plugs·n·pixels

IMAGE CREATION, MANIPULATION & EDUCATION

Terragen 2 final release: A storm's a-brewin'!

Other recent releases:

Topaz Adjust 3 & Simplify 2
onOne Plug-in Suite 4.5
Filter Forge for Mac
Xara Web Designer
Corel Painter 11
DAZ Carrara 7
and more!

- HowieFarkes scenes for Carrara
- New World Digital Art for Terragen 2

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ISSUE #14

Layout created in ACD Canvas X
Final PDF by Acrobat 9 Pro
Text and images by Mike Bedford
(except as noted)

Background created with Carrara 7
(customized preset)

A couple of our favorite plug-ins have recently received updates. The incredibly versatile Filter Forge is now also available for Mac OS-X (one of FF's almost 6000 effects, HEINOUS by filter author Carl, is shown at left). Topaz Adjust (its detail-enhancing effects are shown above) is now in version 3 with a totally revamped interface.

PLANETSIDE SOFTWARE

Terragen™ 2

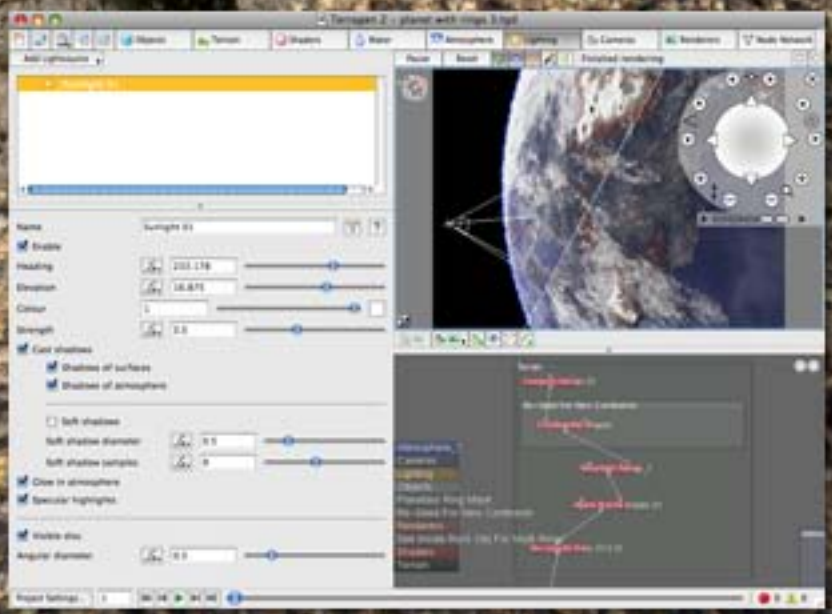
The long wait is over!

www.plugsandpixels.com/terragen.html

Background art:
Fake Stone & Hero Rock Pack
by New World Digital Art

It was literally years in the making, but Terragen 2 has now left beta and has reached its final release! Terragen has long been known as one of the premier applications for the visualization of landscapes and natural environments, used by Hollywood movie studios, game developers, advertising groups and casual users worldwide.

You are the master of your global domain, having full control over the creation and appearance of weather, landscape, rivers, lakes and oceans, suns, moons and stars with the sophisticated film- and broadcast-quality renderer and procedural modelling tools.



NWDA

NEW WORLD DIGITAL ART

- TU Snow Pack
- Fake Stone & Hero Rock Pack
- Cumulus Atmosphere Pack V2
- Sunset Atmosphere Pack
- 17th Century Dutch Marine Art Atmosphere Pack
- Class M Planets & Planetary Rings Pack

www.plugsandpixels.com/newworldtgpacks.html

Background art:
17th Century Dutch Marine Art Atmosphere Pack
with texture by Mr. Retro's Machine Wash plug-in

If you find it hard to get started it Terragen 2, it's not a problem. New World Digital Art offers six different TG2-format project files ranging from snow on the ground to planets in the sky. Open one of these packs and you're ready to explore each of the masterfully created scenes, rendering them as-is or changing the viewpoint and parameters as you go. It's a great way to learn the intricacies of the new Terragen, with each of the base settings already provided.

