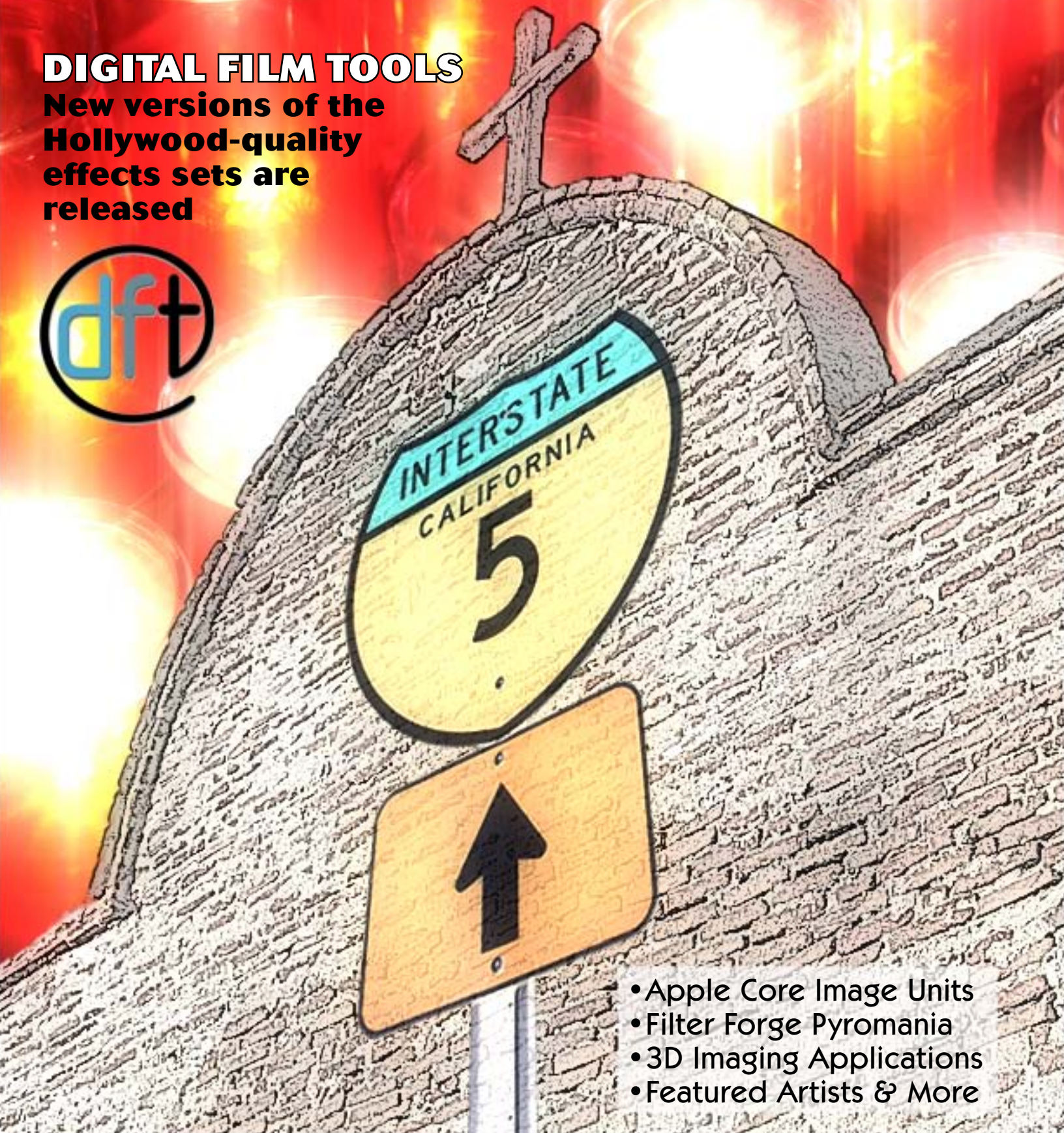
PLUG-IN

plugs·n·pixels

IMAGE CREATION, MANIPULATION & EDUCATION

DIGITAL FILM TOOLS

New versions of the Hollywood-quality effects sets are released



- Apple Core Image Units
- Filter Forge Pyromania
- 3D Imaging Applications
- Featured Artists & More

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"Painted Swan" by Jill S. Balsam (Painter IX) www.VisualDesignTech.com

Above: Jean Moore (Painter X). See more of Jean's work with Painter on page 19

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•Glossy text effect: BeLight Art Text
•Background effect: BeLight ImageTricks

"Cross Stitch Cat" by Richard Flaskegaard of Jack Dog Studio (www.jackdogstudio.com) using Alien Skin Splat!

