

GRAPHIC EXCHANGE



EXPERIENCE

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OS X

The Seven Per Cent Solution

They say beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but sometimes it can depend on what kind of eye is beholding.

That's why we raised an eyebrow when we recently got a call from Al Stygma, president of the United Canadian Colorblind Artists National Coalition.

"We at UCCANC are all for technology that improves our ability to create," Al began. "But when software developers try to say that they can make an application that can simulate what we at UCCANC have been perfecting by trained eye for years—well, that's when we have to take a stand."

Our confusion at Al's outburst was quickly cleared up when he explained that a company in Pittsburgh called Colorfield Digital Media (www.colorfield.com) had just released a new \$US79 Macintosh plug-in (Windows version due later this year) called Insight 1.0 that works with Photoshop, Illustrator, AfterEffects, ImageReady and Fireworks as well as being ColorSync-compliant. Colorfield contends that Insight gives artists, designers and publishers with perfect color vision the ability to see images just the way a person with any of the three most common forms of Dicromatic colorblindness would see them. Software-wise, this is certainly a horse of a different color.

"We think this is outrageous," protested Al. "We have been satisfactorily servicing the colorblind art and design market for a long time. Our colorblind artists painstakingly create special images which are specially optimized for any colorblind person, and especially the seven per cent of the male population who are afflicted by colorblindness. And our artists are not just colorblind—they're also experienced in translating normal color values into a special tonal range that we colorblind people can appreciate. We have a keen eye for colorblindness that no software could possibly duplicate."

But times are changing. There are now 6 billion people in the world, half of them men. And seven per cent of those men have color-deficient eyesight—a potential market of over 200 million. With Insight 1.0, Colorfield is poised to seize control of what that market views.

According to Colorfield spokesman John Walden, "Insight was developed to help designers and artists with normal color vision better evaluate the efficacy of their designs for the colorblind population. Its potential use spans graphic design, industrial design, software design, package design, environmental design, anywhere designers use colors to convey information, to an audience."

But Al Stygma isn't ready to give up without a fight.

"UCCANC clearly now offers the best in colorblind-aware design services. This software gives a black eye to colorblind designers and artists everywhere. The way we see it, no software anywhere can match the quality of expression, subtlety and texture that we produce."

Nonetheless, Insight has received two thumbs up from a variety of sources, including the well-respected Eyes and Fingers International organization.

Obviously this is one case in particular where we'll just have to wait—and see. ■

Here's a normal picture of a pretty blonde girl holding a multi-colored pinwheel (far left). If you were one of the 7% of the male population who suffers from the most common form of "red-green" colorblindness (called Deutan deficiency), what you'd see would look like the picture at left centre. If you were afflicted by a more uncommon type of colorblindness (called Protan deficiency), the picture would look like the one at right centre. And if you had the extremely rare case of Tritan deficiency, you'd be seeing the picture at the far right. These sample images were all produced using **COLORFIELD'S INSIGHT** Photoshop filter.

