

Power Retouche Retouching Suite

A Photoshop plug-in to create film grain in digital photos

Power Retouche Film Grain plug-in is an advanced digital equivalent of film grain in both black & white and color images. Color images can be given both B&W grain and color grain independently. The plugin actually emulates real grain, it does not just apply noise. Also it applies grain across the brightness levels in the same way as in analog photography with a special "Photographic Mode" option.



■ Power Retouche Photoshop plug-ins are also for Paint Shop Pro, Corel Draw, Illustrator, Fireworks and other graphic software or photo software (Mac & Windows) see [list](#)

Film Grain Plug-in

Benefits of the plugin

- Control the intensity (visual presence) of grain
- Control the size of the grain
- Control the contrast of the grain
- Control the softness & hardness of the grain
- Target grain to lights, mid tones or darks independently

The Film Grain plug-in works with these image modes (Windows and Mac)...
8 & 16 bit / channel: RGB, Duotone, Grayscale, Lab.

Grain controls

This is the Film Grain Plug-ins control panel (Mac). Click on the image to enlarge. The controlpanel and preview area can be changed by dragging the sides.

It has two groups of controls: B&W and color. Each has three groups of controls:

1. Grain details (intensity, size, etc.)
2. Light (softness/hardness of grain)
3. Retouch levels: target lights, mid tones or darks



Examples - applying various types of grain



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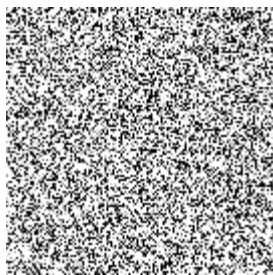
The Film Grain plugin is an advanced digital version of traditional film grain. It gives you full control over grain size, amount and hardness for both B&W and color grain

Why Emulate Film Grain?

Three reasons:

1. Digital cameras produce grainless images (though they can be noisy).
2. Film grain can be very beautiful and convey texture and mood.
3. Photoshop's gaussian noise, or other noise, is very ugly.

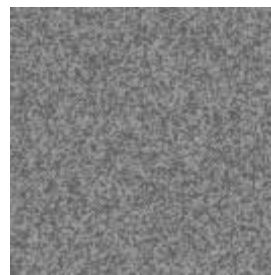
Below you can see a sample of Power Retouche Film Grain for comparison with noise. The gaussian noise is, well, nothing but noise. The PR film grain on the other hand is pure texture and vibrato -- as it should be. Please compare the two Power Retouche samples with the real film grain below.



Gaussian noise



Gaussian noise



Power Retouche Film Grain
plug-in



Power Retouche Film Grain
plug-in

Grain is often considered at its best in B&W images or color images of low saturation. Here it gives not only texture, but also mood. I hope the examples below will show color images can benefit from grain too.

Real Film Grain

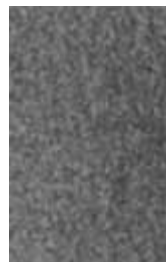
Compare these six samples with the two Power Retouche samples above. Remember PR Film Grain let's you adjust contrast and size to produce any grain desired. What you should look for when comparing is texture and "feel" and how unified the grain is in an overall vibrant surface.



TriX



TMax



Old film



Old film



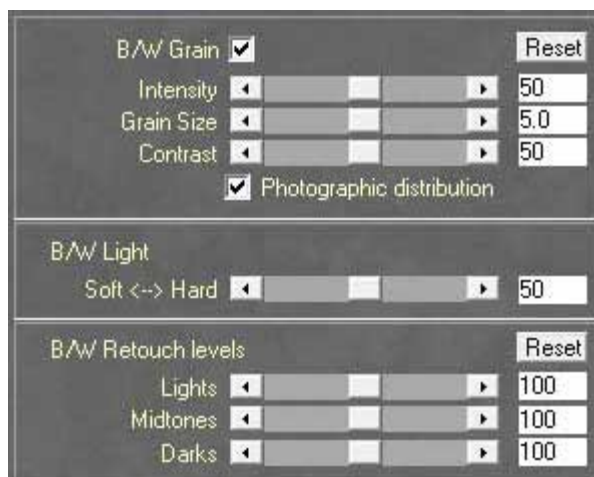
Kodak



Kodak

The Film Grain Plug-ins' controls

Grain controls



As you can see, the Film Grain Plug-in has two identical sets of controls, one set makes the black & white grain, the other the color grain. The top checkbox turns the entire group on or off.

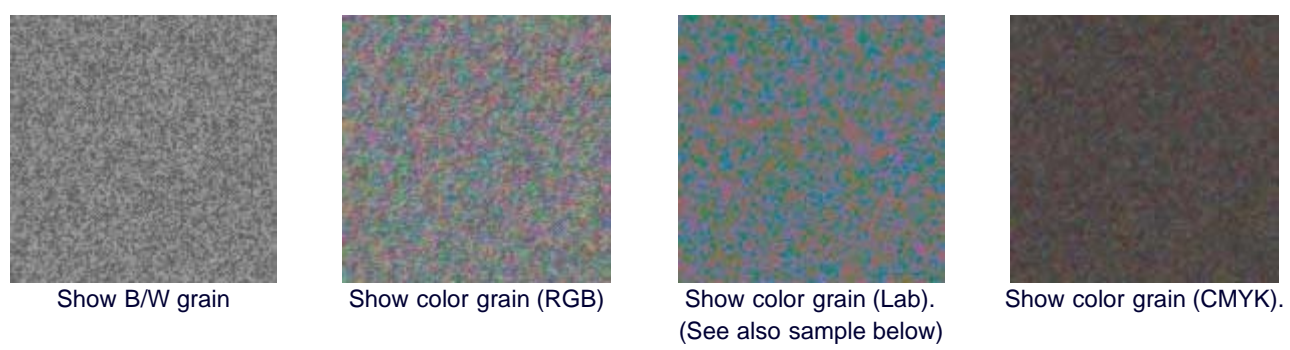
Intensity	This slider ranges from 0 to 100 and changes the degree to which grain will be apparent in the image. It does not change the amount of grain pr. square centimeter.
Grain Size	This sets the general size of the grain. In reality grains do not have a strictly uniform size and likewise our Film Grain Plug-in will create varied grain.
Contrast	In the BW-Grain this will make the difference between light and dark grains more pronounced. In the Color Grain it will primarily make the grains more or less saturated, but it will also make light-dark differences more pronounced.
Photographic	This checkbox will change the distribution of the grain to emulate the grain distribution in film as it varies at different

