

Kubota Image Tools releases an action organizer and a new Bor-Tex Pak that adds zing to your portrait style.

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# Spice it up

KUBOTA DASHBOARD 3 PRO, BORDERS AND TEXTURES



Kubota Image Tools has a reputation for producing some of the best actions, scripts and presets available, simplifying advanced Photoshop automations. Kubota has been issuing action sets for some time, and its recent release, Dashboard, is a solution for organizing all those sets and having ready access to them.

Dashboard 3 Pro, the latest version, also organizes your own actions and other third-party actions. Having a tidy list of all those actions is welcome, but the real utility of this version is the ability to do a text search for the action you want and mark actions as

favorites, so you can easily segregate the actions you use most frequently.

Dashboard 3 Pro allows you to add your own keywords to actions, whether they're Kubota actions or not. You can tag certain actions for use with certain subjects, like senior boys or girls.

As professional photographers, we're always seeking techniques to help differentiate our images from hobbyists and one another. Two popular looks are textures and "sloppy borders." You can add an overlay of texture to the subject of the image, and use the Blending

mode and apply opacity to add interesting effects to the overall image. Once the layer has been added, you're prompted to "paint away" textures. This allows you to remove texture from areas like faces and clothing without having to add a new mask. I like to capture images of interesting textures whenever I find them, even in the middle of an assignment. A stockpile of textures adds firepower to your creative arsenal.

Kubota Borders and Textures plug-ins, or the Bor-Tex Pak, are incredibly easy to use and come with their own Dashboard. Like the Dashboard 3 Pro for actions, the Bor-Tex Dashboard allows you to search for effects by name, and also gives you a thumbnail image of the border or texture to further simplify the task. The textures collection is solid and varied; it includes the Earth Textures-Smooth Organic Pak as well as the Industrial Textures-High Tech Electric Pak, giving you considerable freedom to create diverse looks, moods, and enhancements.

One interesting property of the Bor-Tex Pak: When you apply a texture, the software provides a layer mask so you can apply the effect selectively to an area of the image while maintaining any color-shift the texture creates throughout the image. You can also turn off the color of any texture with one click.

Sloppy borders has several useful attributes.

Damian's basketball spin worked well with Burner texture and Barnacle border.



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## THE GOODS: PRO REVIEW

First is the ability to change the color of a border easily. All the borders start off as a white space with the interior edges in black, and it's simple to change the white to any color by simply double-clicking on the fill adjustment layer at the bottom of the Layers palette.

Inverting the colors is accomplished with a click in the basic tools section. The most useful feature of all is that the borders are applied *around* the image rather than *over* it, so you don't have to sacrifice the edges of the image to have a border. If you're preparing to make a large print and want to squeeze in all the resolution you can, you can select a "grow" border that will increase the canvas size to accommodate the border around it. All of the borders are available in a format that preserves your image size, as well. Applied with the "keep" borders, this function reduces the image to fit within the border.

Compared to a tool like onOne Software's PhotoFrame Professional, the Bor-Tex Pak has certain features I like better, especially the grow functionality. Other aspects compare less favorably. For example, *all* the Kubota sloppy borders have a clean interior edge, whereas the borders in PhotoFrame are varied. Of course, it's that clean inner edge that allows you to apply the border without sacrificing



The Cherry Bomb border matched with uniform colors makes Travis's team photo pop (above), while this portrait of Brandon got a rustic treatment using Buj texture and a Resca border (left).



much of your image. Still, having the option to use a border with jagged edges is nice, even at the cost of a bit of the image. And unlike the textures, there's no step where you can resize the border before applying it. My workaround is to choose grow borders and use the rectangular marquee tool to select the

part I want to retain and crop off the rest.

All in all, Kubota Imaging Tools Borders and Textures is an attractive bit of software that lets you add a finished touch to your images. The Kubota Bor-Tex Pak is priced at \$349. Sloppy Borders and Texture Paks are also available separately. ■