

TUTORIAL GIMP



PHOTO EDITING

Filter Fantasies: Part 2

While each filter adds its own unique elements to a design, it is the combination of filters that produces something that is uniquely yours, as **Michael J Hammel** shows us.

This issue in part 2 of our look at GIMP filters, we're sticking with options available from the stock set of filters – those every *GIMP* user will have at hand. While these examples are quick and easy, they can all be used to quickly spice up any artwork – many of the tricks discussed here have been used in making the above and previous splash images for this series on *The GIMP*.

And while we're looking at readily available filters, don't forget to check out the *GIMP* Registry and to search the Net for more plugins. There are literally hundreds available for download now, many of which are easily compiled or are supported by the Perl and Script-FU filter interfaces. Additionally, there are collections of these filters already precompiled and ready to install. So be sure to dig around a little once you've mastered today's tutorials.

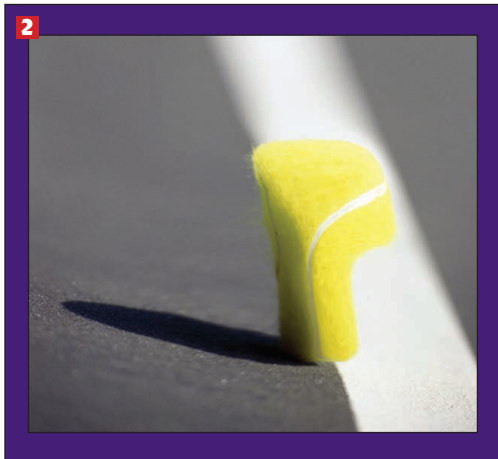
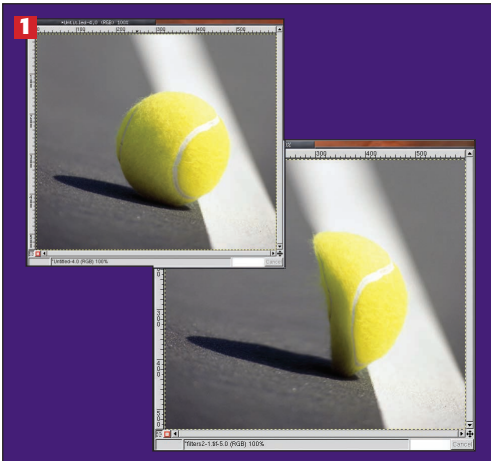
DRAG AND SCULPT

The *IWarp* plugin may offer one of the most interesting yet least-utilised of all standard *GIMP* filters. Its interactive window allows you to drag the mouse through a preview and deform an image in multiple ways, from shrinking and growing, to moving sections of an image the way a blob of acrylic paint might be spread across a canvas. The problem with *IWarp* is not its ease of use –

it easily stands as one of the most intuitive filters – but rather with what you might do with such a tool. Most warping will be small – changing the shape of someone's nose or ears, for example if you work in fantasy imagery of elves or aliens. But you can also warp objects in ways that might not be easy to do with the real object and too complex to simulate with 3D tools.

