iPhone Obsessed

Photo Editing Experiments with Apps

by Dan Marcolina

Dedication

For Denise, Who Completes My Circle.

PIC TAG I would like to dedicate this, my first book, to my wife and business partner, Denise, who creates the space and supplies the inspiration for me to explore my visual obsessions with controlled abandon. And to my son, Danny, and daughter, Dana, who have waited so many times for me to catch up with the family after being distracted with some picture opportunity. Their pictures now inspire me. **SCAN THE TAG TO SEE THE FAMILY GALLERY**

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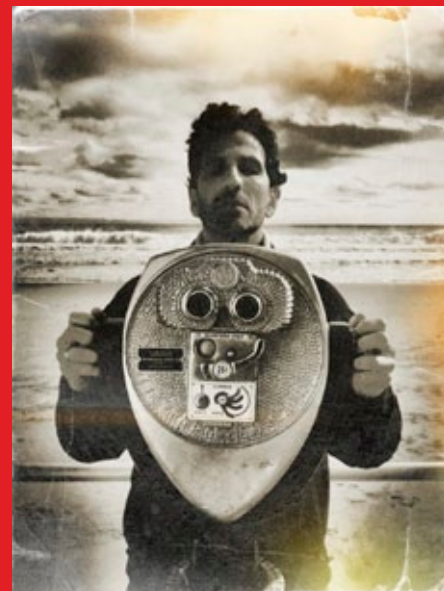
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I Am Obsessed

I am obsessed. I am obsessed with my iPhone. Not for making calls, listening to music, or even taking pictures. No, mostly I'm obsessed with processing images with apps!

Collecting and combining apps to explore new image iterations. Dozens of iterations. Turning snapshots into statements. With the right subject, shot and processed with just the right intent, you can transform your image into an illustration of an idea.

A blurred image may just perfectly clarify your idea. The trick is to put effectiveness before effects. How do you set the tone of an image for its best impact? Think of this book as an alchemist's journal of creative elixirs, as we will be discovering the results of cross-mutating apps with a variety of image types. I have looked at most of the photography apps in iTunes and have boiled them down to my favorites. You can be certain that the 40 or so included in this book have useful or artistic merit of some kind.

I've been a designer and photographer for over 25 years, and I'm known for my skills with image manipulation, but this new mobile platform has challenged me to try things I would never have attempted in my traditional workflow. And now I have been liberated to add new techniques to my everyday design work.

Some images in the book may not be completely successful. But each one shows some promise or possibility that may help you break through with something even better.

With the right subject, shot and processed with just the right intent, you can transform your image into an illustration of an idea.

How the Book Works

I have broken down the postprocessing into common categories like blurs or grunge or HDR. At the beginning of each chapter I outline my favorite apps in that category with a short description of each app's main strengths.

After each intro you will see many examples to show off the chapter's techniques. Examples also include the original image and the steps of the processing. Since this book is really about combining different techniques, the steps often include apps from other chapters, which are referenced so you can find them quickly.

Also, all of the app descriptions have another layer of virtual information called an iObsessed App Tag, shown to the left. When you scan the tag with the free Microsoft Tag Reader (http://gettag.mobi) on your iPhone, additional information on the app will be revealed. It includes a short overview demo video by the author that helps you understand the app's possibilities. Also included are links to the developer's Web site and iTunes download link and related photography galleries.

Many other pages have Tip Tags, which when scanned will reveal a video tip on how the image was processed. Pic Tags give you a gallery of related information or insights to a process.

In the final chapter you will discover a gallery of additional experimental images and unusual apps. Also included is a summary of all the apps with the Web addresses for all the app demos, for those of you without an iPhone.

All of the app descriptions and many other pages have another layer of virtual information called an iObsessed Tag. Get app demos, image tips, and pic galleries.

APP TAG

TIP TAG

PIC TAG

APP TAG

A video tour of each app When you touch the large image, up pops a full-screen video demo by the author of each of the 45 apps, showing tricks and hidden features.

Expand your viewpoint Here you are linked to the author's personally selected galleries to view his latest experiments or other related info.

iTunes download link From this master control panel you can immediately jump to the iTunes download link and get the app.

Link to the developer's Web site Touch to go directly to the latest news and updates. Get tutorials and see samples of your favorite apps.

Scan the tags next to the app icons and see a short video from the author explaining each app's key concepts. In addition, you will have access to the iTunes download link and developer's Web site.

