



## SuperBladePro 101

*Lessons by Karen Stimson*

### *Wool Sweater Street*

Lesson 1: The Basics--An Introduction to SuperBladePro

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### What is SuperBladePro?

SuperBladePro, or SBP for short, is a plugin filter for Photoshop, Paint Shop Pro, and other graphics programs which applies effects, called “presets,” to graphic images. It is made by [Flaming Pear](http://FlamingPear.com), and a fully-functional trial version is available for download [here](#).

### Installation

After downloading, click on the installation file and follow the instructions from Flaming Pear for installing--click [here](#) and follow the instructions. When you have finished installing, you will find a folder called “SuperBladePro” in your Program Files folder on your computer. Locate that folder and open it. You can see that there is a folder labeled “environments and textures”. This contains all the default presets and bitmaps (or Pict files for Mac) that Flaming Pear gives you with the program. You can download extra environments and textures from links at the bottom of [this page](#). After downloading, place them into your environments and textures folder. (Note to Mac users: you will need to convert the bitmaps supplied as environments and textures to Pict images, and will need to convert all Windows preset files to Mac format as well. Flaming Pear includes an application to do this with the Mac version of SBP.)

### Organizing your presets and bitmaps

One of the keys to using SBP easily and successfully is in managing your preset collections. As you have no doubt discovered, there are literally thousands of free SBP or BladePro presets available for download on the web. You need to organize them so that SBP will be able to load them easily. First, let me explain a little about how SBP works. A preset is comprised of two things: a file with the extension .q5q (for SuperBladePro) or

.q9q (for the older BladePro), and one or two bitmaps (Picts for Mac) that the preset uses to work. ***You cannot use the .q5q or .q9q file without the bitmap/Picts!*** An SBP or BladePro preset can use either one or two bitmaps, and it cannot use any other type of graphic format. By default, when the SBP plugin opens in your graphics program and you select a preset to load, the program looks in the environments and textures folder for the associated bitmaps/Picts. If it doesn't find them there, you will get an error message that says, "Can't open the texture file 'example.bmp' or 'example.pict'. Try putting this file in your 'environments and textures' folder. Or help BladePro find the 'environments and textures' folder." There will be a little box at the bottom of the message where you can navigate to the folder where the referenced bitmap can be found, but it's easier if you place copies of all the bitmaps/Picts for the presets in your collections right into the E&T folder. That way SBP will be able to load any preset you open right away without giving you that aggravating error message that drives many of us nuts!

Please note that I recommend keeping ***copies*** of all the bitmaps/Picts for your presets in the environments and textures folder. This is because on rare occasions you will come across a bitmap/Pict that has the same name as one in your E&T folder, and when you try to copy it you will get a message asking if you want to overwrite the one that's already there. We'll discuss how to deal with that later, but for now just remember to put copies of your bitmaps or Picts in the E&T folder, and save the originals with the presets that they work with.

### ***Where do you put your presets?***

You can put a copy of all your presets in the E&T folder if you wish. In short order, however, you will have so many presets there that you will have trouble finding the one you want! So I recommend keeping your preset collection in subfolders, either within the E&T folder or in another folder on your computer. I also recommend organizing your preset folders by creator, or the site you downloaded them from, and keeping a copy of the terms of use in each folder.

Most people who create presets add an identifying prefix in front of all their presets--I always use "ks\_". This makes it easy to identify whose the preset is if you get it mixed up with other presets sometime. You can go to [this site](#) for a "who's who" list of many of the SBP creators and their prefixes.

Many SBP designers also provide a preview for each preset they make. This is a graphic image, usually a jpeg, showing how the preset looks applied to one or more selections. I always include a folder of previews with my presets. You can store these previews wherever it's most convenient for you, but it's good to have a reference when using your preset collection. There is another way you can get previews of all the presets in your collection and we will discuss that later.

If you use my system, you should have your folder tree organized something like this:

Program Files folder

SuperBladePro folder

E&T folder, with copies of all bitmaps or Picts

Presets folder, containing subfolders for all your presets, organized by source (this can be in your E&T folder or elsewhere)

