



Effective graphics

Ken McMahon tackles your **problems with chrome** and sorts out the negative side of scanning.

We've had a positively bulging mailbox, so I thought I'd devote most of this month's column to your questions and comments.

Robin Beck tried the chrome text effect mentioned in April using Paint Shop Pro 6, and was surprised he ended up with something not particularly metallic looking. My guess is that Paint Shop Pro developer JASC has tweaked the hot wax effect filter. While it never did look anything like hot wax, now it's not so good at chrome either. Take a look at these two samples (screenshot 1). The top one is my original effort in Paint Shop Pro 4.15SE, the lower is in version 6. Don't worry, I hear you cry – Paint Shop Pro 6 has a chrome special effect all of its own. Unfortunately, like many of version 6's new special effects, it doesn't exactly deliver the goods its description promises.

The good news is that if you're on the hunt for Paint Shop Pro tutorials, hints and tips, plug-ins and other resources, the Paint Shop Pro User Group has an excellent website that you can find at www.pspug.org.

Scanning update

Following on from Tony Almond's query about scanning and colour adjusting negatives in the same issue, Robin also wants to know if you can scan negative film on a flatbed without a transparency hood. The short answer is no. Negatives and transparencies need to be scanned – and viewed for that matter – with transmitted light. A transparency adaptor or hood backlights the trannie, and the main light used for illuminating reflective material is switched off. Robin



Paint Shop Pro 6 shows its metal (bottom), while we can relive the way it used to work in version 4 (top)



The Cool 360 application shipped with Ulead Photo Express 3

also wants to know if there's a way of 'positivising' scanned negatives in Paint Shop Pro 6 in the same way I described for PhotoPaint and Photoshop. Well, Paint Shop Pro 6 has a negative command that simply inverts the image. Removing the cast is more problematic and as the program seems to lack the ability to set white, black and midtone points using an eyedropper on the image, it doesn't look good. Of course, if anyone knows different...

While we're on the subject of negatives, Brian Story emailed to say I'd got it wrong about the orange mask on negatives. 'The orange mask is actually there to help correct for the fact that the colour characteristics of the dyes used in manufacturing the film are not perfect, and the masking technique improves the accuracy of the reproduction of colours in

the final print,' he says, and being from the Department of Applied Physics at the University of Dundee I suppose he should know.

My information came from an unhealthy interest in photographic chemistry many years ago, gleaned while up to my elbows in chemicals in a

darkened bathroom. Next time I'll make sure to check my facts. Either way, if it interests you, you can find out more at www.photo.net/photo/orange-negative-mask.html. Reading this explanation and the aforementioned bathroom experiences are more than enough to convince me that digital photography is the way to go.

Panoramic panic

Way back in December I looked at producing QuickTime VR panoramas using a digital camera and Corel PhotoPaint 9. Firstly, I owe belated apologies to some readers for not having made it clear that, in addition to needing QuickTime 4 to view 360-degree panoramas, you also need a package to produce them in. Of course, you can join a row of pictures to make a panorama in virtually any image-editing package, but for 360-degree wrap-around views you need something capable of generating QuickTime panorama .mov files.

I used Corel PhotoPaint 9, which at the time was one of the few packages to support QuickTime VR editing. There hasn't been a rush of products to join it, but andrew@webby.freemove.com is a big fan of PictureWorks Spin Panorama. Although I've not used it myself, judging from the information on the website (www.pictureworks.com) it provides all the tools necessary to get the job done painlessly. Although there's no demo, you can download a Java applet to provide browser-based navigation through a QuickTime VR Panorama.

Andy Scott emailed to say he had

Multimedia must-read

If you're looking for a good bedtime read, you could do worse than *Dust or Magic – Secrets of Successful Multimedia Design* by Bob Hughes (Addison-Wesley ISBN 0-201-36071-3). This is not, as the title might suggest, another tome full of Director tips and techniques, but a broad look at why some multimedia projects are insanely great yet the majority make you wish CD-ROM had never been invented.

Hughes kicks off with

some philosophical and historical background tackling the fundamental question of how and why 'good stuff' – which could mean anything from the flintlock trigger that helped Nelson win the battle of Trafalgar to Jeff Hawkins' PalmPilot organiser – is produced.

