

Photoshop Tip: Put Your Name on a (Photoshop) Marquee

By Bert Monroy

Look at theater marquees nowadays and you'll see letters silk-screened onto clear plastic. In this exercise we re-create that effect in Photoshop.

Here's how to make the words of your choice appear on those clear plastic marquee letters.

Put your name in lights

1. Open a new Photoshop document.
2. Choose the Gradient tool by clicking and holding down the left mouse button over the Paint Bucket tool and selecting Gradient tool from the drop-down menu. Create a light-colored radial gradient with the lightest color in the center.
3. Create a few thin horizontal lines to serve as the bands holding the letters on the marquee.
4. Using the Text tool, type in the word you want to appear on the marquee. Make the size about equal to the space between the horizontal lines.
5. Scale the text to fit perfectly between the two horizontal lines using the Scale tool (Edit > Transform > Scale).
6. Duplicate the text layer. In the Layers menu turn off the Eye for the layer below and make the top layer the active layer.
7. Choose "Create warped text" in the Options bar for the Text tool. The "Create warped text" button has a letter "T" underlined by an arc. In the drop-down Style menu, select Bulge. Then click the Vertical button and adjust the Bend until you have the shape you want.
8. Create a new layer. Using the Pen tool, create a shape that curves at the edges and follows the shape of the distorted letters.
9. Fill the shape with a shade of gray.
10. Adjust the layer's Opacity level to less than 50 percent.
11. Create a new layer above the layer with the gray box. Using a soft-edged Paintbrush tool, paint a black line across at the bottom of the box to serve as a dark shadow.
12. Clip the layer with the black stripe to the same size as the layer containing the gray box.
13. Select the second, undistorted text layer. Rasterize it (Layer > Rasterize > Type).
14. Scale the rasterized text to line up with the distorted letters. Stretch the bottom to elongate the rasterized letters.
15. Apply a slight Gaussian Blur filter (Filter > Blur > Gaussian Blur).
16. Cut off the bottom of the rasterized letters so they don't extend beyond the bottom of the distorted letters.
17. Lower the Opacity of the rasterized text.
18. Our final step is to give the sign a little highlight. Create a new layer on top of all the others.
19. Paint a thin, soft-edged white stripe across the upper part of the sign.
20. Make the layer with the gray box a selection (on a Mac, Command-click on the layer in the layer palette; on a PC, use Ctrl-click).
21. Choose Inverse in the Select menu.
22. Click Delete if you're using a Mac or Backspace if you're on a PC. Now you're done!