ISSUE #9

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Text and images by Mike Bedford
(except as noted)

•Plugs 'N Pixels will always be free!•

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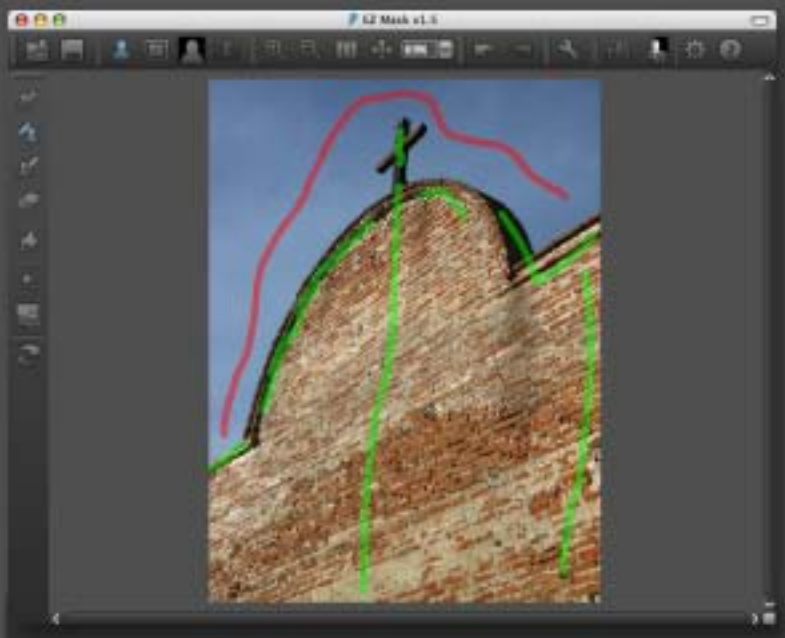
•If you would like your digital artwork or image editing software (applications, plug-ins, actions, etc.) featured in Plugs 'N Pixels, please write Mike at the address above. There is no cost or payment for this worldwide exposure!•

making the cover image

My mission (pun intended) with this issue's cover art was to use the new Digital Film Tools plug-ins updates on a group of images shot in the same location.

With that brief, I chose to work with three images I took at California's Mission San Juan Capistrano: the mission exterior, a group of candles from a chapel inside and a freeway sign located just outside the mission's walls.

The resulting collage is full of unintended symbolism (secular and sacred, past and present) for the viewer to discover.



I chose to isolate the brick exterior of the mission so I could swap the sky for something more interesting. I did my extraction with EZ Mask, drawing green lines to retain subject data and red to lose it.

EZ Mask does the rest of the work with a single click. Here is the clean mask before exporting. The result of the operation was the mission face with a transparent sky on its own layer in Photoshop.

Over in DFT 55mm, not sure where I wanted to next take the design, I experimented with different toning effects (the straight color image was too plain). Here is the Color Correction option.

As you can see from the layers palette screenshot above, the final design incorporated the straight color version of the bricks blended with an Effects>Pencil version (75% opacity). Nice result!

source images

Shown above are the source images for this project. For the sign image I originally intended to use the palm trees as well, but ended up not doing so.

The sign's final color effect was achieved simply by inverting it in Photoshop, then using the Edit>Transform>Distort tool to make the sign better fit the perspective of the mission wall.

Remember, once you get started on this type of project and hear the mission bells, you can check out any time you like, but you can never leave! •

55mm's Light>VariStar Star 12pt effect helped makes the candles look a bit more exciting.

Finally, 55mm's Effects>Streaks Vertical 1 was used to finish off the glowing candle effect. Never settle for any single plug-in effect!

www.plugsandpixels.com/55mm.html • /ezmask.html

playing with fire

Tonight we're setting the woods on fire with a fantastic preset filter I downloaded and installed in Filter Forge. Pyromaniac (by FF forum contributor Carl) is found in the Creative subset of installed filters.

Pyromaniac is one of the best fire effects I've seen thus far, and it is incredibly easy to use. Compare the final result (left) with the original (below) and you'll agree this is a very believable and striking effect.

Original

FILTER FORGE

www.plugsandpixels.com/filterforge.html

Pyromaniac works its magic by using displacement to wrap fire and smoke around objects in your image. Or you can skip the raging flames and just have smoke if you wish.

At lower left you can see the presets that come with Pyromaniac. Double-click on any and fine-tune the result with options found under the Settings tab shown above (Flame Position, Fire Suppression, Smoke Shape , pixel size, etc.).

Remember, Pyromanic is only one of THOUSANDS of filters available in the online Filter Forge library. All are free to download and install, making Filter Forge an incredibly versatile image effects machine for the creation of everything from fire to stone to seamless tiles, and much more.

