

FIRST EXPOSURE

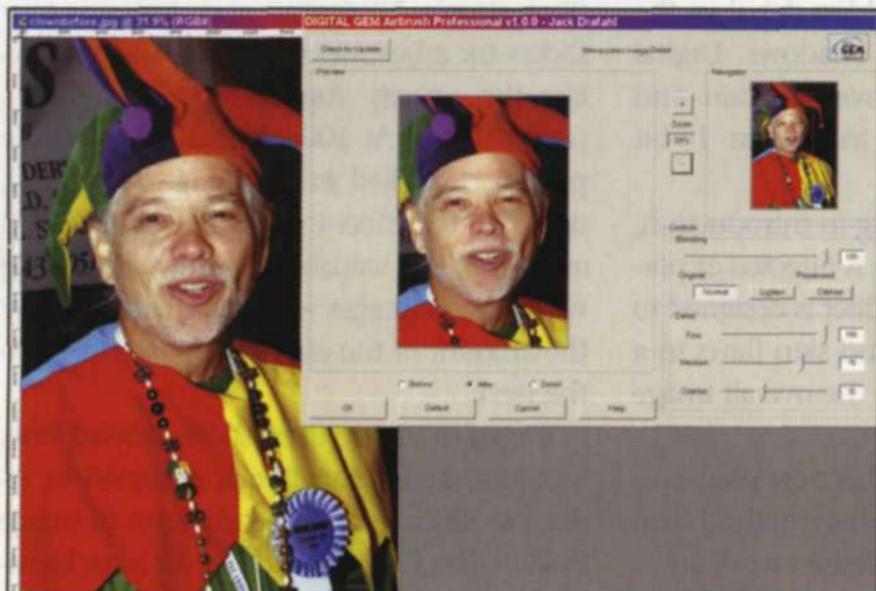
JACK AND SUE DRAFAHL

ONE OF THE BIGGEST advancements in making the conversion from film to digital was scanners that incorporated Digital Ice. This unique technology reduces dust and scratches on the film while it was scanned. Scanners later expanded to utilize Digital Roc for restoring faded colors, and Digital Gem for grain reduction. These innovative technologies came from Applied Science Fiction, which was later acquired by Kodak's Austin Development Center.



It wasn't long before many of these scanner technologies were converted to Photoshop plug-in filters. Digital Gem reduces distracting digital noise as well as film grain. Digital Roc restores, corrects and balances image color. Digital Sho reveals hidden detail in the shadows. Joining this suite of image correction and enhancement plug-ins are the Pro versions. These advanced filters offer the photogra-

Kodak DIGITAL GEM
Airbrush Professional



Digital Gem Airbrush menu overlaid on original image, with preview thumbnail on left, and navigator screen on right. Sliders used to tweak the airbrush effect are at the lower right side. (Original stock shot taken on color negative film and scanned at 6 megapixels or 18 megabytes, 3072x2048)

Comparison view of Digital Gem Airbrush plug-in filter. "Before" image is on the left and applied image on the right. The range selection menu is in the upper center. This command was used to select the facial tones for the application of the filter. Adobe Photoshop navigator is in the lower center, and shows you the zoomed in section of the image.



