

Hands On Newsletter

July and August 2008

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Palisades Pontiac **The Story Behind the Image**

This image tells many stories.

First, it explains why this is a “combined” newsletter – one that serves as both the July and August editions. Simply stated, I unexpectedly spent 6 weeks, this summer, in Southern California. Occupied with family matters, and removed from my studio and the resources I use to create newsletters, I could not publish

a July edition. By the time I got home, to Texas, I was so far behind that I couldn’t just crank one out. When I look at this image, I will always remember the events of the summer of 2008.

Second, it is an iconic representation of my old home town, Pacific Palisades, California – an intimate village in anonymous Los Angeles. Nothing is more small town Palisades than the local 4th of July Celebration which starts with a parade and ends with fireworks at the high school.

And, finally, it is the story of an image – not a terribly great image, and my fiddling in *Lightroom* and *Photoshop* to make it better.

It's this latter story I'll tell here.

Act 1: Capturing the Image

The main character in this act is my [Canon PowerShot G9](#) “point and shoot” camera.



What you say, “You shoot a Canon? I thought you were a died in the wool Nikon guy.” I am, most of the time (although my first serious camera was the Canon FTb that I still own.) And, to

make matters more interesting, I also had my D3 and a bunch of lenses with me in California.

But, I chose the G9 because I just didn't want to lug a big camera around. And, because the G9 gets amazing results. (I'm not alone in going to the G9 in situations like this. Close friends Jim DiVitale and Helene Glassman do the same thing. You can see some of their work with the G9 on his [blog site](#).)

Why the G9? Because it allows me to shoot RAW images. I don't shoot any other way. Although it has a lot of great features, including the ability both shoot and focus in the manual mode, what sealed the deal was the fact that it shot RAW; very few point and shoots can do that.

Every good character has its flaws – and the G9 is not flawless. My greatest concern with this camera is that the first 3 I bought came dead-in-the box. Were it not for Jim consistently telling me that I was simply on a bad run, I would have given up on Canon. And, if Nikon had been making a point and shoot that could shoot RAW, I would never have seen the good things the G9 can do.

Bottom Line: This is a very good camera IF you get one that works.

The capture back story is part of the big picture. I've gotten used to what I call “big lens privilege”. Walk around with a big camera and lens – with or without a press pass showing – and you will be given great deference as to where you are allowed to go to grab the best shot. With the D3, I'm allowed to roam. With the G9, I'm not.

So, I had to stake out a place on the parade route where I could get more than just a snap shot.

Mindful of [John Woodward's](#) lectures on composition and flow, I tried to find a line that would lead in and out of my images. Duh! How about the yellow line down the middle of the road? This was just too easy. I love cars and I knew that there were a lot of great cars in the parade. I knew I'd want to shoot slightly up. So I took up my post and waited for the world to come to me, and it did. One of the resulting images is Palisades Pontiac.

All was good. Well, all was good until the Palisades Pooches, the neighborhood dogs on leashes, and their owners, came marching down the road. I held my ground and tried to get some weird angle shots of the dogs leading their owners down my path until one of the male dogs decided to mark “his territory” which included my spot. I made an immediate decision to bail. Good bye favorite spot. Thank goodness I had already gotten the Pontiac.

Act 2: Processing the Image: Putting Some Punch in an Ordinary Image

Most of you know where I stand in the “Get it right in the camera” v. “Fix it in Photoshop” wars; I'm Sweden. I'm firmly in between.

I absolutely believe in “getting it right in the camera” and do everything I can to do so.

But, I also believe that I can enhance and improve most every image I take with some creative work in post production.

Scene 1: A Minor Rant on those who Denigrate Post Production

I find it particularly annoying when the “anti-digital” people talk about the good old days before Photoshop – the days when you had to get it right in the camera.

It sounds good, but it wasn’t true then and it isn’t true, now.

Labs corrected major shooting mistakes. Overexpose, underexpose use the wrong film? No worries. The lab fixed it. And, they did it silently without embarrassing the photographer.

Your negative a bit too ordinary? Send it to the print maker – a retouching expert who, with chemicals and brushes did exactly what we do with Photoshop, today.

My first lighting teacher was a bit “digital hostile”; in a class where more than 90% of us were shooting digitally, he denigrated digital capture and post processing. OK, he was entitled to his opinion.

And, then, one day, he held a 3 hour session on how to make merit award quality prints.

During that session, it all fell apart for him. He showed us a “before” image and an “after” image. Things that looked like something your kid would take on a cell phone turned into an incredible works of art. He was absolutely brilliant. His work breathtaking. And, his message totally inconsistent with what he had been preaching for days: Post production wins awards.

Amongst the world of great retouchers, no one is more impressive than Janice Wendt. I’ve seen outstanding compositions taken by famous photographers go from very good to great with Janice’s gentle touch.

Just as I am inspired by the compositions of people like Hanson Fong and John Woodward, so too am I inspired by the post-production mastery of people like Jim DiVitale and Janice Wendt.

Rant over.

Scene 2: Giving Palisades Pontiac Some Personality

Here’s the original image – not a bad capture, but it lacks zing and punch. The sky is washed out, the palm trees – which should be a



spectacular symbol of Southern California, are blah, and the car, though interesting doesn’t command attention. But, there were some things I really like about it including the fact that it was a very “contrasty” image – one that would lend itself to a process I’d been playing with since reading about it on a [Scott Kelby blog](#) – *The Dave Hill or Grunge Look*.

Almost all of the processing on Palisades Pontiac was done in less than 5 minutes in **Lightroom**; after 90% of the work was done, I opened the image in **Photoshop** to add one special touch. The exact same thing could have been done in Adobe Camera Raw.

With the image in the development mode of *Lightroom*, here’s what I did with the sliders:

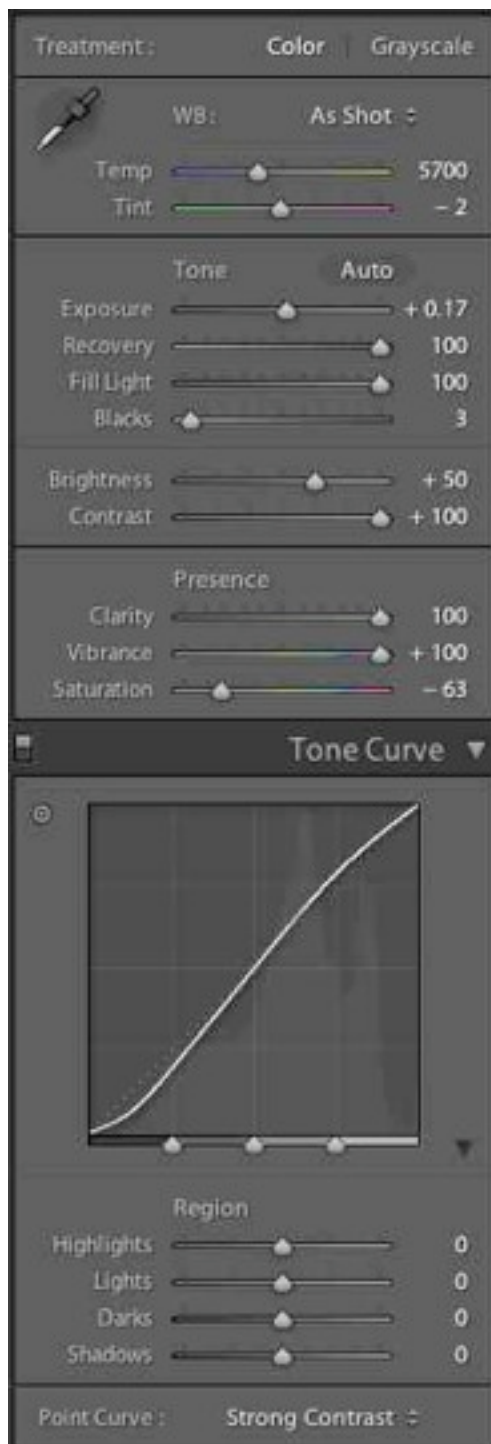
Exposure – normal tweak optimize exposure
Recovery – all the way to the right (100)
Fill Light – all the way to the right (100)
Contrast – all the way to the right (100)
Clarity – all the way to the right (100)
Vibrance – all the way to the right (100)

Blacks – move the slider to the right to put some black back in the image.