Apple's Core Image Technology

Use Image Units to uniquely stylize your images

Original

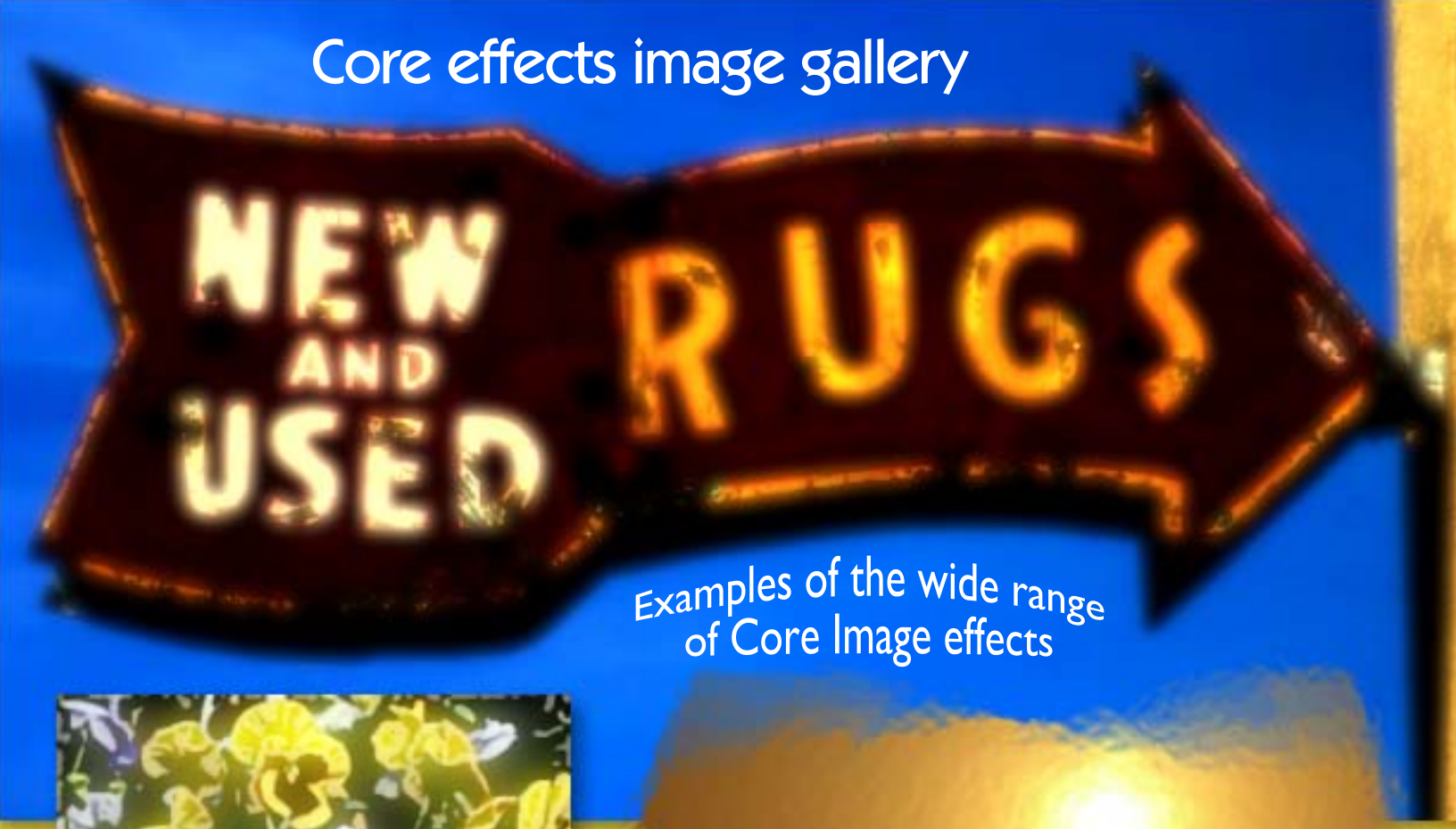
A recently sprayed chemtrail snakes and spreads its way across the hazy LA sky. What better way to emphasize the sinister implications captured in the original image (above) than to run it through Apple's Core Image technology?

Core Image is an architecture for accessing the various filter effects called Image Units. These effects include blurs, color adjustments, distortions, blend modes, transitions and more.

Various Apple and third-party applications are used to access and apply the filters to your images (see page 9 for some examples of these freeware and shareware apps in action).

This page's background image was created using the Core Image Stylize>Height Field From Mask option.