Start with the Class M Planets & Planetary Rings Pack–it's free!

DAZ 3D

Modeling+scenics in one 3D app

From 3D modeling to lush scenic landscapes, Carrara 7 is an incredibly versatile application. Users can approach Carrara from any number of directions. Desktop artists and animators, web designers and multimedia producers who are tasked with creating 3D graphics for magazines, ads and websites can create a scene, model the objects that populate it, create environmental effects and render the resulting scene, using only one application!

Animated productions take advantage of Carrara's key-event, dynamic and timeline-based animation features. Authors of interactive multimedia enjoy low-polygon modeling and export to popular formats such as GIF, JPEG, OBJ, 3DS, AVI, Quicklime and sequenced movies.

You can create broadcast quality output for square or non-square pixels, and output that is NTSC color safe.

To further extend its already impressive capabilities, Carrara is built on an open architecture that supports additional functionality through extensions.

Snow scene by HowieFarkes. Background art from Carrara's included presets collection.

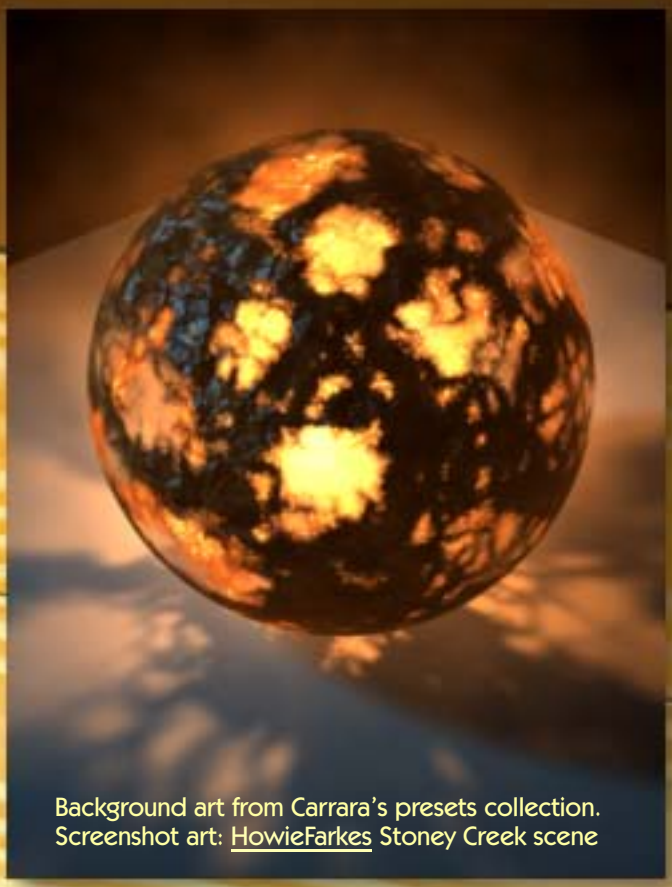
Carrara 7 Pro

What's new in Carrara 7

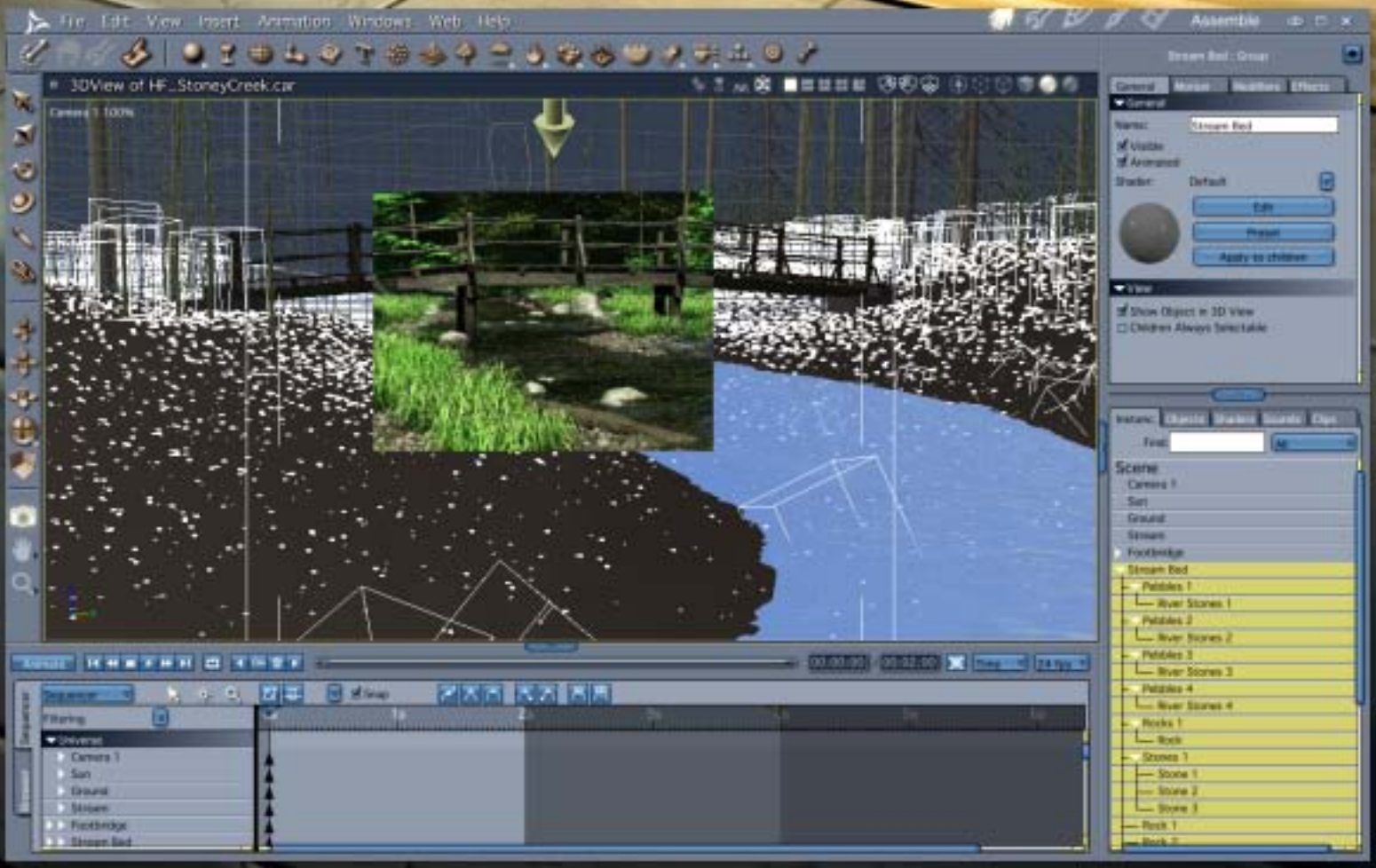
For this latest version of Carrara, DAZ 3D welcomed input from its customers in its quest to add more features, tweak more interfaces and fix more bugs.

Besides enhancing existing features for more effective performance, DAZ included much new functionality in version 7:

Vertex Modeling Updates, Content LOD Support, UV UI Enhancements (Standard, Pro), UV Unfolding (Pro Only), UV Relax Seams (Standard, Pro), 3D Painting (Pro Only), Multi-Pass Rendering, COLLADA Export, COLLADA Import (Standard, Pro), Non-Linear Animation Merge Tracks, Specularity and Bump Display in OpenGL (Pro Only), Larger OpenGL Texture Display, Rendering Optimizations for Transparency, DAZ Studio Content Support Improvements.



