Madison PhotoPlus the Photo Summit
e-Photo Newsletter
September, 2004

Happy September!

This month's newsletter will be in 2 sections - the first being instructional, the second being news about things going on in the stores that you will want to know about (not a sales announcement).

A PHOTOGRAPHIC FILTER PRIMER

Both film and digital pictures are often improved by the use of filters. A filter can be as simple as a piece of glass placed in front of a lens, or as complex as a sophisticated computer program. All filters do one thing: change the way a picture will be rendered. Most filters are broken down into broad categories, including
- color correcting
- close up
- polarizing
- neutral density
- special effects.

Color correcting filters serve many functions, such as accentuating a sunset, removing the unnatural hues of indoor, flashless photography, changing contrast in black and white photography and more. In a recent issue of the newsletter, we discussed the Kelvin scale of light temperatures. Colored filters can correct the temperature of the actual light before it exposes the film or digital pickup chip. Some of these filters can work on only a specific section of the spectrum, such as an *enhancing filter*, which makes red tones deeper without affecting other subjects in a photo, such as green grass. (This filter is very popular when shooting autumn foliage). These filters are usually numerically named, from a system created by Frederick Wratten (a British scientist) about a century ago. A synopsis of this nomenclature can be found at http://photonotes.org/cgi-bin/entry.pl?id=Wrattennumbers.

Close up filters (sometimes referred to as close up lenses) are like eyeglasses for your camera's lens. Most lenses can focus from a near distance, say 24", to infinity. Putting a close up lens in front of most cameras allows the lens to focus in range from only a few inches to perhaps a few feet. These filters allow the photographer to move in tight and magnify a small item such as a flower, insect, piece of jewelry, etc. These filters typically are sold in sets of varied strengths, with the filters capable of being used separately or in combination.

The optical formulation of some lenses prohibit the use of close up filters. Non SLR film cameras usually do not do well with these, nor do very wide angle lenses on any camera.

Polarizing filters are extremely valuable to photography with all cameras. The most basic advantage of a Polarizer is that it only permits light perpendicular to the film (or pickup chip) to pass through the lens. This elimination of stray light permits better contrast, fewer reflections (both from the picture's subject and within the lens barrel), and deeper, more saturated colors. These filters also allow the camera to "see through water" and eliminate reflections that prohibit us from seeing through glass. Using a Polarizer will almost always improve an outdoor picture!

Sometimes there is too much light to take a picture. This can be by the shore, at higher altitudes, under bright lights, etc. **Neutral density filter**s absorb some of the light before passing the rest on to the film or chip. These filters come in different densities (darknesses) to absorb more or less light. They can be combined to increase the density.

Special effect filters do what one would expect - create special effects. Some are rather mundane, like making an entire picture red. Others can be extremely creative and make a so-so picture into a winner.

Most special effect filters are very simple to use, just put it in front of the lens. A few of the possibilities of special effect pictures include:

- •creating a rainbow where none exist
- •adding flare to street lights at night
- •making an overcast sky look threatening
- •creating the effect of fog on a bright day
- •smoothing a person's complexion
- •repeating an image
- •multiple exposing
- •intensifying a sunset or sunrise
- •darkening a selected part of a picture

and much much more. Your imagination is really the only limit of what can be done with filters.

Most filters can be used in conjunction with other filters. A color correcting filter can be used on top of a starburst filter to make car headlights look like bright yellow 8 pointed stars projecting from car headlights at night for example.

OPTICAL FILTER CONSIDERATIONS

In black and white photography, colored filters act differently. Such a filter lightens its own color and darkens that color's complement. For example, a yellow filter will make a yellow flower look much lighter than it is, while darkening a blue sky.

FILTER QUALITY

Be sure not to use poor quality optical filters with your camera. As you are certainly aware, a good lens in not inexpensive, and using an inferior filter will negate your lens quality.

