



Photoshop and...

Why are artists using Illustrator, Poser, Painter and Flash with our favourite Adobe app? Let's take a look **BY DAVID COUSENS**



MONKEYING AROUND: Jonny Duddle loves creating art that uses the strengths of both Photoshop and Painter, such as *Monkey Girl: The Chase!* featuring the eponymous *Monkey Girl* and a simian army!

If you're reading this, chances are you're already a big fan of Photoshop, but have you ever thought about what can be achieved by incorporating it with other programs?

We all love Photoshop, but let's face it, there are still some things that we wish it could do – like animate artwork, work with 3D models and automatically do our tax return for us. Fortunately, the designers at Adobe were smart enough to make Photoshop compatible with many other leading products, so we can use them together to achieve

everything we want to (well, apart from sorting out the tax forms.) So what do four of the biggest image making programs have to offer when used with everyone's favourite pixel manipulating software?

Illustrator

Using Illustrator can be confusing to begin with. Made by Adobe, it looks a lot like Photoshop, but feels like somebody has rearranged the furniture. Various hotkeys now perform different functions and nothing is where you're used to it being.



STEPH LABERIS, PAPER CUT: Using Illustrator with Photoshop allows Steph to create images that look like they were made with real paper! On first glance, her image Papercut looks like an authentic collage

However, once you become used to the differences, you can see where Illustrator's main strength is: Vector Graphics. Photoshop uses raster images – essentially every pixel on the screen is assigned a colour that Photoshop remembers. Illustrator uses vector-based mathematical descriptions to generate shapes that can be rescaled up and down as many times as you like, with no loss of quality, unlike transforming something in Photoshop. This ability comes at a price though. Illustrator's file sizes can be enormous, which is why designers choose to use both programs together.

Character and product designer Steph Laberis, (www.flyingclam.com) frequently uses Photoshop to add texture to designs that she makes in vector-based programs like Illustrator. "I primarily work with Photoshop and Illustrator because I'm most comfortable with the Pen Tool in Illustrator and I prefer Photoshop's layering styles to Flash's bitmapping options."

One of Steph's favourite techniques is to mimic the look of a cut-paper collage. "Once I have created a character or prop in Illustrator, I copy and paste each piece of my character to a separate layer in Photoshop. I give each layer a warm Drop Shadow and use the Multiply or Overlay layer styles to apply a paper texture, using a hi-res paper scan." Steph explains: "Using layers for this technique is important in order to create the illusion that each piece is sitting on top of another, but it also allows me to move and slide pieces around, just as I would with real cut paper."

Poser

The benefits of using Poser and Photoshop together are obvious. For those people who aren't so up on human anatomy, they don't have to struggle to

»»



“AT FIRST, COREL PAINTER LOOKS AND FEELS A LOT LIKE PHOTOSHOP”

shadows. “Auto trace is great for when you want to retain the effect of a grainy rough edge of a hand-drawn ink or marker line for your vector art. Auto-trace technology has vastly improved in the last few years, it can yield great results now, it used to suck!”

Painter

At first glance, Corel Painter looks and feels a lot like Photoshop. In fact, the latest version has been altered to more closely resemble Adobe's app. Layers are now added above the current layer, as in Photoshop and the interface looks more familiar. Switching files between Photoshop and Painter has never been more effective, with Painter maintaining layer masks, alpha channels and layer sets. Where Painter truly excels is acting much more like traditional media than Photoshop can. ‘Designed by artists, for artists’ as the tagline goes, Painter handles quite intuitively for artists with a traditional background. It even has the ability to rotate the canvas as you would a piece of paper.

Steven Topley often uses the Perspective Tool to rough out an environment before taking it to Photoshop to tighten the painting. Steven says: “Practising in Painter can yield great illustrative results – it's really close to the real thing. Switching back to Photoshop when you've created something is a great safety net until you get more familiar with the program.” He continues: “The use of Painter with Photoshop is ideal if you're making more textural work. The sheer range of brushes, paper textures and brush options offers a huge range of choice when it comes to adding interesting texture to your images.” Freelance illustrator and concept artist, Jonny Duddle (www.duddlebug.com) agrees: “I've been using Photoshop for eight years. Painter is fairly new to me, so I still tend to lean more heavily on CS2. But there are so many lovely brushes in Painter that I'm using it more and more.”