Background art from Carrara's presets collection.
Screenshot art: HowieFarkes Stoney Creek scene



www.plugsandpixels.com/carrara.html

howiefarkes
3d landscape artistry

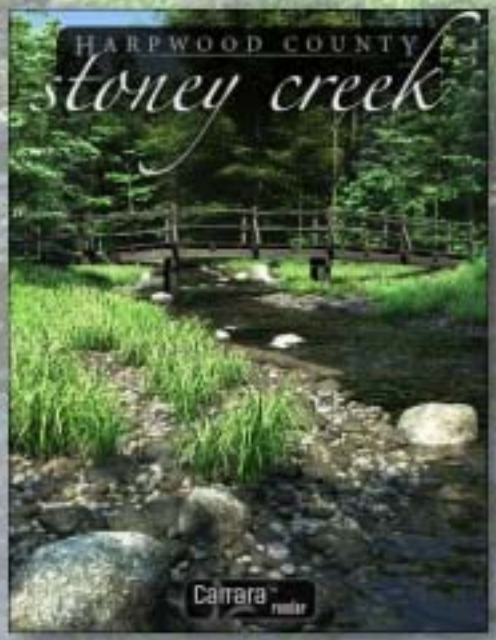
www.plugsandpixels.com/howiefarkes.html

Besides being capable of doing 3D modeling, Cararra is also an excellent choice for creating and rendering lush landscape scenes full of foliage and architectural objects. Martin Hedenstroem of Australia (doing business as "HowieFarkes") creates all of the individual elements in each of his custom scenes, such as trees, water, plants, buildings, etc.

You can use any of the elements on its own or even the scene in its entirety when creating your own 3D artwork. Even add your own 3D models as desired.

There are currently eight separate products available (plus two product bundles).

- Arboretum Volume 1
- Country Lane
- Country Lane Bundle
- Country Lane Hedgerow
- Maple Meadows
- Secret Lake
- Secret Lake Bundle
- Secret Lake Seasons
- Stoney Creek
- World Gardens Japan



onOne software
NEW VERSION 4.5
Plug-In Suite
The onOne Plug-In Suite is a collection of six creative and image enhancement plug-ins designed to solve your biggest Photoshop problems. See how I used five of them to create this scene.
Save 20%!
Discount code: "1502"
CONTINENTAL
HOTEL
PhotoTune 2.2
Mask Pro 4.1
PhotoTools 2
FocalPoint 1.1
PhotoFrame 4
Genuine Fractals 6
www.plugsandpixels.com/ononesuite.html

putting the plug-in suite to work

Original

I started off this little project with an everyday photo of a classic hotel sign that could use some spiffing up with several of the Suite's tools. First, I used PhotoTune to correct the color. PhotoTune operates on the comparison principle where over the course of six steps you are presented with side-by-side options, and you pick the one that looks the best. At the end of the process you are able to make further adjustments in the Fine Tune panel as needed.

PhotoTune

Mask Pro

The next step was to get rid of the background (the sky) using Mask Pro. The idea was to replace it with something more interesting (a winter mountain scene). I chose which colors to keep and discard, then quickly painted away the sky and clouds to transparency. Once that was done, I saved the result and dragged in the new background, after which I explored the creative options in PhotoTools. I used a combination of the Antique Grunge, Vibrant Glow, Grungy Noise and Shadow-Highlight presets to achieve the final color alteration effect.

PhotoTools

FocalPoint

Once the coloration adjustments were set, I launched FocalPoint to create a controlled diffusion around the hotel sign as a means of drawing attention to it. Both the angle and degree of the effect were completely controllable. The final touch was added with PhotoFrame, where I applied a grunge frame preset with an oval opening that followed the shape of the diffusion created by FocalPoint.

