



# Gloria in Extensis

Extensis Intellihance is heavenly for **improving your images**. Ken McMahon sings its praises.

It's more than a year since I took stock of the myriad plug-ins available for image editors. They're generally referred to as Photoshop plug-ins but you can use them with any application which supports Adobe's plug-in architecture. This month, though, I want to concentrate on one that's earned its keep many times over in the past year, and that's Extensis Intellihance.

**Intellihance is a** multi-faceted plug-in which improves your images by first evaluating them, then making adjustments to the contrast, brightness and saturation, and applying sharpness and despeckle filters. You can alter the settings to reflect your own personal preference and save the alterations as presets. Say, for instance, that images grabbed from your camcorder always had a particular colour cast and grainy-looking shadow areas, you could optimise Intellihance's preferences and save them as a preset to be used when processing video images.

Used in combination with an image editor which supports scripting or batch processing, Intellihance becomes just about the quickest and easiest way to bring your images up to scratch.

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## When you select

Intellihance from the plug-in filters menu of your application, you are presented with a not very impressive dialog box with three buttons: enhance image, preferences and cancel. The enhance image button does what it says. Using the default settings you can give it a try, but you'll do better to press the preferences button which gives you more of a hand in the process. The preferences dialog is shown in Fig 1. This

is one of a series of pictures I took outside at night, with a flash mounted on the camera. Inevitably, the highlights in the foreground are a little burned out and the illumination falls off rapidly (in inverse proportion to the square of the distance, for all you technical types) resulting in some very dense shadows. Using the default settings, Intellihance has done a pretty good job of bringing some detail back into the



**▲ FIG 2 YOU CAN FINE TUNE ADJUSTMENTS BUT REGRETTABLY ALL THE FINE TUNING IN THE WORLD CANNOT BE SAVED AS PART OF A PRESET**

shadow areas. The "before" version can be viewed in the preview window by pressing Control. The highlights are still looking harsh, though, and the contrast is way too high, probably not helped by Intellihance's bucketload approach to unsharp masking. So there's still plenty we can do with this image.

**Before you start**, it's probably worthwhile selecting Preferences from the "display at launch" pulldown so you come straight here next time you select Intellihance from the plug-in's menu. Another thing worth doing right away is maximising the window to full-screen. Oh, and I should have told you to make sure that you crop your picture nice and tight, as any areas of white or any flat colour around the edges will throw Intellihance off the scent.

In the top left of Fig 1, you can see pulldown menus from which you can select presets for all the adjustments. The contrast pulldown has seven options, ranging from Off to Hard, Snappy, Flatten Highlights and Flatten Shadows. Soft seems to do the trick well with this kind of image. The saturation presets range from Low to High with a few in-between settings: all increase the saturation of the original, and changing



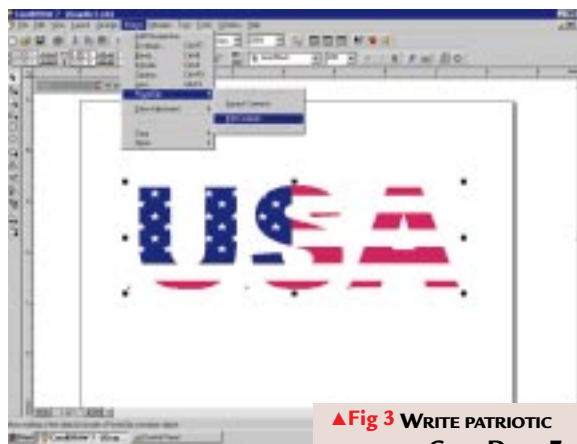
**◀ FIG 1 INTELLIHANCE PROVIDES A NICE BIG PREVIEW WINDOW SO YOU CAN SEE EXACTLY WHAT'S GOING ON. PRESS CONTROL TO REVERT TO THE PRE-ADJUSTED IMAGE. THE BLACK AND RED AREAS ON THE HISTOGRAM INDICATE PRE- AND POST-ADJUSTED LEVELS RESPECTIVELY**

## Questions & answers

**Q** I want to have the letters USA filled with stars and stripes clipart. How could I do it? I have Microsoft Publisher 97, CorelDraw 3, SerifDraw Plus 2 and Pageplus 3, yet no matter what I try, it doesn't seem to register the clipart. I have tried everything to achieve this but nothing seems to work. What I had to settle for in the end was a stars and stripes flag placed behind the text with a clear fill colour.