Jonny enjoys Painter's tendency to end up with more of the ‘happy accidents’ that you normally associate with traditional media. “Painterly work in Photoshop requires conscious effort and that's often reflected in the final piece. So, sometimes the clumsiness and limitations of specific Painter brushes can give you the effect you're after.”

So there you have it, each program has many benefits, but no matter which of these programs you use, remember the most important tool is still your talent. As Steven Topley advises: “In saying all of this, I think the true advancement of creating artwork is to keep scribbling in those sketchbooks – practice, practice, practice – that's the key!” ■

THE CIRQUE DE SPECTACULAIRE: By creating art that uses tools from both Adobe Photoshop and Corel's Painter, Jonny Duddle can make even the most grotesque characters look spectacular!

draw a character with the right proportions, they can take one of the ready-made 3D models from Poser itself. The modelling software program can be used to design, pose and animate your figure in 3D. It can easily create a scene, establishing not only the characters, but also the lighting and texturing before bringing the image into Photoshop, where you can then effectively ‘paint over’ the new creation in the style of your choice. Create anything from photorealistic content to cartoon images and modern art. Make figures walk, dance or run to create animations for Flash content or movies. Prolific freelance illustrator Steven Topley (www.steventopley.co.uk) elaborates on how the 3D app can assist your artistic endeavours. “Poser is a very strong tool for working fast – you could use it to make a crowd scene for example.” He goes on: “However, just using the basic models tends to create bland work. If Poser is used to its strengths, the work created can be fantastic.”

Flash

Flash is, somewhat unfairly, the odd one out of the Adobe family. This is partially due to website designers overusing it, leading to a lot of needlessly complicated navigation and some annoying download delays. Nowadays though, every man, woman and spambot has a broadband connection, so loading times are rarely an issue. Flash can incorporate both vector and raster graphics making it very popular for animators that work online, such as Kenny Kiernan (www.kennyk.com). He used Flash and Photoshop to create the American anti-smoking TV commercial *He's Omnipotteen!* “The line art was pen and ink, scanned into Photoshop and then imported as bitmaps into Flash. It was then auto-traced, turned into vector art symbols, coloured and animated.” Kenny uses Photoshop after that if he wants to add raster effects such as Gaussian Blurs and Directional Motion Blurs, or airbrushed-looking hand-drawn highlights and



KENNY K, OMNIPOTEN (TOP LEFT): Kenny Kiernan uses Auto trace to retain the grainy rough edge of hand-drawn ink or marker line for vector art. "Auto-trace technology has vastly improved in the last few years – it used to suck!"

STEVEN TOPLEY, ROCKER WOMAN (TOP RIGHT): Steven finds using Painter with Photoshop ideal. "The sheer range of paper textures and brushes offers a range of options when it comes to adding textures to your images"

STEVEN TOPLEY, THOUGHT WOMAN (MAIN IMAGE): No matter how great the tools are at your disposal however, Steven reminds artists that the most important tool of all is your talent! So remember to never stop practising, practising, practising!

FURTHER READING

For more information on Painter IX.5, check out Corel's website (www.corel.co.uk/painterIX) where you can download a trial version for free! To take a look at Poser 7 and the various expansion packs for the software, go to the Content Paradise site (www.e-frontier.com/go/poser) where you can download the software plus various freebies too! For information on Flash, Illustrator and Photoshop (of course), head over to www.Adobe.co.uk. You may also be interested to hear that a new monthly Official Corel Painter Magazine has been launched from the creators of Photoshop Creative. Visit www.imagine-publishing.co.uk for more info.

Showcase sites

Get interacting, get inspired and get noticed by logging on to these great online galleries

ArtWanted.com

Web: www.artwanted.com

With 28,000 members and visitors, ArtWanted.com is one of the leading global showcase sites. With nine unique galleries ranging from Anime/Manga to Digital Painting, its tolerance to the art community as a whole is commendable.