PhotoFrame

topaz adjust 3

HDR effects and image correction for only $49.99

Topaz Labs products are taking the photo forums by storm as users around the world discover these inexpensive but excellent and highly versatile plug-ins.

Topaz Adjust, Simplify and DeNoise together make up a killer pack of creative and image-correction plug-ins that can be used individually or one after the other on your images.

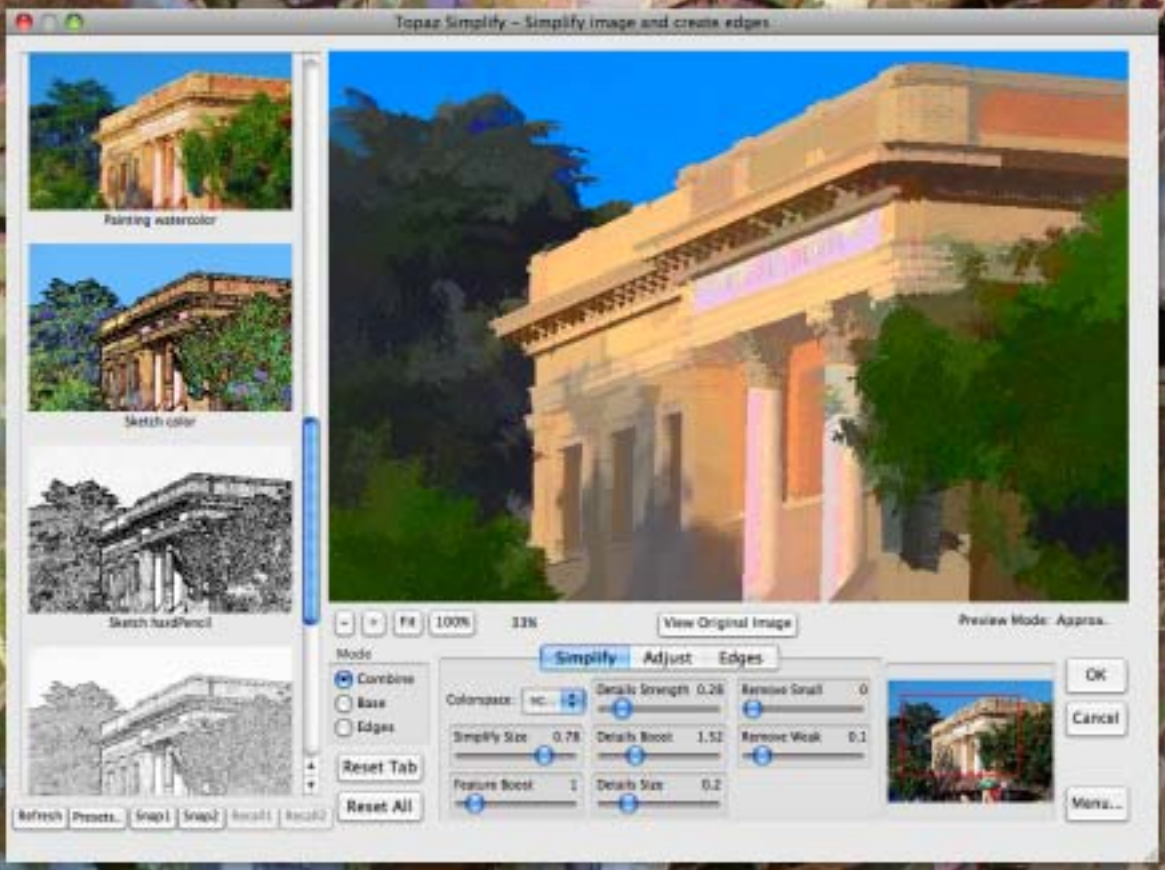
Adjust (shown at left) offers image enhancement and creative effects, such as small detail enhancement or image softening (both effects are reminiscent of a $595 plug-in from another developer which used to rule this product niche, but no more).