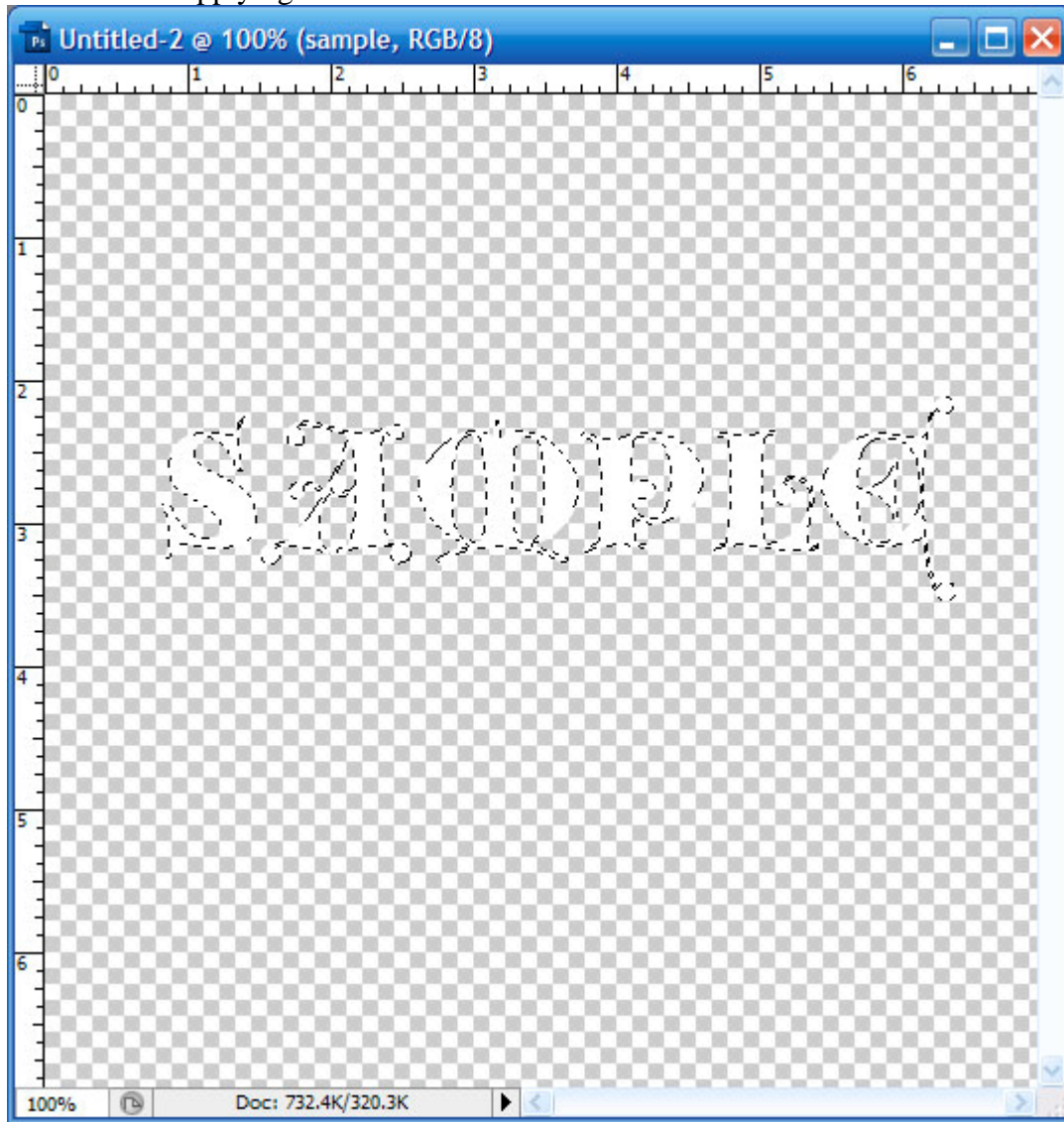
Presets folders, labeled by source or creator

Now that we're all organized, we're ready to load our first preset! We're going to use as our example, one of my presets. Please go to [this page](#) and download the presets and bitmaps. Follow my instructions above for organizing them in your folders. If you are using a Mac, be sure to convert the presets and bitmaps to Mac format.

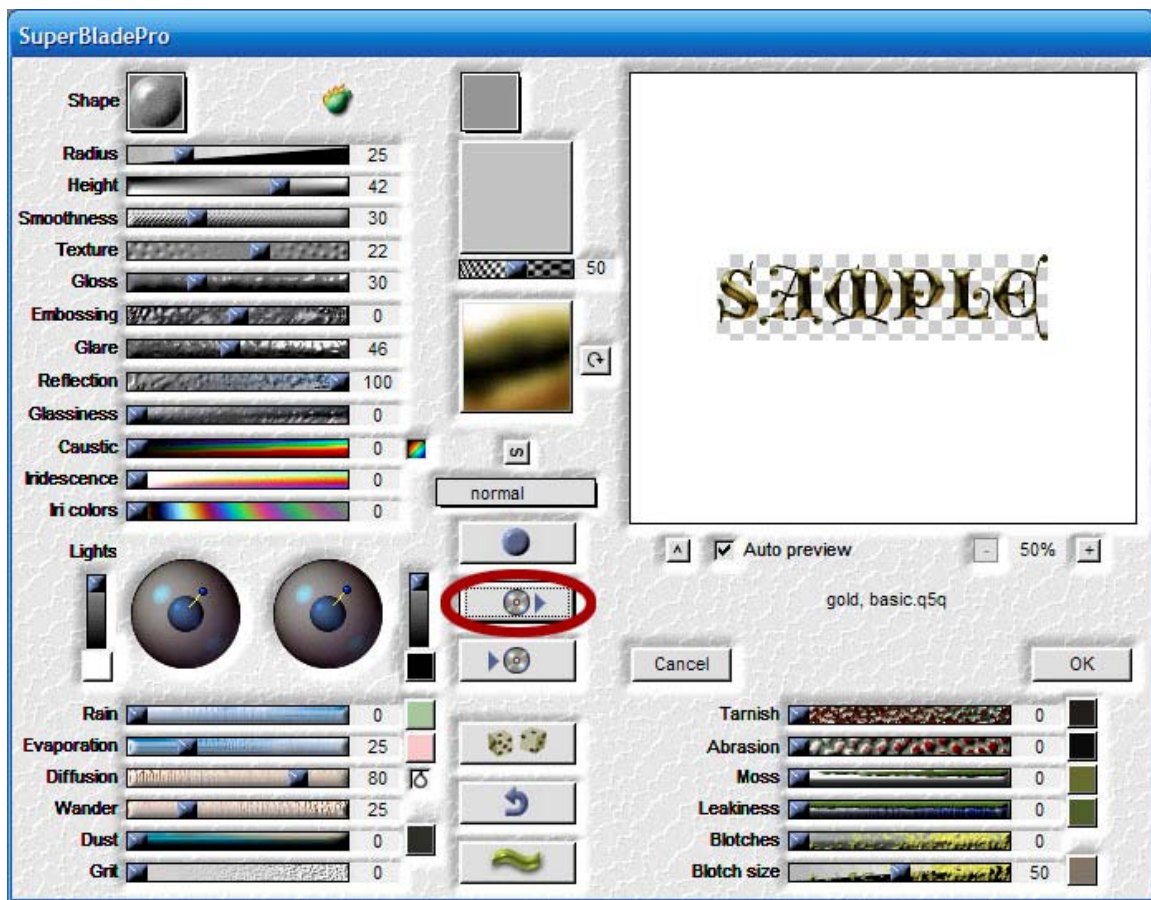
## **The SuperBladePro interface**

Create a new document measuring 500 by 500 pixels, at 72 ppi (pixels per inch, or resolution), with a transparent background. Type in a sample word in a thick font, with white as your fill color. Rasterize your