Professionals and art enthusiasts alike are welcomed to promote the love of creativity within its four virtual walls, regardless of the criterion. The site reflects this as one big living, loving design community. Not inhibited with an overload of script, it's as uncomplicated in appearance as in ideal. It provides a pleasurable visual experience using thumbnails to navigate around the site. The forum is extremely well moderated and date-listed. Also on offer are regular competitions, with the best work of the year being featured in the ArtWanted.com *Creative Minds* book.



The extensive member area allows easy upload, unlimited sub gallery creation and allows creatives to stroke their egos with daily updates of views in the portfolio statistics option. ■

Rating: **5/5**

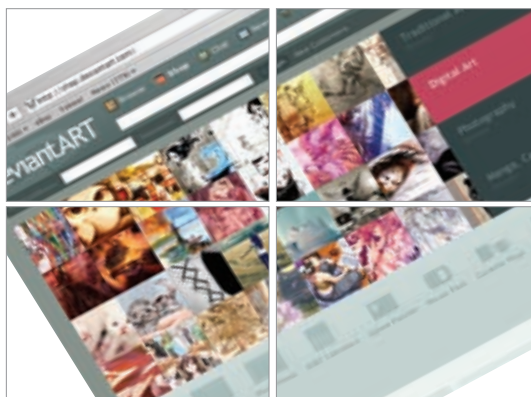
deviantART

Web: www.deviantart.com

DeviantART is a creative community alive with activity and interaction. It's a busy, free-for-all of creative designs, with a level of high proficiency in the work displayed.

After submitting your gallery, you're sure to find several responses from day one, with more and more following afterwards, allowing artists to discover what's hot and what's not within their own portfolio and that of others. This general feedback serves to motivate and also allows creatives to make friends along the way.

More than just a showcase site, it's also a creative resource. For example, the site provides quality stock imagery for artists to use in their compositions. With over one thousand users online at any given time, artists around the globe can interact in a number of live chat rooms, meaning designs can be



constantly viewed and reviewed. Just watch out for all the cool emoticons in this crowded house. Those crazy critters get everywhere! ■

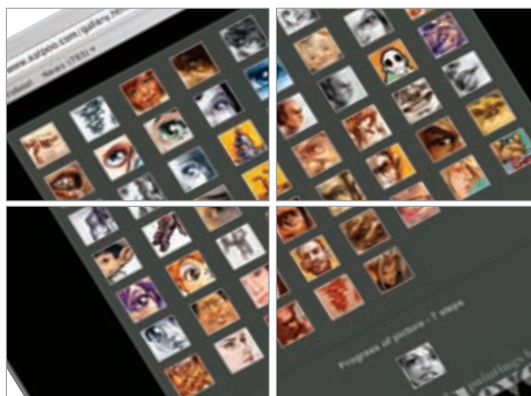
Rating: **4/5**

Eatpoo.com

Web: www.eatpoo.com

Eatpoo.com offers something a bit different from other showcase sites. As the title of the site suggests, it's a little cheeky. Eatpoo welcomes all kinds of crazy people as well as art desperados.

At first glance, the site seems an amalgamation of styles, appearing awkward in topic and design. Due to its bold graphic open page, Nation Poo comic link – where you can submit comics adding to this amusing nation of nonsense – is a seemingly limited forum. However in a matter of fact way, it's this that becomes its virtue, as it's beset with inside jokes, accepting all opinions and creativity brought together in one unified disruptive community – a mad hatters tea party for the creative! Not to say it doesn't take design seriously and its forums promote a culture of evolution and progression. The discussions bring together this community through



competitions, including key-word projects, instigating maximum imagination and adept design. Just beware the Toilet forum. Don't say we didn't warn you. ■

Rating: **3/5**

Showcase sites

Graphola

Web: www.graphola.com

A showcase site, come art gallery, Graphola's continental community is dedicated to promoting creativity and culture linked to the development of digital technology.

The site is free to join, yet to be successful in your application the Graphola team must first evaluate your work. This may seem elitist but they wish to ensure nothing but high-quality art is featured. So if you're welcomed it's surely an accolade to your talents.