Chapter 7 Painting Looks

To some purists, converting a photo into what looks like a painting is considered cheating or tacky. I prefer to think of the process as photo illustration. Taking the energy of a photo and minimizing its reality sometime maximizes its symbolic or emotional qualities. The low-res qualities of mobile photos can give just enough detail to render a effective painted look. By blending and layering different app effects you can come up with a unique hybrid of an image that feels honest and less like cheating.

Artist'sTouch allows you to selectively clone-paint an existing image. There is no other app I know like it. You start by importing a photo; the app then creates a ghosted line-drawing version. After choosing a brush type and size you paint back in the image color and detail. Change the size of the brush to get more detail in certain areas.

Fill in the details The secret is to work with broad strokes first for background elements, then change to a smaller brush with short strokes for the detailed areas.

Multimedia Select different paint modes like watercolor, oil, chalk, airbrush, or pencil to get different painting styles.

Paper choices You also have access to the paper texture and color. Choose textures like canvas, rough paper, or my favorite, cracked paint.

ArtistaOil translates your image into an oil painting. Generally I do not like this kind of cheap trick on images, but this app really does generate a pleasing result. I like to start with an image that I have already manipulated in some way, either with a slight distortion, blur, or color change. This helps push it into a believable painting.
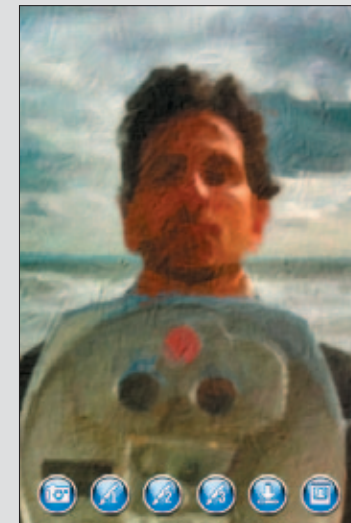
Step by step Just follow the buttons on the bottom. Start by choosing one of many presets, and check details along the way by zooming in.
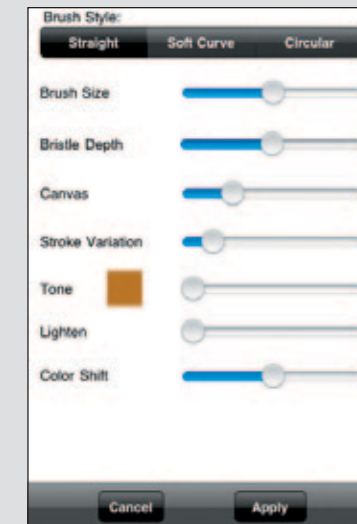
Slide the paint around Once you have a preset you like, you can then tweak the sliders to get something unique and appropriate for your subject matter.

Finishing touch The last step is to choose the kind of painted edge you want, and there is a wide selection available. Then save your image and custom preset.

SketchMee turns your photo into a vector line drawing. The results are really remarkable—there is no desktop app that can do this as well. The best part is you can e-mail a full vector version to yourself that is editable in Adobe Illustrator. I sometimes restroke the lines with one of the art brushes in Illustrator to give it a softer look.
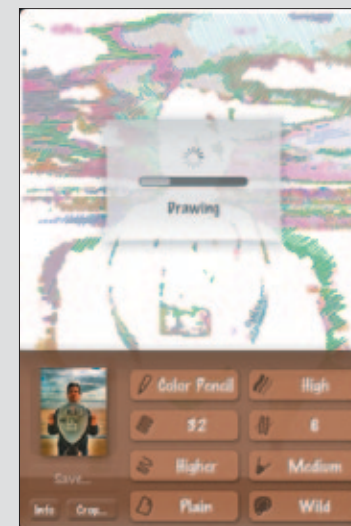
Convincing results The image is redrawn in front of your eyes. The line work follows the contour lines of the original and gives it a convincing hand-drawn look.
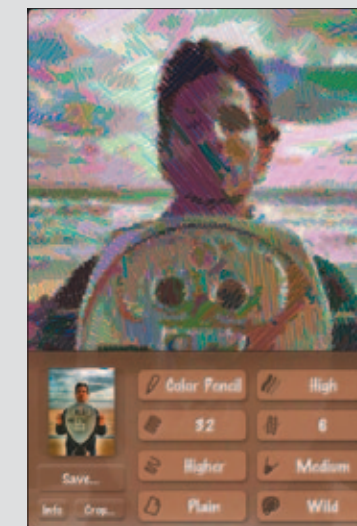
Tweak your results Try various techniques like colored pencil or chalk. Change seven settings to affect the final output. I like the new combo setting best.
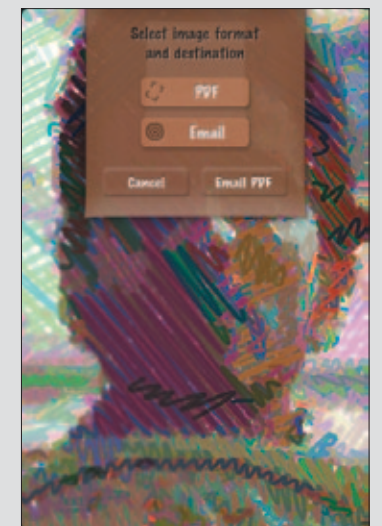
Unlimited size output Input images can be of any size. Tiny Web images are easily transformed into works of high-resolution sketch art. Zoom in to see the detail.