Saturation – one of the keys to this process is to desaturate the image, not to black and white, but to a level that looks good to you.

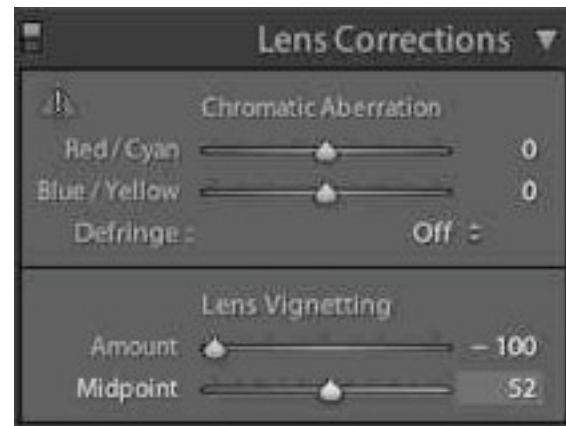
Here's the Develop Panel in *Lightroom*:

First, showing the settings set forth above:



Note that I boosted the contrast by using the “Strong Contrast” curve.

Finally, to push the eye toward the middle of the image, I added a vignette – once more using the Develop Panel in *Lightroom*.



Actually, the tool is designed to remove lens induced vignettes. So to actually darken the corners, you have to move the “Amount” slider to negative numbers. The “Midpoint” slider does exactly what you’d expect, it lets you place the center of the vignette – just in case you want it offset some.

I have to admit, I’m never satisfied or finished. I always fiddle with almost every slider in the panel just to see what they do and whether they improve the image.

Scene 3: The Lazy Photographer’s Way to Save Time: Lightroom Presets

Yea, like I really need to save time – this all took less than 5 minutes.

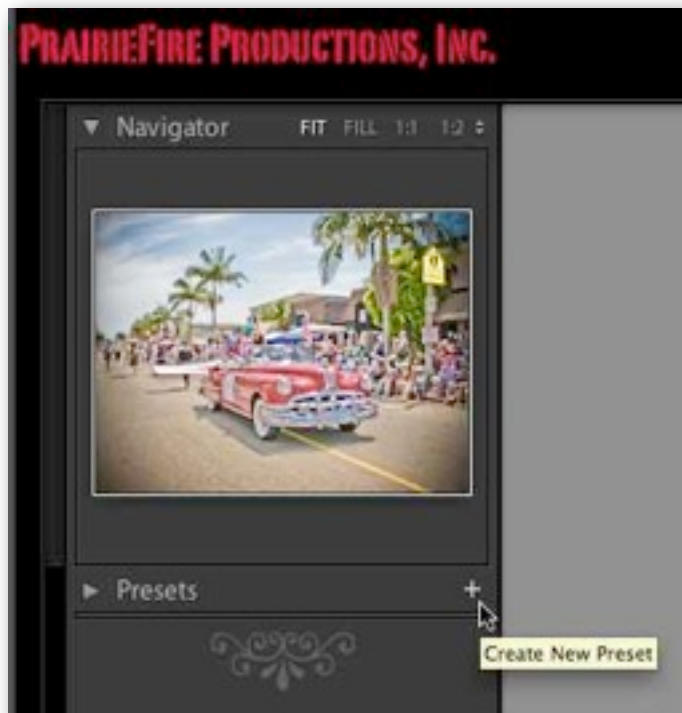
But, one of the cool things in *Lightroom* is that we can create a way to do it in seconds – by defining a **Preset**.

Nothing could be easier.

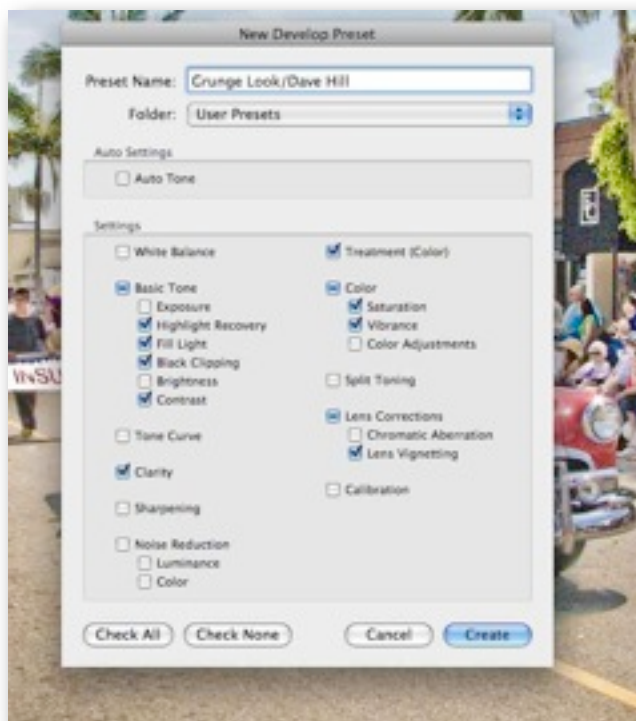
We’ve already done the first step, we’ve used the Develop panel to get exactly the look we want.

Now to save all of those settings, so we can use them again, we’ll make a Preset.

We start in the left Panel where there is a drop down menu for Presets.



When we click on the “Create New Preset” button which is the “+”, we get the following window:



The window will allow us to save all of the settings we’ve used in creating our image – or just some of them. For example, I didn’t want to save the White Balance setting because were I to use an image shot under tungsten light I’d not want this setting based on an outdoor shot.

Name the preset and push “Create” and you’re in business. It’s that simple.

The next time you open an image and want to see how it will look with the Grunge Effect, just mouse over the Grunge Preset – and the image in the navigator window will apply the effect so you can preview it.

If that’s what you want, click on the present and all the heavy lifting is done. All that remains is for you to tweak the settings for last minute optimization.

([onOne Software](#), one of our sponsors, has very generously posted a set of FREE Lightroom presets. This is a significant set created by Photoshop legends Jack Davis and Kevin Kubota. Thanks, onOne. To get your set, go [here](#).)

Scene 4: But Wait There’s More!



The truly lazy way? Apply the preset to the image as you import it.

One of the great things about *Lightroom* is that you can do so many things BEFORE you import the image – name it, put your copyright information on it, AND apply Presets to it.

So, if you’ve taken images you know you will want to have the Hill/Grunge look, you simply choose it in the “Develop Settings” drop down menu and it will come in pre-processed and ready for tweaking.

Scene 4: But Wait, There’s Even More!

As I looked at Palisades Pontiac in *Lightroom*, I had a feeling that there was something more I could do with it – but I just didn’t know what that “more” was.

So I did what I usually do in those situations, I went into *Photoshop* and fiddled – and in that fiddling, I used a program I’d never used before.

Real Grain provided the last bit of punch I was seeking – that little bit extra that made the image pop.

Real Grain is amongst the strong Photoshop “plug in” offerings from our sponsor [Imagenomics](#). I’ll do a complete review on the program in an upcoming newsletter. On Palisades Pontiac, all I did was go to Filters>Imagenomic>Real Grain.



Although *Real Grain* gives us many ways to control the nature and amount of grain we introduce into an image, I simply used a preset

– I chose a setting that emulates Kodak Kodachrome 64, one of my favorite films from yesteryear.

The result pleased me. Palisades Pontiac was finally finished.

Finale:

There is no way I could have gotten this same result “in the camera”. I had an “ordinary image” with pleasing content. It told a story but told it without punch. With a few simple steps in *Lightroom* and with an enhancement using a *Photoshop* Plug In – *Real Grain* – I have an image that is now under consideration for use in an ad campaign. How about that?

Epilogue:

A while back, Adobe released *Lightroom 2.0*. I’m about to load it on my computer. If you’ve not tried *Lightroom*, you can get a free trial copy [here](#).

Imagenomic, one of our sponsors, will let you download a trial version of *Real Grain*, [here](#).