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Backgrounds by David Maheu

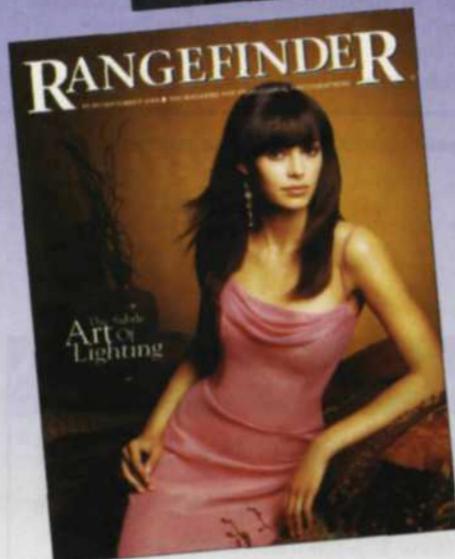
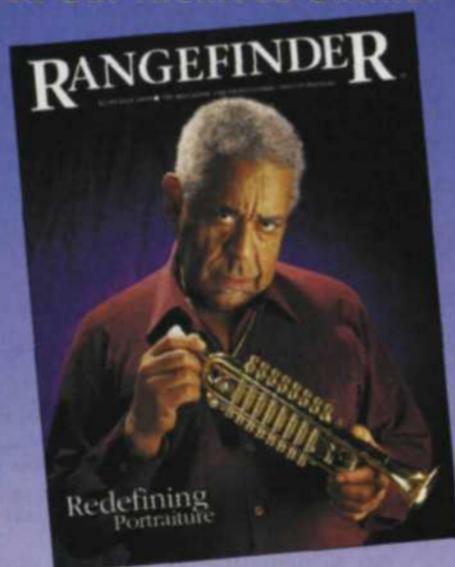
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Before and after image of the Kodak Digital Gem filter in use. Foreground shows the Digital Gem menu. Notice that only the areas selected with the Adobe Photoshop Color Range filter are displayed in the menu and affected by the filter.

pher even more control and better image enhancement. The Digital Roc Pro adds contrast and brightness control as well as supporting 16-bit color images. Digital Sho Pro expands to reveal hidden detail in the highlight as well as the shadows. Digital Gem Pro adds more powerful grain and noise reduction features as well as 16-bit support.

Kodak's most recent plug-in introduction, Digital Gem Airbrush Pro, is targeted at portrait photographers. This filter is designed to reduce or smooth facial and skin flaws in a portrait without reducing the overall image quality.

The first step in using this new plug-in is that you must decide what method you want to use to select the desired work areas. One method is to use the Photoshop select > Color Range filter to select just the facial areas you want to retouch. If that doesn't work, you can try the Magic Wand, using the Add Selections to choose only those areas you want to adjust. We suggest you feather your selection by about two pixels so the Digital Gem Airbrush blends in with the rest of the image. You can even make all your adjustments on a duplicate layer for even more blending control.

When the Airbrush menu opens, you will be presented with a preview screen on the left and a slider control screen on the right. The left thumbnail image can be toggled so you can see the before and after effect of the

