Smoke and Mirrors II - Corel Photo-paint

by Clifford Anderson

What follows is an assortment of text effects that I have come across in some of my readings. In the case of this document, the 'readings' are Photoshop User™ magazine and Scott Kelby's Down and Dirty Tricks (New Riders, 2000). Since the latter derives its content from the former, perhaps the source for all these exercises can be relegated to one source only (PU). Whatever the case, given that Photoshop™ and Photo-paint are different in many respects, this document attempts to transpose the content by means of methods more in tune with Photo-paint's ability. It should be noted that these exercises do not necessary adhere strictly to the letter of Scott and Felix's originals. I've taken license to move to a different groove whenever such an opportunity availed itself.

Let's go...

Inner Shadow Offset

This exercise involves creating an 'inner' shadow to offset the blend between similar colors. These colors have to do with the foreground, background and what lies between (the shadow). With the help of guides, shapes, and Clip-to-Parent, we can make short work of this already short exercise.

Be sure to have the Objects docker handy as well as the Color docker.

Create a new document : w500 x h200 x 72ppi, white. Show the rulers (View | Rulers) and drag 4 guides to the following coordinates : horizontal, 50/150; vertical, 50/450. Set 'Snap to guidelines' from the View drop down.

Press 'F7' for the Rectangle tool. In the Color docker, click on the Fill well and input the following numbers : R150 G200 B225 (a low chroma cyan). At the Rectangle tool property bar, make sure 'Uniform Fill' is selected, Shape width = 0, Rectangle Roundness = 100, and Render as Object is enabled. Draw you shape according to the guidelines in place. Rename the object, 'pill'.

figure 1

Set the Paint color to Black, disable the uniform fill from the Rectangle tool and increase the Shape Width to 10. Draw the same size shape. Rename it 'outline' (it will be only temporary) then remove the guidelines.

Select the Text tool ('F8') and change the property bar with : BankGothic Md BT, 100pts; type the word 'headache' then select the text ('Ctrl A'). Open the 'Format text' dialog and change 'Range Kerning' to -40. Click OK; click on the Object Picker. As a convenience, we can use the Align and Distribute dialog to center the text to the document (Objects | Arrange).

figure 2

As seen from the original (above), we want the text to be melded with the black outline. Therefore, transform the text both vertically and horizontally until it fits (figure 2).

Select both text and 'outline' then combine them (Ctrl Alt DnArr). Rename the object 'text' and enable 'Lock Object Transparency' from the foot of the Objects docker.

From the Color docker, input (for the Paint well) R0 G120 B110; drag it to the Paper well also (figure 3). Press 'G' for the Interactive Fill tool and drag from left to right, from one end of the pill shape to the other.

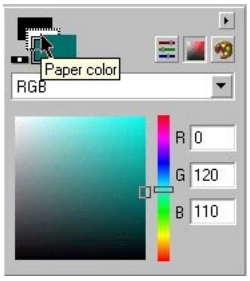


figure 3

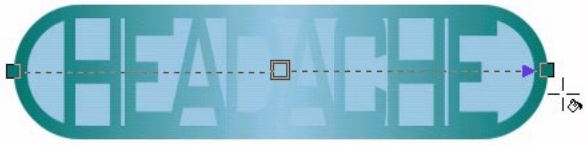


figure 4

Select the Paint well again and input the original cyan (R150 G200 B225). Drag & drop from the Paint well to the Interactive Fill tie then position it to the middle (figure 4).

Select the Object Picker, make a duplicate of 'text', rename it 'inner shadow', drag it below the 'text' object, then fill it with black (transparency lock should still be in play, here). Disable 'Lock Object Transparency', Clip-to-Parent 'inner shadow' to 'pill' (figure 5) and add a Gaussian blur of 4px.

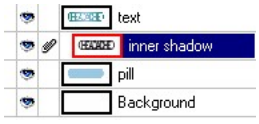


figure 5

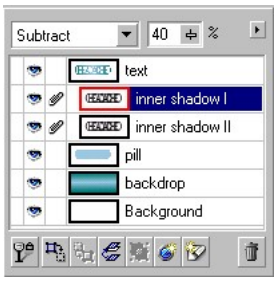


figure 6

At this point, we can see that the blur is just too weak to keep the edge for the as-weak cyan coloring. Therefore, duplicate 'inner shadow', Clip-to-Parent alongside the original shadow, switch its Merge mode to 'Subtract' and play with the opacity. I started very low (10) and worked my way upwards until the edge was clearly defined for the entire string of text (figure 6).