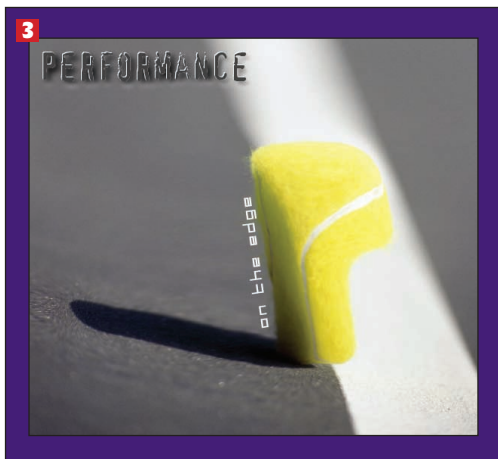
Flatten left side

1 This depth of field image allows us to be very creative with the tennis ball. Opening the *IWarp* plugin (Filters>Distorts>*IWarp*), we adjust the deform radius first to a large amount, about 75 (this is in percent of the image or selection area), and the amount to about 50 using a Deform Mode of 'Move'. Dragging in the preview window along the grain of the image, which angles slightly downward from left to right, pull most of the left side of the ball into the centre by starting the drag inside the ball. Choose a starting drag point that is nearer the left side than the centre of the ball – we don't want to disturb any part of the ball to the right of centre. Adjust the 'amount' and 'radius' down with successive drags to fine-tune the deformation. Change the mode to 'Shrink' to merge the seam to the new left edge, if necessary.



Flatten backside to make half a ball

2 Repeat the 'Move' mode on the right side dragging up through the white line to push the ball into the shape of a 'P'. By dragging inside the white we can keep the lines appearance intact (it's blurred by the depth of field anyway) and push the ball into the desired shape. Additional pushes are required near the top of the ball, starting just inside its edge, to push the ball to form a distinct square appearance at the upper right of the letter 'P'. Finally, the bottom of the 'P' is pulled down, and very small Move mode pushes are done beneath the letter to merge the shadow and the ground.



The Letter P

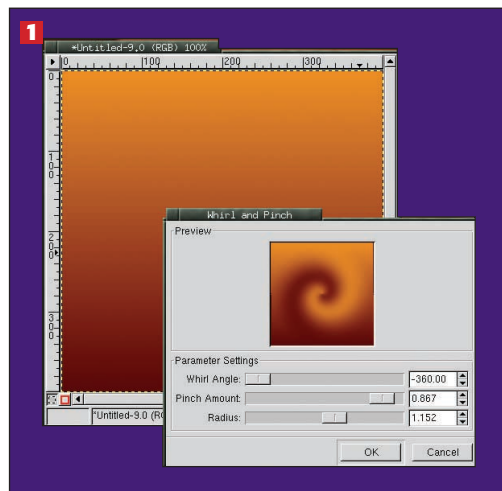
3 A final bit of adjustment to square off the shadow and the back of the P and we're ready to add some text. The result shows how we can take an ordinary object and convert it quickly into something that might cost much more to produce in real life or take far longer using more complex 3D tools.

CATCHING A WAVE

This next example is a quickie – making a coloured wave pattern with a grained texture. The simplicity of this process shows how a few filters can make a dramatic impact quickly.

Gradient

1 Start with a linear gradient using the foreground and background colours. One of the keys here to make the wave effect stand out is to use high colour contrast between the foreground and background colours. Next, open the Whirl and Pinch filter (Filters>Distorts>Whirl and Pinch). The Whirl Amount sets not only the size of the wave but the direction it breaks. The Pinch amount sets how tight the wave breaks – lower values unroll the wave. The radius sets how much of the image to use in creating the wave.

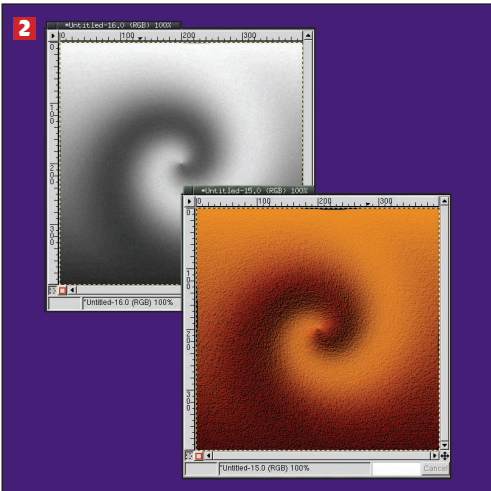


TUTORIAL GIMP

CATCHING A WAVE (CONTINUED)

Noisify & Bump Map

2 Duplicate the image with **Ctrl-D**, then desaturate the duplicate. Open the Noisify filter (Filters>Noise>Noisify). Be sure the Independent box is not checked. This will guarantee that the noise will not be coloured. Set the slider down to 0.04 to apply a fairly small amount of noise. The noise will provide texture in the final image. Click on the original image to make it the active image and open the Bump Map filter (Filters>Map>Bump Map). Set the Bump Map image to the desaturated copy and choose appropriate filter settings to bring out the texture in the coloured wave.

