

Creative Workflow for the Digital Darkroom

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The “Original” File

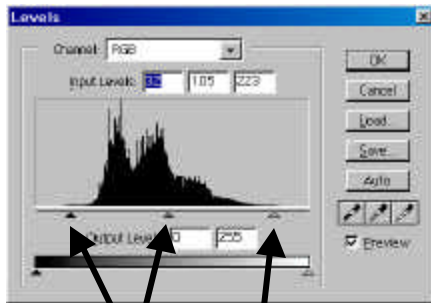
- The original is shot on conventional film (slides or negatives) then scanned.
- Alternative: shot with digital camera.
- From 35mm, the normal file is ~25 MB.
- This becomes the starting point ...

The Basic Workflow

- Set size and resolution
- Create **adjustment layers** as needed
 - ? Tonality
 - ? Color
 - ? Contrast
- Make area adjustments with **layer masks**
- Sharpen
- Save your **digital master**

Tonality - Levels

Create a Levels adjustment layer.



Histogram Stretch

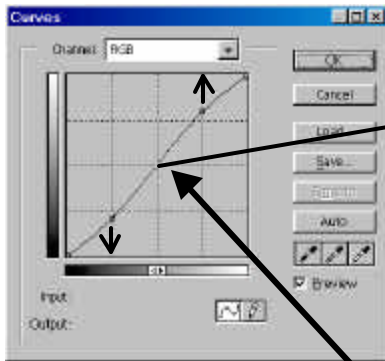
Move black and white points inward to eliminate unused data levels (Alt for clipping)

Adjust midtone left (lighten) or right (darken) to adjust middle tones

Optional: for printing, set Output Levels to 10 and 245.

Tonality - Curves

Create a Curves adjustment layer.



Localized Contrast

Pull shadow area of curve down, and highlight area up.

This “S-shaped curve” increases the slope of the curve in the midtone region, thus increasing contrast there and adding “punch” to the image.

Color - Curves

Create a Curves adjustment layer.

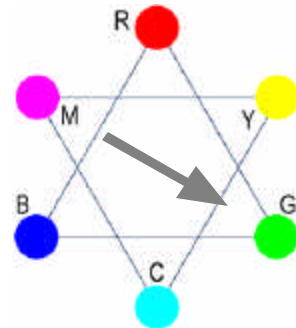
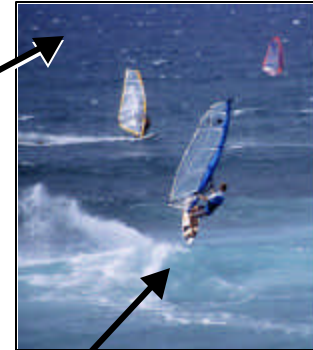
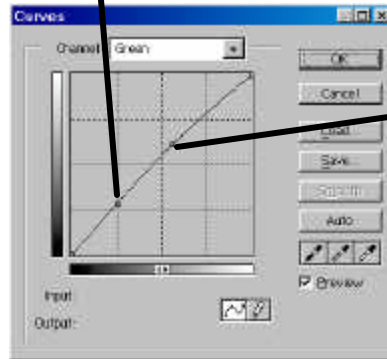
Choose a color channel based on the color cast, or its complement:

Red - Cyan
Green - Magenta
Blue - Yellow

Click on the image to find corresponding region on the curve.

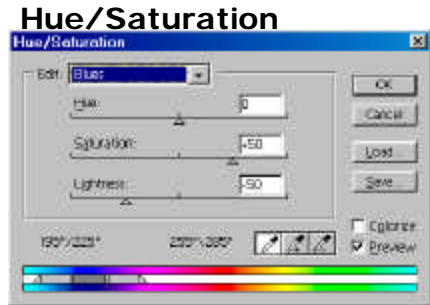
(Ctrl-Click to set point)

Eliminate (or emphasize) a color cast by pulling the control point on the curve up or down. Use the position arrows for more precise control.



Color - Layers

Two ways to “fine tune” individual colors with adjustment layers:



Reds: +7 saturation
Yellows: +11 saturation
Blues: +50 saturation,
- 50 lightness

Yellows: yellow +9
Cyans: magenta -5, black +40
Blues: yellow -12, black +14

In this case, the reds and yellows emphasize specific elements of the photo, while the blue adjustments provide a “polarizer” effect on the sky.

Contrast Mask

Two image layers



Lower (Image) Layer



Upper (Mask) Layer

Duplicate image layer
Image>Adjust>Desaturate
Image>Adjust>Invert
Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur
Radius 5 - 10 pixels
Blending Mode = "overlay"
Opacity ??50%

Contrast Adjustment Layer

Image Layer + Adjustment Layer

To Lower Contrast

Create Levels adjustment layer
Blending Mode = "screen"
Opacity ??50%

For more control:

adjust Opacity so shadows look good
highlights will then be overcompensated

Select the Layer Mask for the adjustment layer
Choose a large (100), soft (hardness = 0) brush
Set foreground color to black at 10 - 20%
Paint black into layer mask to "paint out" the
overcompensated highlight areas.