TIP TAG

Endless Summer / Process

THE MOMENT When my editor nixed my original cover image (seen on page 14), I needed to find new subject matter. I found this picture while obsessing about which surf break to paddle out in. The waves and sky were great and along with this quirky, nostalgic vacation viewer I had the makings of an interesting cover. I took many shots, but it wasn't until Paul closed his eyes that the picture came together. **THE PROCESSING** I wanted the style of the processing to capture a whimsical, dreamy quality. Also, since this was going to be the cover I wanted to use multiple apps. Ideas from the chapters "Straightforward," "Blurs and Vignettes," "Toon Looks," "Film Looks," "High Dynamic Range," and this chapter are all used. **SCAN THE TAG TO SEE THE PROCESS**

ProHDR I captured a dark exposure and a light exposure and combined them. Using the levels, contrast, and saturation sliders I gave it a dramatic look.

FilmLab To bring out the nostalgic warm qualities of the image, I chose the setting called Pharlap. With the other tools I tweaked the color and sharpened the image.

TiltShift I then used TiltShift to dramatically blur the image with the lens setting. Extreme saturation, contrast, and aperture highlights helped make the image even wilder.

Toon Paint I processed the original photo into a toon variation with the soft slider setting. A balanced amount of gray and black edges were generated.
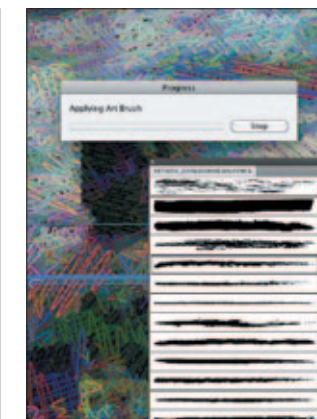
SketchMe I used the color chalk setting. Then I opened the exported PDF in Adobe Illustrator and retraced the line work with the artistic charcoal pencil.
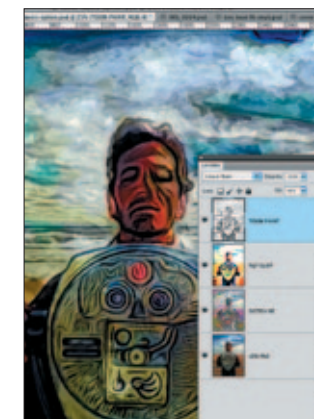
Photoshop I layered the four resulting files into Photoshop: HDR image on the bottom, Illustrator strokes next, set to 90 percent luminosity, TiltShift image next at 40 percent color, and ToonPaint on top, set to 45 percent linear burn.
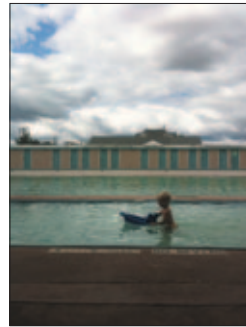
Three Generations

STEP 1 Photoshop Express
(CHAPTER 2) Import high-resolution photo from a DSLR and brighten, sharpen, and crop.

STEP 2 Artist'sTouch Clone-paint with broad brush.

STEP 3 DXP (CHAPTER 2) Merge the image from step 1 with the image from step 2 using the halfblend setting.

STEP 4 ArtistaOil Render with the straight brush preset.