Adjust offers you full control over image exposure, details, color and noise reduction. Version 3 recently underwent an interface redesign which includes visuals of each preset.

www.plugsandpixels.com/adjust.html

Save 10% on Adjust! Use coupon code “plugsnpixels”

topaz simplify 2



There used to be a simplification product called buZZ Pro/buZZ.X, marketed by f02pix. Unfortunately, that developer went out of the plug-in business and for a long time there was no other product to fill the gap. Until now!

The folks at Topaz Labs not only reproduced the unique effects generated by the buZZ line, but have added more control and additional effects as well. Problem solved.

The new Simplify 2 interface now offers preset thumbnails. You can choose from a number of varied effects which range from "buzsim" (used on this page's background image) through cartoons, oil painting and watercolor, color and pencil sketching, woodcarving and underpainting (the latter is shown in the screenshot above).

Of course you are free to further edit the results of each preset, including the size and strength of the simplification, level of brightness, contrast and saturation as well as edge type and strength (with isolated edge preview for fine-tuning the distinction).

Simplify makes it easy to experiment with applying different presets to duplicate layers of your image for unique results.

www.plugsandpixels.com/simplify.html

topaz denoise 2

www.plugsandpixels.com/denoise.html

Dead pixels and horrible digital noise abound in this long-exposure image of a California forest fire. The shot was taken in 2003 with a 4-megapixel consumer camera at night, so the odds were against getting a clean image from the start.

Topaz Labs' DeNoise 2 plug-in handled both problems with very little tweaking, resulting in a clean yet still-sharp final version of the image.

Topaz Adjust has a lite version of DeNoise built in, but this standalone version offers even more control over color noise, smoothness, JPEG artifact repair, amount of added grain, etc.

AFTER DeNoise

BEFORE DeNoise

Buy all three featured Topaz plug-ins
(Adjust, Simplify and DeNoise)
PLUS the new Clean 2 and DeJPEG in the
Topaz Photoshop Plug-in bundle
for only $139.99 (save $90)!

topaz artists

There is a very active group of Topaz Labs plug-ins users on Flickr, and several of them have contributed samples of their artwork for display in this issue.

Clockwise from top left: jfdpl686 (Jorge) used three different Adjust settings on separate layers. Brian D. Reed used DeNoise and Adjust along with additional software. Jovan used Adjust with an added gradient. HeideHo used Adjust on the glass and Simplify on the landscape only. DelosJ used DeNoise and Simplify for his landscape. Nethopper started with Adjust followed by Vivacity (Sharpen mode).

No longer a Windows-only application, Filter Forge is now available for Mac OS-X!

Original

Create unique image filtering effects! Filter Forge does MUCH more than generate seamless textures!

www.plugsandpixels.com/filterforge.html

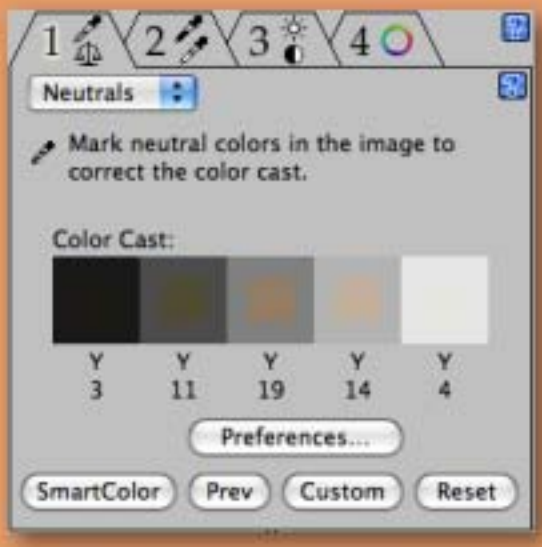
Background art:
"Batik Cutout" filter (by jffe)