I’ve done extensive reviews of *Imagenomics Portraiture* and *Noiseware* and swear by both products. Hands On Newsletter readers, and seminar students can get a discount from *Imagenomic* by using the following discount code: **PFP2007**

Thanks, *Imagenomic*.

One More From the Parade



Turning Lemons Into Lemonade

Nik Silver Efex Pro

I guess there's a theme emerging in this issue – I'm fessing up that I shoot some rather ordinary images and discussing the post production tricks I use to try to make them better.

One of my favorite “lemons to lemonade” techniques is to convert “troubled” images to black and white. And, I've just found a great lemon squeezer in a recently released software program, [*Nik Silver Efex Pro*](#).

Before saying more, I want to make clear that I am in no way denigrating the amazing work that photographic artists do with black and white photography. One need only look at the work of [Vincent Versace](#) or [John Paul Caponigro](#) to understand the depth and allure of black and white images. And, all who know me know I worship the work of [George Hurrell](#), [Clarence Sinclair Bull](#), and [Yusef Karsh](#). Black and White photography is a powerful art form, one that many of us are trying to master.

But, those artists usually start with the idea of creating a great black and white image. From the moment of conception, they are thinking black and white.

There are also images we do well, that we later decide have more impact in black and white. A while back, Doug Box let me shoot part of a wedding with him – just so I could appreciate the challenges my wedding photographer friends face. Mixed light, the need to shoot quickly, “interference” from the crowd – it was “difficult” at best. I got some good images. I thought they were better in black and white so I converted them. In the album Doug delivered, they looked good amongst the full color pictures.

In this article, I'm talking about another type of image – an image that just didn't turn out right, an image that lacked impact, an image that we either threw out or stuffed off in a folder of “unprocessed” work¹. We all have those images.

Those are the images that often lend themselves to black and white processing. Often, with a good conversion, we can make them interesting and useable.

Said another way, black and white processing can mask a lot of mistakes. (And, no, I'm not advocating the practice of making mistakes, and yes I believe in “get it right in the camera”, but, let's be honest, we don't always get it right in the camera and sometimes we need to use an image that looks better in black and white.) And, that's what we'll be talking about in this article.

Why is black and white so powerful?²

I think I've had more breathtaking moments looking at black and white photography than any other art form. Black and white images often blow me away.

And, I think I know why. They leave room for our imaginations to “complete them” to find the story within them. We get more involved in them because we know that they are not an exact depiction of the subject – and we, therefore, must do some work on our own to close the circle.

Why do I say this? Because of a research project I ran, many years ago, when I was a young law professor teaching trial advocacy and working with a team of psychologists on the science and art of presentation and persuasion.

We did what all academics do. We'd find something interesting and then we'd spend an inordinate amount of time studying it.

¹ Under Jim DiVitali's tutelage, I'm keeping more “bad images”. I use parts of them in collages or to make brushes. Cheap storage makes this viable.

² What follows is an academic explanation of the psychological power of black and white images. If you just want to know how to do it, you might want to skip ahead a couple of pages.

It was one of those studies that gave me insight into why black and white photographs are so moving. Here's what it was about:

Lawyers in cases in which there have been gruesome deaths or injuries are faced with a conundrum. Often the best evidence of the injury is contained in a color photograph. A properly authenticated photograph is the next best thing to being there.

So, on the one hand, the court system wants to give the jury this evidence to bring it as close to the reality of the injury as possible. However, on the other hand, lawyers believe that an 8x10 color photograph of a gruesome injury will “inflame the jury” or have such a great impact on the individual jurors that they become “irrational” which, in legal terms, means that, because of the photograph, the jury will reach an “emotional”, rather than a “rational” decision.

So, lawyers who oppose the use of a gruesome color photographs file motions to exclude those photographs from evidence. Because of the “reality component” of the images, they are rarely excluded but ...

Judges often use what they perceived to be the wisdom of Solomon and cut the issue in half – **they prohibit the use of the color images but allow the use of their black and white equivalents.**

The assumption is that the black and white images are more “neutral” – that they are less likely to invoke an emotional reaction.

In a series of carefully controlled experiments, we learned that the assumption was wrong.

Black and white photographs invoke a greater “emotional response” than do their color equivalents.

The lawyers and judges who were sending black and white images to the juries instead of color were getting it bass backwards.

When asked to describe how they felt when viewing black and white images, the subjects in

the study gave far more vivid and emotional responses. They looked more deeply into the picture to find its “story” and to complete the experience.

There is no reason to believe that viewers of regular black and white photos do otherwise.

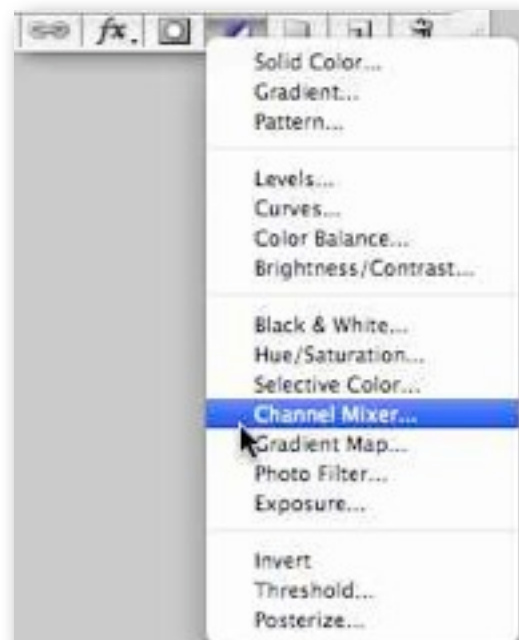
And, that is why I think one can cover mistakes with black and white processing. With a good conversion, we put the viewer at the beginning of the experiential path – not somewhere closer to the end.

Class over.

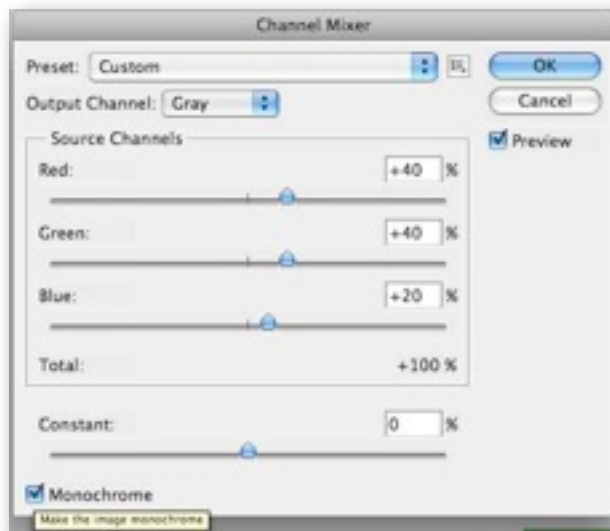
There's More Than One Way to Squeeze A Lemon

When I first started processing images in *Photoshop* (version 7), I was taught to simply desaturate the image – to take all of the color out – to turn it black and white. Although that worked, it left a rather flat image. That alternative still exists in *Photoshop* Image>Adjustments>Desaturate.

But, I soon learned a much better way, one that gave me more creative control over the output. I started using Channel Mixer Layers, adding them from the layers palette in the layers menu:



As you will notice, in CS3 you can also add a “Black and White” layer and do your work there.



The trick is to click the monochrome box and then to fiddle with the various sliders until you get a black and white image you like.

In a great step forward, *Lightroom* and *Adobe*



Camera RAW (ACR) added a better way to do the conversion – in the processing of a RAW image³. Amongst the advantages are the fact that RAW processing is totally non-destructive AND the RAW processor gives you far more tools

with which to work than can be found in the Channel Mixer layer. Above is the *Lightroom* module; the ACR is almost identical.

My technique is to fiddle with the sliders until I get an image I like – and then, I fiddle some more.

ALL of the sliders in the development module will have an impact on the final look of your black and white image. Fiddle with the White Balance (temperature), tint, exposure, clarity, vibrance and saturation. You can also work on creating a multi-tone (split-tone) look.