type layer, then select all the letters. I am using Kingthings Versalis, all lowercase, at 72 points. This is what my image looks like before applying SBP:

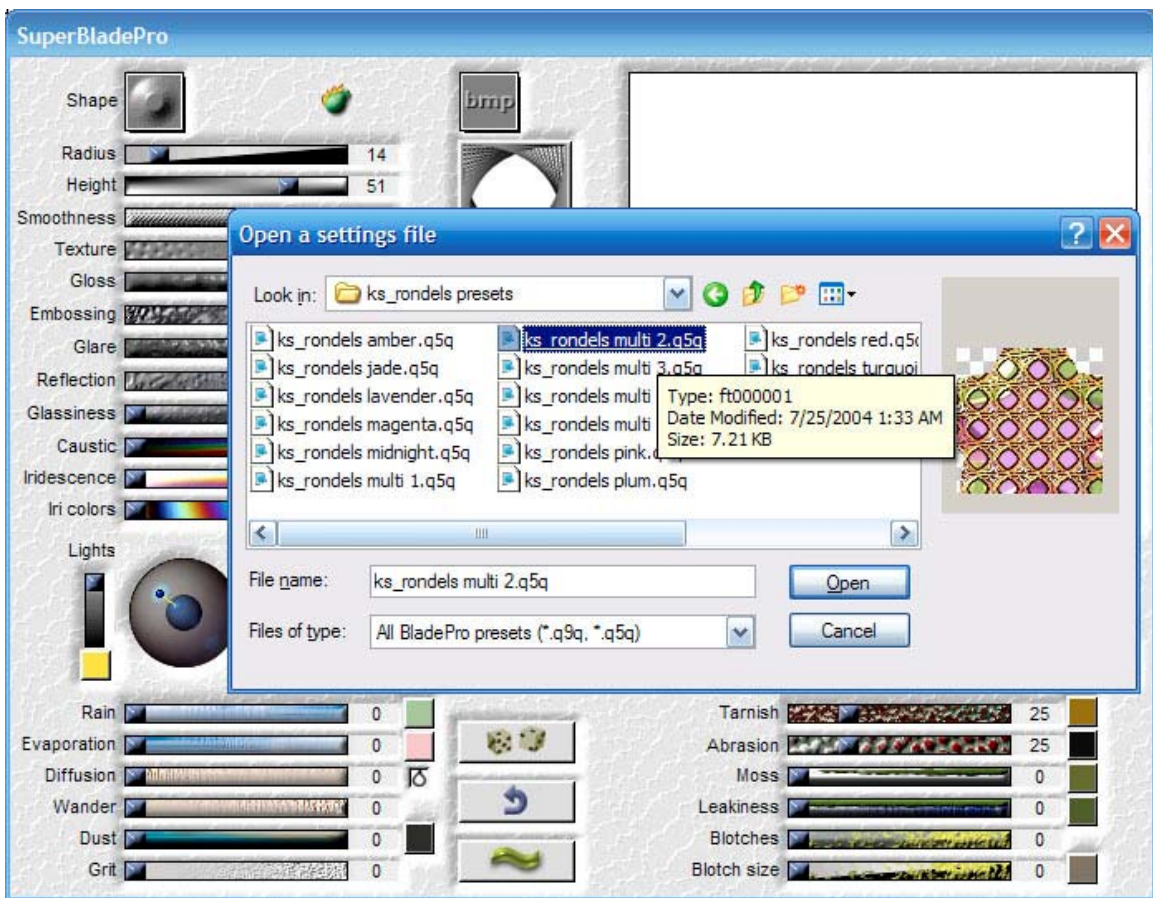


Open SBP by going to Filter, Flaming Pear, then click on SuperBladePro. This interface will appear (please note that I am using version 142, the newest version has a slightly different interface but you should be able to follow this tutorial easily):