Benefits of acceptance are certainly useful. Not only is your work promoted through gallery exhibition (although in Italy) but you could receive €50 (£33) per print of the work, maximum of 50 print run. Now that's making a pretty penny! ■

Rating: **3/5**

ArtWire

Web: www.artwire.com

A simple yet attractive site, ArtWire.com's off-the-wall visual approach is sure to turn a few heads. It's exquisitely vibrant and uncanny, bold-graphic style make navigation a surprisingly lucid formality.

A creative brouhaha, this community is in no way exclusive and is tailored for professionals, enthusiasts and students alike. ArtWire's resident artist guru will take a good look at your artwork and respond with constructive comments and honest opinions, free of charge. Why? Because all concerned are artists themselves.

With forums steeped in passion for all things arty, as well as crammed with pop culture content, such as top tips for the movies and musical distinctions and debacles, ArtWire.com is a modish place to retreat. ■

Rating: **3/5**

Sigsource

Web: www.sigsource.com

Much more than a showcase site, Sigsource is a place where those creative can grow, not just through encouragement but also by having access to rigorous, constructive learning devices.

All actions take place on the forum where you can find on offer free Photoshop resources, such as brush tools, stock photos and fonts, among many others. There's also an extensive list of practical tutorials, helping graphic designers and artists to polish up on their Photoshop, PHP, HTML and JavaScript skills. So for all you Photoshop enthusiasts looking to kick-start your learning, through interaction with like-minded artists, this is a comfy corner of the web to visit. ■

Rating: **5/5**



Showcase sites

AltPick.com

Web: www.altpick.com

AltPick.com prides itself on its ability to offer simple, efficient ways to present your art, making it easier for the site to promote it to related business in a fast, efficient way.

There are lots of promotions on offer and if you're competent enough, you could feature in one of AltPick's favoured publications such as *The Alternative Pick Sourcebook* and *Card Deck* or even the AltPick Awards. With its sexy, contemporary style, it promises an art community for both creative and client, benefiting from the extensive listings including news, calendars and classifieds (which are all self-serving). Truth is, AltPick, even with its promotion perks, offers little innovation and with a one-off fee of \$299 (about £150) it all becomes crystal clear. ■

Rating: **3/5**

CGSociety

Web: www.cgsociety.org

CGSociety is a site for anyone who uses computers to visually narrate. The society aggregates, trains and promotes within its community, unbiased in its support of all genres, styles and aptitude.

In addition to the usual benefits, there is extra value in other areas, such as discounts on CG-marked products and online workshops and free 50MB video hosting. Also, privileged access to the CGConference and film festivals, CGAwards, CGPortfolio, member and industry promotions. Along with its advisory board are subcommittees who advise on matters related to the technical, artistic, community and regional perspective of the CGSociety. With a annual fee of \$29.95 (about £15) you can write your own creative chapter with CGSociety. What a novel idea. ■

Rating: **4/5**

Renderosity Art Community

Web: www.renderosity.com

Renderosity has become one of the web's most thriving, productive online communities for digital artists.

Founded in 1998, once known as PoserForum.com, it's a showcase site that has evolved to stay at the forefront of communication. With over four hundred thousand average daily visitors, 25 million pages viewed and 3.3 million visits per month, it's certainly the place to be to get viewed and reviewed. Sporting over 60 specialist forums with an average of 2 million posts, you're sure to make associates and develop in this flourishing environment. With this comes the allure of over thirteen thousand freely shared products created by artists, for artists. So what are you waiting for? Log on and get mingling. ■

Rating: **4/5**

ConceptArt.org

Web: www.conceptart.org

If you specialise in concept and fantasy art, or just have an appetite for such a field, then ConceptArt.org is for you. Subscribe for free and you can utilise the usual gallery construction and most forums are standard and identifiable.

Yet ConceptArt seems so much more than just a showcase site with its ethos of learning promoted throughout. Within the chat rooms you can submit, comment and compare as usual with punctual honesty and all criticism is highly constructive, which is reflected through the art on show. There are also forums offering genuine opportunities of career development from professional companies such as NCsoft Europe Ltd no less.

ConceptArt also offers professional workshops and its own educational tuition with ConceptArt.Org Atelier. It believes within these environments growth and understanding is accelerated beyond the normal working environment.