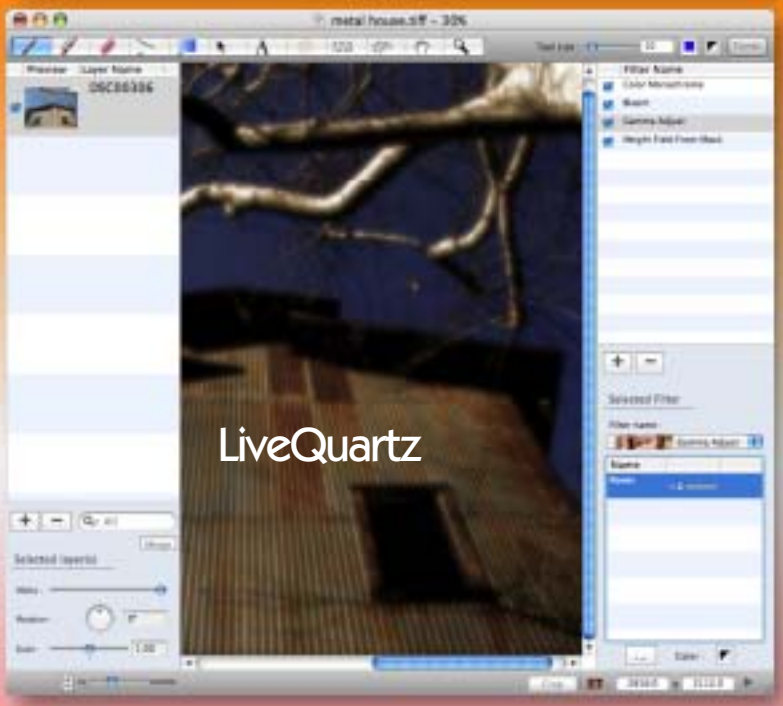
Core effects image gallery

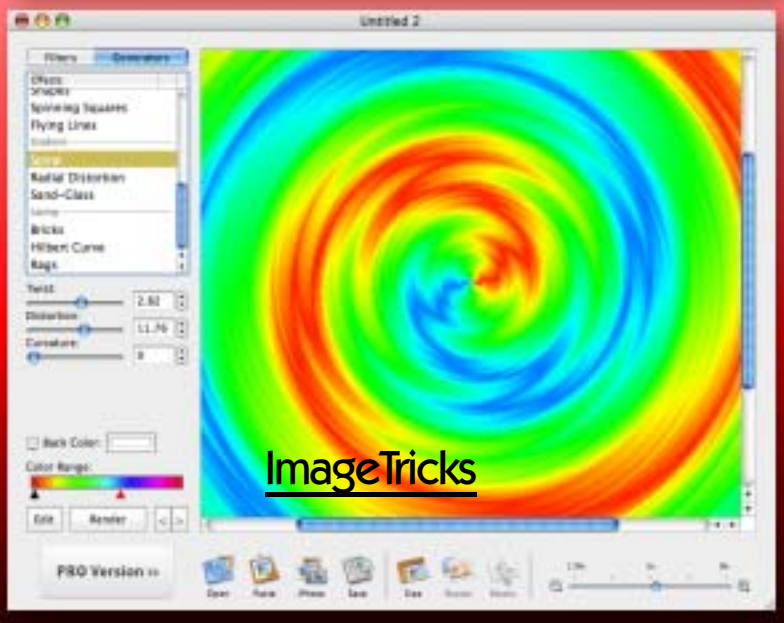


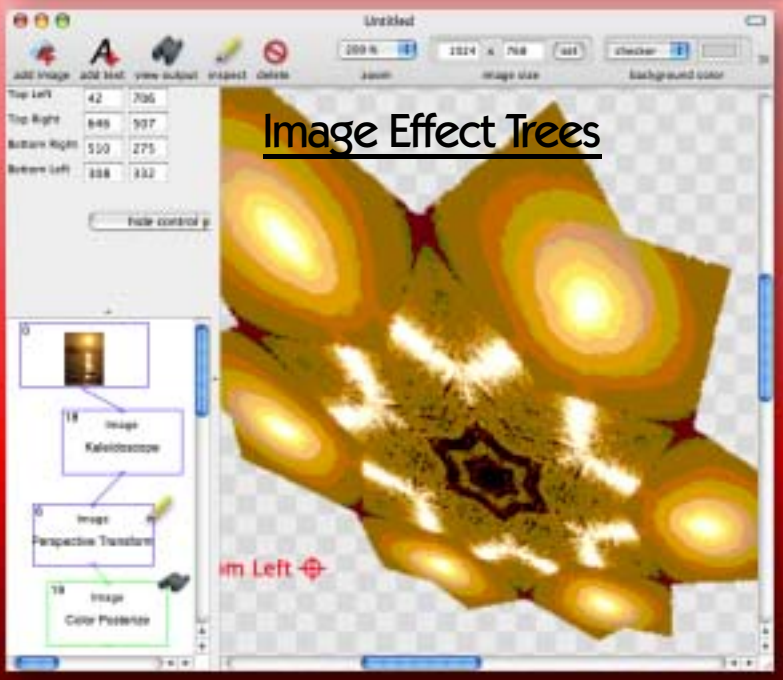
Examples of the wide range of Core Image effects

Not bad for **FREE FILTERS** built into the OS!

Core Image access options







Each of these commercial or free applications helps you access and manage multiple Core Image filters in different ways.

TOPAZ LABS

topaz adjust

SAVE $70!