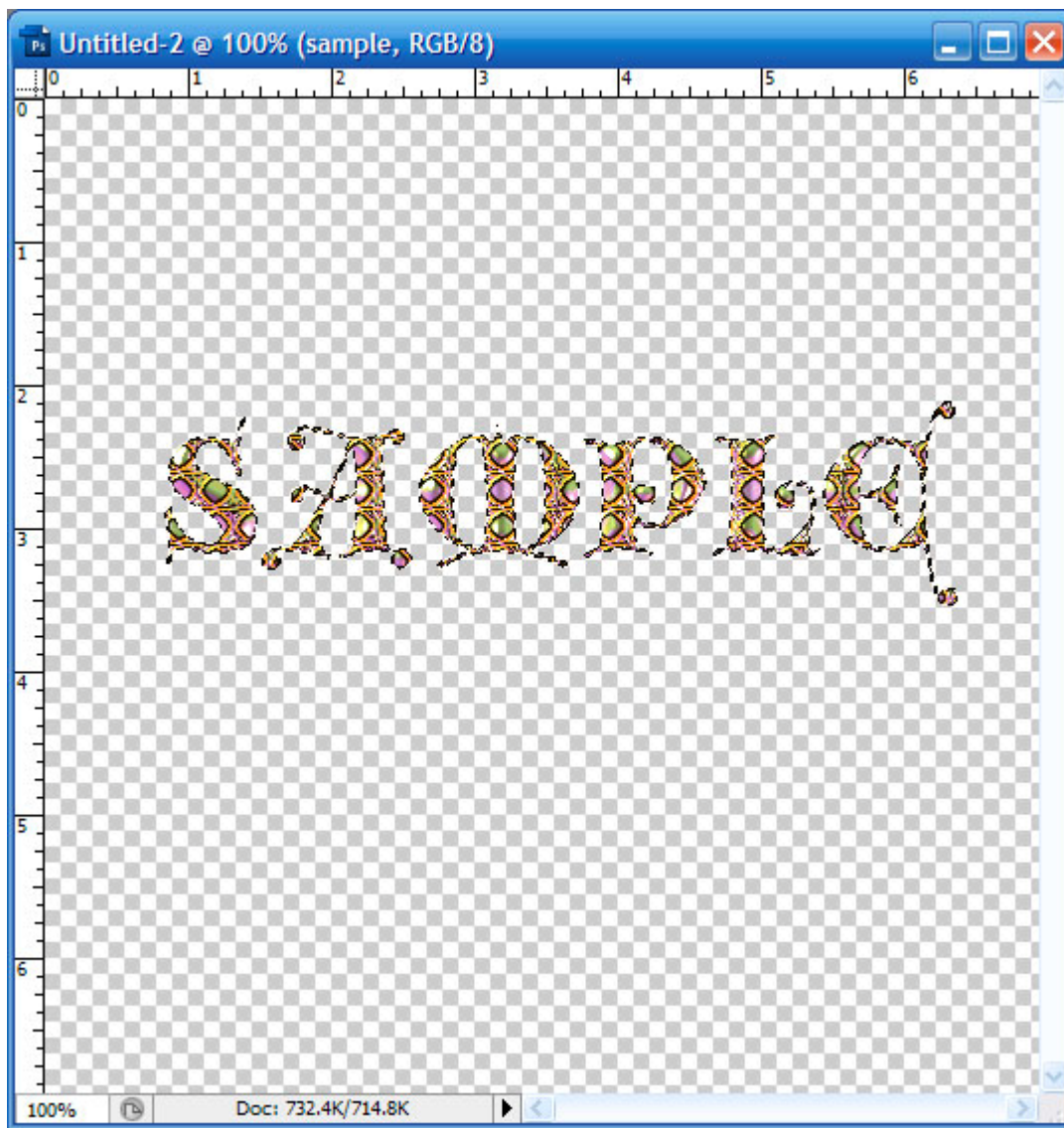


Click on the top button with the CD icon, circled in red above. *This is the button for loading presets.*

A dialog box labeled “Open a settings file” will appear. Navigate to the folder where you have saved the presets “ks\_rondels presets”. Click on the file named “ks\_rondels multi 2.q5q” and click the “Open” button, as shown below:



Click OK. Here is what my image looks after the preset has been applied:



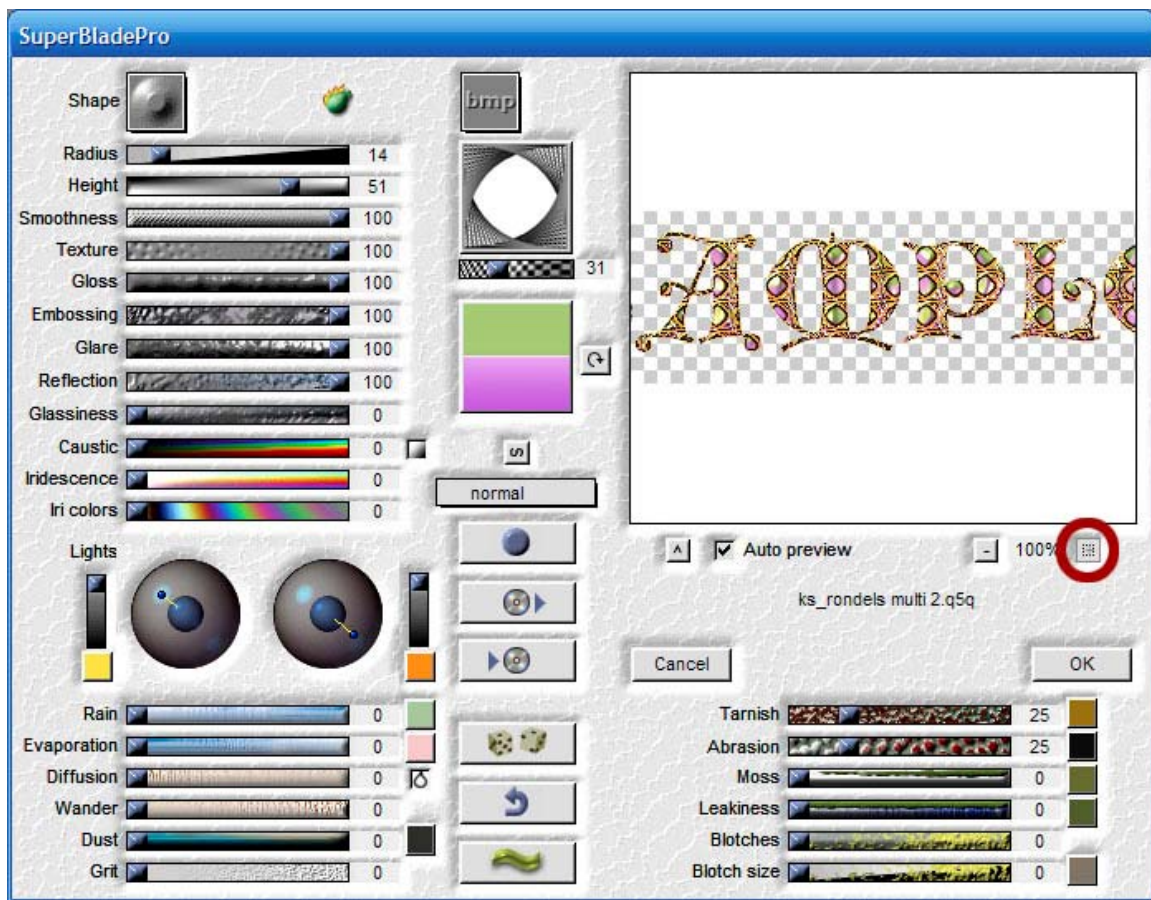
Deselect your type, and your text is ready to use!