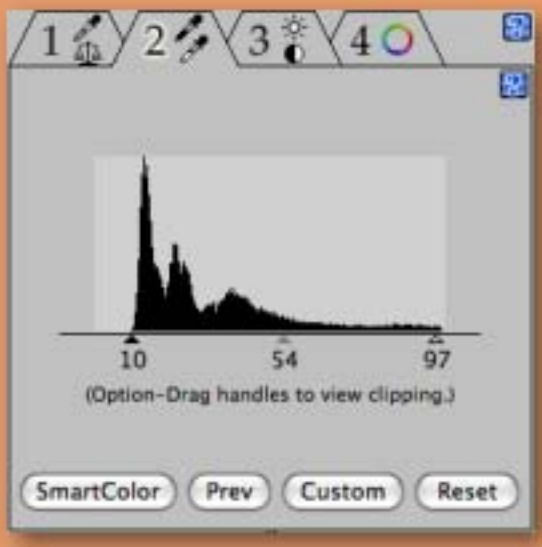
If Photoshop's auto Color Balance and Levels options don't give me the final colors I need, the first product I reach for is iCorrect EditLab.

Version 6 is a standalone and version 5.5 is a plug-in, but both work in a similar manner.

I usually start by clicking the SmartColor option, and if it is not enough on its own, I simply click on my image with the neutral color selection tool.

In literally seconds I have a color-corrected image.



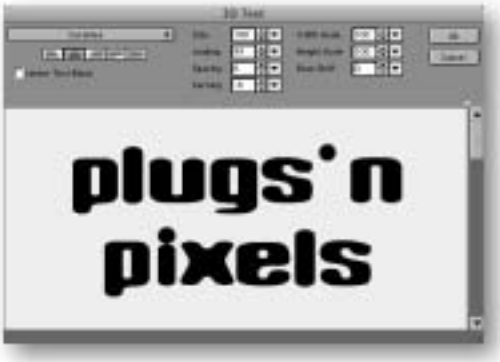


iCorrect EditLab makes it easy to perform additional image-correction steps over the course of four modes (see screenshots, top to bottom). Working from left to right across the set of tabs, you can make further adjustments to your image without worrying about undoing the previous step.

Other color-correction products available from PictoColor are CorrectPhoto, iCorrect One-Click and iCorrect Portrait plus InCamera for ICC profiling.

Step 1:
Set neutral points
Step 2:
Set levels
Step 3:
Set B/C/Saturation
Step 4:
Set hue/colors

3D INVIGORATOR for Photoshop



Previously available for use in the video and film industry, 3D Invigorator is now offered as a Photoshop plug-in. Both Illustrator format and font-based objects can be imported into (or in the case or text, also created within) 3D Invigorator. Next, you add depth, beveling and other 3D features including surface materials (from over 100 presets or custom-created) and multiple light sources. These 3D objects can be rotated and viewed from any angle and moved into various arrangements, as with standard 3D applications.

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digital anarchy

Quidam 3

3D Character Creation

Quidam 3 is an upgrade to the easy-to-use character modeling software from N-Sided. The Prime version includes export plug-ins for Maya and 3D Studio Max and licensing rights for the 3D models you generate! A new Catalog system for managing project elements, a 2D bridge to Photoshop and faster speed are included in this update.

www.plugsandpixels.com/quidam.html

Quidam includes character models to get you started. Additional Pro model packs are available separately, featuring Boys, Girls, Women, Man, MangaBoy, Fantasy Man, Muscles and Weapons