Summer's Ending

STEP 1 PerfectlyClear (CHAPTER 2) Auto brighten and sharpen original image.

STEP 2 ArtistaOil Render with the curved brush preset and soft edge.

STEP 3 PhotoCopier (CHAPTER 3) Render with a customized Monet setting.

STEP 4 Photoshop (DESKTOP) Merge the PhotoCopier version over the top of the ArtistaOil version using the lighter color blend mode.

TIP TAG

At the Parking Garage / Process

THE MOMENT This image is a great example of what I call "hearing the phototone." As I was going to my car I passed these fine gentlemen conversing, and the combination of lighting, design, and gesture all came together. This is when I hear a tone in my mind's ear that forces me back to quietly snap the picture. If you open yourself up to such moments, their design rhythm and emotional balance will alert you to open your phone. I can't really tell you how to hear the phototone; you just always need to be listening. **THE PROCESSING** While sitting in traffic on my way home I developed the first iteration of the image. It is a basic process I use often, layer-blending a very abstracted painted version of the image with a sharpened lightened version. **SCAN THE TAG TO SEE THE PROCESS**

Artist'sTouch Quickly thumb-brush in some short, fat color-cloned strokes. Change the brush size and brush higher detail into the face and hand.

Iris Studio Import the original photo and open up shadow areas, brighten highlights, and sharpen and saturate. Bring in the painted version over the top and use the overlay blend mode.

PicGrunger I experimented with various effects and decided on sponged at around 80 percent with border turned on.
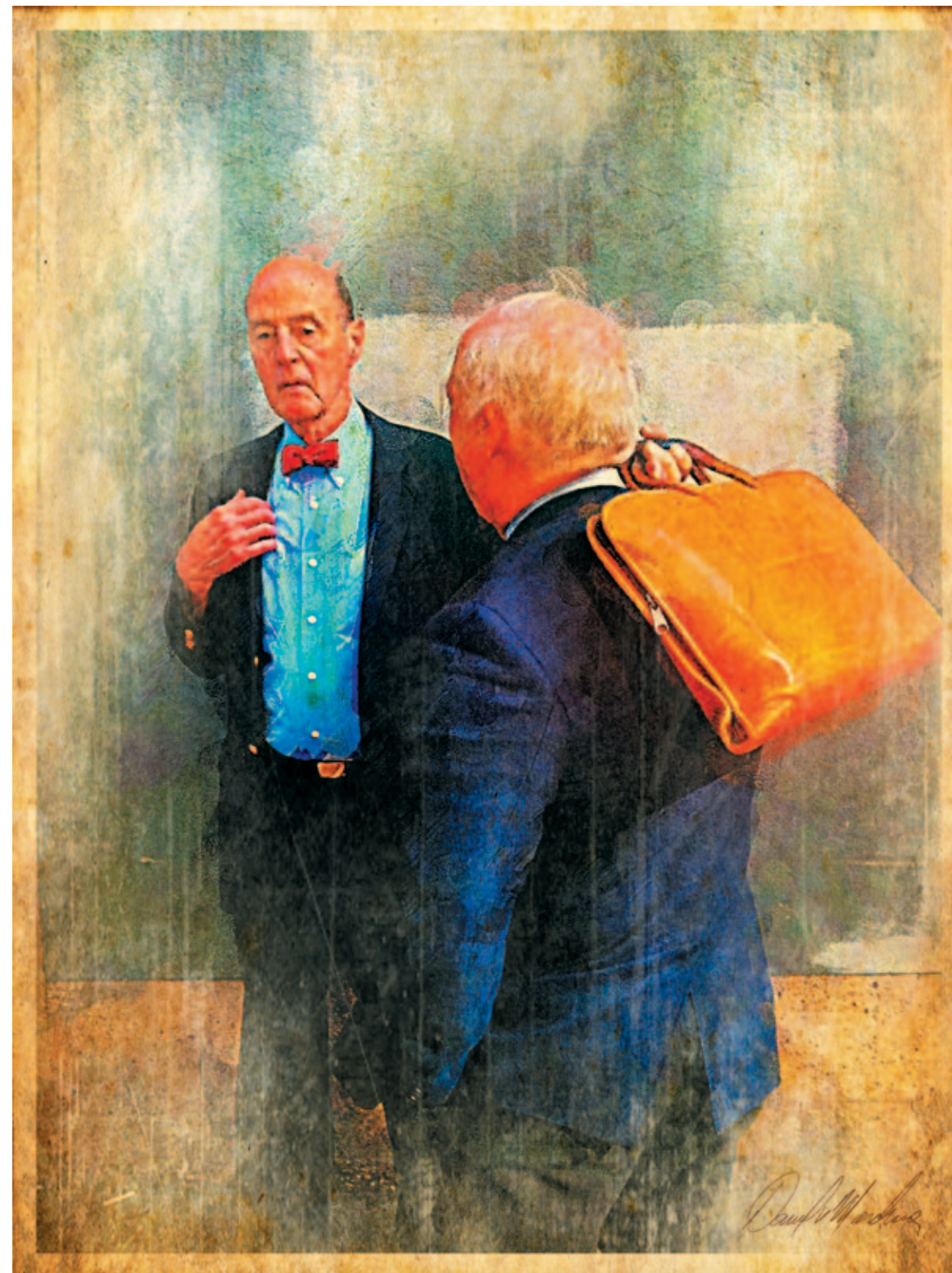
Walking to Hair