When you purchase the Topaz suite

www.plugsandpixels.com/adjust.html

Instant HDR with a single frame!

Reveal hidden details in the shadows while bringing highlights under control

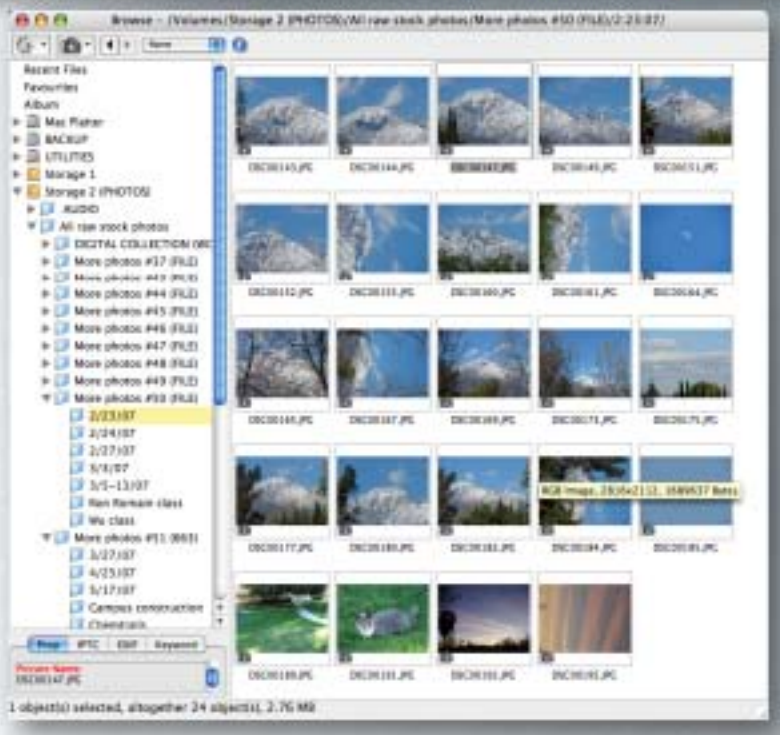
ADJUST DOES MORE THAN HDR!

While the results of this example are impressive enough, Topaz Adjust does much more than revealing highlight and shadow detail in extremely contrasty images. Starting with any of the 18 presets, you can do anything from simple exposure adjustment to controlling detail, color and noise, achieving corrective and artistic effects once reserved for plug-ins costing several times more.

If you can't afford Photoshop, you need to look at PhotoLine 32! This is perhaps one of the best-kept secrets of image editing. At a time when Adobe users are up in arms about the high cost of upgrading their software, along comes an upgrade to a very affordable application that offers many of Photoshop's advanced features for a fraction of the cost.

For starters, multi-layered images created in PhotoLine are easily transferred to Photoshop (and vice-versa), layers intact. This is important if you need to interface with others using the Adobe suite. PhotoLine also offers support for 16-bit processing and CMYK/LAB color spaces. Lossless image editing is possible, as are Working (ie, adjustment) Layers and a LOT more.

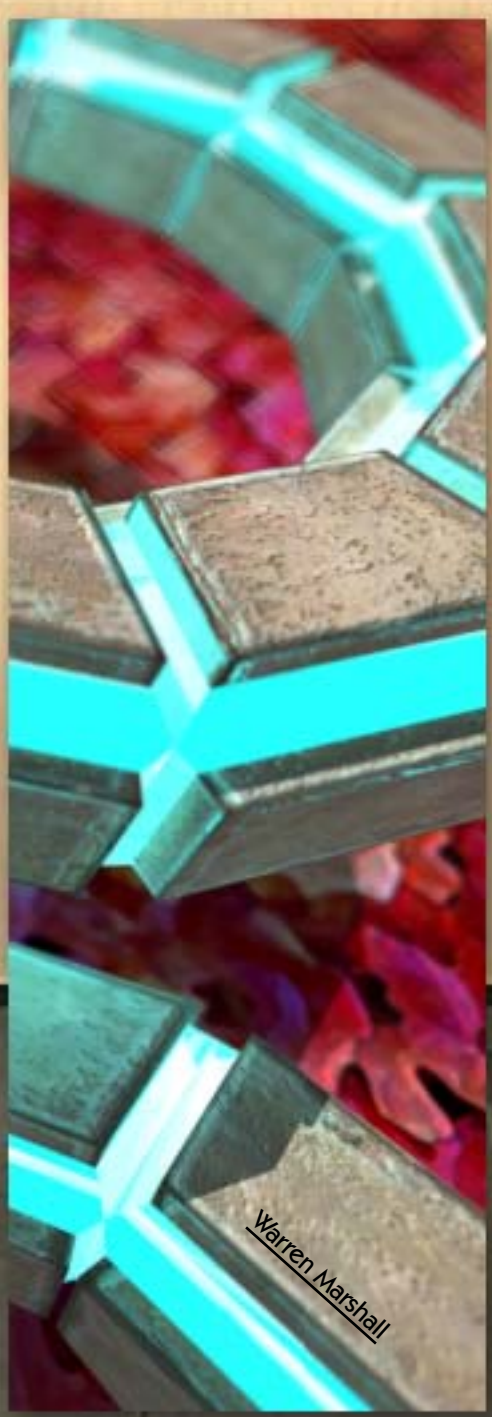
Digital cameras are fully supported, with PhotoLine recognizing most RAW files and EXIF and IPTC data. File>Browse takes you to the built-in image browser (right); Actions can be recorded and played back. The expected corrective filters are present, such as Light/Shadow, image noise, red eye correction, lens correction and many other practical and fun effects. Importantly, PhotoLine supports the use of vector and text objects in your images.