N-Sided

Xara

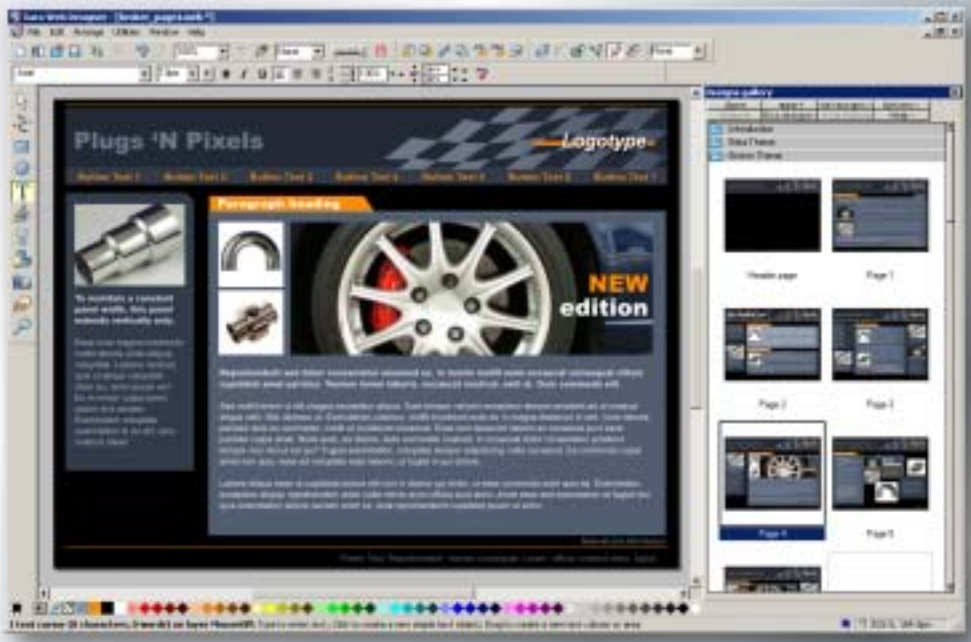
Web design for the rest of us.

Web Designer

Template-based website solution with complete design freedom

Not everybody is a professional web designer, but everybody wants profession-looking websites! Xara Web Designer helps make that happen by offering a means of creating attractive and flexible websites with no need for HTML or Javascript skills.

Professional web designers have already created the hundreds of templates that are included in Web Designer; all you need to do is pick one and customize the content. If you change your mind along the way, switching site themes is as easy as one click. And when you experiment with different layouts, your content flows accordingly.



The screenshot above shows Web Designer's interface, with the design area at left and sample templates from the template browser at right. You can browse templates and view thumbnails by theme category, such as Legal, Music, Photographer, Portfolio, Reflections, Serenity, Writer, etc. Double-clicking any theme sample loads that prepared design into the layout area.

Web page elements such as headings, navigation buttons, logos, text panels and speech bubbles don't need to be created from scratch. You simply drag these items from the Designs Gallery onto the page, where the elements covert their appearance to conform with your site's theme colors.

Web Designer's freeform approach is perfect for designing websites that contain a large number of text boxes, graphics, photos, widgets and Flash animations.

Web Designer is the first web design application to provide automatic text flow around photos and even irregular shapes. There's no need to reposition every item on the page manually while experimenting with the placement of an image, for instance. Speaking of images, you can edit and optimize them right in Web Designer! By the way, experienced pros can also benefit from using Web Designer as a rapid prototyping tool for client designs.

www.plugsandpixels.com/xaraweb.html

Corel® painter™ 11

When one thinks of escaping the toxic mess of the traditional art studio for the clean environment of the computer and tablet, chances are Corel Painter immediately comes to mind as the premier natural media application of choice for digital artists.

Now in version 11, Painter continues its long history of uncannily emulating on screen the world of paint, paper, brushes, chalk, markers, pens and pencils with over 40 new and enhanced features, including 30% faster brushes.

There are two ways you can use Painter: Create your own artwork from scratch on a blank canvas using the multitude of tools and options at hand, or transform your photographs into works of art.

A large online community of Painter enthusiasts exists, and several offer training in Painter techniques.

www.plugsandpixels.com/painter.html

Above: Artwork by Sam Gray
Below: Artwork by Pam Brodersen

closing artwork

Photo and artwork by:
Mike Bedford

Created with:
Topaz Labs Adjust and Simplify;
Alien Skin Bokeh