I was comfortable with my black and white workflow until ...

Enter *Silver Efex Pro*

I got *Silver Efex Pro* because I have a deep respect for [Nik Software](#) and was curious to see what they could possibly do to raise the bar on black and white conversions. It turns out, they did a lot. And, now *Silver Efex Pro* is my go to black and white converter.

Before coming to this point, I decided to put the software to the ultimate “lemons to lemonade”



test. I decided to pick a couple of images, blind, to convert with my new software. So I went to a couple of folders on my master storage drive where I keep “culled images” – images not good enough to process. I pulled 2 images, each from a different folder and opened them up.

Here’s the first candidate for a black and white makeover.

³ Actually, you can process non-RAW images in the same way. I just don’t shoot anything outside of the RAW format.

I want to make one thing clear. This isn't a "cull" image because of the model. This is a cull image because we⁴ didn't capture her correctly. She is a pretty girl who can pose. The problems were in the lights, the white balance, and I was driven crazy by the wrinkles on the backdrop down by her feet. We had a lot of better images of Ashley so we just left this one, behind. Until the *Silver Efex Pro* challenge.

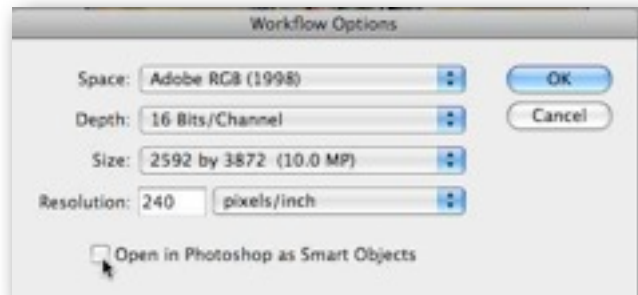
In less than 5 minutes, I ended up with this:



The first thing I did was open the image in ACR. I didn't do a thing to it there – no corrections whatsoever. I then opened it up in Photoshop as a Smart Object. (I'm beginning to use smart objects a lot and I'll write about why in an upcoming newsletter.)

To open the image as a Smart Object, I held down the Shift key on my Mac as I clicked the Open Image button in ACR.

You can also set your ACR workflow to open images in Photoshop as Smart Object by setting the option on this menu:

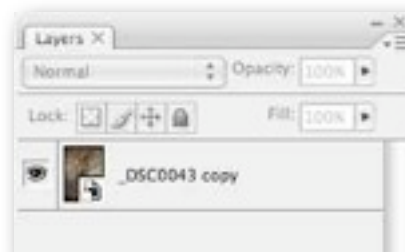


Lightroom 2 now gives us the ability to take an object directly into Photoshop as a Smart Object. That's a very significant change.

Without preempting my Smart Objects article, let me quickly explain the advantages of processing this way.

First, using smart objects gives us an immediate path back to the RAW processor. If, at the end of the process, we want to change the White Balance, all we need do is click on the image and we are back in the RAW processor and can tweak 'til the cows come home.

And, second, using smart objects allows us to use "smart filters". We can apply a filter and then go back to tweak or modify it – instead of removing the filter layer and starting over from scratch. This is a huge advantage. Not all filters are smart filters. But, *Silver Efex Pro* is.



Advantage Nik.

Here's what a smart object looks like in the layers palette.

⁴ This comes from a session Dave Cross shot in my studio a couple of years ago.



This is the start window when you open up *Silver Efex Pro* (which I started from the Filter menu).

A couple of things to note. First, the image comes in as a black and white conversion. On the left side of the window is a set of “pre-set” conversions; you scroll down the selections to pick your starting point; in some cases, this will also be your end point. But, not if you are like me and you like to fiddle.

On the right side are a host of modifiers.

First, we have the Brightness/Contrast/Structure sliders. They make **global** changes to your image. Said another way, if you boost one of those qualities, it is boosted throughout the image.

The second modifier allows you to add a control point – which allows you to make **local** changes.

Silver Efex Pro and some of *Nik*’s other products use a brilliant technology they call U-Point. I’ll write a long piece on U-Point in an upcoming newsletter.

Simply stated, U-Point solves a problem many of us share – the inability to make precise selections in *Photoshop*. Without U-Points, to make a local change we need to carefully select the area we want to change move it to a layer, perhaps employ a mask, and make our change. Then we have to carefully blend it to fit so that we don’t leave a sharp line between the modified and unmodified areas.

U-Point technology obviates the need for that entire process. We simply put a point where we want to make the change and the software identifies the characteristics of the area so as to confine the change to our target area. Amazing. And, it works.

One of the things we did wrong in lighting Ashley was to leave a bit too much shadow on the left side of her face.

I fixed the problem in seconds. I put a control point in the shadow and adjusted the brightness and contrast until I had what I wanted. All I needed was a subtle change – but sometimes, with selections and masks, subtle is difficult to do. Here's how it worked:



The upper slider tells the software what area to sample in order to make the selection for the effect. the second slider controls the brightness, the third, the contrast and the last something Nik calls “structure” which I’ll explain, in depth, in a future article.



The picture on the bottom is uncorrected. The top is corrected. You can see how subtle the effect is. I was able to open up the left side of her face, light her left eye and show some of the texture of her hair – all without making a selection, creating a mask or doing any blending.

From that point on, it was just a matter of working through the steps of enhancing the black and white image.

For those of us who like to mess with color sliders, *Silver Efex Pro* has a “Color Filter” Section.



You pick your color, adjust the Hue and Strength and voila, you're dialing in the perfect image. To write this article, I actually reprocessed the image so as to grab screen shots for publication. I know, I should have done that the first time, but I get too excited to slow down when learning new software. I decided to work with the Orange filter and actually improved the image over the one at the front of this article. I'll put the final product of this re-run at the end.

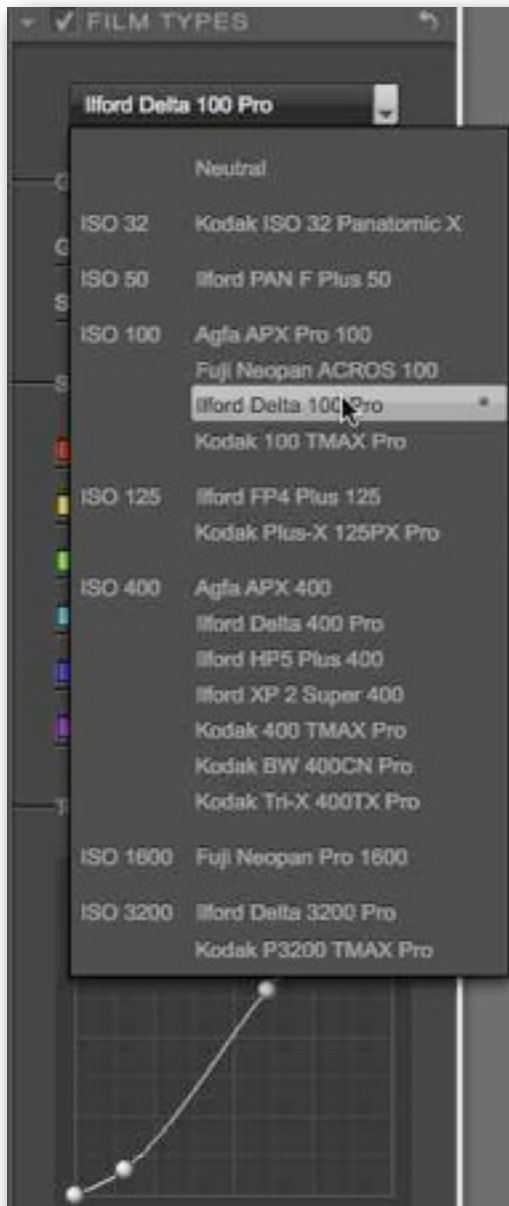
All of these sections or modules have boxes that allow us to see the changes the modules apply. Turn them off and turn them on. Pretty cool.

In many ways this program is a marriage between what's best in digital post production and what we old folks know from the film world.