For kicks, add a new object (renamed 'backdrop') then drag it to the bottom (above 'Background'). Press 'G' and create a vertical fill derived from the same fill for the text.

The Clip-to-Parent served us in ensuring that the 'inner shadow' would not bleed outside the confines of the pill's shape. Just so you know, in Photoshop™, this command is known as 'Group with Previous' and isn't used enough in my personal experience. Very useful device in both programs.

Simple Neon Effect

Creating neon in Photo-paint may be a lot easier than you think. It is a simple combination of the Gaussian blur filter and Tone Curve adjustment. Experimenting with the latter can give you total control to what extent the neon is going to be glowing.

Start with a new document, w500 x h300 x 72ppi, black.

Select black for the Paint well, press 'F8' for the Text tool. Choose 'Baltasar', 130pts then type 'Red Hot'. Of course, you won't be able to see the text but that's only temporary. Finally, align it the center of the document (Objects | Arrange).

figure 1

To make the actual neon effect, the following. Press 'Ctrl M' to make a mask from the text then press 'Ctrl K' to get into Paint on Mask (figure 1, top).

Go to Effects | Blur > Gaussian Blur and input 3px (figure 1, middle).

Next, go to Image | Adjust > Tone Curve and set the curve according to figure 2 (see also figure 1, bottom).

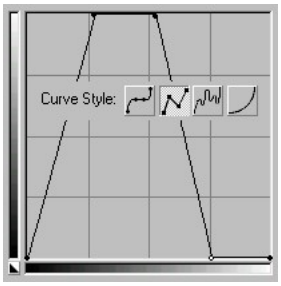


figure 2

(While still in the Tone Curve dialog, do notice that you can save curve information to your hard drive for re-use.)

Once done with the Tone Curve, press 'Ctrl K' again to transform the POM to a mask. Add a new object, rename it 'neon'.

Open the Color docker, select the Fill well then input R220 G50 B50 for a nice red. Go to Edit | Fill... to fill it with our 'neon' (figure 3).

And that's the basic neon effect. But, while we're here, let's add a couple more items for fun.

figure 3

Make a duplicate of the 'neon' object and place it below the original text object; rename it 'warpo' (you'll find out why shortly).

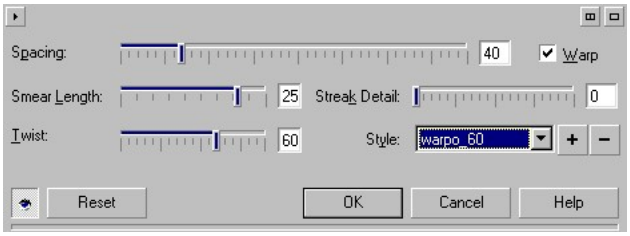


figure 4

Go to Effects | Distort > Whirlpool then set the Preset drop down to 'Super Warpo' (told you you'd find out shortly). The only change I'll ask you to make is with the Twist control; replace 45 with 60 (figure 4). This will make it a little more irregular. Reduce the Opacity of the object to 80%.

Consider. Because the 'warpo' object is behind the text, the text object serves to shield the effect from penetrating the inside of the neon. Only the outside of the 'neon' object gets the effect itself (figure 5).

figure 5

Let's add some flames. Add a new object, rename it 'flames' and drag it to the bottom of the Objects docker. Press 'I' for the Image Sprayer tool and find 'Fire' in the Brush Type drop down.


figure 6

I like to pick and choose which flames make the grade, so I click to paint each one individually (figure 6). If there is one I don't like, I simply 'Ctrl Z' to remove it. Create for yourself a nice array of flames along the bottom of the 'flames' object.

