

# Kubota Image Tools ▼

ARTISTIC TOOLS  
VOLUMES 3 AND 4 *Review by Dave Huss*



My first experience with the Kubota Image Tools was when I reviewed the first two volumes of the Artistic Tools series: *Classic Film Effects* and *Modern Chic*. Both volumes contained great effects but installing the product was challenging, in part because of the paucity of documentation and the assumption that the installer had a strong working knowledge of Photoshop actions—which I did not. But that was then.

When I went to review the latest entries, Volumes 3 and 4, I discovered Kubota had been busy since my last encounter. All of the products now feature a much-improved user interface (the Kubota Action Dashboard), an installer, well-structured documentation, and a host of tutorials that allows even an action-phobic guy like me to install the actions into Photoshop without pain. (*Tip:* There are a few manual points in the installation, so read the instructions each time before clicking Continue.)

The two new Artistic Tools are Volume 3, *High Fashion-Edgy* and Volume 4, *Cutting Edge*. (Don't let the names throw you off. They don't describe what the actions do; they're just cool-sounding names.) Volume 3 contains more than 50 actions that are categorized into Black and White, Color, Creative Effects, Image Correction, and Image Borders. The Black and White actions make color images into artsy black-and-white images. Color and Creative Effects run the gamut from adding glow or punch to making colors softer, or even muted or washed out. Image Correction contains the all-important tools to make the finished images look as good as the subjects you shot—no small feat in many cases. My favorite is the *Skin Powder Genie*, which is semi-automatic in that you have to paint in the areas of interest, but it smoothes out complexions better than Botox without making faces look like they're made of plastic.

Volume 4 is a different mix from Volume 3, although it also has a nice assortment of Black and White effects and

Image Correction actions. The majority of the actions are Creative Effects with names as creative as the effects they produce. It's a waste of ink to attempt to describe actions such as *TechyKolor* or *Krypto Glasses*—you just have to go to the Kubota webpage and look at the samples. The other major part of this collection is found in the actions classified as Edges and Vignettes, a few of which are improved versions of vignettes used in Volume 2. I found the edges were especially good for images to be shown on the Web.

On top of that, Kevin Kubota, one of *American Photo's* Top 10 Wedding Photographers and the actions' author, uses many of these in combination to produce even more stunning effects. They've also released a cookbook of sorts, *The Kubota Formula Book*. This full-color book, which sells for \$125, shows different completed projects with a description of what combination of Artistic Image tools were used to accomplish the effect.

Each volume provides enough creative toys to dazzle any client. The Artistic Tools work on Mac and Windows but since they use Photoshop actions, they can only work on Photoshop 7 or later.

I'm sorry to say that there isn't a free download version, but Kubota Tools will refund your money if you're not satisfied. If you shoot weddings or do portrait photography, this collection is a must and it will pay for itself the first time you blow away a client with some of these effects. ■

Company: Kubota Image Tools	Price: \$149 each
Web: <a href="http://www.kubotaimagetools.com">www.kubotaimagetools.com</a>	Phone: 877-330-4330
▶ Platform: Mac and Windows	▶ Rating: ◆◆◆◆◆