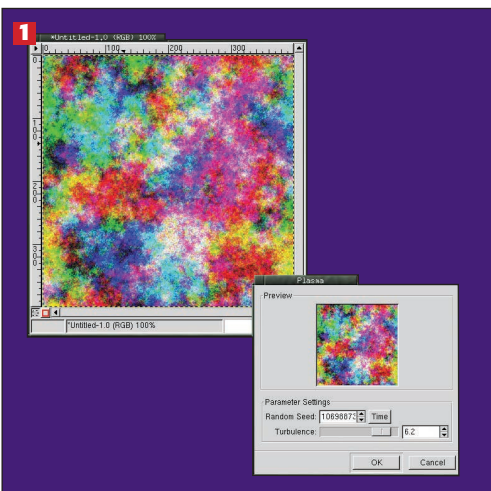


THE FIRE WITHIN

Another quick but useful effect is fire, or rather a cloud of burning gas. The effect takes only two filters and less than 2 minutes to create. More importantly, with careful use of *IWarp* and some brightness and contrast adjustments, you can convert one such image into a series of moving flames.

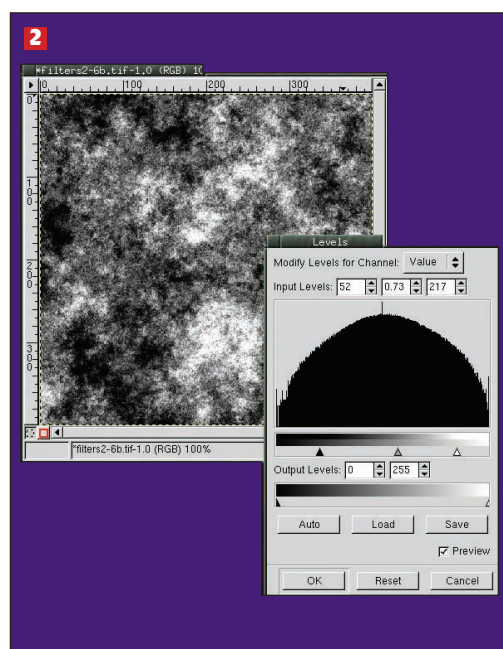
Plasma

1 Open a new image window of whatever dimensions you want or need. Render plasma (Filters>Render>Plasma) or solid noise (Filters>Render>Solid Noise) into the window. Plasma works better for this one because it better simulates the random gas look. If plasma is used, desaturate the image. The Plasma plugin renders in colour, whereas Solid Noise renders in black and white, and this effect needs to start with a black and white image.



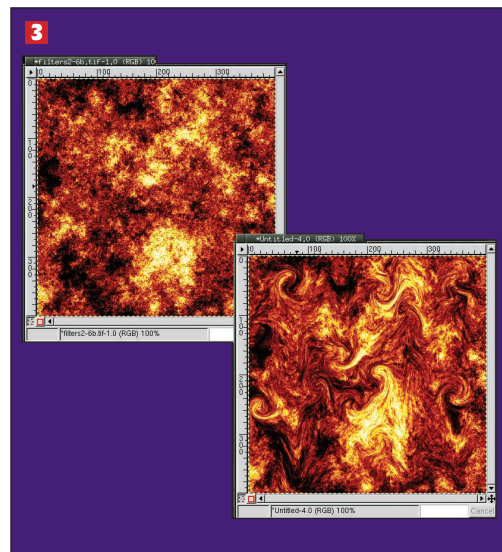
Gas & Flames

3 Adjust each of the other channels input levels (using the triangles below the histogram) individually, never closing the filter window until all changes are complete. The actual values will vary. In this example, we set the Red channel input values to 61, 1.94, 207; the Green channel to 72, 0.63, 207; and the Blue channel to 87, 0.26, 234. You can also adjust the output levels, perhaps reducing the amount of green used to bring out more yellow and red. While this image is fine for burning plasma, you can get creative and apply multiple passes of the *IWarp* plugin to create fingered flames, as shown in the second image here.