Distribution	brightness levels. When off, grain will be distributed evenly. In both cases you can adjust the distribution to taste with the three Retouch Levels sliders. In Photographic Distribution, the whites and blacks do not get any grain.
Light Soft <--> Hard	This slider emulates the way the light in the darkroom projector can manipulate the appearance of the film grain. It can make the grain softer or harder.
Retouch Levels	The three Retouch Levels sliders (Lights, Mid tones, Darks) are common to most Power Retouche plug-ins. They regulate how strongly the retouching should be present in the respective levels of brightness. By turning Photographic Mode on or off and using these sliders, you can create your own grain distribution. You can of course save it as a preset for later use.

Show Grain This checkbox toggles the preview between drawing the grain on the source image or on a neutral medium gray background. You can choose between viewing the B/W grain or the color grain. Of course, this requires the BW grain or color grain are on. If you have turned BW grain off and select Show Grain and pick the B/W grain, then you will simply see the original source image. Likewise with color grain off.



Different color grain for different image modes



As you can see from the three color examples, the color grain is different depending on the image mode you use. This way you have more choices of effect. The grain in a RGB image will tend towards red, green and blue. The grain in a Lab image will tend towards yellow, magenta, cyan and green and will have higher contrast. Grain in a CMYK image will be very slight and tend towards cyan, magenta and yellow.

Note that pure color grain in RGB will inevitably have some BW grain also.

It is special in Lab mode that pure color grain will be without any brightness value variation. You can add that with BW grain.



If you in Lab mode combine color grain with BW grain, this is the result.

Examples of B&W Film Grain

Grayscale image without and with B&W film grain in photographic distribution

This nice grayscale image would improve with a bit of grain. The smooth, even slick, appearance of the mid tones does not suit neither the clouds nor the mood.

This example illustrates Photographic Distribution. Notice how the intensity (presence) of the grain changes with varying brightness levels. Pure black and pure white has no grain in film, nor in our photographic distribution. If you need grain in the lights or darks, turn photographic distribution off and use the Retouch Levels to create your own grain distribution.



Original



With slight grain

Soft Film Grain

These two examples illustrate soft film grain versus hard film grain, but you will also notice that (true to nature) the soft film grain appears larger than the hard film grain.

Hard Film Grain



Soft film grain



Hard film grain

Film grain in color images

Though film grain is mostly utilized in grayscale images, it can give a nice quality to color images also. If you just use B/W film grain in a color image, the grain will not be integrated but will appear to float on top of the colors; not nice! So with color images either use B/W film grain together with color film grain or just use color film grain alone.

In this RGB example we only used color film grain and still with photographic distribution. Notice how the grain enhances the

mood by adding a slight vibrato.



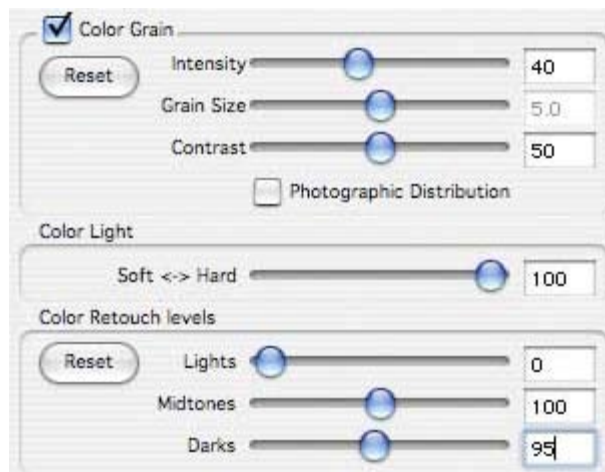
Original



Slight color film grain (RGB)

The problem here is, that even though it's photo-technically correct not to have grain in the dark blue clouds, it is aesthetically not pleasing in this particular image. So we will have to use the retouch levels and turn Photographic Distribution off. See below.

Retouch levels



These are the settings we used

Here we used the retouch levels to add a slight grain to the dark blue clouds. To the right you can see the settings we used.

B&W Grain or Color Grain?



Above: Original image. Below: Color grain only (RGB)



Above: Color grain only (RGB). Below B/W grain only



As you can see from the above two examples, the effect of adding either B&W grain or color grain is very different.

In general you will find that with color images, even when they are as low in color as this one, color grain works better than B&W grain. This is because, as you can see, pure B&W grain in a color image tends to sort of float above the colors. On the other hand, if you want strong grain in a color images, then using color grain alone will not work well because the colored grains will stand out. In this case you need to enhance with B&W grain. When combined with color grain, B&W grain will not stand out in color images.

Here's the classic Zebra, that used to come with Photoshop. It is photographed in such a manner that the zebra is in focus and the background blurred. The problem with this is that the blurred background becomes overly smooth and, at least in my view, becomes a sore spot for the eye. It's just so slick, it acts like a green piece of paper onto which a cut out zebra has been pasted. Adding some medium sized grain (BW in Photographic Mode) will fix this.



Original



PR Film Grain