

TP 5

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Rating: Excellent

Pros: Some truly wild and crazy effects as well as some extremely useful ones.

Cons: Learning curve is steeper than for KPT 3. No printed manual - PDF format only.

Categories: Plug-ins, XTensions & Xtras

Developer: MetaCreations, Inc. <<http://www.metacreations.com>>

There are Photoshop creative plug-ins and there are Photoshop creative plug-ins, and those brought to us from the minds of Kai Krause and Co. have always trod on the wilder shores of human imaginings.

REVELATION

My first exposure to any Photoshop plug-in was Kai's Power Tools 2.1 at the Sydney Morning Herald, and that early effort from MetaCreation's predecessor HSC Software was jaw dropping enough. KPT version 3 soon followed with further improvements and innovations, and it and components of its parent's toolset still have active places in my plug-ins menu, alongside KPT Convolver. KPT 5 (there was no version 4) is just as stunning and useful in its own way. And it beats the pants off all the other creative plug-ins from anybody else out there.

ANOTHER FOR YOUR KPT COLLECTION

KPT 5 does not supersede KPT 3 however. They are quite different filter sets to the extent that MetaCreations have included a free copy of 3 on the CD-ROM along with your copy of 5. That is nice of them, as I still get good use out of a KPT 2.1 module that came free on the KPT 3 CD-ROM, although that is absent on this disc.

There is a decided family resemblance in all the KPT plug-ins, whether version 2.1, 3 or 5, and none of them should be considered the rival or replacement for any of the others. Some components have similarities, particularly the various Fractal explorers, and KPT5's FraxPlover is an evolution of the Fractal Explorers of previous Kai's Power Tools. Other components represent completely new developments.

HE GUI, OR IS THAT GOOEY?

Another evolution that version 5 has undergone is within its interface. Kai Krause's interfaces are notorious for the fact that users either love to loathe them and Kai himself is comfortable with that, as his intent was to shake the complacency not to say complexity that dogs far too much software even now. He was quite the radical in his day but very much a leader of the pack in GUIs (Graphical User Interfaces) now. Many other developers have tried to imitate his look, such as the forthcoming Amorphium from Play, Inc. <www.play.com>, and I for one am grateful for an alternative that is pointing the way out of the now staid, mortally tired even, WIMP (Windows, Icons, Mouse, Pointer) computer metaphor.

rause has on the evidence renounced the many hidden features that plagued early GUIs, such as Convolver with its invisible stars that unlocked necessary production

functions, and everything is now plain to see. In fact you can even control just how the windows for each filter behave. Accurate numeric input is dead easy, just double click on a default value and type in your own. And I do love the playfulness of the 3D effects in KPT5. Inspiring to the creative process, as Krause's GUIs were intended to be in the first place.

THE FEATURES, BUD

This being a first look review, and KPT5 being such a deep product in its possibilities, I am simply going to list its components. Come back later for more in-depth articles on what you do with it. I have no doubt however that KPT5's effects will rapidly find their way into countless online and print publications, exactly as its predecessors did.

Blurrrr - blurring the Kai way.

FiberOptix - grow realistic or completely fake hair and fur on damned near anything.

Frax4D - remarkable evolution of fractal mathematics into the 4th dimension; the most abstract of all the effects.

FraxFlame - dancing flames and gaseous substances that touch on the fourth state of matter, plasma.

FraxPlorer - fractal generator on (yes, it is an appalling cliché) steroids.

Noize - Krause's answer to regular photoshop noise.

Orb-It - an evolution of sorts of aspects of KPT3's Spheroid Designer, but wilder.

RadWarp - warping for pixels, slightly reminiscent of Vector Effects' warping for vectors but spherical in nature.

ShapeShifter - amazing new way of creating uncannily real 3D looking buttons and forms; will get the most use of all of these plug-ins.

Smoothie - various new ways of smoothing.

A brilliant set of plug-ins and one that you will want to set daily time aside to explore. It is a classic already, so get it and go for it!

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