Outline Effect

One major minus in Photo-paint is its inability to stroke a path or mask effectively. This exercise would be made up predominantly of that technique if we could use it with good, working results. Because we can't, what we will do is utilize our resident path-maker, Draw.

figure 1

Using the Contour tool and simple cut/paste will make short work of our needs whereby we can then focus on the pluses of Photo-paint.

Let's start with Draw. Open a new document then reset the Workspace toolbar with figure 1.

Select the Text tool and type in the word 'KIDZ'. Click the Pick tool and from the property bar, input 150pts for the size and 'Futura XBlk BT'. Finally, center the text (Arrange | Align & Distribute).

With the text still selected, open the default RGB color palette (for Photo-paint compatibility) then click on Yellow. From the Interactive tools flyout, select the Contour tool and set the property bar options as in figure 2 (the remaining properties are fine as is).

figure 2

We want to fill these objects ourselves, so we need to break apart the Contour group then ungroup it. Go to the Arrange drop down menu and choose 'Break Contour Group Apart'. Press 'Ctrl U' to ungroup then ESC to deselect.

figure 3

As you can see (figure 3), the colors are simple. Starting from the Yellow text, outward : Red, White, Blue. Be sure you are choosing from the RGB palette and not the CMYK.

Now then, group the red, white, and blue objects then double-click the Pick tool to select all. In the toolbar press the 'Quick Trim' control. This will 'punch' out the stuff behind the yellow text, giving us the transparency we will need once in Photo-paint.

Press ESC to deselect, click on the yellow text. Before we cut this text, right-click Yellow from the color palette to add a hairline outline to it. This will serve to adequately overlap the outline object; 'Ctrl X' to cut it. Migrate over to Photo-paint, open a new document (w500 x h300 x 72ppi, 20% black) and paste. Rename the object 'kidz text'.

figure 4

Back to Draw, do the same thing for the remaining piece. Returning to Photo-paint, rename this object 'outline' and place it below 'kidz text'. When we center both these objects, the yellow text will be off due to the odd shape of the 'z'. Therefore, nudge the yellow text left to re-align it a bit (figure 4).

figure 5

The first thing we want to do is create a 'shadow' object. Double-click the Object Picker to select both objects then press 'Ctrl M' to generate a mask based on both. Create a new object, rename it 'shadow' and fill it with black. 'Sh PgDn' to place it at the bottom of the stack.

Remove the mask, go to Effects | Blur > Gaussian Blur, 8px. Finally, nudge the object down and right 12px, reduce the Opacity to 80% (figure 5).

(Doing the shadow up front is to give us a better visual for our proceedings.)

Select the 'outline' object, go to Effects | Texture > Plastic and input the following : Highlight, 0; Depth, 2; Smoothness, 12; Light Direction, 135.

Plastic gives us a soft edge but I wanted a hard edge for the yellow text that, with it, I couldn't quite get. Therefore, select the 'kidz text' object, go to Effects | 3D Effects > Emboss and input the following : Depth, 3; Level, 200; Direction, 135; Emboss color, Original color (figure 6).

figure 6

That's good enough... if we were interested in 'good enough'. But there's an interesting option I discovered while putting down this exercise that I'd like to add, here.

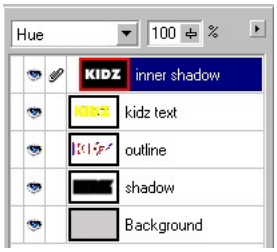


figure 7

Select 'kidz text' and press 'R' then 'Ctrl M' for an inverted mask. Create a new object, fill it with black, rename it 'inner shadow', then Clip-to-Parent to 'kidz text' (figure 7).