Desaturated & Level adjusted

2 Open the Levels dialog (Image>Colours>Levels). This is the only other filter you need for this effect. The Levels dialog initially shows the histogram for the Value channel. Adjust this channel by moving the black and white triangles on either end of the line below the histogram. Moving the black triangle to the right will increase the contrast of the image, effectively removing some of the clutter in the plasma cloud. Moving the white triangle to the left will also increase the contrast. When adjustments are complete, **DON'T** close the window! Further adjustments can be made to this channel later if needed before applying the changes. Keep in mind that the grey areas of the image will become reddish to yellow and white areas will go from yellow to white, so you have some idea what your image will look like even while its desaturated.

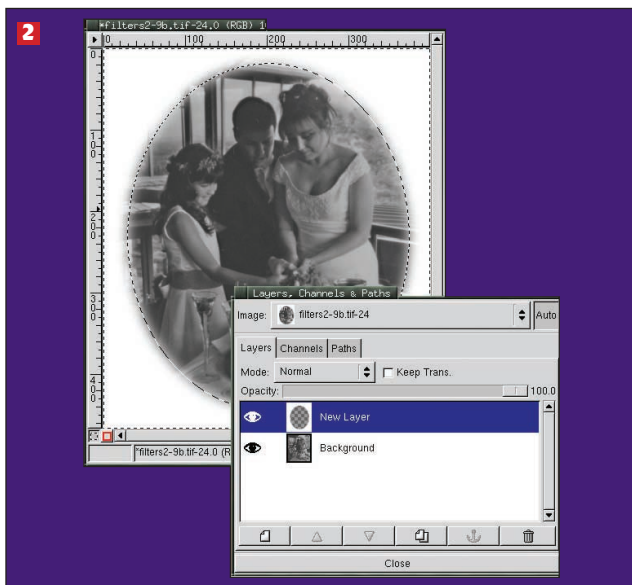


A BIT OF HISTORY

In this example we'll take an ordinary photo, apply a vignette and age it to make it appear as though it were a photo taken in the late 1800s. Using a photo from an occasion when the subjects are dressed formally helps, as sportswear and other contemporary clothing can spoil the 'authenticity' at a stroke!

Original image, desaturated

1 Start with an appropriate photo which, when filtered, would look just as good having come from 100 years in the past as it would from today. A wedding photo often fits this requirement. Scale and centre the subject of the image. Leave plenty of space around the subject in order to create a vignette (a soft round oval that fades into the border). Adjust the levels if necessary to set the white and black points but keep in mind that not adjusting the levels may work even better. Desaturate the image.



Vignette

2 Create an oval selection. Use the **Alt** key (or **Shift-Alt** if **Alt** alone doesn't work) to position the selection around the subject. Feather the selection a relatively large amount. For this roughly 400x500 image, we used feathering of about 25 pixels – you can experiment with different values, as a greater amount of feathering can look good for some images. Invert the selection. Create a new layer and then fill the selection with white. Clear the selection.

Aged photo & noisified version

3 Open the Old Photo Script-FU filter. This can be found under Script-FU>Decor in the Canvas menu. Choose Defocus and Sepia from the available options. You might add Mottle as well, but you definitely won't need to add a border – the vignette you just created is border enough – less is more! Apply the filter to a copy of the original. The filter will flatten your image for you (in the copy it creates) so you don't need to flatten it yourself. Be creative if you want – add some stains (Script-FU>Coffee Stains) or noise (Filters>Noise>Noisify) to make the image more grainy. [LXF](#)