SOFTWARE FILTERS

With digital camera images (or film images that have been digitized [such as scanned to a CD]) there are a tremendous number of filters available in programs such as Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Photoshop Elements, Jasc Paint Shop Pro and other photo editing software. There is no practical limit to the number or quality of filters available, all of which are combinable. Some software publishers, such as NiK Color Efex (http://www.nikmultimedia.com/index/usa/entry) offer the full gamut optical filters, but done via software after the picture is taken.

If you have questions or would like to see examples of what filters can do for your pictures, please visit us. See page 4 for some filtered photos.

Leaving the instructional segment of this month's newsletter behind, there is some photo business news to know, much of which is related to Kodak. As mentioned in previous newsletters, Kodak has closed their premier photo lab in Fair Lawn, NJ. The Rochester, NY lab was closed decades ago, and now the nearest labs are in Hartford, CT and Allentown, PA. These labs, however, only service their lowest bid, lowest quality chain store accounts, such as Costco, CVS, K-Mart, etc.

Camera store quality processing is supposedly being done at Kodak's Beltsville, Md. facility. Film picked up from our stores by Kodak couriers are transported to Allentown by truck, resorted, transferred to Beltsville for Premier quality processing, or to other Kodak plants around the country for services not supplied in Beltsville.

So far, two problems have been encountered...

As of this writing (9/6/04) work from the 3rd week in August has yet to find its way back to Madison and Summit. Kodak has only incomplete records about the jobs. We have received some orders back in 6 days that previously took a few hours.

The work that has made it back has been of what we find to be unacceptably poor quality. When work was sent back to be reprinted, it was either damaged or accompanied by a notice to the effect

that it was the best quality possible, and would not be reprinted.

Our stores have lived by a rule for over a half century, "We will not treat your film any other way than we treat our own." We will not trust Kodak with our film any longer, therefore we will not entrust yours to them either. Beginning September 1, our processing is being done elsewhere. We have entered into agreements with 2 custom photo labs, and will be offering two tiered service. We will have a high quality, lower priced service which offers same or next day service, matte or glossy prints (bordered or borderless) and the option to get 1 print each at a slightly lower price. We have tested these labs and are pleased with the quality of the prints as well as the care given to the negatives.

Beginning September 20, we will be inaugurating professional quality custom processing at a higher price, offering individually color corrected prints and index prints, red eye removal, cropping and other custom services. CDs produced at the time of processing will also be color corrected and verticals rotated when written to the disk. True black and white services will also become available again, with the same surface and border options as with color. E-6 slide processing will be a 2 day service, instead of 7 days as now supplied by Kodak.

Because the changes by Kodak occurred so quickly we have not had the opportunity to order new envelopes in which to write up your processing orders. They will remain the same as before (indicating Processing by Kodak) but the work will NOT be going to Eastman Kodak. We expect to have our own envelopes ready before November 1.

We thank you for your understanding and patience. This has been a difficult and stressful time for all of us at the Photo Summit and Madison PhotoPlus.

As our final piece of news for this issue, there have been some staffing changes in our stores:

Geoff Garden had been in Madison for 5 years, and is now at the Photo Summit, nearer his home. Leslie and her fiancee Rich have moved out of the area. Geoff volunteered to transfer and joins Lynne, Mick, Dave and John.

Steve Sagala once ran a professional photography studio in Madison, then married and moved to Pennsylvania. He is delighted to commute from the Stroudsburg area to Madison each day, and we are delighted to have him on our staff. We now have 2 Steves with excellent photo knowledge on our staff and are very proud of it!

That's it for this issue, we hope you've enjoyed it. We hope those of you who had vacations this summer enjoyed them and are well rested. We look forward to seeing you soon.

Lynne & Jerry

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(These pictures are copied from the Tiffen (www.tiffen.com) and Cokin (www.cokinusa.com) websites)

Tiffen Starburst Filter

without   with

Tiffen Starburst Filter

without   with

Tiffen SepiaFilter

without   with

Tiffen Enhancing Filter

without   with

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Examples from the Cokin Creative Filter System