

Tricks of the Trade for da Vinci's Colorist Toolbox

As the most recent upgrade to the da Vinci 2K color enhancement system, the Colorist Toolbox has prompted a good deal of interest among colorists working with SD, HD and even data material for film and television. With several new tools, the Toolbox gives colorists a wider palette of effects —ultimately allowing them to be more responsive to director requests.

Among the tools it offers are defocused kilovectors and a set of powerful filters often overlooked by colorists, who mistakenly think that they are too extreme to use in anything other than music videos.

As Director of Training for da Vinci, I have the enviable job of experimenting with the new tools and demonstrating their uses to other colorists. A recent demo reminded me of just how versatile the filters are, and inspired a few "tips and tricks" for colorists currently using, or considering, this system.

Take, for example, the Motion Blur filter. This tool has an obvious application for moving objects, and indeed the complementary PowerGrade library includes a setup that adds horizontal motion blur. It is basically a soft Circle Power Window (CPW) with a hard-edged Quad Power Window (QPW) mask. The blur starts at the hard edge and is confined by the CPW.



Before



Colorist Toolbox Motion Blur

To demonstrate the less-than-obvious versatility of this filter, my source image is a quiet harbor shot that does not need “go faster” streaks. The harbor shot is nice enough, but it lacks a focal point.

I decide to focus the viewers’ attention on the boats at the center of the image and make an initial grade, avoiding the cliché vignette on this occasion. To create reflections on the water, I load the motion blur filter using powergrade. This will make the water less murky, and also lead the eye towards the boats. To begin with, I re-position the Power Windows to the center of the screen. The **Motion Blur** algorithm has controls for horizontal blur (**H Blur**), vertical blur (**V Blur**) and **Detail**, which defines how much of the original sharp image should be visible through the blurred image. Since the reflections are vertical, I set **H Blur** to 0, and to maximize the effect I also set **Detail** to 0. Increasing **V Blur** creates vertical streaks, but because the water is obscured, the effect seems over the water rather than in it. Increasing **Detail** reveals the water through the effect until it looks like reflections, while increasing **H Blur** softens the streaks to finish the effect.

My guest colorist wants to save the effect as a PowerGrade so that it can be reproduced with a mouse click. I open the Power Windows to the full width of the screen, for a more general application and save the Colorist Toolbox settings in PowerGrade.



Source image



Power Windows for Motion Blur Filter



Colorist Toolbox Reflections

The wider Power Windows look better than my center-based grade, but the reflection effect now makes the foreground boat in the right hand corner look soft. I put the Defocus Circle Power Window over the boat, make it the Output Key, and use it in the Colorist Toolbox as a mask.

That fixes the soft boat problem, and gives me another idea. I use the Defocus Quad Power Window to slightly defocus the buildings, creating a subtle depth of field effect that focuses even more attention on my subject, the boats.

Finally, just for fun, we try the newly made reflection PowerGrade on another shot. It's a girl with a bike looking out to sea. I used a QPW grad effect to add drama to the sky, but the foreground is rather dull. We load the reflection effect, line up the Power Windows, add a touch of warmth inside the Colorist Toolbox region and the shot comes to life!



PowerGrade effect with Circle Power Window Mask



Final image with depth of field and reflections



Source Image



Colorist Toolbox Reflection from Powergrade

Happy Coloring!

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