

My Digital Darkroom

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In this presentation I will demonstrate my way of using former darkroom techniques as they're applied to electronic image processing techniques. If you have ever had a wet or, as some call it, a silver based darkroom, there are many techniques we used in the darkroom to enhance our monochrome and color prints. Techniques such as dodging and burning, darkening the edges, multiple image printing techniques, and even creating "Unsharp Masks" to strengthen the appeared sharpness of a print.

Recently I was talking to a club member over dinner and he, being a devout chemical printer, inquired about the amount of time that I may spend creating an inkjet color print. I cited a recent submission at my camera club and told him from start to mounted print I spent about one hour opposed to the time getting out the chemicals, measuring out and bringing them up to temperature, making test prints, making the final print drying and then mounting the print for exhibition. This would consume the better part of an entire evening. Jokingly, he said, "I hate you".

The era of electronic imaging has brought life to old techniques, created new tools and we can do it faster and better than before. And, by using calibrated monitors and printers, we can create consistent and predictable results.

My Digital Darkroom Tools

Software

- Image Editing software - Adobe Photoshop CS
- Capture One LE RAW File conversion software available from Phase One www.phaseone.com This is available as a free trial download.
- Vue Scan Scanning software available from www.hamrick.com
This software is user friendly and has a lot of features for former film users. The Pro version of the software has an unlimited lifetime upgrade feature. This software is also available as free download

Presentation Software

- Microsoft PowerPoint 2003
- Pro Show Gold 2.5. This is one of the best image presentation tools. It has a lot of excellent features and is user friendly. You can create CD's and DVD's to share your presentations or you can post your presentations on their website, www.photodex.com. This software is available for PC users only.
- SmoothShow is an excellent image presentation software available from www.smoothshow.com. One of the features I like is the ease of preparing a manual presentation of images and text for judging and lecture purposes. It also has a lot of the neat features like the "Ken Burns" effect. Ken Burns is noted for his PBS programs using a pan and scan technique. This software is a PC platform only.

Hardware

- Dell Dimension Computer
- Plextor PX-712A combination CD/DVD internal burner
- NIKON Super CoolScan 4000 film scanner
- Wacom 6" x 9" tablet
- Epson 1280 Inkjet color printer

DIGITAL WORKFLOW

My workflow is simple but it is efficient for me. I always make duplicates of my image files. I work on the duplicates only. This procedure will always preserve the original image file...DO NO HARM TO PIXELS.

At a recent seminar in Detroit, MI, Tim Grey put it best on the subject of workflow. He says, "*Develop a logical workflow that works for you.*" Each of us may have our specific workflows that work best for us. However, if someone has a better idea or technique, I'm subject to change if it suites my conditions or offers a better or logical way of working.

BILL'S WORKFLOW

- Open selected image in Photoshop
- Make a duplicate
- Close original image file
(The reason I perform this step is to protect the original file. If I make a mistake and destroy the image file, I still have the unaltered original file.)
- Name file and "Save As" in preferred folder
- Adjust Levels using Adjustment Layer
 - **Never work on the Background Layer**
- Save
- Adjust Color Balance using Adjustment Layer
- Save
- Adjust Hue/Saturation using Adjustment Layer
- Save
- Make image corrections i.e.: Cloning, Masking, Burning, Dodging, or any other manipulation or enhancement and save often.
- Re-size image for output – Printing or on-line competition.
 - Output @ 300 dpi for prints

- At this point I “Save As” with file name corresponding to print or pixel size (club competition and Exhibition size requires 1024 x 768 pixels max size) I’ll also save to a new folder for either Work In Progress or as a designated File i.e. Prints, Salon Images and etc.

This step is helpful when using the image for various uses and mixed print sizes. If you were to save as an 8” X 10” print and re-size to make a 13” x 19” the image would suffer. Therefore it’s best to save your original file to make additional size prints or formats.

- A method I use for creating file names is quite simple. I use the letters “F”, “L” & “W” after the file name to indicate if it is “F” flattened, “L” layered, or “W” web file.

This way I can have several variations of a single image and be able to identify which type of image file I’m looking for.

- Note: when sizing an image for Projection or on line viewing, disregard the output size. We are using image size in Pixels only.

- Sharpen image using Unsharp Mask.
- Save file.
- Print image

RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

There are many resources available for the digital photographer. Here is a list of some of my favorite learning tools.

Books

Adobe Photoshop CS for Photographers

by Martin Evening

Photoshop CS2 Workflow: The Digital Photographer's Guide

by Tim Grey

The Photoshop CS Wow! Book

by Linnea Dayton, Jack Davis

Magazines

PC Photo

Outdoor Photographer

Digital Photo Effects: www.dcmag.co.uk – This magazine is from Great Britain and it includes a tutorial CD with each issue. It may be a bit pricey to some but it’s a good learning tool.

NAPP – National association of Photoshop Professionals. An excellent investment for any Photoshop user. Membership includes access to on-line tutorials and discounts on software, books, and hardware. See: www.photoshopuser.com

On-Line Tutorials and CD's

Russell Brown – Russell Brown, the noted and somewhat wacky Photoshop guru, has a wealth of information and tutorials on his website.

see: www.russellbrown.com

ShootSmarter.com