



Photoshop Creative Elements Community Newsletter. Vol. 1 No. 11 November 9, 2008

Happy Anniversary PEGG

Fun Learning Sharing

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Where in the World

One Year



Congratulations Kimiboo on the One Year Anniversary winning header for the forum and newsletter.

Can you believe it has been one year since the Photoshop Creative Elements forum began? What a year it has been. We have so many old friends and many new friends. Once again, thank you Christian for giving us this awesome site to share with, and learn from each other. Thank you again to Jane for talking him into it.

In commemoration of our One Year Anniversary, Christian and Connie have donated Gift Certificates in the amount of twenty five dollars each for this months winners of the Header Challenge, Hall of Fame Image of the Month October and Scraps of Fame Page of the Month October. As you can already see the winning header gift certificate goes to Kimiboo. Look ahead in the newsletter to pages 16 and 17 for the other 2 winners. All winners please PM Jane with your e-mail address so that she can send them to you. Here is to another GREAT YEAR!!!!

Keeping your Digital Camera Up-to-Date

By Geoff Chalcraft

You got your digital camera two or three years ago, so it's in good condition, and still works fine. Of course, camera technology has moved on and those 5Megpixels you were so pleased with have now become a bit 'old-hat'. But is your camera as good as it's ever going to be? You don't always need to trade last year's model camera in for this year's version. You're not going to be able to put a new sensor in, or any other hardware to keep up to date, in the way you might change a processor, add more memory or change the hard disk in a computer. You can upgrade, however, by updating the camera's firmware - that's the software that is embedded in your digital camera. Digital camera firmware updates are a great free way to upgrade your camera without splurging on the hottest new model. Firmware updates for your digital camera can help with your camera's performance, whether it be the LCD brightness or to extend battery life, or it can correct a problem with the camera that wasn't noticed before it was released, improve a compression rate or add something to the menu. How do you tell if you need to upgrade? Firstly you'll need to check which version of firmware is installed in your camera. The method will differ from camera to camera, generally either via an item on the menu or by holding down the menu button while switching on. Firmware updates for your digital camera are put out by the manufacturers, and can usually be found by fishing around the support pages of their websites, so you can check on your camera manufacturer's website, to see if you've missed an upgrade. I'll leave you to find your correct firmware download page on the net - they all seem to have different methods of finding what you want. Once located, the firmware is downloaded to your computer and then copied on to either your camera's memory card, which goes into its usual slot on the computer, or via the USB connection cable. Once on the card, or directly in the camera, follow the instructions carefully. You'll have to get that little program to be read by the camera's memory. In practice it's easier than it sounds. However, if in doubt, I'd recommend a visit to Camera Kingston (or your supplier), who may be able to either do the job for you or get you to exactly the page you need (after all, being 'internet connected' is not - yet - an essential part of owning a digital camera).



Making Color Pop... a LAB Workflow

Tutorial by Randy S...a guest contributor

Submitted by SuziB

OK, here is my LAB workflow, and sorry for the delay -- unfortunately my day job (which is the only one that actually pays me a salary) intruded upon my ability to get this down on paper. Let me also say at the outset that none of this is particularly original to me. I've developed my LAB workflow from information that I found on many different web sites (all of which follow the same general steps, albeit with was some distinct differences or twists). The people who came up with these techniques are way smarter than I am -- they actually understand what is happening at the pixel level as various adjustments are made. I am much more low-tech -- I simply move around sliders and ask myself whether it looks better one way or another (the answer to this question often depends on whether I've been drinking while photo editing).

Before I get to the actual workflow, it might be helpful to talk a little bit about what LAB is, so that you understand the potential for this type of adjustment. The LAB colorspace separates the luminance (brightness) of your image from the color components, which are in turn split into the "a" channel (red/green) and "b" channel (blue/yellow). By separating the image in this fashion, you can make tonal/contrast adjustments in the Luminance (or "L") channel, and can also sharpen the image, without affecting the color content. Alternatively, you can adjust the colors without affecting luminance/brightness. I've also read that colors are also calculated differently in the LAB color space than in RGB, so supposedly you have expanded gamut for important colors. I don't know whether this is true, although intuitively it seems right, given the fact that I've been able to add a whole lot more "pop" to my colors through LAB adjustments.

Anyway, on to my workflow. To demonstrate this, I will use an image that has been floating around on my computer for a while (no pun intended), but could use some "pop". Here's the original image:



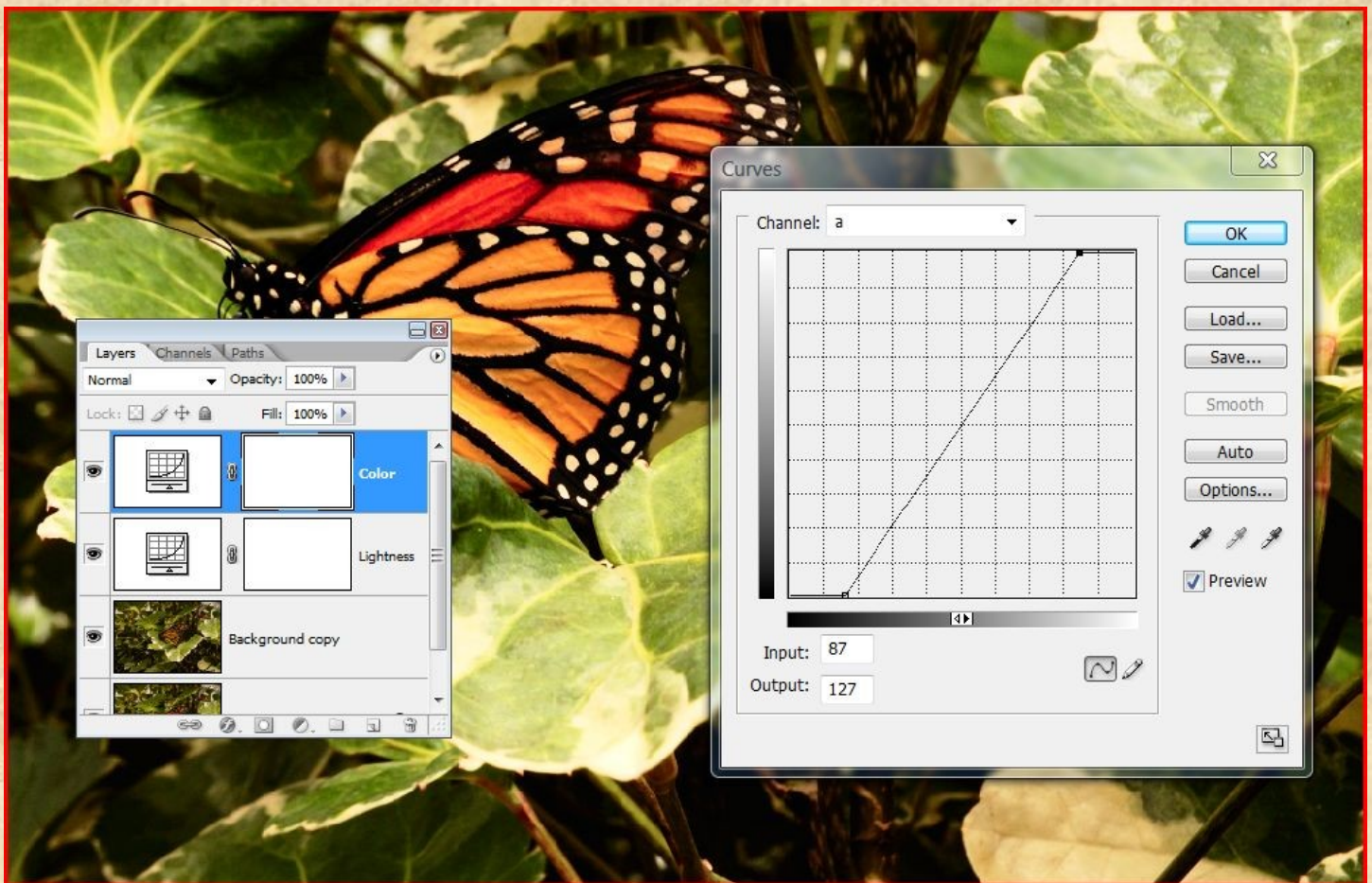
1. Convert to LAB/Duplicate Background:

Convert the image to LAB (Image >Mode >LAB) and then duplicate the background layer. I like to perform my Lab adjustments on a separate layer, so that when I'm done making adjustments, I can fine tune the overall result on the final image by adjusting the opacity and/or masking. Having this flexibility is important to me, because LAB adjustments can easily be overdone and, moreover, they sometimes work well on one part of an image but not others. Here's what it should look like:

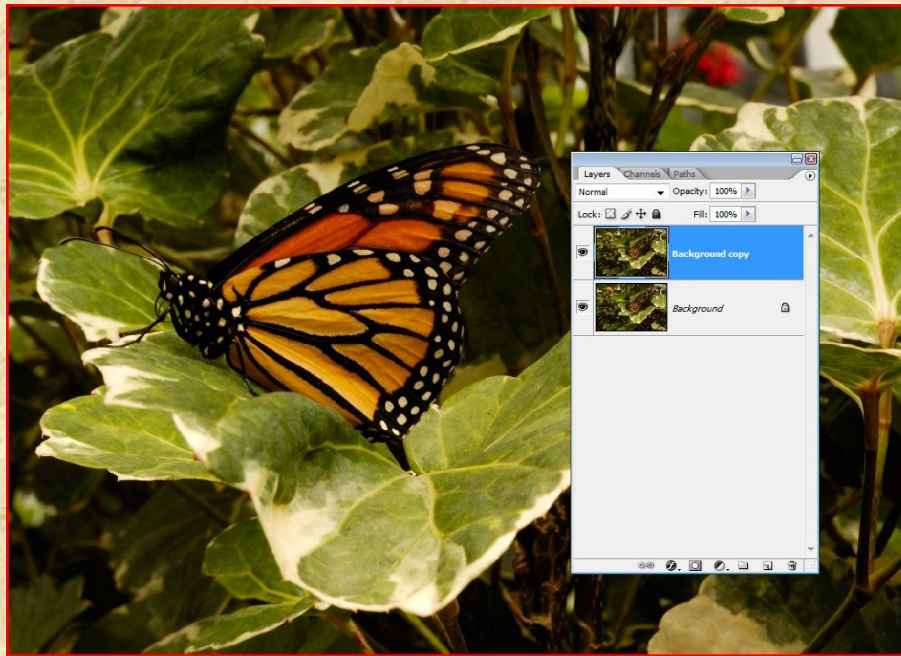
Note: I've read that you can elect to forgo an adjustment layer, and instead make a shadows/highlights adjustment (Image >Adjustments >Shadows/Highlights) using the Lightness channel. I've never tried this, as I prefer curves adjustments. However, depending upon the image, this might be something to consider.

3. Color/Saturation Adjustments Using the "a" and "b" Channels:

Next, create another curves adjustment layer -- now we are going to make the color adjustments by steepening the curves on both the "a" and "b" channels. First, start with the "a" channel from the drop-down menu, and move both endpoints in (by left clicking your cursor on the lower left-hand corner and dragging to the right and thereafter clicking upper right hand corner and dragging to the left. At least initially, I move both endpoints by the the same amount (approximately 20% to 30%). Your image may look a bit odd, but don't worry -- we still have to adjust the "b" channel.