## **Tweaking presets--the basics**

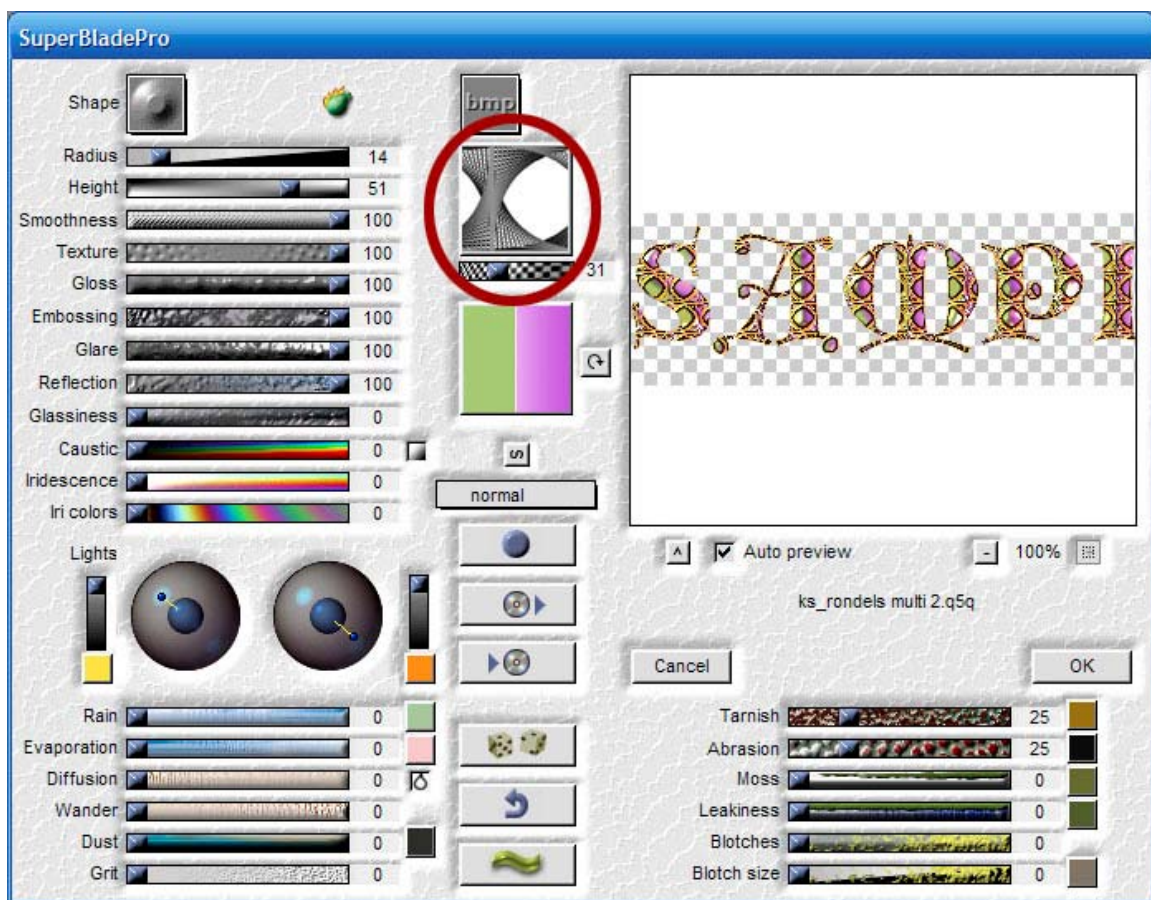
Another key to using SBP successfully is knowing how to tweak presets to suit the selections you are working with. A preset can look completely different when applied to different selections, depending on their size and shape. What looks great on a thin font, where only the edges of the preset show up, might look absolutely horrible on a large dingbat, which will utilize the preset's full effects. There are a lot of ways you can make subtle and not-so-subtle changes in the way the preset looks, and I will show you some of the simpler ones now. Others will be covered in later lessons.