As zippy and cool as this digital program is, it is not scary to those who started in film because Nik uses a “film based” metaphor throughout. The terminology and concepts reflect the days where we both developed our own film and processed our black and white images in the darkroom. Filters, “silver” (for areas where the image turned darker) and “paper” for the areas

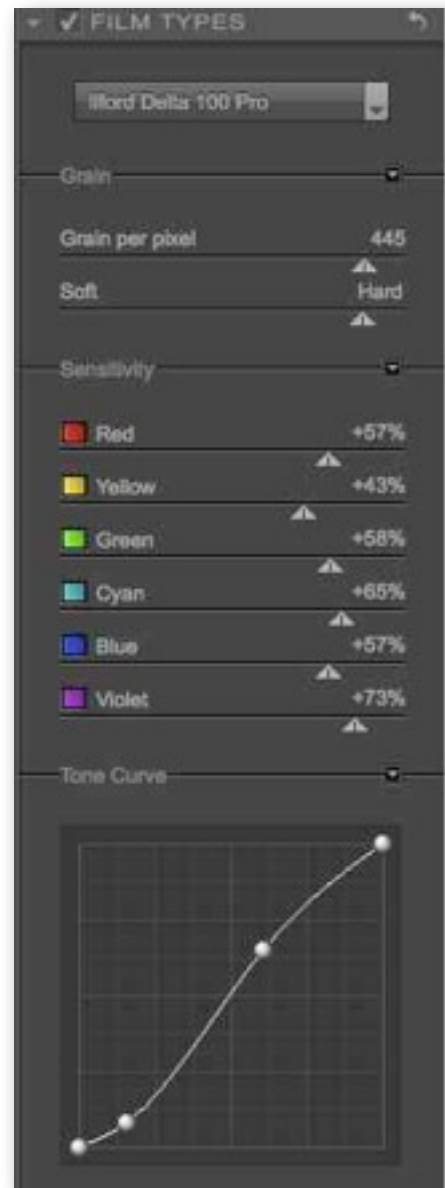
where the paper created the light in the picture – *Silver Efex Pro* merges the new and old into a an easy to use processor.

For example, there is a window in which we can choose to impose the look of a film from yesteryear. For the re-run of this image I chose “Ilford Delta 100 Pro”; the first time I processed the image, I used “Kodak 100 TMAX Pro”. Here’s the “film type” window:



What’s really cool about this window is that as you mouse over each film type, your big screen image changes to reflect the selection.

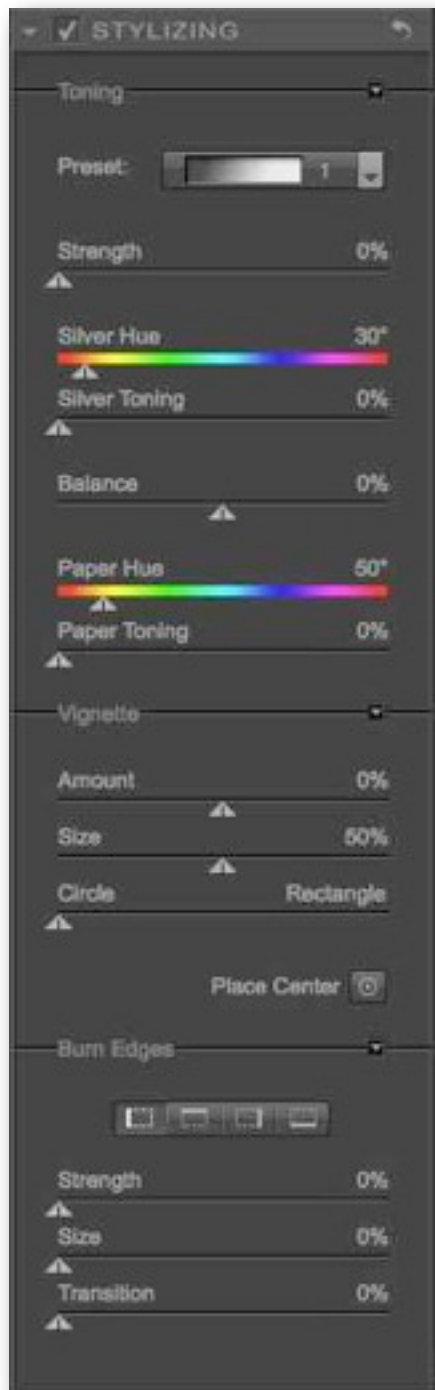
For those who are too young to understand “film types” and don’t want to fiddle through the menu, there is another way to do the same thing. In essence, the film type selection is actually manipulating color sliders and creating a tone curve.



Note also, that you can add “grain” and control both its density and its hardness.

I start with picking a film type and then work with the sliders to tweak the output.

The final module is the “Stylizing Module”. It’s here that we make the finishing touches that are the icing on the black and white process cake.



There are two basic sets of tools, here, one that allows you to turn the image into a “duo tone” and the other that allows you to treat the edges,

either all at once with a vignette, or separately by burning one edge.

Here’s the duotone menu:



In essence, a duo tone changes the color of the darks and highlights (in *Silver Efex* terms, the “Silver” and the “Paper”.) The idea is to use color casts to enhance the image. This does digitally what film photographers did with chemicals. Once more, the interface is impeccable. As you mouse over the color selections, the image changes colors in the window. Once you have selected a “tone” you can tweak it with the sliders.

I decided not to put color casts on my photo of Ashley.

But, I still had one last squeeze to go before this lemon was turned to lemonade.

The wrinkles in the backdrop by Ashley's feet bothered me. They were just the kind of distraction that might pull the eye away from the core of the image. And, I wanted to do something to direct the eye toward Ashley.

So, I decided to add a vignette.



One of the things that I like about *Silver Efex Pro* is that it allows me to “shape” the vignette – to move it from round to rectangular. As you can see, the rectangle did the trick on this image.

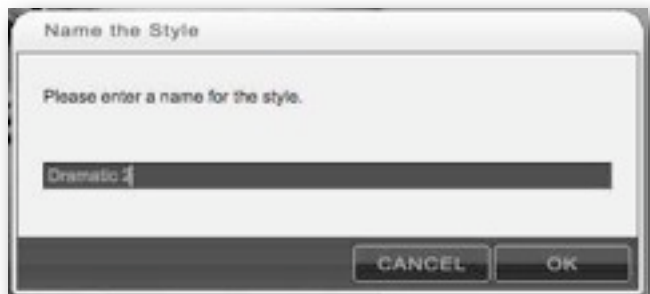
Sometimes, we don't want a vignette, but we just want to “burn in” (darken – in film terminology) one edge.

Although I was “done” with Ashley, there was one more step to take before exiting Silver Efex

Pro. I made a “Style” and added it to the left side column. That way, if I decide to process any more images from that shoot, all I'll have to do is push a button.

To make a style, I pushed the “Add Style” button and got this dialogue box. I put in a name, and I was done.

I pushed the “OK” button and I was back in Photoshop with a black and white image.



Here's the image I got when I worked through this article. I actually like it better than the one I did first.



And, therein lies the value of using a Smart Object and Smart Filters.

Here's the layers menu for the finished object:

By clicking on the image itself, I can go back into the RAW processor and tweak away. By double clicking on *Silver Efex Pro*, I go right back into the Filter interface and can make whatever changes I want – in the control point



or on any setting I've used. Smart Objects and Smart Filters – magic.

It's funny, it took me a half a day to write this review of a process that takes only minutes. But, watch out. This program is a "black hole". Yes, you can do a conversion in 5 minutes – but you won't, because it is so much fun to play and tweak in this program that you will diddle with the same image for hours. That says a lot about Silver Efex Pro – and is a great way to learn.

Nik offers a [free trial download](#). Take it for a test run and let me know what you think.

But Wait, There's More!

Nik is offering our readers and students a 15% discount on all of their products except their bundles and Nikon software. If you fall in love with this stuff, buy it from Nik and use the **Discount Code ⁵: PrairieFire 08**.

⁵ The discount code will not be implemented until Tuesday, September 2, 2008.