From there we move on to what makes computers such an irresistible creative medium, and why we waste so much time and effort on them. In the following



chapters Hughes provides insightful analysis of the players, projects and theories

that have played a part in the development of multimedia as we know it today.

Surprisingly, considering the topic, many of the sources and examples drawn on are British. Hughes' experience, insight and his concentration on defining the essence of excellence from any example make for a fascinating read. I'd recommend this to anyone involved in multimedia – students, project managers, designers, programmers and discerning consumers.

attempted to take a 360-degree image from a hill in the lake district, but was having difficulty stitching the pictures together. In addition to Spin Panorama and Corel PhotoPaint 9, you could also choose Adobe PhotoDeluxe Home Edition 3, MGI Photo Suite III or Ulead Photo Express 3. These all provide pretty good tools for stitching, but only Photo Express 3 will produce QuickTime 360-degree panoramas (screenshot 2).

The last word on 360-degree imaging goes to Derek Trayler, who had some interesting things to say about the 'joining-up' problem that occurs when you don't rotate your camera in a perfect, level 360-degree circle.

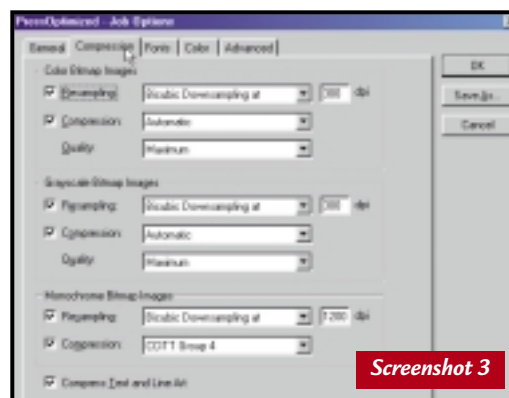
'I am not an expert on digital photography or stitching with Photoshop but if you take a series of shots by holding a camera and turning round I doubt if you will ever get them to fit properly,' he says.

According to Derek, the problem is that the camera needs to rotate around the 'back nodal point' of the lens – this is the point about half-way between the lens and film plane at which the image inverts. Guess what? This point isn't marked on most lenses and even if it was you probably won't be able to fix your camera to the tripod at the correct position. Derek advises using a special sliding mount that will allow you to fix the camera to the tripod in an adjustable fashion.

This might be more of a problem with a conventional SLR than with a digital camera. Detailed examination of my Fujifilm MX600 zoom reveals that the tripod mounting on the base, while

backwards of the lens is probably slightly forward of the CCD-array. However, this is pure guesswork.

Over the next few weeks I'll be experimenting with panoramas – see www.pelicans.demon.co.uk/panorama for the results. Feel free to tell us about any panoramic experiences of your own.



Press-ready PDFs courtesy of Acrobat Distiller 4

Porting Quark files

Alan Murphy wants to know if a report he has produced in QuarkXpress 4 on a Windows machine will be OK when his bureau opens it on a Mac. In my experience Windows Xpress files convert and open pretty reliably on Macs, but there will inevitably be problems with missing or mismatched fonts.

There are three options for getting your Windows Quark pages to a bureau with high odds of receiving them back as you expected. The first is to find a PC-based bureau. We published a list a while

back and I can email this to anyone who wants it – send a request to the email address below. Regrettably Corel appears to have dropped its list of UK approved service bureaux.

The other option is to print the file to disc, ie save it as a PostScript file. I'd recommend downloading the most recent version of the Adobe PostScript driver (v5.1.2 for NT or v4.3.1 for Win95/98) from www.adobe.com/support/downloads/pdrtwin.htm. You will also need the PostScript Printer Description (PPD) file for the imagesetter that your bureau uses. They should be able to provide this, but you can also get it from Adobe's website.

One problem with PostScript files is that they can be quite bulky. A more compact and simpler solution all round is to produce a pdf. Acrobat 4's press optimised settings

(screenshot 3) are a good starting place from which you can customise settings for compression, font embedding and colour management. If you're using an earlier version of Distiller it's just as easy to set the job options for press output.

CONTACTS

Ken McMahon welcomes your comments on the Graphics & DTP column. Contact him via the PCW editorial office, or email: graphics@pcw.co.uk