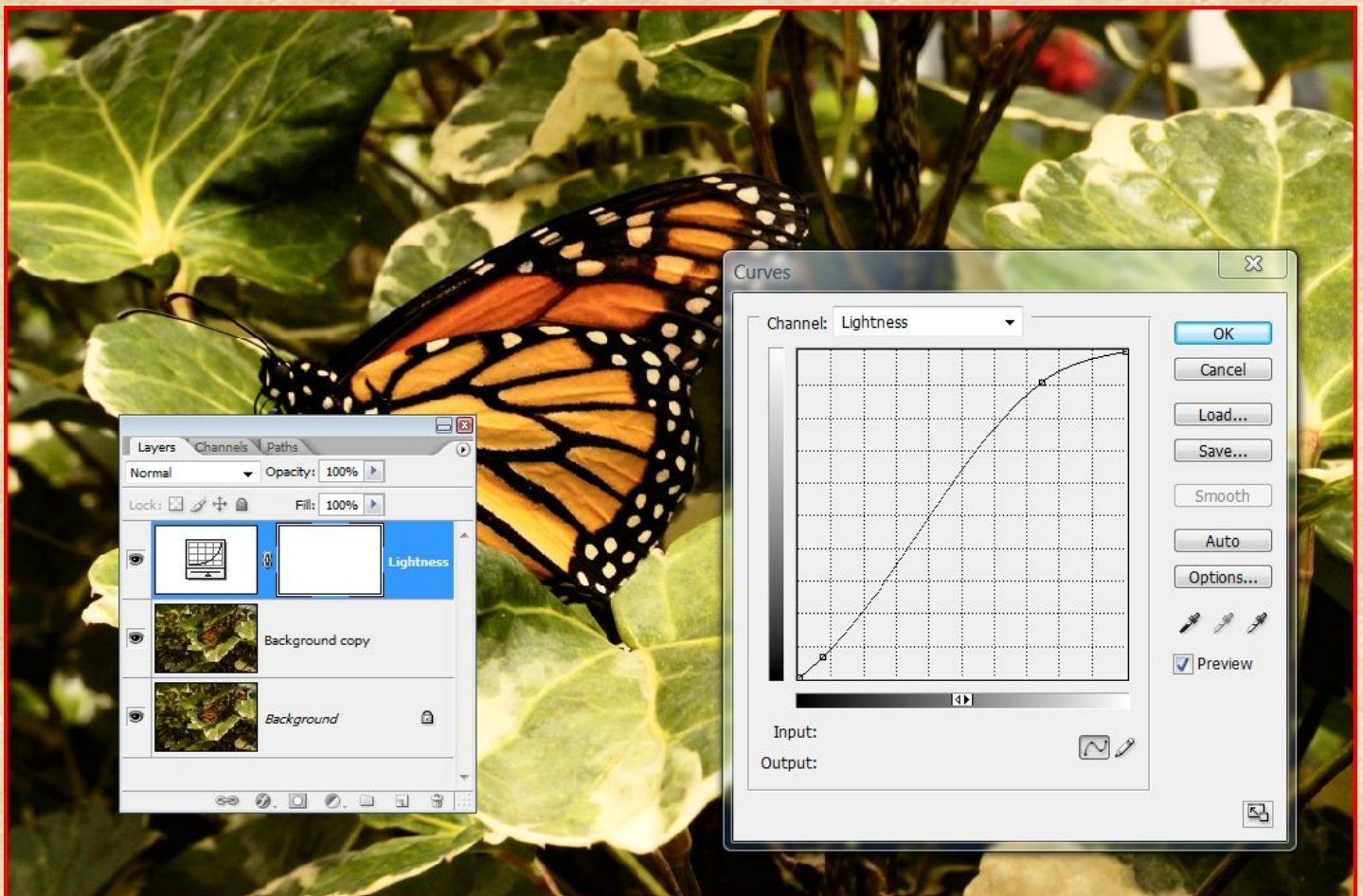


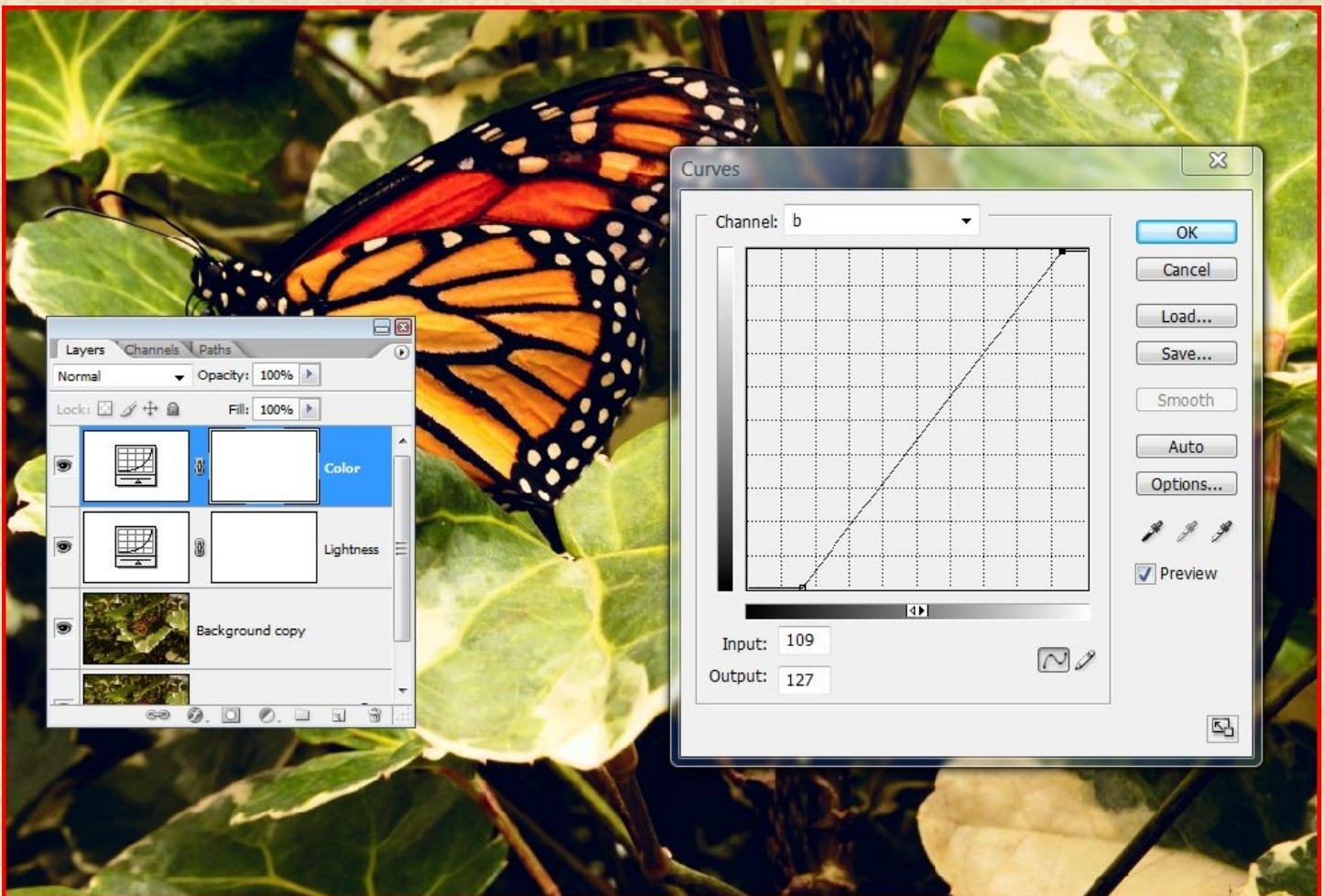
Once you have adjusted the sliders in the "a" channel (and steepened the red/green curve), do the same for the "b" channel (which is blue/yellow). You may or may not move each the slider the same amount -- this is really according to taste and depends upon what you are looking to achieve. In the materials I have read, some have suggested each endpoint should be moved the same amount (for both the "a" and "b" channels). However, with many of my images I have found that moving the upper right hand corner endpoint (yellow) in by in the same amount makes the image too yellow.



2. Contrast/Total Adjustments Using the L Channel:

After converting to LAB, I then create a Curves adjustment layer (using the adjustment layer icon at the bottom of the layers palette). You'll see that at the top there is a drop-down box which reads "Lightness". This is actually the Luminosity channel. If your image needs more contrast, or any other total adjustments, this is the time to do it (later, we'll use this channel to sharpen the image). Typically, I will apply a slight "S" curve.





If you are really feeling adventurous, you can try specific discrete adjustments within the body of either the "a" or "b" curves (changing them from straight lines to something different). However, I've never had much success with this, so I typically limit myself to simply moving the endpoints in, and I leave the body of the curve as is (i.e., a straight line). However, feel free to experiment.

After I have achieved a (hopefully) pleasing look through steepening the "a" and "b" curves, I click off visibility on the original background layer, and merge the adjustment players into my background copy. .

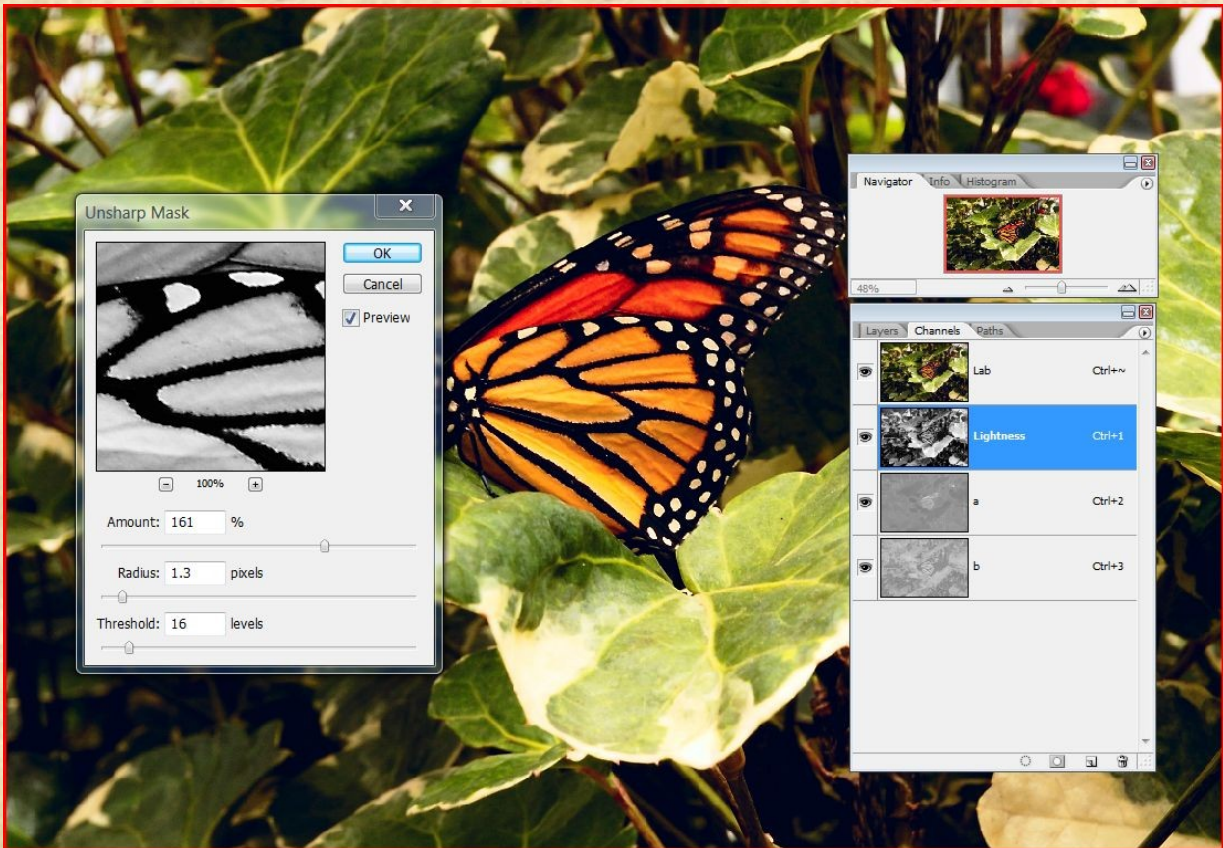
4. USM Sharpening:

Click on the channels tab, and activate the "Lightness" channel by clicking on it. Your image should have now converted to a grayscale, so click the box to the left of the composite LAB channel to make all the channel visible again.

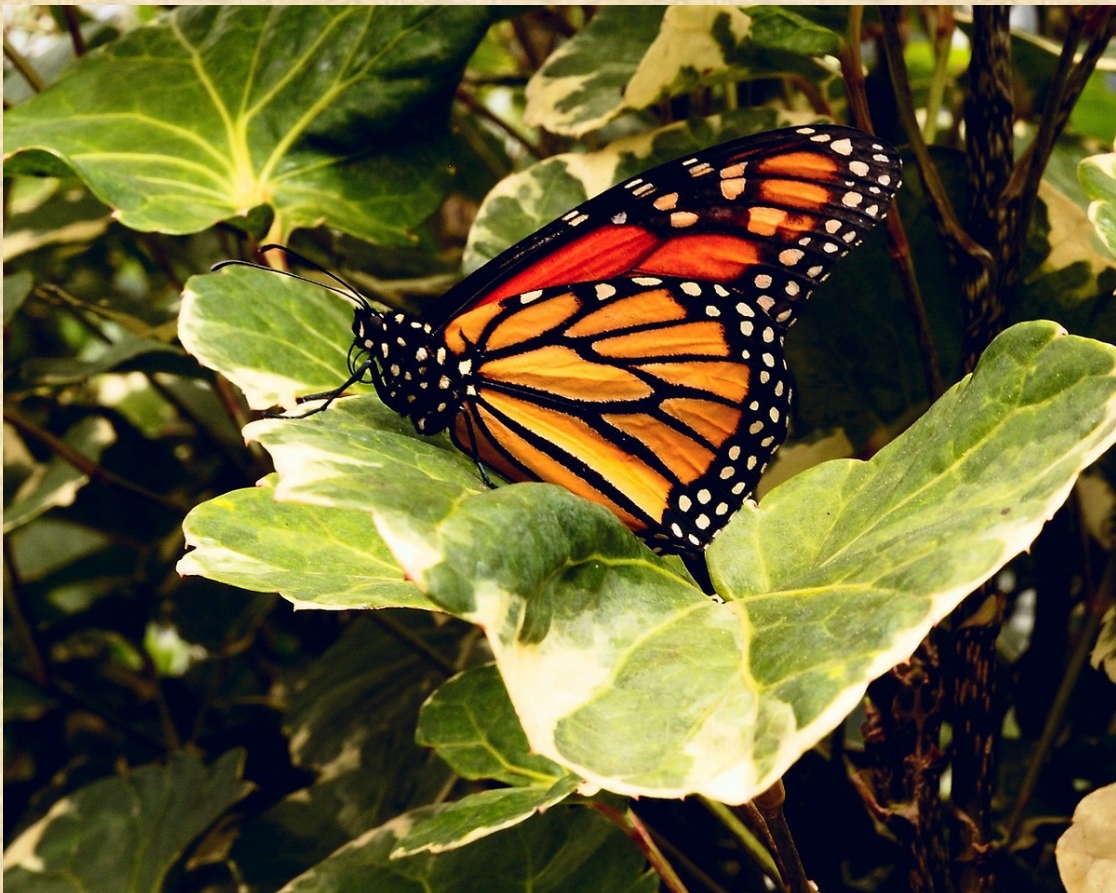
Set the magnification to 100% in the USM dialog box (I usually keep the magnification of the underlying image at 50%), and make sure you are viewing a portion of your image that contains detail and/or is important (e.g., if the image is a portrait, then the eyes and/or hair -- in my butterfly image I used a portion of the wing pattern).

Bring up the USM dialog box (Filters >Sharpen >Unsharp Mask). You'll find that there are any number of different views on what setting should be used for USM sharpening. Moreover, the proper settings will change, depending upon the image you were working on. However, my typical values generally fall within the range of 150-300 for the "Amount" slider, 1-3 for the "Radius" slider and between 10-20 for the "Threshold".