MICHAEL PHOENIX

**a** My advice is to upgrade to CorelDraw 7 which, in the form of Powerclips, provides exactly what you need. Here's how to create text filled with the stars and stripes flag. First, create the USA text by clicking in the draw window to create artistic rather than paragraph text. Set the text using the font and size pull-down (I've used 200pt Arial Black). Next, import the flag from the Corel clipart CD, which contains just about every flag ever flown, including semaphore flags and the skull and crossbones. With the flag still selected, choose "Powerclip — place inside container" from the effects



menu, then click on the USA text. You can position the flag artwork within the text by selecting Edit Contents from the same menu.

**▲ Fig 3 WRITE PATRIOTIC LETTERS IN CORELDRAW 7, COURTESY OF POWERCLIPS. THE CONTENT, THE US FLAG, CAN BE POSITIONED ACCURATELY USING EDIT CONTENTS**

it from medium to low will tone things down without losing colour from the skin tones. The sharpness settings, like the others, increase the overall sharpness of the image. The lowest setting is Soft, but don't expect it to soften or blur the images: it just sharpens things up by a soft degree. Because it's so contrasty I don't think this image, nor others like it, will benefit from sharpness, so I'm turning it off. Bear in mind that you're trying to optimise these settings, not just for this one image but for all of the

images you're going to process using these presets. The next thing to do is save the preset; I've called it "night flash".

### Fine tuning

If you want more control than the pulldown settings provide, hit the Fine Tune button at the bottom of the preview window. Fine-tuning adjustments can be made manually only to individual images: you can't save the adjustments as part of a preset [Fig2].

This replaces the pulldowns with a tabbed palette, giving greater control over each of the image adjustments.

**Instead of a few** presets you get access to sliders and other tools which provide an infinitely variable degree of control. Using the tone panel I've put detail back into the highlights by bringing the highlight slider back up to 255 and lightened up the midtones using the midtone slider. There are three eyedropper tools you can use to set the white, black and midtone points from the image, and a lightmeter which you can use to select an area of the image on which to concentrate when making tonal adjustments. The final adjustment I've made is to fine tune the cast in order to remove the green tinge that's crept into the wall.

**There really isn't** too much wrong with this image to start with, but by using Intellihance I've managed to make real improvements in no time at all. What's more, other similar images on which I've tried these settings all benefit from similar improvements, in some cases bringing out background detail that previously was not visible.

## COLOUR MANAGEMENT CUES

Following the Colour Management workshop in the September issue, a number of you wrote in to ask for further information about ICC-compliant colour management systems.

**There seem to be** relatively few books on the subject, although I can wholeheartedly recommend Agfa's *The Secrets of Colour Management* which you can order online from [www.agfahome.com/publications/dcp5text.html](http://www.agfahome.com/publications/dcp5text.html). Chapters include: The Digital Reproduction Workflow; What Is Light?; How Do We Perceive Colour?; Why Colour Management?; Monitor Limitations; Characterizing Output Devices; Colour Separation; and Colour Management Today.

There is also an Agfa colour management FAQ at

[www.agfahome.com/faqs/colormgmt.html](http://www.agfahome.com/faqs/colormgmt.html), although this is rather heavily Agfa-product biased.

**Other useful web** resources include:

➤ The International Colour Consortium at [www.color.org](http://www.color.org) which has good links to most of the relevant sites.

➤ Try [www.apple.com/colorsync/index.html](http://www.apple.com/colorsync/index.html) for details of Apple's ColorSync CMS.

➤ And at [www.adobe.com/supportservice/custsupport/TECHGUIDE/PSHOP/CMS3/cms\\_gen.html](http://www.adobe.com/supportservice/custsupport/TECHGUIDE/PSHOP/CMS3/cms_gen.html) you can find Adobe's excellent and comprehensive technical guide to colour management.

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