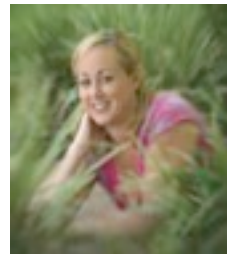
⁶ You can learn more about Jody, [here](#).

Thanks Nik!

Pro Tips

Protect Your Work!

I've asked Jody Goldstein, who is an intellectual property attorney⁶, photographer, and *Hands On Seminar* participant to write some columns of interest to all of us who need to protect not only our rights but also the rights of others. Of course, these columns are not legal advice and are offered as a starting point rather than a destination.



You may remember Jody, here's a picture of her, taken by Hanson Fong during one of our classes. I used this image in my review of *Focal Point*.

Thanks, Jody! Here's Jody's Column:

I once had a potential client come to me with some of the best facts a lawyer can hope to get. She was a professional photographer. She was in Wal Mart one day and ran into a customer for whom she had recently done portraits. The customer was using one of the photo scan machines - you know those evil machines that have popped up everywhere, stealing money from photographer's pockets. When the picture popped out of the machine, low and behold, it was one of her copyrighted portraits.

Notice I said copyrighted, not registered. Don't know the difference? That makes you like almost every other photographer in this world. And what you don't know CAN cost you money.

You've heard it said that if you create a work - in this case a photograph or the digital file - you own the copyright. That's absolutely right. You don't have to do a thing. That means that you have the right to do whatever you wish

with it and nobody else does. If the customer buys the print, they buy ONLY that print. They have no right to reproduce it.

But back to what happens if they do. You take them to court and win, right? Sort of. As I explained to the potential client above, you take them to court, have a slam dunk case with witnesses, spend lots of money and win. What do you win? The court will either look at profits the copyright infringer received from his illegal use of the photo (which would not be relevant with this example), or award the wronged party whatever it takes to “get whole.” The client used the machine at Wal Mart to make an 8x10 print. Had she actually taken the honest/legal route and bought that 8x10 from the photographer, it would have cost her \$75. Gavel down. Case over. Photographer wins. Judge awards.....\$75.

Hardly worth going to court.

Had she actually registered her copyrights with the U.S. copyright office, her award would have been treble, or triple. OK, so in this instance, we’re still not talking about a ton of money. But in other real life scenarios it might be. If someone throws the photo up on a website and uses it for advertising purposes, we could be talking about huge profits and a large judgment - especially when it is tripled.

And registering your copyrights is so easy - even an attorney can do it. No, seriously. As an attorney, I rarely advise people to tackle legal issues on their own. When they do, they still usually end up in an attorney’s office and the attorney spends more time and money undoing what the lay person did. Filing for copyright protection is the exception to the rule.

It takes three steps. You fill out an online form. You make an online payment of only \$35. No, that’s not a typo. And you give them a “deposit” of materials. That’s a fancy way of saying that you give them a digital file (either uploaded, or sent in the mail on a CD) of the pictures you want protected. Even better, you can register pictures in bunches. So we’re not talking \$35 a

picture, it’s \$35 for a group of pictures. The only key is that they all have to be from the same photographer. If you work in a studio with multiple shooters, don’t combine the works into the same copyright application.

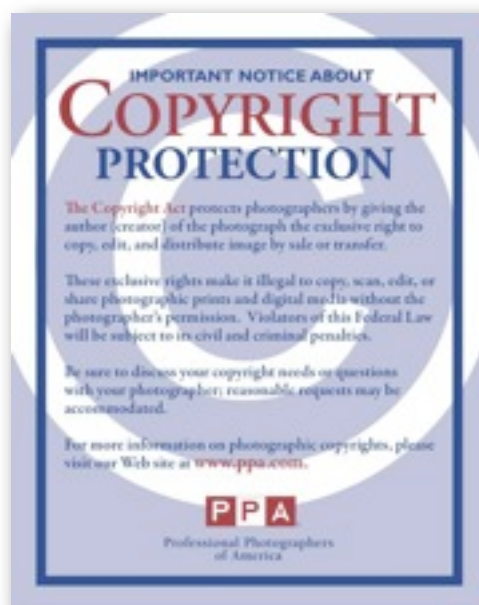
To register your copyright, log onto the U.S. Copyright Office website at www.copyright.gov. On the right-hand side of the page, you’ll see a bright “e” and the words Electronic Copyright Office. Click there and you’ll be asked to register. Once registered and logged on, look on the right-hand side of the page again and you’ll see Copyright Services, Register a New Claim. It will want to know what type of work(s) you are registering. Photographs fall under “Work of the Visual Arts.”

From there, it is an incredibly easy process, simply answering the questions posed by the copyright office on each screen. It will take just minutes of your time and could potentially save you thousands of dollars.

And don’t hesitate to tell your clients that you register all your photographs with the U.S. Copyright Office. That fact alone is enough to scare many of them into doing the right thing.

PPA – Protecting Our Rights

If you care about artists’ rights, and you are not a member of PPA ([Professional Photographers of America](http://www.ppa.com)) you should consider joining. PPA is on the frontlines trying to educate us and protect our rights. They protect individual photographers and the entire industry with their work to make sure the laws are just and



fair and that they are enforced. PPA is working hard to make sure that photographers and their clients understand the scope of copyright protection. Seminars, webinars, and things like this hand out for our customers are part of their program.

There are lots of reasons to join PPA. Not the least of them is that they are working, every day, to protect our intellectual property rights.

Learning On Line

Every so often, I include a few on line links to places where I learn or find inspiration.

Some of my sponsors have put up some Blog Sites that are driven by strong content.

Here are some of my favorites from my sponsor the MAC group. They are the children of Matt Hill and he is raising them well.

One of the things I like most about these blogs is that they contain content from real people, like you and me. Instructions from the people like us on how they use the equipment we own.

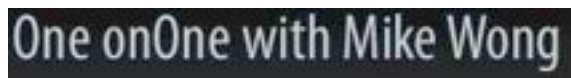


(You should be able to click on the logo, but if it does not open, click [here](#).)



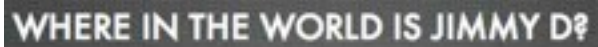
(You should be able to click on the logo, but if it does not open, click [here](#).)

And, finally from **onOne Software's** Mike Wong – an all time good guy and onOne guru.



(Or, [here](#).)

And, I like to keep track of my good friend Jim DiVitale and sample some of his latest work by going to his blog:



(Or, [here](#).)

Finally, a great source of information on one of my favorite programs, *Lightroom* from one of the "Photoshop Guys", Matt Kloskowski.



(Or, [here](#).)

I'll do this again. There is so much great stuff out there. Let me know your favorites.

Seminar News

We've finalized this year's schedule and I'm working on next years.

Here's what's coming up:

Teacher	Dates	Topic
Jim DiVitale	Sept. 20&21	Photoshop -- Keep It Simple Stupid
Janice Wendt	Oct. 11&12	Retouching with the Master
John Woodward	Nov. 15 & 16	Creating Images that Demand Attention
Tony Corbell	Dec. 13 & 14	The Power of Light 2008

Enrollment in Jim and Janice's seminars is not active. John and Tony's will be posted opened for enrollment soon. We will also be adding another free webinar from **onOne**.

You Wanted More of Jim DiVitale – Here He Is!

You wanted More Photoshop – Here It Is!



2 Full Days –September 20 and 21, 2008



\$350 for 2 Days

The Photoshop KISS* Seminar (*Keep It Simple, Stupid)

The Seminar For Those of Us Who Don't Want to Struggle With Photoshop Anymore

Don't Need to Read More? Just Want to Register? Go to page 6.

For everyone else, here's the complete course description:

We've all heard the phrase "Keep It Simple, Stupid". The idea is that there are ways to find simple paths through life – paths that take the stress and strain out of daily living.

It's time we applied the same principle to our use of Photoshop.

And, there is no one more qualified to teach us how to find the simple path than our own *Hands On Seminar* instructor, Jim DiVitale. Someone once defined a genius as a person who could take the complex and make it simple and manageable. Jim is a Photoshop genius.

Photoshop is not inherently more difficult than other programs we "master" and use.

