

Are you playing with a full deck?

Special Effects Filters Alienskin Eye Candy 4000

by Ron Giddings

Just when we thought *KPT6* was going to be the end of crazy filters, Alienskin comes out with *Eye Candy 4000*.

Since we last heard from them, the champions of natural material simulation such as Fire, Water Drops and Fur have been busy applying their tools to Adobe's *AfterEffects*. Now they're back taking advantage of newer host software that's appeared. *Photoshop* layers, for instance, are now part of every day working procedure, rather than the somewhat limiting use of selections.

Although I haven't tried them, Macro-media *Fireworks 3* and Deneba *Canvas 7*

feature "live effects" with *Eye Candy*. The user can apply a filter, then revise the artwork, and the filter will automatically update to match the revision.

A welcome feature is the new and improved preview window. Besides extensive Presets for each effect, we are offered tabbed palettes to select such properties as lighting, bevel profile, etc., which cuts down on the clutter and helps considerably with the thinking process.

Mind you, it's very easy to go too far with the sliders, so every filter has a "Reset to Factory Default" command. Many of these settings can be traded with other users independent of the platform they use simply by placing them in a folder called "Eye Candy 4000 Settings".

One nice new feature in particular for Web page designers is a seamless tiling option. Checking this box affects the borders

in such a way that a texture can create a background with no visible seams. This is available for Fur, HSV Noise, Jiggle, Marble, Swirl, Water Drops and Wood.

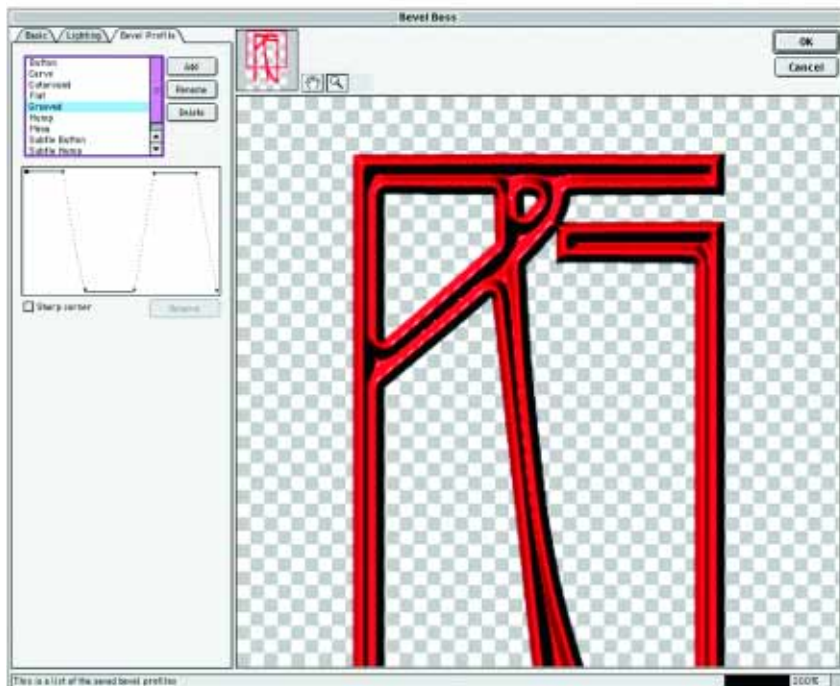
Of the 23 available filters in *Eye Candy 4000*, probably the most useful is going to be the Bevel Boss. The Bevel Profile tab provides a changeable Bezier curve to define either simple and smooth or very complicated bevels or chiseled effects.

Just try the Bevel Boss on Marble, Chrome or Glass—you won't find a better button maker for your website anywhere.

Speaking of buttons, the Show All Layers feature for *Photoshop* and *ImageReady* should help a lot with creating mouse-overs—when you create a revision, your last version is still visible underneath without leaving the Preview window.

If you find yourself yearning for the days of endless experimentation, when serendipity played a major role in getting your creative juices flowing, you're going to like the fact that there are still some crazies out there writing wacko filters like *Eye Candy 4000*. ■

The first thing you'll notice about the new version of Eye Candy are the enlarged and improved preview windows. I observed that some of the more intricate effects can take almost as long to preview as they do to render, which is why it is recommended that you try a filter out at a low dpi setting and save it to apply to the high res version. This is made possible because all these filters are resolution-independent. By the way, Shadow Lab still remains the only filter to my knowledge that can cast a shadow in front of or behind your selection with perspective blur.





And who among us hasn't had to fight the urge from time to time to deface a priceless Matisse? I know I have—and now I can, with Eye Candy's new *DRIP FILTER*. One recommendation that Alienskin makes is to paste a selection as a new layer and apply the filter to the entire layer because so many of its filters would go outside the selection.

Although *CHROME* and *GLASS* (left) are not new, they have been vastly improved to include the users' own TIFFs as reflections. Chrome, in particular, will be used a lot by anyone who wants to do metallic text. Lighting and drop shadows really enhance the realism of these 2 1/2D effects.

MARBLE and *WOOD* (left), two of the five new filters, reaffirm Eye Candy's strengths for creating natural textures, with control over knots, grain, color and more. These are especially effective when combined with its beveling tool (see the cover of this issue).



ALIENSKIN EYE CANDY 4000

MACINTOSH:
PowerPC
OS 8.6 or greater
32 MB RAM, 24-bit color monitor

WINDOWS:
Pentium II or better
Windows 98/NT/2000/Me
32 MB RAM, 24-bit color monitor

MACINTOSH OR PC HOST APPLICATION
Adobe Photoshop 4 or later
Macromedia Fireworks 2 or later
Deneba Canvas 6
Jasc Paintshop Pro 5 or later
Corel Photo-Paint 8 or later

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US\$169
Alienskin Software, Inc.
Telephone 919-832-4124
Web www.alienskin.com