### ***Tweak No. 1***

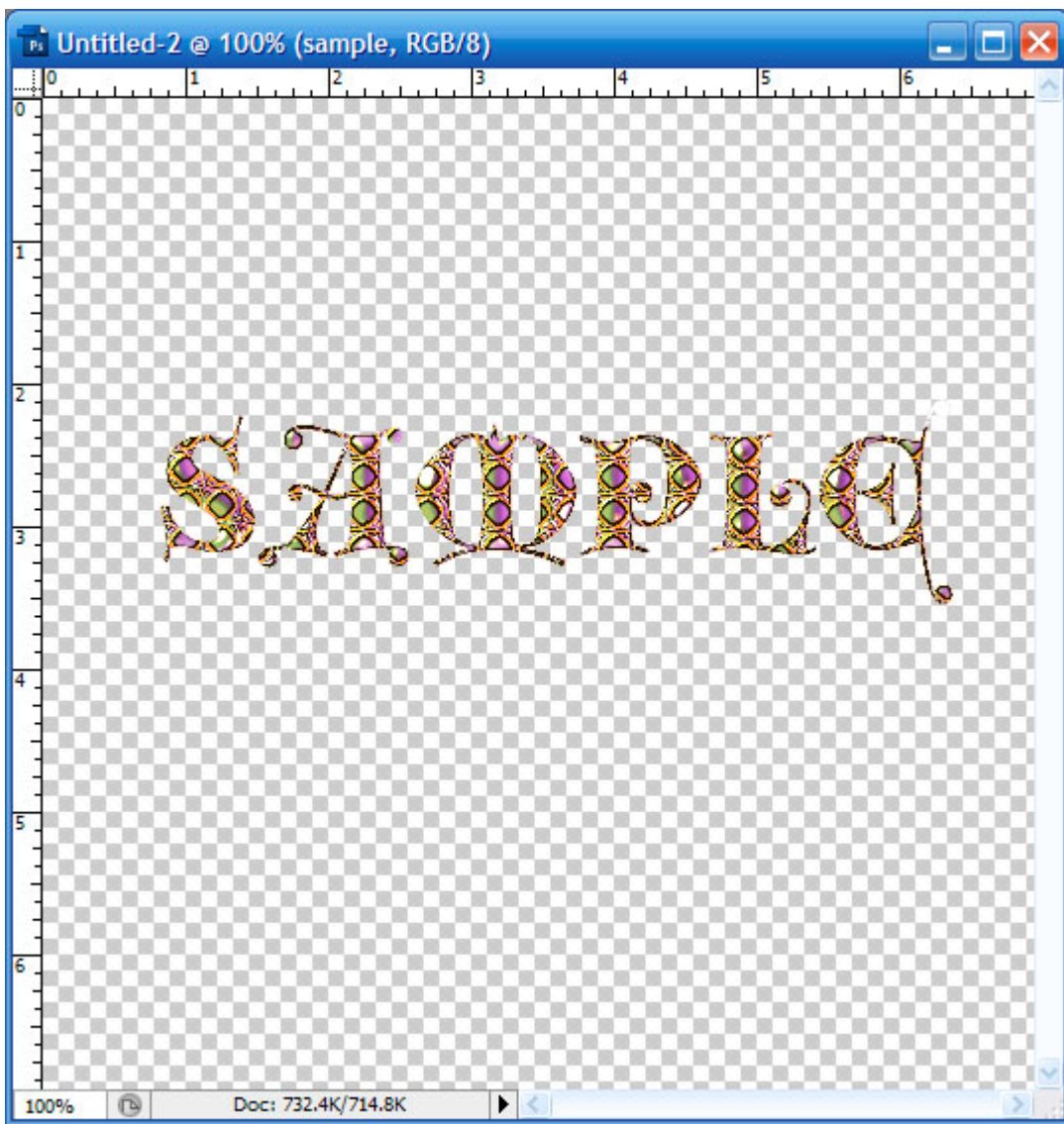
Let's go back to our example, using the same sample text and the preset "ks\_rondels multi 2.q5q". Start with a fresh selection as before. Open SBP and load the preset. In the interface, click on the button circled in red below to increase the size of the preview in the preview window to 100%:



This allows you to see how the preset will look on your selection. If you place your mouse cursor in the preview window and hold down your left button you can move the image around so you can see it all. By moving your image around, you can see in this case that the preset looks good on the letter “M” but not so good on the other letters. There’s a simple way to fix this, one of the easiest tweaks in SBP. Place your mouse cursor in the window shown circled in red below--this is your texture bitmap. Move the texture slightly to the right, until the rondels are centered as shown below in the letters A and P:



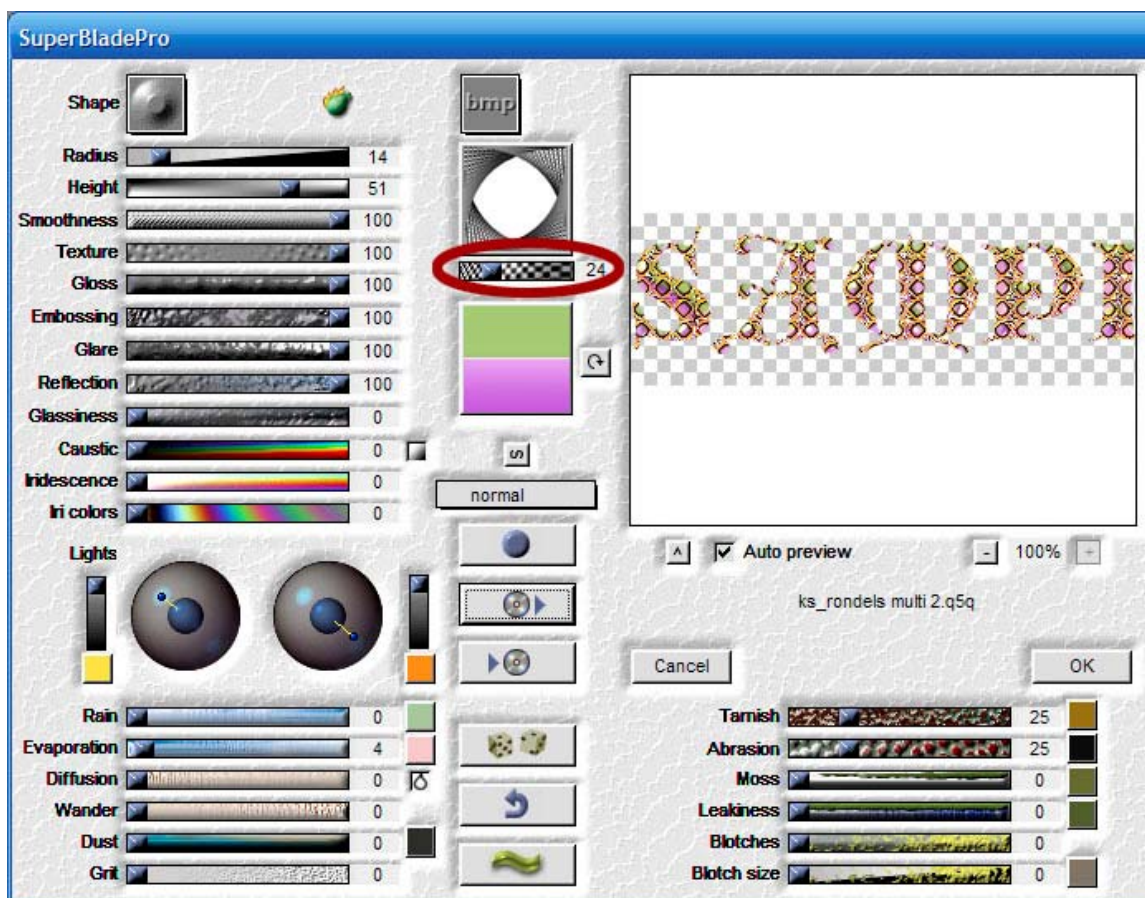
However, now the letter M doesn't look good. So the solution to this is to apply the preset to individual letters one by one. Click "Cancel", then select just the A and P, and reload SBP and the preset. SBP remembers the preset it last loaded, so the placement of your texture bitmap will be the same as you left it. Click OK to apply the preset to these two letters. Repeat this procedure for each of the other letters, moving the texture bitmap around to position it for each letter as you wish, then click OK to apply. When you are done, your text should look something like this:



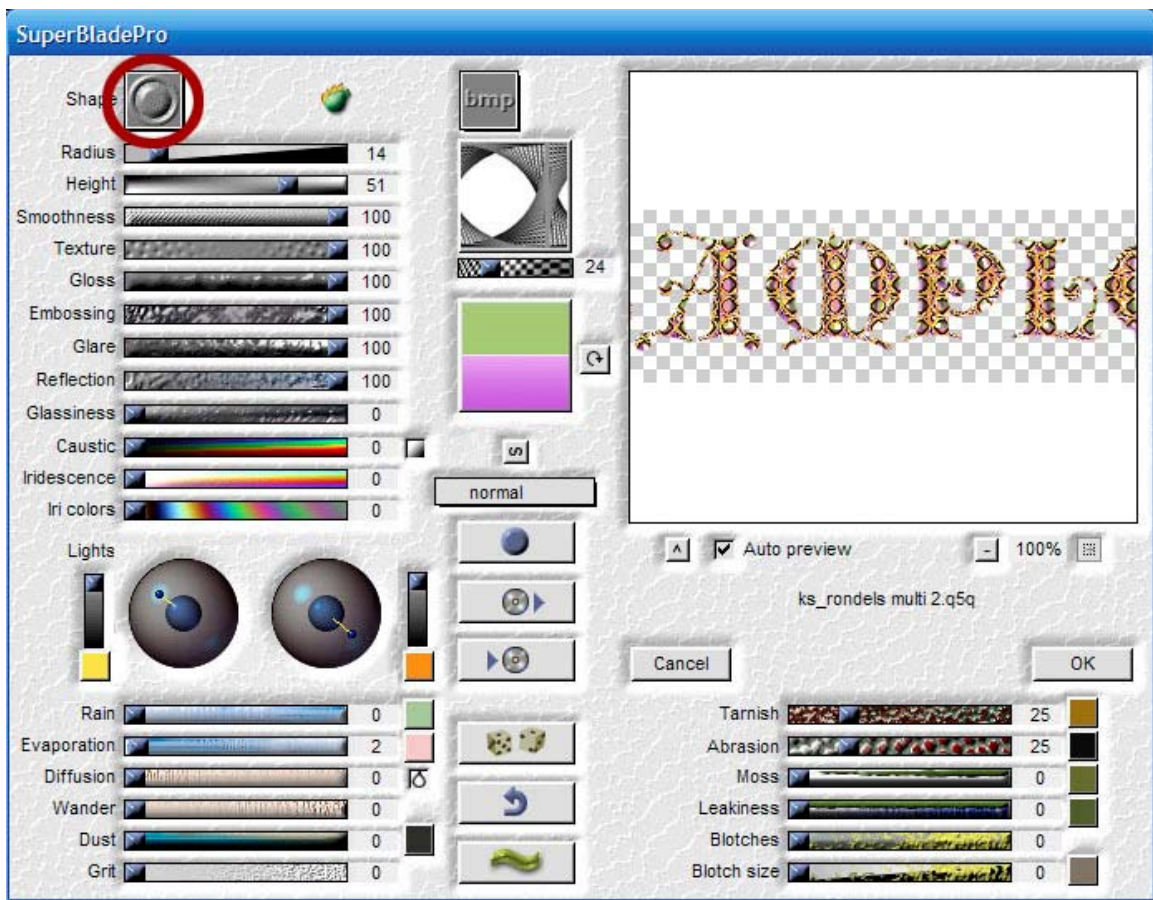
This looks good now!