Yet, most of us never feel that we have "mastered" Photoshop. Perhaps, that is because there are so many ways of doing the same thing, we never feel secure – we never feel that we are using the right tool at the right time.

In this seminar, at our own computers, we will work with Jim to find the simplest most efficient way to solve the problems we most often face. Jim will show us the alternatives and help us choose the best and easiest way to get things done.

Photoshop is a magical program. And, therein lies the problem for many of us.

With the magical, comes a dose of mystical.

To feel comfortable in Photoshop, we need to "de-mystify" the tools so that we can see them as no more complex than the hammers in our toolboxes and the whisks in

our kitchens. Tools are tools, and once we learn to use them, they will become simple.

As we will discuss later, this is not a beginner class; and it is not an expert class. It's a class for those of us who know enough about Photoshop to see some of the alternatives and to get confused by the many choices. This really covers about 90% of all Photoshop users – from those who have a basic understanding to those who are very experienced users.

Why do I think an experienced user will benefit from this seminar? It's simple. Last year, at Photoshop World, I had the pleasure of hanging out with Jim and some of the other instructors. "How did you do that?" was a part of almost every conversation. I watch Photoshop TV and read tons of Photoshop blogs and books. I love it when Scott Kelby or one of the truly great instructors says something like "Here's another way of doing that – a tip I learned from Dave Cross or Jim DiVitale, or Matt Kloskowski".

Yes, even the best and the most experienced are not too experienced to learn new and simple ways of doing things.

This is the seminar for all of us. It is a Hands On Seminar. Jim's protocol is simple and effective. First, he demonstrates. Then we all work along with him to master the technique. We see it. And, then, we do it.

Depending on how quickly we move (our motto is "Leave no student behind") we will cover some of the following:

A. First, we will travel down **the left side menu**. Honestly, do you know what those tools do and when to use them?

1. **Selections:** Almost every task in Photoshop starts with a "selection" and it seems that there are a million ways to make a selection. Jim will help us decide which is the best for a given task – be it the lasso, magic wand, a quick mask, or a plug in like *MaskPro*.
2. **Healing/Patching and Cloning:** Ever get frustrated healing and patching? Not sure which tool to use when? How to handle tight spots? Why some of your "cure's" are opaque and others are not?
3. **The History and Art History Brushes:** Huh?
4. **Making Brushes Work for Us:** Custom settings – when and how to use them.
5. **Color Replacement:** Do I use that brush or is there a better way?
6. **The Custom Shape Tool**
7. **Using the Text Tool:** This should be simple, right? It is. But, many of us struggle with it. Jim will help us get over the hurdles.

Ok, you get the idea – there are a lot of basic tools and most of us don't know which to choose and when.

- B. **Layers, Masks and Blending Modes:** What separates Photoshop from most other manipulation tools is the ability to use layers and masks. Jim will simplify the process so that we feel comfortable using them productively.
- C. **Filters and Plug-Ins:** Photoshop's own tools and the best from 3rd party vendors. For example, what's the best way to sharpen an image? Remove the background? Retouch skin? Frame? Enlarge?

That's a lot you say? It is.

But wait, there's more.

For the first time, ever – we are going to ask the enrolled students what they want to learn, and try to incorporate some of those concepts into our lesson plan.

We will leave some "open space" in the lesson plan to create segments that directly respond to student requests. In fairness to the entire class, we will pick topics of general interest. We will gather the requests, and if there is something that a majority wants to learn, we will build a segment around it. In some ways, this is a dangerous thing to do. Someone is bound to be disappointed if we don't use his or her suggestion. We are willing to step out on the limb so long as you trust us to make a decision that best suits the needs and talent levels of the entire group.

So there it is – **The Photoshop KISS* Seminar.**

Is This the Class For You?

How do you decide if this class is for you? Here are a couple of questions you might want to ask yourselves:

Are you proficient on your computer? Do you know how to turn it on, download files, open, close and save files? Is your computer "stable"? Has it been trouble free for a while? Can you deal with crashes and freezes? Unfortunately, we won't have IT support on site.

Are you familiar with *Photoshop*? Do you know how to find the basic tool set? How to open new documents? What layers are and how to create them? Do you have a basic understanding of masks? Have you ever processed a RAW image?

As to the *Photoshop* questions, if you want to take the seminar, you can build some proficiency in these areas by reading and working with books, online training, and DVD's – before you come to class. We don't expect anyone to be experts in these areas. We do think you will need to know how to open the gate to the arena we are entering.

Are you too advanced for the seminar? That's hard to tell. I really don't know anyone, including our instructors Dave Cross and Jim DiVitale, who are too advanced to learn new *Photoshop* techniques. As many of you know, *Photoshop* is a "black hole"; it's easy to be captivated, fall in and never come back. There's always something new, a bit more down the hole.

We are posting this seminar early to give as many people as possible a chance to bring their skills up to the level which we think will ensure a positive experience in the class.

What Am I Supposed to Bring to Class?

Please bring a laptop computer, an extension cord, and a power strip; if you have a tablet, you may want to bring it. I'm sorry, but we cannot support desktop computers or large external monitors; there's just not enough room in the classroom.

To Get Ready for Class We Recommend:

1. That you download the trial versions of the software we will be using in class and familiarize yourself with what they do and how they do it. Proficiency is not necessary. Familiarity will be helpful:

In addition to Photoshop, we will touch on aspects of:

a. [onOne Software](http://www.ononesoftware.com/) – just click the link to download MaskPro 4.1, PhotoFrame Pro 3.1, and Genuine Fractals 5. This site has great video tutorials on each product. These are fully functional versions that expire after the trial period. (If clicking on the underlined text does not work put the following url in your browser: <http://www.ononesoftware.com/>)

b. [Imagenomic](#) – download and try Noiseware , Portraiture and Real Grain. These are fully functional trial versions – except they leave a watermark on your prints.

You'll get to learn how to use them and see whether you like them, but you won't want to print the images. There are some excellent training materials on this site. (If clicking on the underlined text does not work put the following url in your browser: (If clicking on the underlined text does not work put the following url in your browser: <http://www.ononesoftware.com/>))

2. We will teach this course using *Photoshop* CS3 and *Lightroom* 2.0. Most of what we do can also be done in CS and CS2, but we strongly recommend that you upgrade to CS3 if you can.

If you do not own *Lightroom*, you can download a free, 30 day, trial version from [Adobe](#).

3. When you come to class, we will give you a CD with the files we will be using in the exercises. So, you'll need a computer with a functioning CD drive and the ability to load the files.

This is a long description because we think we are offering a lot of class. We want to be very careful to let you know what we are going to be doing and give you a way to figure out whether or not you should take the class. We really don't want to discourage anyone. This class will work for people with basic computer and *Photoshop* skills.

Enrollment in this seminar will be capped at 15 students for the entire weekend. We expect this class to fill quickly.

But Wait, There's More

This seminar is being brought to you with the help of our sponsors – Houston Camera Exchange, the MAC Group, onOne Software, Lensbaby and Imagenomic. Upon completion of the class you will be given certificates that allow you to purchase their products at discounted prices.

This seminar will be taught in the classroom and [studio](#) of:

PrairieFire Productions, Inc.
7026 Old Katy Road
Studio 162
Houston, Texas 77024

New and Improved Registration Process

We are currently working on a brand new registration process, one that will simplify enrolling and paying.

This is our first test of the system:

Step 1: To reserve a place in the seminar, send me an email by clicking this [Here](#):
When I receive the email, I'll put you on a list and look for your payment.

Step 2: Send a check for \$350.00 made out to: PrairieFire Productions, Inc.

And mailed to:

PrairieFire Productions, Inc.

7026 Old Katy Road

Studio 162

Houston, Texas 77024

On the check, indicate that the payment is for Jim's seminar.

SENDING THE CHECK LOCKS IN YOUR SPOT.

Jim's seminars have filled quickly. When we have received payment from 15 students, we close enrollment. Although we keep a waiting list, we rarely have more than one spot, per seminar, open up because of cancellations. So, it's a good idea to enroll as soon as you decide you want to attend.