Rating: **5/5**

GFXartist.com

Web: www.gfxartist.com

GFXartist.com sits on the fence. Not great. Not bad. Getting started on the site can be infuriating at times, with missing links making navigation time-consuming.

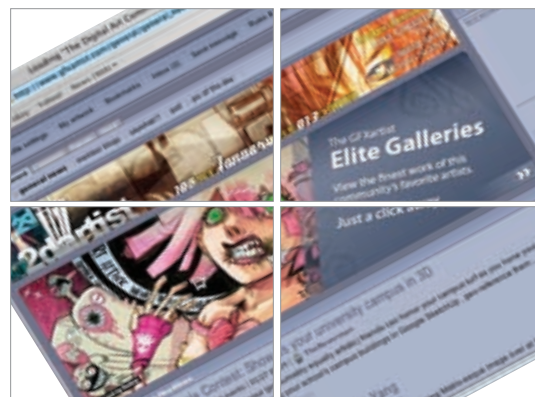
But to be fair, it's worth persevering. The standard of the digital art on show is inspiring throughout. With the Elite Member gallery, separating quality design from the mediocre is easier than in similar sites.

On offer are cool features, such as tutorials and interviews from leading digital pros such as Kevin Johnstone, one of the world's leading Gameskin creators. These helpful resources have obviously had a huge impact of the GFX creative population.

Creating your own portfolio can be seen as laborious, without simple upload options, instead having to link imagery from an external webspace. Those without such facilities are



Again these sentiments can surely be reinforced by the standard of work promoted. So if you've got what it takes, come strut your conceptual creativity here. ■



subjected to quarterly payments of £5.93. However a year's subscription costs £21.36. So what's our overall opinion? Let's call it evens. ■

Rating: **3/5**

FanArtReview.com

Web: www.fanartreview.com

We at *Advanced Photoshop* love to admit when a site impresses us, however, we also feel it's our duty to highlight ones that aren't so inspiring. So we're making an example of FanArtReview. To be fair it has it coming.

A self-proclaimed resource helping artists to improve their craft seems a hollow sentiment after closer inspection, as the examples of art are as uninspiring as the site's design layout. However this factor may be a deciding one for those considering joining. Members are expected to provide a minimum \$2.80 (about £1.50) per month. Seems cheap? Not when it adds up to \$67 (roughly £35) with the minimum two-year subscription. But hang on, what benefits do you receive?

Well if you're good enough you can take advantage of FanArtReview's Ranking system, where you can aim for the number one spot. Although to be honest, the competition is



pretty limited. But let's be fair, there are some merits such as cash prizes when entering competitions. These can be lucrative such as £100 VISA gift card. Like taking candy from a baby. ■

Rating: **2/5**

Photoshop forums

Chat about your favourite app with like-minded souls

Advanced Photoshop

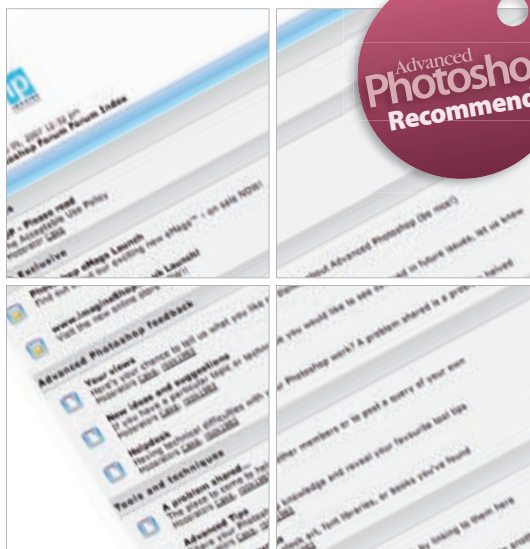
Web: www.advancedphotoshop.co.uk/forum

Where better to go to chat about Photoshop than *Advanced Photoshop* magazine's very own dedicated forum site?

It's a lively and friendly gathering where you can not only ask technical questions for your peers to answer but where you can also receive feedback on posted artwork. The Peer Pressure section on the forum can also be used to send work over to us for consideration for our monthly reader's gallery.