cheetah3d

www.plugsandpixels.com/cheetah3d.html

There's no need to spend a fortune on highly capable 3-D software written in Cocoa specifically for the Mac! $129 gets you Cheetah3D, which offers polygon and spline modelling, scripting, a UV editor, UV unwrapping, texture painting, sleek animation tools, character animation, morph targets, an integrated raytracer and a render manager. Download the free demo!

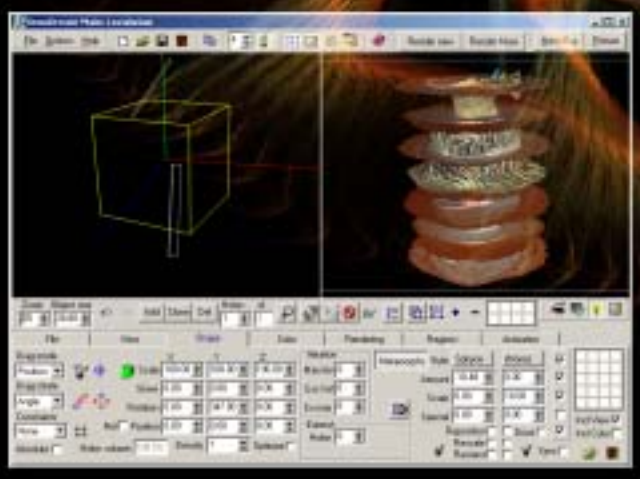


"One of the things which is so impressive about Cheetah3D is that despite being an inexpensive program written by one guy with a very tight feature set, it manages to (a) support a lot of file formats, (b) be far more usable than pretty much any other competing product, and certainly any other similarly priced product, and (c) offer competitive functionality in three competitive domains (modeling, rendering and real-time applications)."

-Tonio Loewald

XenoDream is a 3-D graphics program that could be described as an artist's workshop, adventure playground, tool or toy. It is a flexible environment incorporating 3-D object creation, 3-D lighting and filters, 2-D layering and various other operations. XenoDream's object modeling is unique and very powerful, combining smooth shapes and 3-D IFS fractal methods. This allows it to cover vast possibilities, from constructing the simplest objects to exploring wild shapescapes. There are no formulas or programming to learn; it is entirely interactive.

Background art courtesy of XenoDream Software



XenoDream Software

www.plugsandpixels.com/xenodream.html

ALIEN SKIN SOFTWARE

eye candy
EFFECTS COLLECTION

All Alien Skin products have been updated for compatibility with Adobe Photoshop CS3! Not only is there a discounted upgrade path for each individual plug-in in their product line, you can also buy five selected titles as a set called the Eye Candy Effects Collection.

I created the summer and winter artwork on this page in the same layered document using several different Alien Skin products, starting with nothing more than a blank white background image. The grass, the wall, the sky and lightning, the rain and snow, the fire and smoke as well as the backlight and grain are all native Alien Skin effects.

Alien Skin products are discounted on the Plugs 'N Pixels website (see below for individual product info links).

www.plugsandpixels.com/eyecandyeffects.html

Exposure Image Doctor BlowUp Xenofex Snap Art

Welcome to the Future.

Disc-based software training seems so passe compared to the 24/7 instant access of the new Total Training Online service! Fast-loading video files combined with informative and user-friendly navigation makes learning professional graphics applications fun and painless.

TOTAL TRAINING™ Online

Software Training for Creative Minds

www.plugsandpixels.com/ttonline.html

featured artist: joel schilling •Park Ridge, NJ

http://viewingzone.com
http://21parkavenue.com/pixelpost

Photographer Joel Schilling has been working in the digital realm since 1997, using a combination of Photoshop and PhotoWiz plug-ins to create his art.

The seaport original image at right was altered using B/W Styler, in Expert mode. The Colorize>Sepia mode was used along with increased saturation. Finally, a red mask with an increased Limit value completed the effect.

