine plug-in filter is very complex, and has a wide variety of controls to help you create better images. To fully utilize this filter, we highly recommend that you read the instruction book, or scan through the enclosed PDF file before you jump in. The additional time spent will be well worth it, otherwise you might miss some critical techniques that would have made your images even better.

Dfine plug-in for Adobe Photoshop lists for \$99.95 in a downloadable or boxed version for both Windows 98/ME/NT/2000/XP and Mac OS 9 and OS X systems.

For further information on Dfine and other products from nik multimedia, Inc., log onto www.nikmultimedia.com/.

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