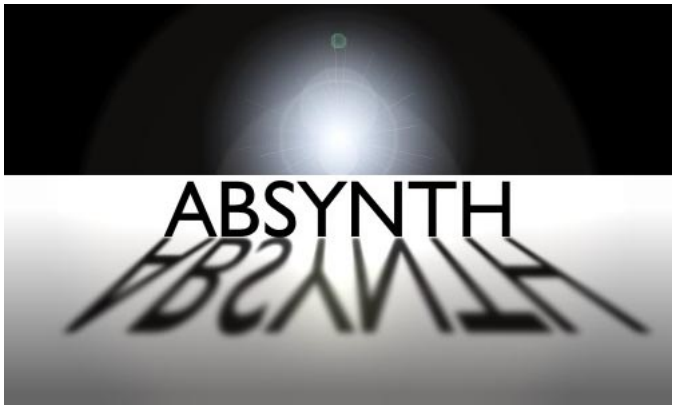
figure 8

Remove the mask, open Gaussian Blur (Effects | Blur) and input 4px. Press 'O' then nudge the 'inner shadow' down and right 5px. Finally, change its Merge mode to Hue (figure 7 and 8). 'Hue' is interesting because it makes white the emboss's upper-left outline and (at least to my eyes) seems to attribute the red to the shadow effect (black and yellow mix pushing toward the red). Nifty!

What do you think? Keep in mind the simple attribute of 'direction' in both the plastic and emboss filters. Changing these yields interesting options when entertaining yourself.

One final point : I switch the background gray to the named color, 'Light BlueGreen'.

Backlight Perspective



Shadow 'perspective' comes in many ways depending on the light source. Photo-paint does have perspective when attributing drop shadows and is very quick and effective at doing so. Unfortunately, it's only for left/right angles stemming from the top or bottom of the object. Nothing wrong with that, but it doesn't coincide with what we're about to do.

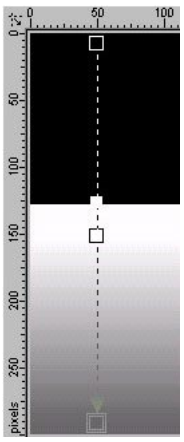


figure 1

Here we're dealing with a backlit source for the light, forcing the text shadow to fall on the 'floor' in front of it.

Start with a new document, w500 x h300 x 72ppi, white. Instantiate the rulers, also (View | Rulers).

Add a new object and rename it 'backdrop'. This will be our floor and sky, so to speak, built with the Interactive Fill tool. Press 'G' and drag a linear fill from top to bottom.

In figure 1, the color chips are as follows, from top to bottom : black, black, white, white, 60% black. The second 'black' and 'first' white are literally on top of each other to create the sharp edge transition. (Note according to the rulers, intermediate chip placement is at approx. 175 and 150.)

To add text, select the Text tool ('F8') and choose Humanst521 BT, 60pts. Type in 'ABSYNTH' and click on the Object Picker. Align the text to the center of the document (Objects | Arrange). Nudge the text down a bit so that it is clearly below the black of 'backdrop' (figure 2).

figure 2

Make a duplicate of the text and render to object (Objects | Text > Render as object). Ctrl-click and drag the top-middle handle of the text and drag downward. This will serve as our reflective text.

Grab the bottom-middle handle and stretch the text downward, about double the height of the text itself; press <enter> to commit (figure 3, top).

figure 3

From the Object Picker properties, switch the mode of transformation to 'perspective'. You now have 4 'donuts' in the corners of the text. Click and drag the bottom-left 'donut' and drag all the way to the left edge of the canvas; press <enter> again (figure 3, middle).

Now, these transformations may cause the alignment from the original text to perspectived text to be not quite right. If so, click and drag the top-right 'donut' and draw inward/outward accordingly (figure 3, bottom). Press <enter> when you're done.

Our next issue is to add some incremental blurring to the perspective text. The idea is, as the perspective pulls away from the original text, the shadow will become more blurred.

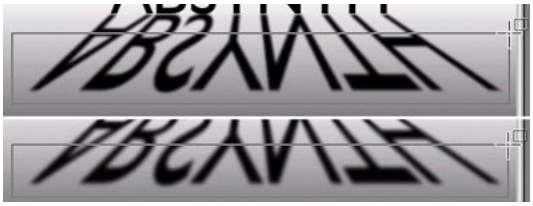


figure 4

Select the object and add a Gaussian Blur, 1px (Effects | Blur). Press 'R' for the Rectangle Mask tool then set the Soft Edge to 10. Draw a rectangle that encompasses the text up to and including the horizontal beam of the 'H' (figure 4, top). Add another Gaussian Blur, 1.5px.