Tinker with the sliders until you achieve maximum sharpness without creating visible halos. I will often finalize the sharpness adjustment and then zoom back out to check the end result (reverting to the original but hitting Control/Z to toggle off and on the adjustment)



Slider the And then perform USM sharpening on this channel to taste. Fine tune the LAB adjustments using the opacity slider, and then flatten the image. Once this is done, convert back to the RGB color space (Image > Mode > RGB) and voilà, you're done! Here is my final (cropped) image:



And again the original:



Some final points: using the LAB color space can be addictive -- there's much more that can be done than sharpening or simple tonal or color adjustments (e.g., it's a neat way for inverting/swapping/changing colors in objects). If you're like me, and photo editing has become a black hole for your time (and has caused your spouse to question your sanity), LAB adjustments can be the darkest part of this black hole. LAB adjustments are also something that can be easily overdone. So while you should not be afraid to experiment, make sure to preserve your original image, and remember that subtle changes are often the most effective ones



Blend Modes to Create Your Own Selective Color Tool in Elements

By Michel B

The following exercise has a dual purpose: creating yourself a useful tool and showing the power of blend modes with adjustment and fill layers.

This tool will be used to create a mask to show or hide a specific color in your image, Here are a few tricky cases where this can be useful:

- color skin mask, to fine tune separately skin color and the rest of the image
- selecting 'purple fringing' around branches over a bright sky to correct it.
- Dealing with images with different color temperature sources or some color cast from the environment.
- Sky selection for smoothing or improving

The result will be the content of a mask, a greyscale image to be pasted into an adjustment or fill layer mask, or into a mask added to a standard layer (with third party tools like Grant, Graffi or Hiddenelements), With the full version of Photoshop, you could use the selective color adjustment tool, With Elements, you can simply use the magic wand tool, which selects pixels based on color similarity. The advantages of the following method are an increased flexibility as well as more visual control over the selection. Remember that even with a good starting mask, you can alter and enhance it via levels, contrast..., You can paint on the mask to show or hide parts of the image. You can even combine different masks logically, for example a color mask with a luminosity mask, targeting midtones of reds...

Our goal is to separate the pixels a given color from pixels with different colors, The starting idea will be to use the difference blend mode. Many blend modes have a clear visual effect... and an awful math definition. No so with difference, The math is simple. Just do the difference of the values of Red, Green and Blue channels, The visual effect is not convincing: unpredictable color results, very dark output. The only useful visual evidence is that the more difference, the lighter the result. Let's be practical: for the difference blend mode to be useful, you'll have to get rid of the unpleasant resulting color, and to increase the levels to get a 'normal' black to white mask. Black= no difference, white= maximum difference, with all shades of gray in between.

Important warning: if we want to be selective on color, we should not take luminosity into account. You might think it is easy to eliminate color by desaturating, but how to eliminate simply luminosity? The answer lies in the definition of luminosity and color blend modes. Let's use a simple middle gray fill layer, In color mode, the color of this layer (gray) will be applied to the underlying layer, which becomes... a greyscale image. In luminosity mode, the luminosity of the fill layer (50%) will be applied, leaving only color. The result is never artistic or pleasant, but for our purpose, we have succeeded in eliminating the influence of luminosity, Remember the paradox: to extract the luminosity via the greyscale layer, use the color blend mode, to extract the color, use the luminosity mode!

Let's begin with this example of skin tones with lots of colors in the background, My suggestion is to work on a duplicate file (menu file/duplicate), With the eyedropper tool, click on the foreground icon, then on a typical skin tone to set foreground color.

We'll start by adding a 50% gray fill layer in luminosity mode to show colors without tones. The result being 'dull' it may be advisable (but optional) to add a hue/saturation adjustment layer to boost saturation 15 to 30%,

Now, we want to compare the resulting colors with the skin tone. Let's add a color fill layer with the foreground color in difference mode. As expected, we need to eliminate color, You can use a hue/saturation adjustment layer to desaturate, or now you know you can use a 50% gray fill layer in color mode...

To make this dark mask useful, add a levels adjustment layer, and move the left and right tabs to 'squeeze' the mountain like histogram,

The layer stack is now:

- 1) 50% gray fill in luminosity mode (color extraction)
- 2) optional : adjustment layer to increase saturation
- 3) skin tone fill in difference mode (to compare)
- 4) hue/sat adjustment layer or 50% gray fill in color mode to desaturate
- 5) levels adjustment layer to extend tonal range

Just for the fun, I would add a 6th layer, an inverse adjustment layer to transform the hide mask into a show mask... Not really necessary, since you can inverse the mask content with the menu, or the shortcut Ctrl I.

Your mask is prepared in your duplicate file, Please save this duplicate with all its layers with a relevant name, such as 'color selection.psd', Suppose your goal is to use this mask in a hue/saturation adjustment layer added to the background on your original file. Select your duplicate file, flatten, then select (Ctrl A) and copy to clipboard (Ctrl C), Now select your original file and in the layer palette, Alt Click on the adjustment layer mask icon (rectangle at right), this should show you a blank screen; finally, copy (Ctrl V) the mask content. Click on the adjustment icon on the left of the mask icon in the layer palette to adjust colors while keeping skin tones masked.

You have successfully created your selective color mask. You can enhance it with levels, contrast etc. You may want to paint on the mask to hide or show parts of the image that are similar in color but are not skin tones.