Other favourites include a 'Photoshop Relay' thread where you can pass on your creations to be manipulated by another user. 'Head to head' gives you the chance to challenge another forum user to create a piece of Photoshop art based on a chosen keyword. ■

Rating: **5/5**



GFXvoid.com

Web: www.gfxvoid.com/forums/index.php

Catering for the graphics community, GFXvoid quite literally attempts to fill a void of digital software discussion, features and polls for the online creative population.

The community-catered site offers its members a free port of call for debate with fellow creatives with a range of promotional facilities. The tone and style of the website borders on a crossover territory of serious enthusiast to professional artist, with knowledgeable debates. The layout has been arduously crafted, with navigation structured and intuitive, so much so that even the registration can be completed in minutes. The only part lacking in this otherwise slick operation, is an inspiring design focus, this site would do well to take some creative advice of its demographic. ■

Rating: **4/5**



PS Workshop

Web: <http://psworkshop.net/psworkshop/forum>

PS Workshop as modestly noble and informative as it is, attracts Photoshop users of a lower experience level than GfXArtist and GfXvoid.

But what it lacks in self-congratulatory kudos, it makes up for with a charming informality that will make any creative feel welcome. The forum even includes a thread titled 'Introductions: Introduce yourself, say hello to a great forum community.' Indeed this may not be the hub of Photoshop excellence, but for those starting out with the app this is an ideal place to begin. The site isn't as well endowed with members as other sites, but the online population is showing signs of growing. New members are attracted by the plethora of tutorials, reviews and helpful discussion on offer. ■

Rating: **3/5**



Forums

Planet Photoshop

Web: www.planetphotoshop.com/forum

Photoshop Planet isn't just an excellent virtual venue for digital manipulation discussion, it's much more besides.

The whole site is bursting with creative and methodical advice, proving to be a fantastic resource site for Photoshop enthusiasts.

The forum itself can be what the user makes of it. There are entertainment-focused sections that are designed for light-hearted conversation, or other areas where heated authoritative dialogue is thrashed out as if it's a new blood sport. The section entitled 'Advanced Photoshop' should not be entered into lightly by new Photoshop users, as the high level debate will not endure inquiry traffic. ■

Rating: **4/5**

Photoshop Lover

Web: www.photoshop-forums.pslover.com

Far from romantic, Photoshop Lover's online hub is one of the most professionally designed in this category, engineered for the more sophisticated artist who takes pride in using a forum with a well-structured navigation system.

The benefit of this more adept website is that it's maintained to a high standard, free from spam invaders and relatively free from adverts except that of the live banner.

The active forum is quite popular but doesn't appear to have the same arena of dedicated users like some of the smaller niche sites can boast. Additionally, the visual concept is weak here and may put off more imaginative Photoshop enthusiasts. ■

Rating: **3/5**

BioRust

Web: <http://forums.biorust.com>

BioRust is one of the more visually stimulating sites sporting a popular forum with dedicated gallery, showcasing the rest as well as the best.

The site is stacked with other features, including tutorials, battles and resources. It receives an admirable quantity of traffic attracting input from all levels of Photoshop users, as well as 3D modelling artists, Flash designers, Illustrator fans, photographers and photo manipulations.

The highly useful forum tracks members, listing daily forum-goers, active users and which threads the majority of members are currently chatting on. The forum's positive focus on allowing members to share and stay as long as they want is the site's most attractive characteristic. ■

Rating: **4/5**

Photoshop plug-ins

Expand the potential of Photoshop with these independent plug-in options

SnapArt

Web: www.xchangeuk.com

Photoshop is the perfect package for people who have an active artistic talent, but unfortunately not every user can claim they have the same creative flair that would threaten the Monets and Vermeers of the 21st century.