### ***Tweaks No. 2 and 3***

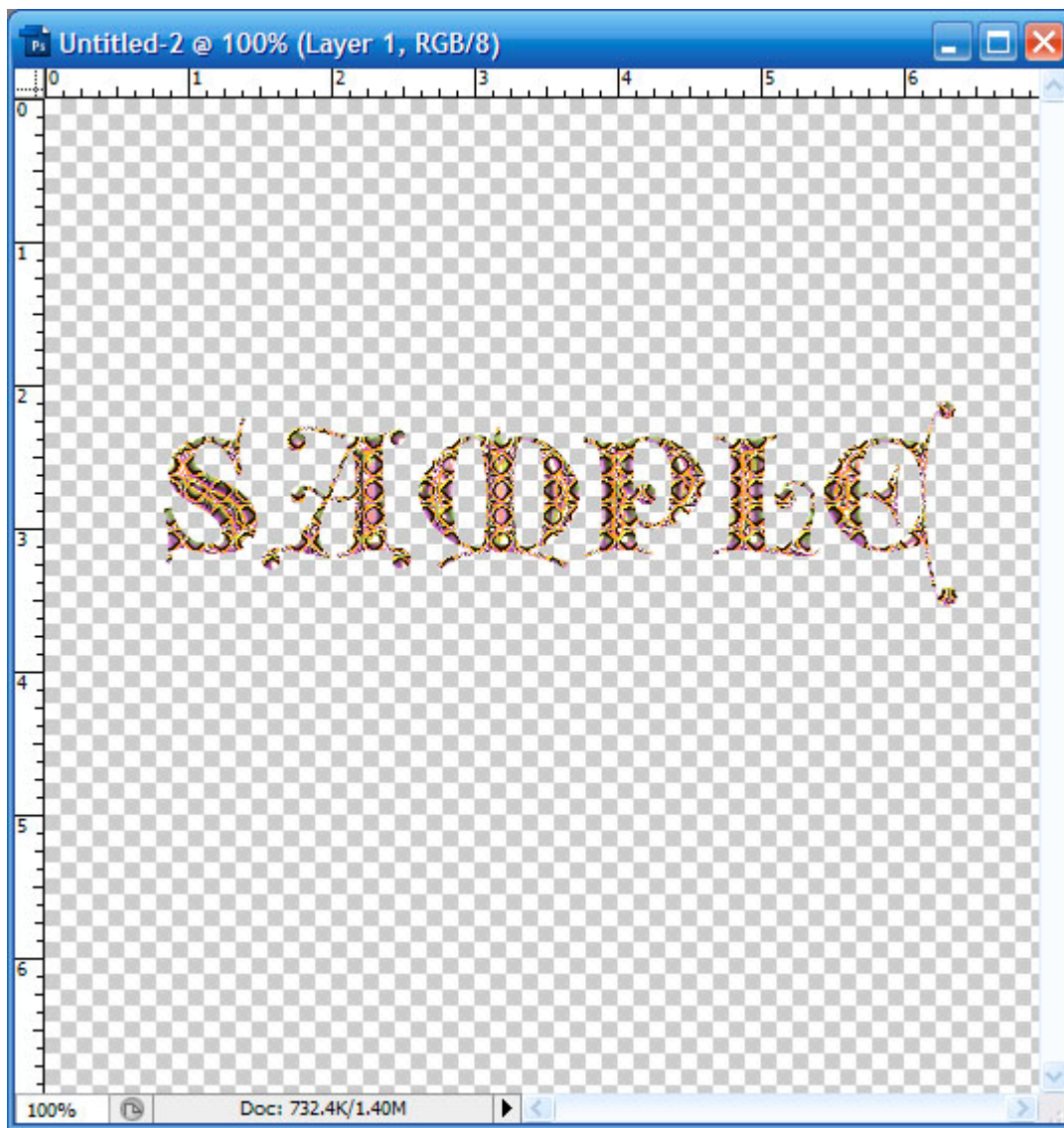
Another easy tweak also involves manipulating the texture bitmap. Let's start off with a fresh copy of our sample text, rasterized and selected, again. Open SBP and load the same preset we've been working with. However, this time, move the slider underneath the texture bitmap/Pict to the number 24, as shown below:



You may want to go back and apply this tweaked preset to each of the letters individually as we did before, but wait, I've got another tweak you can apply along with this one! While you've still got the interface open, move your cursor to the upper left icon, labeled "Shape". Click on it and you will see a row of shapes appear--these are all the bevels that you can use in SBP. You will see a checkmark in front of the bevel currently in use. To change the bevel used by this preset, move your cursor to another one--let's try the 7<sup>th</sup>. one from the top--and then let go of your mouse button. You will see the bevel in the Shape window has changed, and so has the look of the preset:



Click OK to apply, and this is what you'll get:



You'll notice that the preset has more of a rounded look to it now, and the rondels are smaller, more in proportion to the size of the text.

One final tip: most SBP presets are designed to work on selections filled with solid white. There are many exceptions. Some presets, like my [Acrylic High Resolution presets](#), are designed to work as "overlays" to add a shiny gloss and bevel to the base image, and these can be applied to any color or pattern, but for now you should assume when using a preset that it is to be applied to a solid white selection unless the designer tells you otherwise.

So now you should have the tools to successfully load and apply just about any preset you download from the web. In my next lesson I'll cover intermediate techniques, but in the meantime, HAVE FUN with your new skills, and get all those great presets out there!

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Please visit my SuperBladePro site at:

<http://www.woolswesterstreet.com/sbp/index.html>