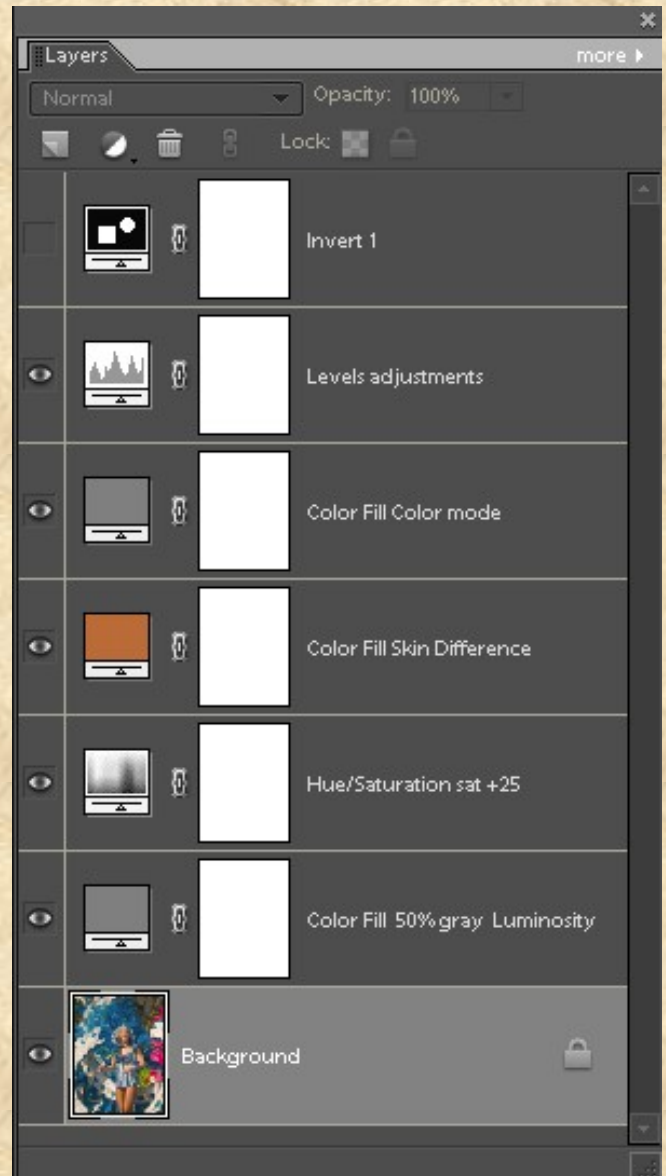
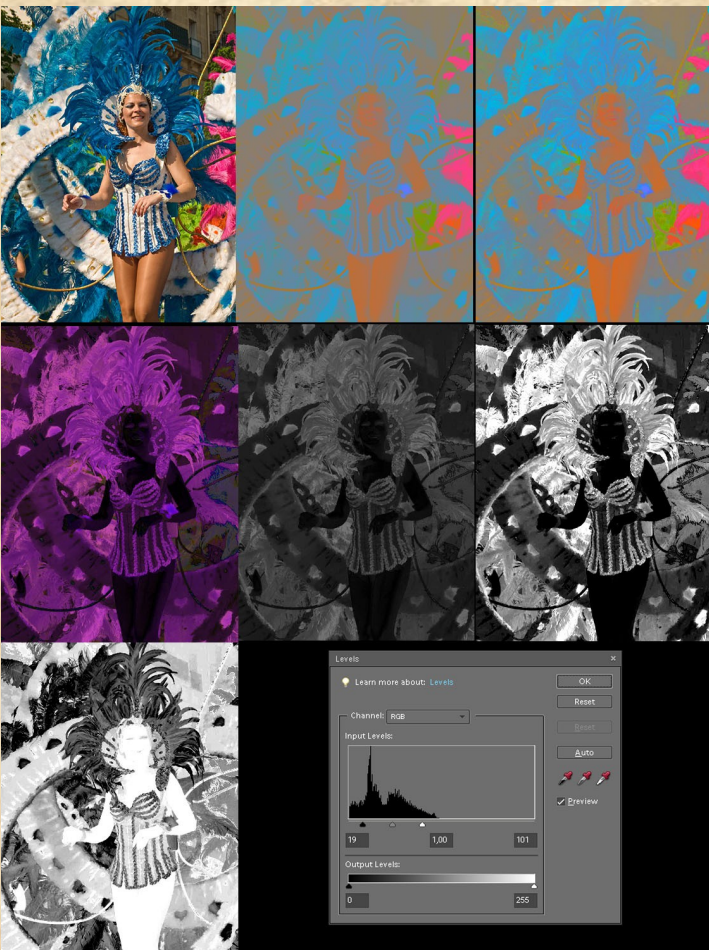
Last of all, do not forget to save this tool for further use. The 'color selection.psd' you have made is your tool. Next time you want to use selective color, open it together with your working file. Have both files visible (menu Windows/arrange/tile). Go to the layers palette, select all 5 or 6 layers, clicking on the lower one, then shift clicking on the upper one. Click and drag the layers directly over your working file, in its working area. The setup is ready. You'll probably want to select another color as a reference in the difference layer mode. In this case, you'll have to adjust the upper levels layer accordingly. And remember, this psd tool is only useful for its adjustment and fill layers, it can be any size without quality loss: downsize it to save disk space.

Original image:

<http://www.viovio.com/storage/users/990/15990/images/821754/20080505008.jpg>

Selective color Psd file with layers :

<http://www.viovio.com/photos/image/1094807/25463>



Part 2: Understanding Exposure - * Putting it All Together *

By Gene Van Horne (aka GeneVH)

We ended part 1 of this series standing in front of a fairly well lit scene, with the light not presenting any real exposure challenges between the dark (shadow) portions and the lighter (bright) portions. You have taken your camera off its program modes and have it set to manual mode. And you're not too concerned about being creative at this time, you just want a decent exposure. And the kids are getting ready to bolt.

Let's start with ISO. Generally, when setting your ISO you want the lowest ISO your camera is capable of. The reason for setting ISO at the lowest possible setting, especially with a digital camera, is that this setting will give you the least amount of noise that your camera is capable of. The trade-off is in how sensitive the sensor will be to light, but in most situations under normal lighting conditions, a lower ISO should be more than sufficient. By normal lighting conditions, I am assuming here a scene with enough light that you probably aren't going to be using your flash.

So set that ISO.