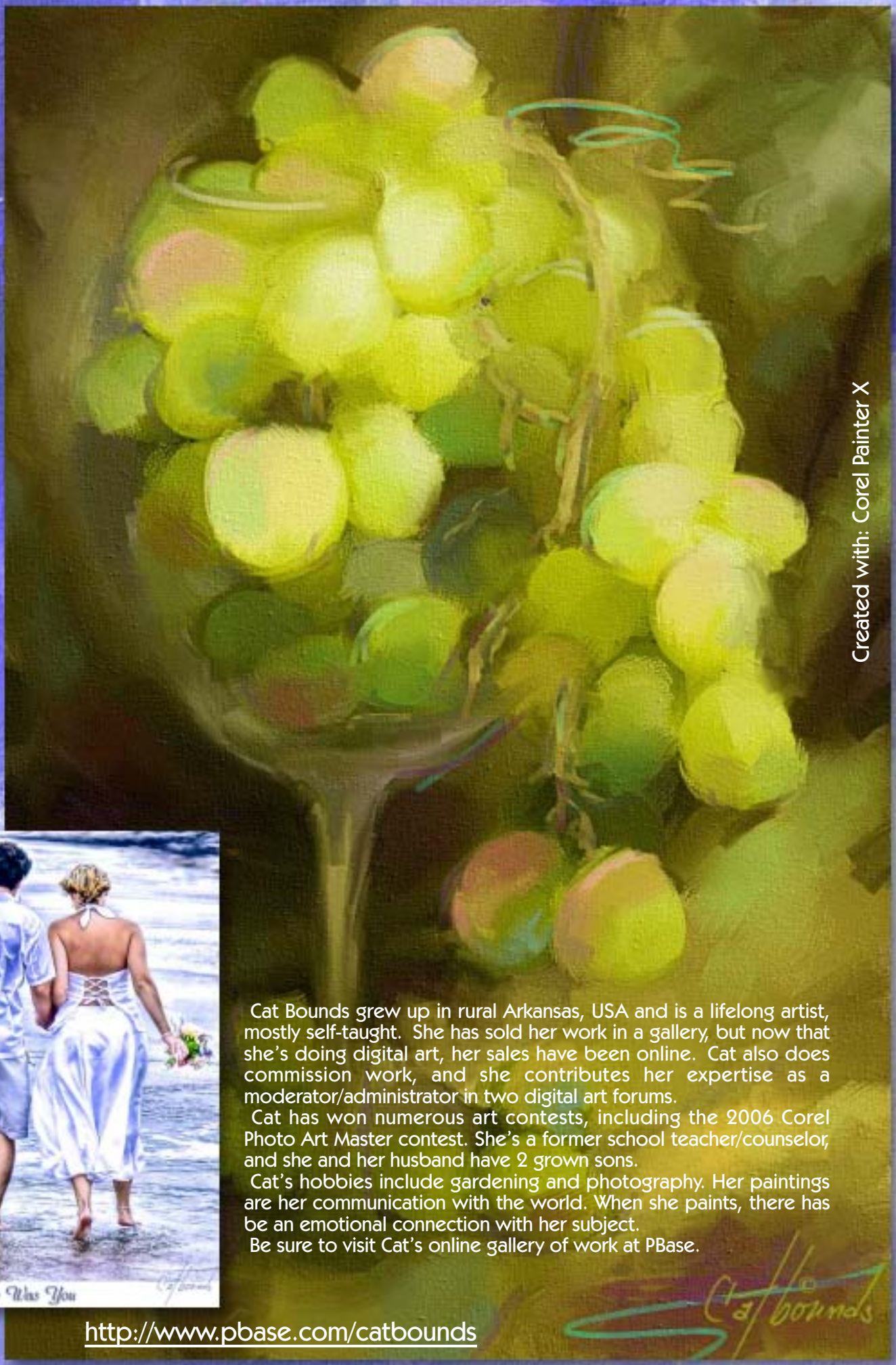
The train station (below) consists of two layers, the original and a duplicate. On the Background layer, Joel used B/W Styler with a blue mask increased to the maximum. In Photoshop, he increased the saturation of the blues even further. On the duplicate layer, he used the Jaseck sketch action, then finally faded this top layer into the Background.

The bum in Paris was treated with Light Machine to balance tonality and B/W Styler to add Platinum and grain effects.

Left: The B/W Styler interface

www.plugsandpixels.com/bwstyler.html

featured artist: cat bounds



Created with: Corel Painter X

Cat Bounds grew up in rural Arkansas, USA and is a lifelong artist, mostly self-taught. She has sold her work in a gallery, but now that she's doing digital art, her sales have been online. Cat also does commission work, and she contributes her expertise as a moderator/administrator in two digital art forums.

Cat has won numerous art contests, including the 2006 Corel Photo Art Master contest. She's a former school teacher/counselor, and she and her husband have 2 grown sons.

