Custom Backgrounds using Gen-EFX
Create that cool artisctic look without much effort

A good menu deserves a nice background. You can of course choose one of the prepared "stock" backgrounds but you will soon get tired of them. The other way would be to make one.
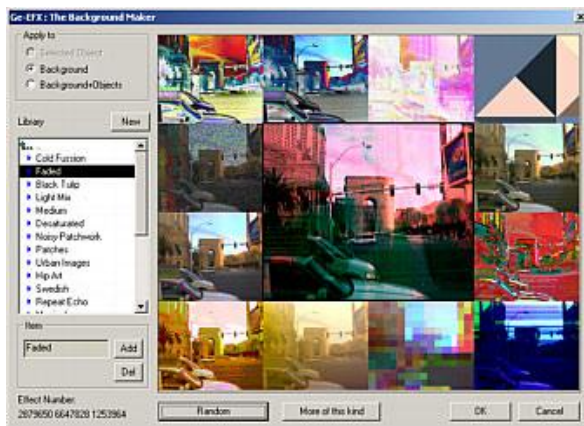
Here you are. Probably the first thing you do is to drop a video frame from preview to menu. If you hold SHIFT while dropping then the image will become a background. Thanks to the internal auto-deinterlacing the image will be nice and smooth. But look at it:

This image above will definitelly not impress anybody.

The role of background is to make the image **interesting**, yet it **shouldn't draw** too much **attention**. The image above breaks both rules. It is boring and full of distracting details. Put a text over it and you surely can be recognized as someone who did this first time in his life.

DVD-lab has one (or more like thousands) trick in its sleeve. It is called Gen-EFX which is a special effect generator where the effects are created by mutation. Just run it and select a background as the source.

The Center larger image is our result. By clicking at Random button you will see various different effects in thumbnails around the Center image. Clicking on any thumbnail will bring it to the Center. Clicking on Center image will create more variation of that effect. You can also use some predefined variations or create your own.

The effects range from simple to very complex and weird looking. However these "weird" images are our prime raw source of a developing background.

Here are just some which you can create by simply clicking at Random and selecting the one you like.

They may still not look very appealing yet, but this is our start raw material. Nobody says you have to stop here.

An interesting effect can be created when you add some text and then use the source (Apply To) to be Background+Objects

This is what we did with the top left image above and the other images are the Gen-EFX variations of it. A subtle text can often create an interesting look of the background.

How to create some ussable backgrounds?
By repeating! Use one effect for example on Background+Objects then run Gen-EFX again and use another effect this time for example only on background. In both cases the objects will always stay intact, only the background will change so you can really repeat this as long as you want. If something went wrong, just SHIFT-drag the frame from preview to the menu and start all over.

So here is the plan. I first draw the text which I would like to have on the menu so I can eventually subtle-mix it into the background itself for added fun.

1. Iteration.
Run the Gen-EFX, select background+Objects and click Random. You can also click on the library - For my first test I used the Black Tulip from the "The Background Maker" collection.

This is already an interesting enough to keep it so I click OK. I add a title to it. This is pretty much what is the image next.

Note that the text is nice and visible because of the strong drop shadow (on text Las Vegas I moved the offset to 0 which creates a black "glow"). I achieved this by simply selecting the text and copying to clipboard and then pasting it back. Like that it will create a stronger shadow - you can repeat this few times.

2. Iteration
The first iteration above is nice but it has a bit too much details for my taste. I can run Gen-EFX again and apply another effect on the Background or on Background+Objects.
This will really add to the whole complexity of texture, ultimatelly creating a background which is more subtle.
Here are some of my picks of this iteration, these I liked because of the color and light. Most of them were touched with the effeects defined in "The Background maker" library. I
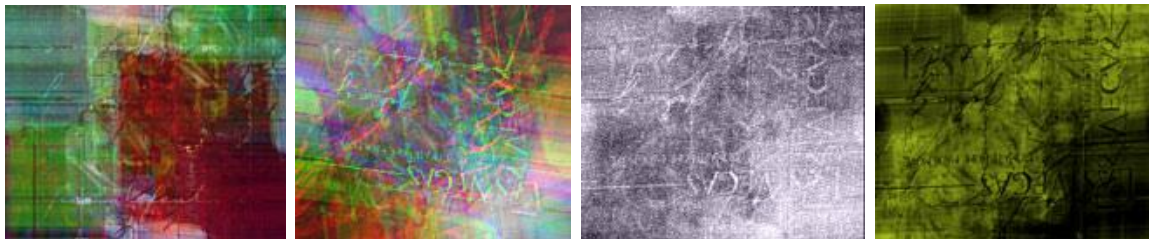

Clicking OK on image you like and it will put this as a new background and the whole image will look now more like this:

I quite like that one, it has nice texture which somehow work with the text. But it is a bit too dramatic. Of course our dull image we sarted on top of the page is now long gone...

3. Iteration
A third and next iteration on the background will make the image with even more subtle textures and lines. Very ideal as a background indeed.

Just check the last one with the text over it:

More you try, more interesting it becomes! I really like the last one - it looks like a map of some sort and the light is quite interesting.
Just remember to Export interesting menus (Menu - Export - As menu) so you can later choose which one is the best.

You can do this whole night and produce hundreds of different menus all originated from a single dull video still!

Just see how far we went:

Next time you see someone read that expensive book about making textures in PhotoShop tell them that you can make better one in three itterations of Gen-EFX.

Bonus:

If you got here so far you deserve a bonus. Yo will get free few of the backgrounds I created, all in full 4:3 resolution. You can use it in any of your project or any authoring tool.

Grab a few free backgrounds I created writing this tutorial.
background38.jpg
background40.jpg

Remember you can create thousands of your own from any image - only in DVD-lab.