

# Kai's Power Tips #3

## One Minute Quickies: Instant “Brushed Aluminum” Textures

### Why?

This does not solve any grandiose problem, it's an interesting extremely quick method to create textures and backgrounds with a “brushed aluminum” look. Lots of variations.

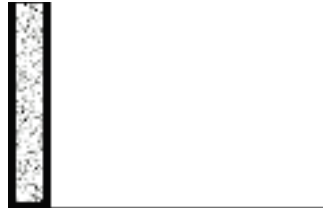
### How?

The texture can be generated at any size, exact numbers are only examples provided for repeatable results.

- 1) Go to File > “New” and create a 400x300y window, grayscale, 72 dpi.
- 2) Use the marquee tool and select a rectangle on the far left side, full height, about 15-20 pixels wide.

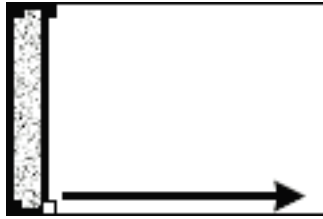
**TIP >>>** Use Window > Show Info. The readouts will show the dynamic size of the selection rectangle as you drag the marquee tool. Not critical here but often very useful.

- 3) Go to Filter > Noise > Add Noise...enter amount 99, Gaussian.
- 4) The 15x300 rectangle should now be filled with Noise as shown here (not to scale).



- 5) Go to Image > Effects > Scale, which adds little handles to the still selected marquee rectangle.
- 6) Click and drag the lower right handle all the way to the far lower right corner of the window.

**TIP >>>** While dragging you can press the SHIFT key to constrain the movement (not critical here)



- 7) Upon release you should have created Instant Brushed Aluminum ...Voila!



The theory behind this is that the noise pixels of various shades of grey are stretched with the Effects Scale feature and are now smooth anti-aliased long strips showing “metallic” transitions.

### **What Else?**

The effect is influenced by several variables: the number of noise pixels, their shape and their shades, the width of the source rectangle before and after the Effect Scale stretch, etc.

Try the following variations:

**TIP >>>** Use Image> Calculate> Duplicate...to create copies of the work in progress and modify them. Easier and faster than UNDO, allows comparative review and multiple channels can be combined in myriads of ways for further effects. (Separate Document on that topic)

- 1) After filling the source rectangle with noise, use the Blur More filter then proceed. A much softer transition between the bands results, often more pleasing and less harsh, albeit not as “metallic”. Many other filters affect the texture, either before or after the stretch. Try Stylize > Find Edges and Diffuse in the source rectangle.
- 2) The Levels... dialog (and others) can greatly affect the final texture. Goto Image > Adjust > Levels and
  - a) move the lower left triangle toward the right. This defines how “black” the dark portions are.
  - b) move the lower right triangle toward the left. This defines how “white” the light portions are.

Together these two alone can compress the tonal range and soften the texture in the process. Considering that you are very likely to superimpose other elements or text it may be required to tone down the texture.

**TIP >>>** You can click in the Title bar (e.g. on the word “Levels”) to quickly compare the before/after state of the Levels... settings. This often overlooked feature is true for many dialogs that affect pixel brightness, saturation, etc.. **MetaTIP>>>** After using the Preview button the preview will not work on 24 bit cards. Use Option Preview to restore it.

3) There are many ways to colorize the mono texture, dealt with in detail in chapters 12 and 13. If the original window is in RGB mode, the noise pixels themselves will already be in random hues and processed in color. More subtle results can be obtained by converting Mode > Gray Scale to Mode > Indexed Color then using Image > Adjust > Hue/Saturation: Colorize. Settings towards Orange/Green can create convincing bronze/gold textures, blue tints result in excellent wave material. (Try the distort filters on such waves, as well as Image > Effects > Perspective...)

4) Many of these textures, especially considering their intrinsic anti-aliased nature, are very useful in high quality 3-D rendering, surface and bump mapping.

5) The same technique applied vertically (i.e. a thin 400x15 marquee selection at the top...+ noise, then stretched downward) can create very realistic curtain folds. Use the gradient Blend tool at 50% (**TIP >>>** just hold down the “5” key, often overlooked short cut) intensity to darken directionally.

6) As always, in the process of trying these variations you may come across numerous interesting mutations and evolutionary sidelines. Save intermediate steps often! Use Duplicate to proceed with a copy. You can keep dozens of windows open.

Happy Photoshopping, Kai Krause