Cat's hobbies include gardening and photography. Her paintings are her communication with the world. When she paints, there has be an emotional connection with her subject.

Be sure to visit Cat's online gallery of work at PBase.

http://www.pbase.com/catbounds

featured artist: sylvia digeorgio • BC, Canada

http://abc-impact.com/photo_art/tutorials.htm

Digital artist Sylvia DiGeorgio of ABC-Impact is known for her wonderful artistic renditions of everyday scenes using digital methods. The images on this page were created using multiple LucisArt filters via layers, including Exposure, Klimpt and Whyeth, blended and merged together with other effects.

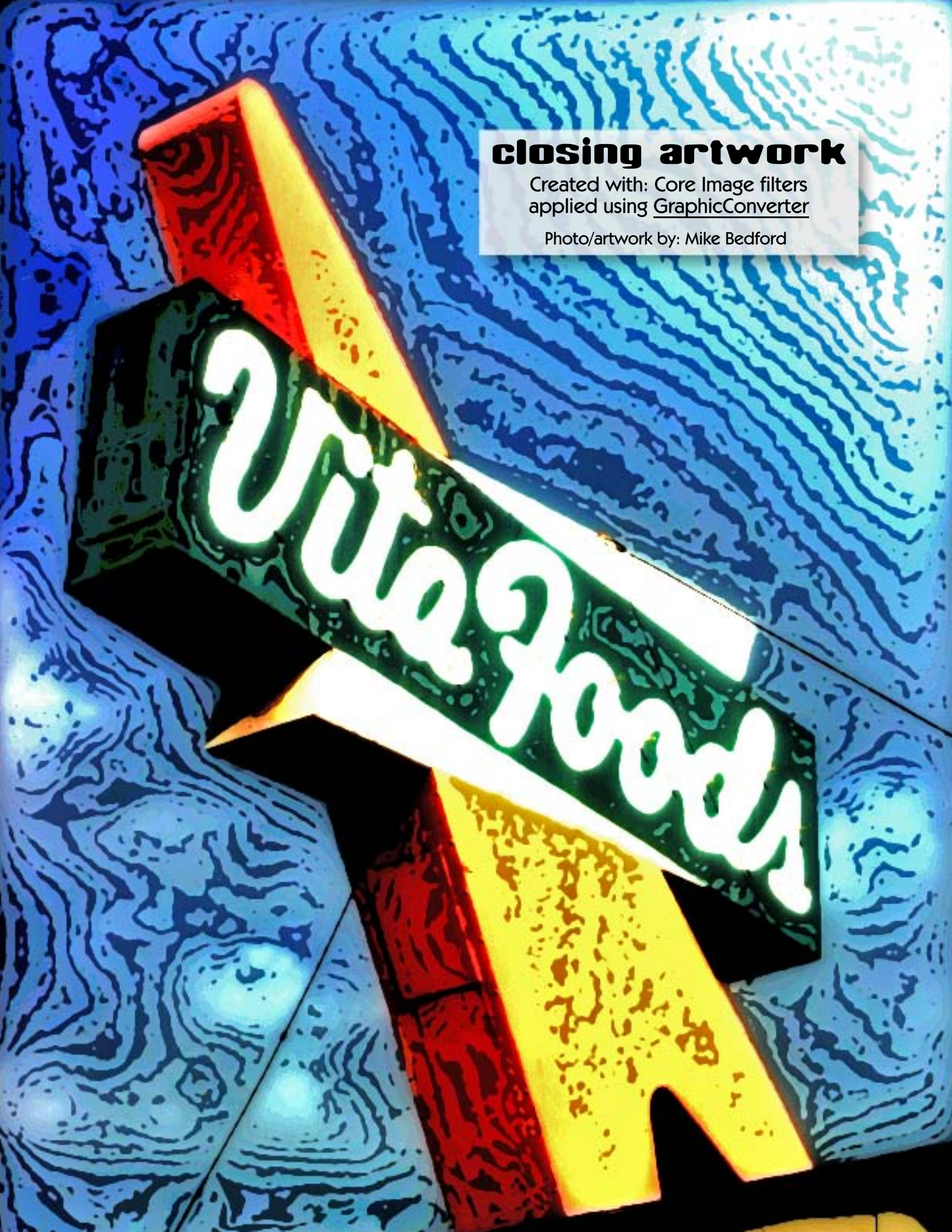
For those interested in learning this style of digital painting (along with pen-and-ink, impressionist and watercolor styles), Sylvia makes the secrets of her techniques known via colorfully illustrated PDF tutorials available for purchase on her website.

Sylvia also offers services such as photo painting, restoration, retouching, colorization and enhancement of your images, as well as art prints of her own work for your collection.

featured artist:

jean moore

Photo-referenced digital painting
using Corel Painter X


closing artwork
Created with: Core Image filters
applied using GraphicConverter
Photo/artwork by: Mike Bedford
Outdoors