

# Tiffen's Virtual Filter Case



Every cinematographer's filter case should include a copy of Tiffen Dfx software loaded on a little laptop like the Macbook or Sony VAIO TZ. Fast, intuitive, easy to use and wonderfully accurate, Dfx software will become as essential on set as a good gaffer, aggressive agent, reliable wakeup call and ticket home.

This rescinds my previous tirade against computers on set, where the software either slowed production down or was too obtuse to use easily. Tiffen Dfx software is astonishing in its realistic rendition not only of color and density but also of its mastery of the holy grail of software simulation known to computer wizards as 3D, because of their complexity, like promists, fogs and diffusions.

Once upon a time, long before this kind of software, Nat Tiffen gave me an official Tiffen hat at one of the first industry trade shows I attended while still in college. Steve Poster, ASC got the other hat, I think. This was better than a secret ring or handshake. I will always be grateful to Nat for his encouragement and generosity with advice and new products to test.

One day, a few years later, while working on a film together, Jeff Laszlo and Bill Coleman proposed that renting filters was a better investment than an index fund. We bought a couple of cases of filters, and began CFL Equipment Rentals. I think filters were our only product, and we had about 100 of them.

The toughest part of the business was not keeping the filters clean; it was explaining to production managers why little slabs of glass were so important and cost so dearly.

Jump cut to September 2007. The new Tiffen Dfx Digital Filter Suite conjures up a laptop library of up to 1000 filters. If you do the math, you would spend around \$300,000 and fill the back of a truck with glass filters. The price of admission to the complete Standalone software license is less than two 6.6 x 6.6 grads. You can get up and running in a few minutes after downloading a trial Mac or PC copy from [www.tiffen.com](http://www.tiffen.com).

Tiffen Dfx went with me to Sweden recently, where the sun never really set and where it was magic hour most of the night. It is car commercial Valhalla. Instead of the usual 30 minute madness between the dark and the daylight, you have 4 hours of beautiful, glowing sky. Be careful not to let the producer talk you into a flat day rate: it seems that most of Sweden's production goes into a frenzy during the few long days of Summer and lack of hotel rooms didn't seem to be a problem for the non-stop crews.



With up to 1000 software simulated filters that closely match the real thing, I found Dfx extremely helpful as a previsualization tool. It answers the questions that try cinematographers' souls, like "should I use a Promist or a Double Fog?" Of course, the best time to use it is in advance of agonizing on set. Long plane rides to Sweden, missing connections in Copenhagen, provide plenty of pre-viz time and doctorates of filterology.

Dfx is available in 3 configurations. Cinematographers will want the standalone application. It's easy to import your pictures from digital still camera. Editors will want the plug-in version for Avid, Final Cut Pro, Adobe After Effects. Still Photographers will want the Adobe Photoshop plug-in. I imagine a Digital Intermediate module will be available soon.

With the Dfx Standalone version, you can "stack" filters and "move" grads. In addition to simulations of most Tiffen glass filters, the software will also let you pre-viz lens effects like soft focus, optical lab processes like bleach bypass, lighting gels with most of the Rosco and GamColor swatches, and image control like black and white and color temperature adjustment.

Among my favorite filters and adjustments are: Black and White, Black Diffusion/FX, Black Pro-Mist, Bleach Bypass, Blur, Bronze Glimmerglass, Center Spot, Chromatic Aberration, Color Compensating, Color Conversion, Color Correct, Color-Grad, Color Infrared, Color Spot, Color Temperature, Cool Pro-Mist, Cross Processing, Day for Night, Defogger (yes, it really works), Diffusion, Double Fog, Dual Grad, Edge Glow, Enhancing, Flashing, Fluorescent, Fog, GamColor Gels, Glimmerglass, Glow, Gold Diffusion/FX, Gold Reflector, Grain, Halo, Infrared, Kelvin, Lens Distortion, Low Contrast, ND-Grad, Night Vision, Nude/FX, Old Photo, Polarizer, Printer Points, Pro-Mist, Radial Exposure, Rosco Gels, Selective Color Correct, Selective Saturation, Silver Reflector, Smokey, Soft/FX, Split Field, Strip Grad, Sunset/Twilight, Telecine, Three Strip, Tint, Ultra Contrast, Warm Black Pro-Mist, Warm Pro-Mist, and Warm Soft/FX.

Tiffen Dfx is like an interactive swatch book and filter catalog. It can help you pre-order the appropriate filter package for your production. It will help you make the right choices on set and on location, and lets you pre-visualize what you would previously have waited for until dawn and dailies, even in Sweden. As a post production tool, it will be another tool for the cinematographer to correct some of the worst things nature can throw at you, and even rectify some of your rare mistakes.



*Above.* Marstrand, Sweden.  
Bottom frame: original image  
Top frame: Tiffen Warm Promist 1

*Opposite.* Lighthouse. Marstrand Sweden.  
Bottom frame: original  
Top frame: Tiffen Double Fog 1 + ND.6 Grad  
+ Tangerine 2 Strip Grad + Bronze Glimmerglass 1

*Below.* Öckerö, Sweden—next to island of Fotö  
Bottom frame: original foto  
Top frame: Tiffen Black Promist 1 + Tangerine 3 Color Grad  
+ Tangerine 3 Strip Grad over sky + Chocolate 3 Strip Grad  
over rocks at bottom + Bleach Bypass lab processing