Thankfully the less adept can rely on third-party software to redeem our flaws. Snap Art 1.0, priced at £79, is a natural media plug-in for Photoshop that gives artists the ability to create handcrafted painted effects. For example, stylising a scenic snapshot into a compelling digital watercolour is achievable with a few mouse strokes. The results are impressively convincing and the broad range of genres stimulates our experimentation streak. There's oil paint, watercolour, coloured pencil, pastel, and line drawing to choose from. ■

Rating: **4/5**



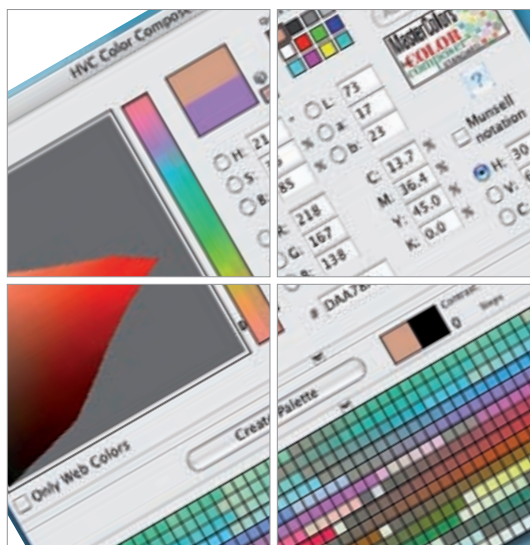
HVC Color Composer

Web: www.master-colors.com

HVC Color Composer from Master Colors, is an artist-friendly plug-in, which through colour-quantification technology, aims to organise coherent palettes intuitively complementing the way designers use colour.

The Photoshop user starts with one or more of their tones and the plug-in determines the numerical distances between these colour values as measured by contrast. It then generates palettes that work perfectly with those colours, thus supplying the user with greater scope for colour compatibility and creative flexibility. The software is ideal for creating a dynamic stack of colour palettes, as it produces numerous striking combinations that have specific relevance to the designers project, but you can visit Kuler for a more intuitive alternative. ■

Rating: **3/5**



PhotoLift

Web: www.pixelvistas.com

Photoshop users who moonlight as keen photographers may want to pay special note to this plug-in, which has the subtle ability to turn images from flat to vivid.

When applied to a picture the powerful plug-in enhances detail and renders a fiercer level of depth within the local contrast of digital photographs, by taking advantage of recent advances in non-linear image filtering.

The filter operates by separating the image into small-scale and large-scale components, which equates to manipulation without the production of halos or other artefacts in the vicinity of prominent edges. With practice, the £26 plug-in brings dull images to life. It mitigates atmospheric haze and reduces the effects of reflections. ■

Rating: **5/5**



Plug-ins

PhotoTessel

Web: www.xchangeuk.com

PhotoTessel may not be the most highbrow of Photoshop plug-in products to register on the more advanced user's radar, but its informally creative and freethinking-enhancing properties are certain to win some fans.

The product, far from being the most professional tool, will allow users to create alarming fabrics, patterns, wallpapers and professional pattern design. To its credit, the app is extremely easy to master as all users are required to control is the selection of one of their images and administer an apt pattern. The result remains fully editable and can be saved in a library to complement future creations. Furthermore, PhotoTessel is impressively responsive and powerful. Priced at £69 the product is a useful addition to any creative's palette. ■

Rating: **3/5**

Magic Frames 3000

Web: www.humansoftware.com

For cynical Photoshop fans who were shackled to the restrictive belief that there are only a handful of ways to fashion an image with a decorative fringe, allow us to introduce Magic Frames 3000.

Granted it's not the most revolutionary of concepts, but the fact it offers a gargantuan bounty of possibilities certainly gets our attention. In fact, the product claims to be able to supply users with more than 3000 frames and 1200 edges. The bubbling reservoir of creative edges (tagged at £59) means users lacking stimulation have a flexible option for shortcut creation. Alternatively, for those feeling a tad more adventurous the package allows users to tailor their own fringe, thanks to the editable layering mechanism. ■

Rating: **3/5**

SkinTune

Web: www.phototune.com

One of the most common grumbles with our beloved creative package is the lack of continuity in the presentation of skin colour and the difficulty of recreating acceptable tones.

Additionally, subtle skin colour is difficult to render on a computer monitor, so making accurate adjustments can be tricky.

SkinTune, sporting an attractive price tag of £49, aims to rectify this. Once users open an image in Photoshop, SkinTune instantly finds the nearest acceptable skin colour from the selected library and automatically corrects your image. After which users can take advantage of the tools to adjust hue, brightness, contrast and saturation. What's more, all the adjustments stay within the boundaries of the library to ensure life-like results. ■

Rating: **4/5**