Remove the mask then create another rectangular mask that is below the beam of the 'H' (figure 4, bottom). Set the Gaussian Blur to 2px and commit. Finally, remove the mask.

The Lens Flare is a trick in merging. Start by dragging a vertical guide to 250px and a horizontal guide to 100px. We'll use this for placing the center of the lens flare when the time comes.

Add a new object and fill it with black. Of course, this makes everything disappear and that's fine for now. Go to Effects | Render > Lens Flare and set the dialog according to figure 5.

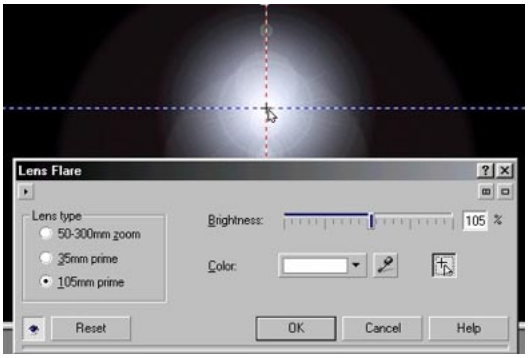


figure 5

Once done, change the Merge mode of this object to 'Add'. Since there is no 'color' value in black it simply gets dropped from view. Nifty!

What else it does, though, is obscure our original text a bit too much. Therefore, from the Objects docker, drag 'ABSYNTH' to the top.

There is just one more issue : the extent of the flare. It looks bad interacting with the shadow. So, let's deal with that. Select the 'lens flare' object, press 'R' for the Rectangle Mask tool, change the Soft Edge property to read '0', then create a mask that encompasses the bottom half of the 'backdrop' object (that which is not total black; figure 6). Create a Gaussian Blur, 16px.

figure 6

Isn't that cool? The 'Add' Merge mode just punches an extra bit of white/yellow to make it look authentically 'glaring'.

That does it. What do you think? Purely a matter of taste that I chose not to have both pieces of text touch at the bottom. If I wanted, I thought it might be cool to place little tiny lens flares under the leg(s) of the letters. But, I didn't...

Creating the "Post" Logo

Though we won't be using the word "Post" for reasons of trademark (it's an American breakfast cereal company), the logo we're about to create does derive its form from it. This exercise is likewise derived from an old DDT from Kelby in Photoshop User™ (November/December 2000, pp.22-3).

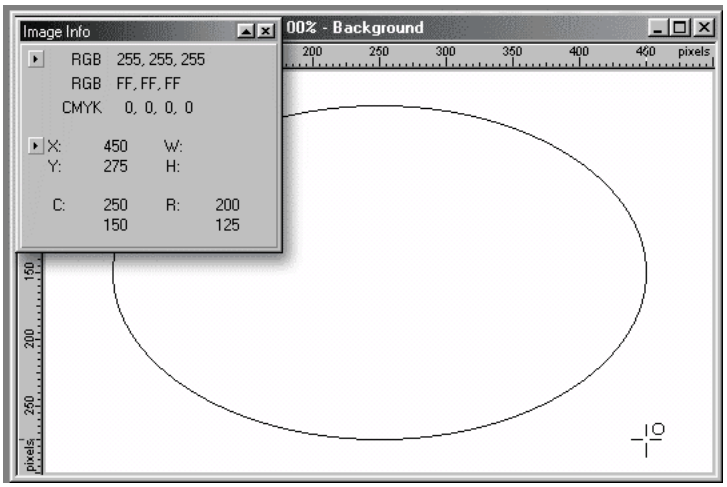


figure 1

Start with a new document (w500 x h300 x 72ppi, white) and set the Rulers (View | Rulers). Open the Objects and Info Docker.

On Shapes : We're going to be using the Ellipse Shape tool ('F7'). Keep in mind that this tool creates a shape from the outside, in. Meaning, if you want a circle 300px round with a 5px outline, its inside perimeter will be 290px. This will be essential for understanding our use of the Info docker.

To start the process, select the Ellipse Shape tool, click Orange for the outline color. In the property bar, disable the fill, set the border to 8, and make sure Render as Object is enabled.

As is apparent from figure 1, we'll freehand an exact size by using the Info docker (over against a bunch of guidelines). Place your cursor so that the X and Y values are 250 and 150, respectively. Shift-click and drag outward until the Radius ('R') reads, 200/125.