STEP 1 Artist'sTouch Clone-paint with broad strokes around the man.
Change his brush size and paint with more detail on his face and hand.
STEP 2 TiltShift (CHAPTER 4) Use the original image and Gauss-blur, saturate,
and brighten all but the man's face.
STEP 3 DXP (CHAPTER 2) Combine the painted version with the blurred version
using hardlight mode through a black-and-white brushed mask.

TIP TAG *Scan this tag to see
some apps that allow
you to take pictures
without being obvious.*

Fashion Shoot / Series

THE MOMENT As an art director at a photo shoot I snapped these images from the right of the main camera. The shot shows the assistant securing the wall behind the model. **THE PROCESSING** I wanted to abstract and simplify the images to the point of making them more like a story illustration. Then when I put the three views together like this, out of context, they begin to tell a tale of an unfulfilled romance—or maybe a creepy stalker.

BOTH IMAGES STEP 1 ArtistaHaiku (CHAPTER 5) Open shadow tones and sharpen.

STEP 1 Iris Studio (CHAPTER 2) Open shadow tones and sharpen. **STEP 2 CameraKit** Develop with sepia, vignette, and flash settings turned on. Blur and push setting set to level 2.
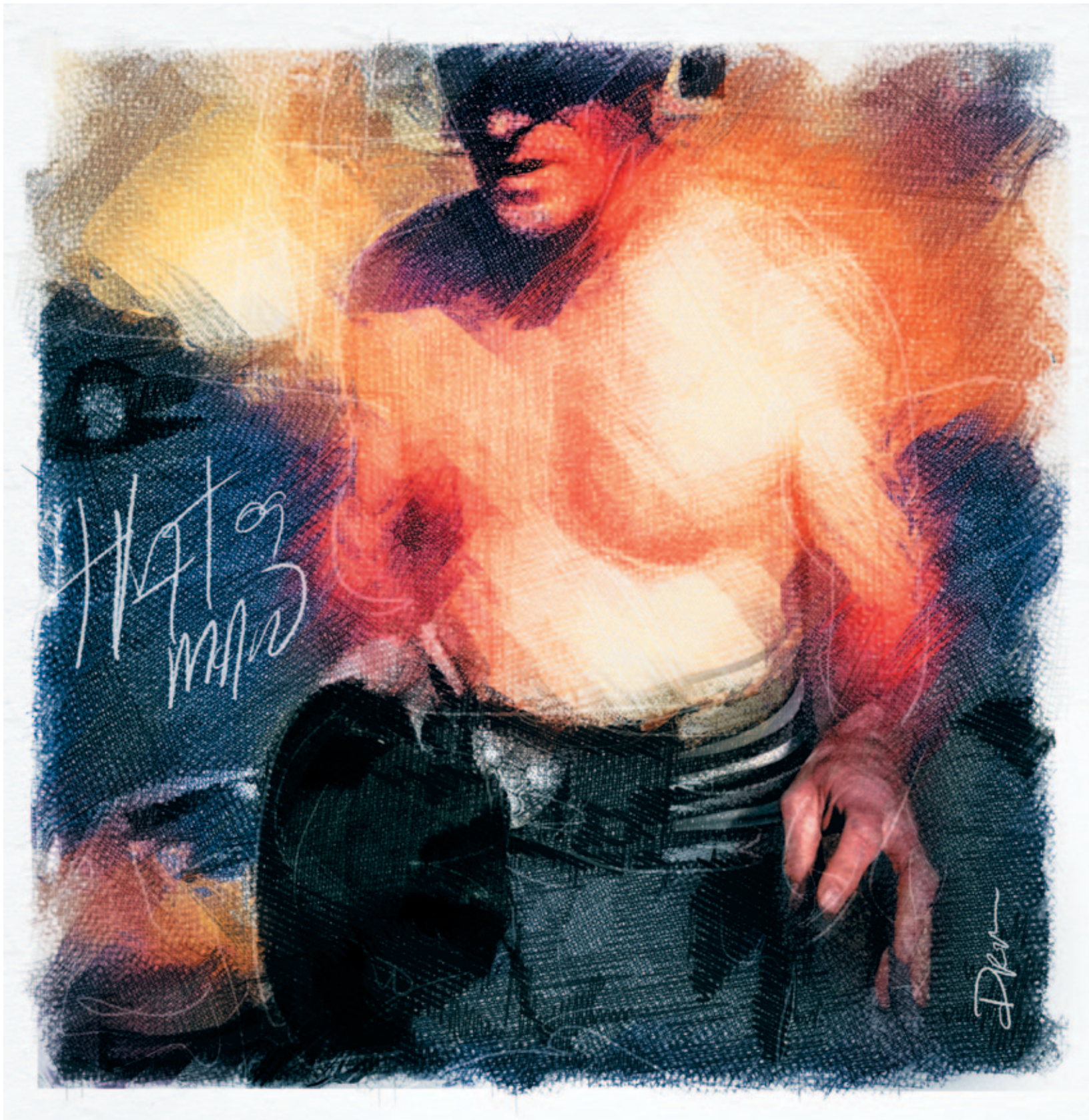
Full-Body Portraits / Process