To Raise Contrast

As above, but Blending Mode = "multiply"



Extreme Contrast



Highlights - layer 3



Shadows - layer 2

Use layer masks
to "paint" desired
areas into image.



Normal Scan - bottom layer



Sharpen - USM



Unsharp Mask Filter

Filter>Sharpen>Unsharp Mask

Amount 100 - 300% typically, sets "strength"

Set Radius to ½% of resolution of final print image*

Threshold 8 - 12% typically (noise)

Then Edit>Fade>Luminosity to eliminate color fringing

* ½% of 240 ppi = 1.2 pixels

The "standard" method - simple and effective.

***But - it makes irreversible changes to the image file,
and effect is lost or reduced when image is resized.***

Sharpen - Layers

Separate layers that emphasize edges



High Pass Filter

Duplicate layer, “soft light” blending
Filter>Other>High Pass

Radius 5 - 10 pixels typically

Variations: “overlay” or “hard light”
blending, adjust Opacity, adjust
contrast of high pass layer



Emboss Filter

Duplicate layer

Filter>Stylize>Emboss

match Angle to blend with lighting of photo
set Height 2 - 4 pixels, Amount ??????

Set blending mode to “overlay”

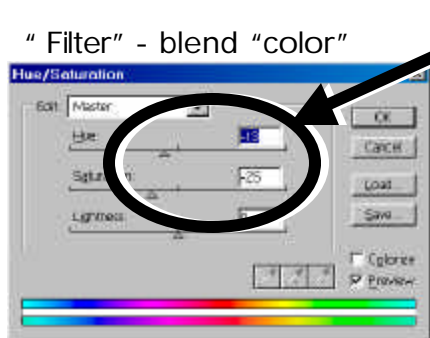
Adjust Opacity to control strength of effect



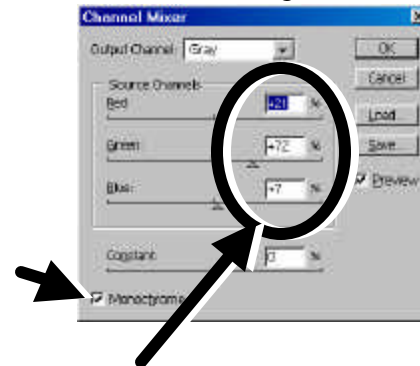
***Either method preserves original image unchanged,
and will scale if image is resized ... but file size is increased.***

Monochrome

Two Hue/Sat Adjustment Layers



Channel Mixer Adjustment Layer



Computer: RGB = 21, 72, 7
Television: RGB = 30, 59, 11

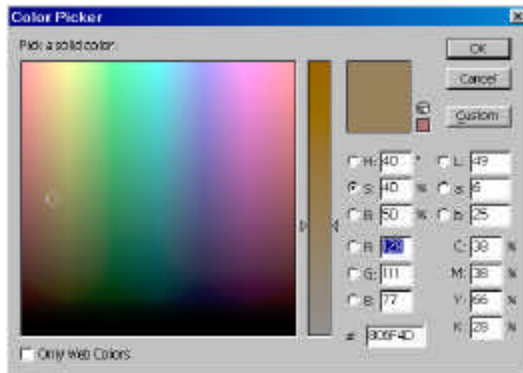
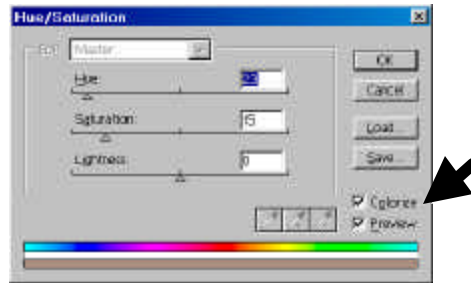
Toning

Hue & Saturation

Set Colorize

Sepia: Hue 32, Sat 12

Blue: Hue 223, Sat 8



Solid-Color Fill

Sepia: HSB = 40°, 40%, 35%

Blue: HSB = 240°, 20%, 35%

For either adjustment layer:
Blend mode = Color
Blend opacity around 60%

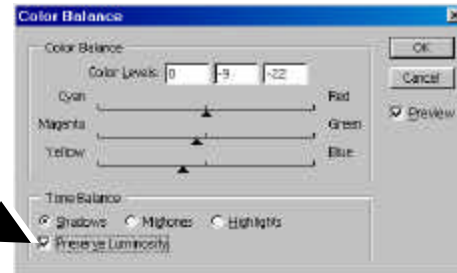
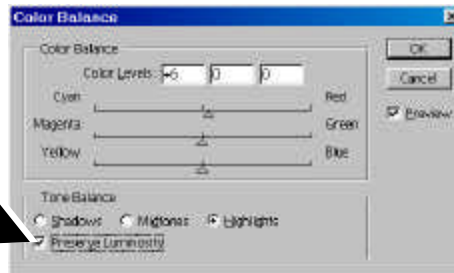
Split Toning

Create Color Balance adjustment layer, Blend Normal

Choose complementary colors for:

Shadows (-40, 0, 0) [cyan]

Highlights (+60, +25, 0) [reddish-yellow]



For Sepia try: shadows (0, -9, -22) and highlights (+6, 0, 0)