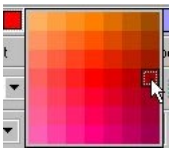


figure 2

We're going to make a second ellipse but make it a part of this object. To do so, go to the property bar and disable Render as Object. While we're changing properties, left-click and hold Red for a second until the Hue variance grid appears; click on the red in Row 3, Column 5 (figure 2).

Just as we've done, so again, start in the middle of the document, Shift-click and drag outward 8 pixels smaller than the original ellipse (figure 3). According to the Info docker, the Radius will be 192/118.

Rename this object 'outline'.

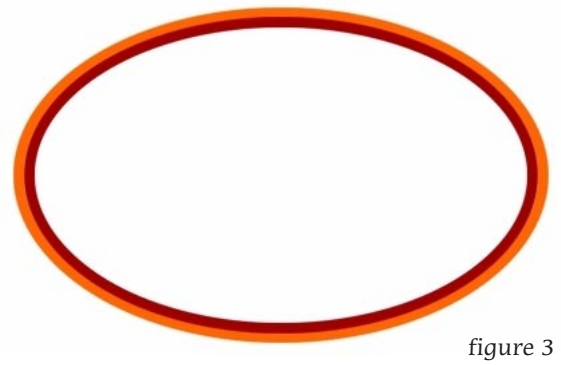


figure 3

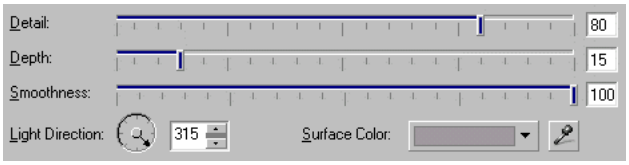


figure 4

To create the embossed button inside the outline, begin by creating a new object, rename it 'button'; then, using the Magic Wand mask tool ('W'), to click on the white, inside 'outline'.

Right-click 50% black from the color well and fill the ellipse; remove the mask when done.

We could have used any color, really, because we're going to use Relief Sculpture to make the shape of the button. It uses it's own color value but needs color (better, tonal value) in order to be used!

Go to Effects | Texture > Relief Sculpture and set it up according to figure 4 (the color chip is set to 40% black). Interestingly, this filter will allow us to emulate an additional outline border along with our customary bevel look. Nifty!

figure 5

Once finished, find your dark red again except right-click on it to set the fill well. Go to Edit | Fill... Lock it, set the Color Mode to 'Overlay', click OK (figure 5).

(The red - here - will be a degree lighter than the outline. Reason? We set the tone level of this 'Overlay' mode when we chose 40% black with Relief Sculpture. Had we chosen 50% black (neutral grey) we would've gotten a perfect match.)

figure 6

To slightly rotate 'button', first place it behind 'outline' ('Ctrl PgDn'), press 'O' for the Object Picker and choose Rotate from the Mode in the property bar.

Rotate counterclockwise just enough that the bevel is next to the outline, top-right corner (figure 6). Let's move on to the text.

figure 7

Click White for the text color, select the Text tool and type in the word 'Jill'. I used 'Eras Bd BT', 140pts. If you don't have an italic font, simply skew it to the right a bit. Also, rotate the text to match the direction of 'button' (figure 7).

Make 3 duplicates of the text and rename them according to figure 8. We'll take them one-by-one.

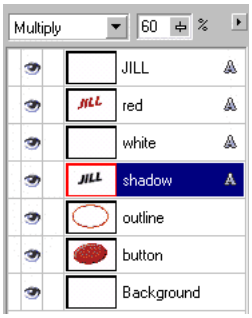


figure 8

Select 'Red' and fill it with the red we've been using. Nudge it down and right 3px.

'White' is already white, so nudge it down and right 6px.

'Black' is going to be our shadow (please fill it accordingly). Nudge it down and right 12px, set the Merge mode to 'Multiply', the Opacity to 60%, then apply a Gaussian blur of 5px (Effects | Blur).

In the end, I grouped all the text elements together and made a couple nudge adjustments in order to center them with the button.