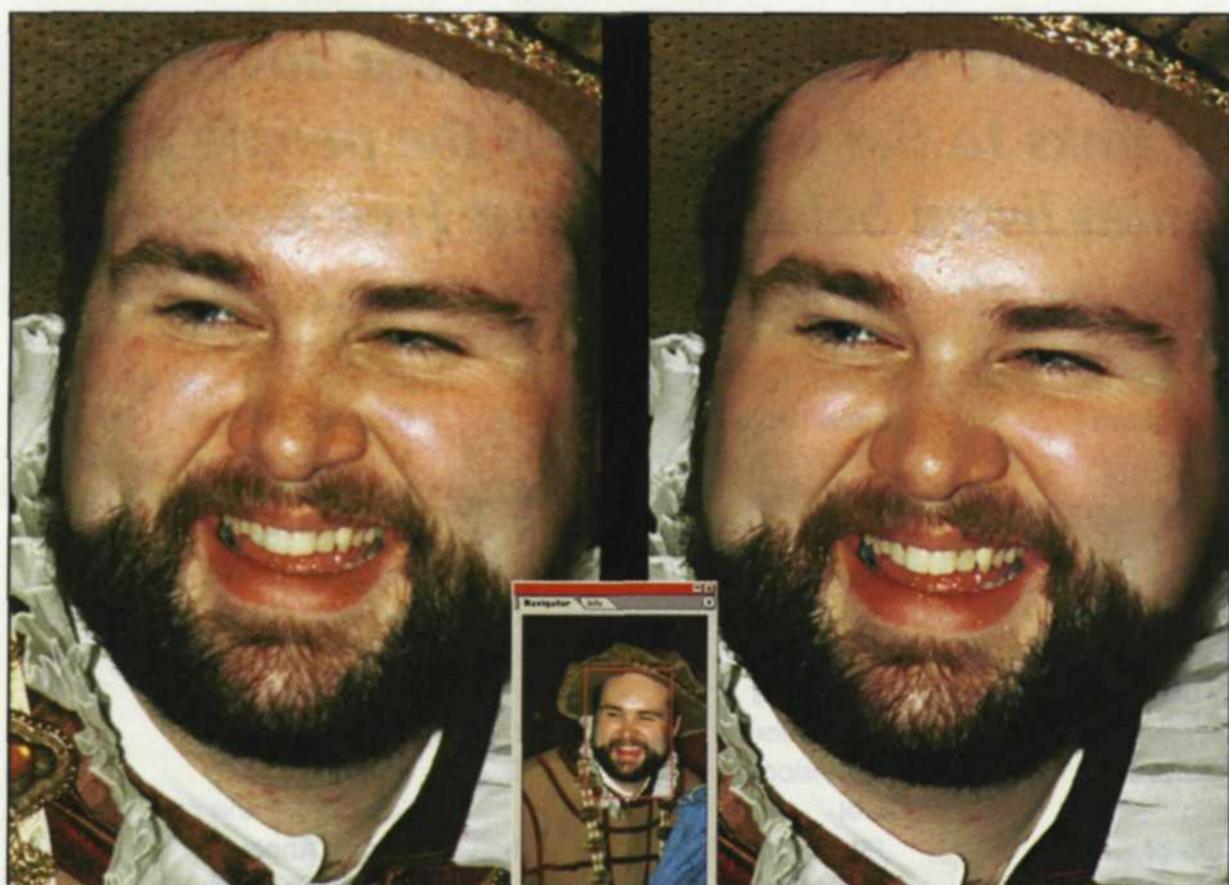
filter. You can also enlarge or reduce the thumbnail image to make critical adjustment decisions.

The right thumbnail image resembles Photoshop's Navigator and features four sliders for adjustment. The top slider works like the opacity function in Photoshop's Layers menu. At 100, the full effect of the plug-in is applied to the image, and at 50, only half the effect is applied to the selected area. This is a valuable control for working with several images where you have to vary the amount of the effect from one image to the next.

You will also find three sliders labeled Fine, Medium, and Course, each designed to reduce facial flaws at a specific level of image quality. The Course would be for large blemishes, while the Fine would be for very slight facial flaws. Finally, there are three boxes that allow you to slightly lighten or darken the original image.

We realize that this plug-in filter is targeted towards portrait photographers, but we feel it offers even more applications. As we delve through some of our older film images and work on scanning them, we find that several were taken on very high speed color negative films. We have found that using the filter's Fine, Medium and Course adjustments make short work of the larger grain effects.

The photographer who used to spend endless hours retouching facial flaws will be



Before and after application of the Kodak Digital Gem Airbrush filter. The Adobe Photoshop navigator menu is in the center lower section, and showed the zoomed in section of the image.



Before (left) and after (right) images of the Kodak Digital Gem Airbrush filter in use.

amazed at the speed with which they can now edit portraits with this plug-in. The versatility and fine line control make it easy to remove unwanted blemishes while still maintaining eyes and intricate eyelash detail. We both give this plug-in a big thumbs up as this filter is definitely a keeper.

Digital Gem Airbrush Professional is available for both Macintosh and PC Platforms. You can download a free trial version of the

plug-in from www.asf.com/. This version applies a digital watermark but is totally functional otherwise. If you like what you see in this plug-in, you can then purchase a software key for \$99.95 to disable the watermark, and you are in business.

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