THE MOMENT A good full-body portrait results from how the light hits a subject or the surroundings or the gesture of the person. A really good portrait is when these elements all come together. **THE PROCESSING** These two examples were done by using the unique qualities of an app call SketchMee combined with Photoshop. This app takes input from a photo and can redraw it in many different styles. The advantage is that you can export it via e-mail as a PDF in vector format. You can then scale it indefinitely without losing sharpness. When you bring in a softened or painted version of the original image and layer it with the vector using a blending mode, the results can be very illustrative in feeling. **SCAN THE TAG TO SEE THE PROCESS**

**TIP TAG**

Chapter 8 High Dynamic Range

One of the limitations of a small sensor in a mobile camera is the lack of dynamic range. But what if you could blend the highlights of the dark image with the shadow areas of the light image to capture a much wider dynamic range?

Well, you can, with a technique call high dynamic range, or HDR. This technique has been around for a while, but with some recent software tools it has really taken off on the DSLR side of photography. Now the mobile market has a few good affordable solutions as well. In addition to the two HDR apps profiled here, Apple has now built the technique into its latest iPhone. In working with these apps, I have really been impressed with the results. You can take dark and light shots automatically with the app determining the different exposures, or you can do it manually. To do it manually you touch the screen in a highlight area, snap the dark picture, and then touch a dark area to snap the light image. Since the two frames need to match perspectives closely, I find the auto works a little better because you can concentrate on holding the camera steady and not fumble around with touching the screen.

The process works best on contrasty scenes shot with the camera on a tripod or propped up on a table. But these apps can also be used creatively to combine not-so-exact frames together. The results can be very interesting.