Refund Policy: In these small classes, we do not offer refunds UNLESS we can fill the seat with another student. This often happens because we usually have a waiting list. But, there are no guarantees.

This will be a great seminar and I look forward to seeing you there.

If you have any questions, please [email me](#).

**You've Been Asking for a "Retouching" Seminar
Here it is!**

**For the First Time
in a Limited Enrollment Hands On Seminar**



One of the Industry's Most Respected Image Doctors

Janice Wendt

2 Full Days – October 11 AND 12, 2008

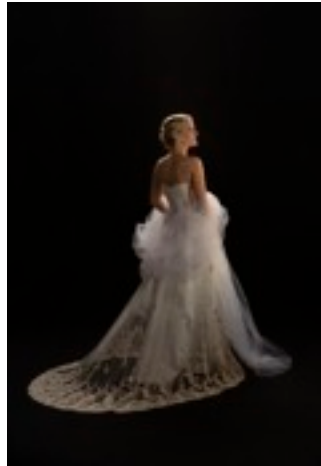
\$350 for 2 Days

Bring Your Camera – Bring Your Computer For:

Retouching with the Master

We all know we are supposed to “get it right” in the camera. But, when we shoot real people we face real problems – problems that we can fix if we know the tricks of the “image doctors”. And, no-one knows those tricks better than the Image Doctor to the Stars, Janice Wendt.

Why do I call her the Image Doctor to the Stars? Because, Janice has done the post production work for some of America’s best photographers on some of their best known images. People like her good friend Hanson Fong turn to her in their moments of need.



Here are two images that Hanson Shot in his last Hands on Seminar. Check out Dr. Janice’s special touches.

And, now, we have her in a small format, work-along-with-the-teacher seminar.

Why bring the camera? Because all good images start with a good exposure. We will spend some time in the studio discussing lighting and posing and the other things we have to do to get it “right” in the camera. It’s not known to many people that in addition to being a world renowned touch up artist, Janice is an accomplished portrait photographer. The studio session will allow her to share those skills with you.

After an introductory lesson, you’ll shoot some images to work on during the remainder of the class. We will also give you some images that present special challenges and we’ll work, together, to solve them. Finally, if time permits, we’ll give you a chance to work on some of your own “problem images” with Janice’s help.

No one can get good results without careful color management. It starts in the studio and ends with the print. Although this will not be a course in color management, we will spend a little time on the concept so that you can use what Janice teaches you to your full benefit.

Some times we really screw up and our images need a “total rescue” – like what to do when something goes wrong in the camera – like when we use the settings for an outdoor shoot under tungsten light, or when we underexpose, or you get the idea, when we have gray moments.

But, the bulk of our time will be spent on two tasks: (1) solving the kinds of problems we can’t completely cure in the studio – things like bad skin,

wrinkles and asymmetrical features or making people thinner, taller, or filling in a partial smile; and (2) making good things better, like making eyes “pop” and teeth glisten – some of the tricks of the fashion/glamour trade.

At a time in this industry when it is critical to be both “better” and “different”, we’ll learn how to give our images an “**edge**” or “**style**” that not all photographers can achieve.

As we all know, there are a myriad of ways to do the same thing in post-production. There are a ton of tools from which we can choose. In class, we will discuss the alternative ways of doing things complete with the “pros” and “cons” of each approach.

Because of the generous support of our sponsors you will have the use of trial versions of the software from *onOne*, *Imagenomic*, and *Nik*.

The Bottom Line: Even the best photographers have to retouch their images. In two days, Janice will teach us an approach to image doctoring that will improve the quality of our work and the ease with which we do it.

More on **Janice Wendt**:

I call Janice the Nik Diva – she’s the woman at the trade shows doing those amazing things with Nik products. When she taught a session in one of my Texas School classes, I decided I’d make every effort to bring her to Houston. With Hanson Fong’s help, I finally convinced her to come.

Janice, who is from San Diego, California, is one of the industry’s most respected retouch and image enhancement artists. She is often called upon to “train the trainers” on numerous techniques related to digital imaging. She spends much of her time working on educational projects for Nik Software and educates hundreds of professional photographers each year nationally in subjects related to the digital capture process, digital workflow and offers a practical view of the film to digital transition or conversion process for professionals.

Janice has fine-tuned her craft over the years and has a foolproof way of getting the most quality out of every image. She possesses a full understanding of the photographic process and has positioned herself as one of the true leaders on the topic of digital image enhancement.

Janice is an experienced commercial and portrait photographer with over 20 years of working in film and digital photography.

Is This the Class For You?

Although there has been a lot of demand for “work along with the teacher courses”, and although I understand that we learn a lot more from doing than seeing, I’ve been hesitant to offer this type of course before because it is difficult to make sure that all of the students get a quality experience.

Simply stated, it’s hard to balance the class in a way that the topics covered are within the reach and understanding of all who attend. For example, I don’t consider myself an “advanced” *Photoshop* user. I figure I’m closer to being a beginner. However, in reality, I’m probably on the line between “intermediate” and “advanced”. Some of my friends who took “work along *Photoshop*” classes at Texas School grumbled that their classes were held back by people who had never studied *Photoshop* or had no idea how to run their computers. I’m sure that those people, who initially signed up for these “intermediate” classes did so in good faith; I can only imagine how frustrated they must have been when they could not keep up.

So, how do you decide if this class is for you? Here are a couple of questions you might want to ask yourselves:

Are you proficient on your computer? Do you know how to turn it on, download files, open, close and save files? Is your computer “stable”? Has it been trouble free for a while? Can you deal with crashes and freezes? Unfortunately, we won’t have IT support on site.

Are you proficient in *Photoshop*? Do you know the basic tool set? How to open new documents? What layers are and how to create them? Do you have a basic understanding of masks? Have you ever processed a RAW image?

As to the *Photoshop* questions, if you want to take the seminar, you can build some proficiency in these areas by reading and working with books, online training, and DVD’s – before you come to class. We don’t expect anyone to be experts in these areas. We do think you will need to know how to open the gate to the arena we are entering.

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To Get Ready for Class We Recommend:

1. That you download the trial versions of the software we will be using in class and familiarize yourself with what they do and how they do it. Proficiency is not necessary. Familiarity will be helpful:

We will touch on aspects of:

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ALL TRIAL VERSIONS OF THE SOFTWARE HAVE A LIMITED "LIFE". **onOne** and **Imagenomic's** software expires in 30 days. **Nik's** expires in 15. PLEASE, BE SURE NOT TO START PLAYING WITH THIS SOFTWARE SO EARLY THAT IT EXPIRES BEFORE THE CLASS.

2. We will teach this course using *Photoshop* CS3. Most of what we do can also be done in CS and CS2, but we strongly recommend that you upgrade to CS3 if you can.

If you do not own *Lightroom*, you can download a free, 30 day, trial version from [Adobe](#).

3. When you come to class, we will give you a CD with the files we will be using in the exercises. So, you'll need a computer with a functioning CD drive and the ability to load the files.

4. We will also pass out trial versions of NIK software products.

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PrairieFire Productions, Inc.
7026 Old Katy Road
Studio 162
Houston, Texas 77024
713.213.1133

To Register For This Seminar: [Click Here](#)

You will be taken to my website where you will fill out an enrollment form. After doing that, hit "submit", and you will see a "Pay Now" button from PayPal. When I receive your payment, I will send you a receipt and confirmation.

If you have any problems enrolling, please call me or send an [email](#).

This seminar will be taught at my Studio. Here's a [MAP](#).

If you have any questions, you can contact me by [email](#).

Thanks.
Steve Herzberg.

Refund Policy: In these small classes, we do not offer refunds UNLESS we can fill the seat with another student. This often happens because we usually have a waiting list. But, there are no guarantee

But Wait, There's Even More Discounts from Our Friends and Sponsors

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[Nik Software](#)

15% off on all products other than bundles or Nikon software.

Discount Code: PrairieFire 08.



www.ononesoftware.com

Discount: 20% and Free Upgrade to New Version

Code: PRFRE08



www.imagenomic.com

Discount: 10%

Code: PFP2007



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