ProHDR automatically takes a dark and light shot, then aligns the images and blends them, delivering a really impressive image. But more than that, it then allows you to tweak the parameters of the resulting image to make it even better. I use it on landscape scenes, as it keeps the sky from blowing out.
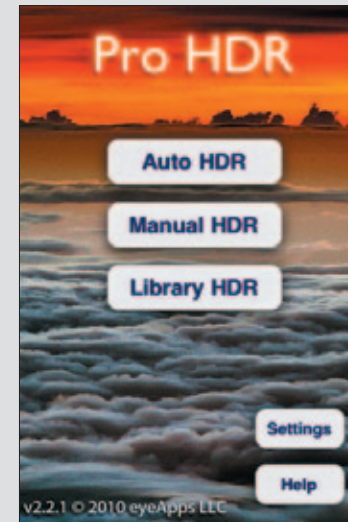
Choose a mode Auto mode analyzes the scene, then takes a dark and light image for you. Manual mode prompts you to take each image, giving you more control.
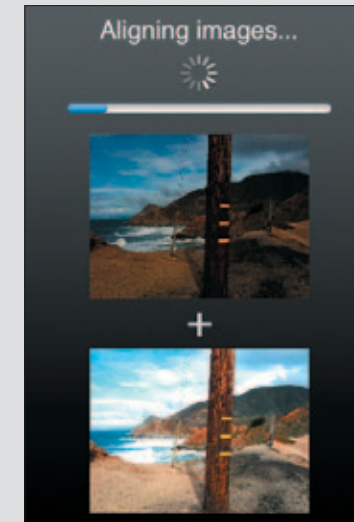
Best of both worlds Image alignment algorithms align images quickly but not always perfectly. It's essential to hold the camera as steady as possible.
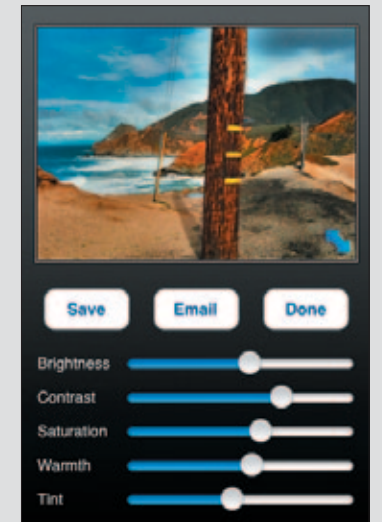
Adding pop Fine-tuning is a bonus in this app. By working with the brightness, contrast, and saturation, you can make a big difference in the final image.

TrueHDR lets you merge two exposures for extended dynamic range. Although I tend to like ProHRD a little better because you can tweak the picture afterward, this app is worth a try. It does have less haloing in tonal transition areas and has a enhanced mode I like for some images, as it gives them a super-real feeling.
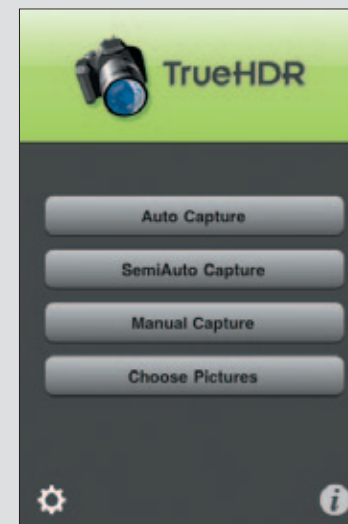
An extra mode In addition to auto capture and manual capture, TrueHDR has semi-auto capture, which allows you to choose the shadow and highlight areas before you start the capture.
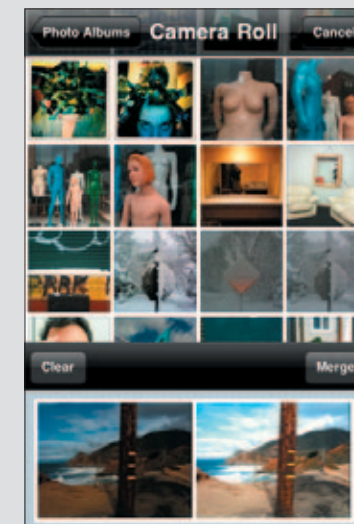
Use your library You can always just take pictures from your library so you don't have to open these apps to take shots. Just use a dark and light version and merge them later.
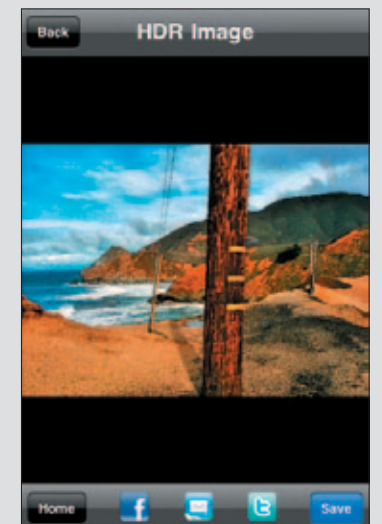
Enhanced mode This app has a natural and an enhanced mode. I like the enhanced mode for its surreal look. You can also share your success quickly on Facebook and Twitter or e-mail it to your mom.