Now, we are going to consider aperture, or the f-stop. The f-stop setting is the 2nd leg of the tripod for controlling the lighting of the exposure, and it also has the added benefit of allowing control over depth of field. Depth of field is simply the amount of the area front to back within your photograph that is in perfect, or acceptable, exposure. In this example that we are shooting, we want the entire scene to be in focus as much as possible, so we are going to set our f-stop to a smaller opening (higher number) to get as much of the scene as possible in focus.

There are a number of guidelines you can follow, again depending on the scene. There is the "sunny f/16" rule that is a good rule of thumb for scenes lit by fairly bright sunlight. Bryan Peterson, in his books, refers to f/11 as the "who cares" setting for getting the most focusing area out of your shot. There are others, but I hope you get the idea. A lot of this also is subjective, and depends on exactly what you want when you push the shutter button.

But in this instance, we want as much as possible in focus, so we're going to pick a setting of f/11. Why? Uhhh.....why not? As Mr. Peterson would say, who cares?

OK... we have set our ISO and set the aperture. The next important setting is our shutter speed.

In the scene before us, everything is fairly stationary. The kids are still cooperating (for the moment anyway) and there are no speeding sports cars or running animals we want to freeze, so we aren't particularly concerned with selecting either a faster or slower shutter speed. We're not making any creative decisions at this point, just trying to get a properly exposed shot.

All modern cameras nowadays have a light meter built in. Most of these operate by sampling the light entering through the lens and taking a reading from it, then performing some fancy calculations taking into account your ISO, Aperture, and current shutter speed setting and then give you a read out based on those current settings. I happen to shoot with a Nikon, so in my case, the readout happens to be a bar scale in my viewfinder. 0 (zero) is the center of the scale, and then it goes + (to the left) or - (to the right) of 0 to indicate whether or not the shot will be over exposed (to the +) or under exposed (to the -) side of 0. Different meters have different readouts, so you will need to familiarize yourself with how your camera displays its readings.

Now, if the the world was a simple place, and light was always constant, and all meters read the same light consistently, you would want to get that meter reading as close to 0 (or centered) as you can. Centered, the meter is telling you that at this ISO, at the current aperture and shutter speed settings, you will get the most perfect exposure that your camera is capable of. Unfortunately, none of the previous sentence is true. There are always variables, and these are what we need to learn to contend with.

Let me also say that none of this is rocket science either. You don't have to understand how your meter makes its calculations. I don't. Nor do I really care. But, as I said in Part 1, your meter is basically stupid for being a fairly sophisticated piece of equipment. It only sees the world in black and white, and it wants to turn that world gray.

Now, in the scene before us, this isn't a major concern since we have a fairly wide range of color, there is no black or white overpowering the scene, nor do we have an overabundance of any particular color. We aren't at this point going to worry about making any adjustments to compensate. This kind of scene is fairly easy to expose. You can use the shutter speed to get your meter reading centered, and once it is, shoot away. You should get a pretty good exposure.

There is one other setting on your camera that you need to concern yourself with, especially if you're shooting JPG, and that is white balance. For those of us that shoot RAW, white balance in camera isn't that big a concern since RAW can be easily adjusted in post processing. Since there is in camera processing performed on each JPG, you will need to pay more attention to white balance settings. JPG can be a bit more limiting in post processing. So, make note of how the scene before you is lit, and set your white balance accordingly.

Another question, and it can be a big one, is where exactly in the scene am I supposed to meter from? This is where things can also get a bit tricky, especially when you are shooting a scene that is not evenly lit, or has an overabundance of a particular color, or blacks or whites. Shooting a back lit subject has its own challenges, also.

I shoot with a Nikon D70s dSLR camera for the moment, so I am going to explain things using its settings. Canon, Olympus, Sony, Pentax, etc. have their own way of controlling meter settings so if you own something other than a Nikon, you may need to get out your instruction manual to apply what I am about to tell you to your particular model camera. Hopefully I can explain things clearly enough to allow you to do that without too much trouble.

I can set my camera to one of 3 metering modes:

Matrix: this uses the largest percentage of the viewfinder in order to calculate the proper exposure setting. This would be used in probably the greatest percentage of your shots, where overall lighting isn't that great a concern and back lighting isn't a problem.

Center-Weighted: this uses a smaller portion of the viewfinder, with the greatest emphasis on the center. This can be set to different proportions and on my camera can be as small as 6mm to 12mm. You may want to use this setting for landscapes, where the sun will be included in the shot but you don't want it as part of your metering calculation. Using this setting would allow you to meter part of the sky, for instance, or off the trees/ground, depending on what you want exposed. Each area has its own uses.

Spot: This setting meters off the same area that is being used for focus. I.E: if you are focusing on someone's face, metering is done from that same area and from the same rough area in the viewfinder that focusing is achieved from. This would give you a more precise metering, especially in the case where you have strong back lighting and you don't want to end up with a silhouette of your subject.

As mentioned already, each metering scheme has its uses. Here is where some of your own creativity will come into play and you will need to make some decisions as to what is important in a given exposure and how best to achieve the vision you have for that exposure. This is an area where photography requires some thinking before you press the shutter button. Not in just picking what you are going to shoot, but what its going to take to get the most out of that shot in any given situation.

This is where practice, and some understanding of how your particular camera meters overall. For example, my camera tends to want to underexpose so I generally have to set my exposure more towards overexposing to get what I want. Your camera may want to overexpose, so you would go the opposite way that I do. The scene before you will dictate how you expose. If you want to take a picture of something back lit, and you want the most detail out of that object, you are going to have to meter off that object, not the entire scene, to get the detail that you are looking for. This type of exposure will result in parts of the scene being overexposed and possibly blown out,

but if those parts are not important to the overall composition, it is something you can live with.

For scenes that have a lot of dark coloring in them, your meter is going to do its best to turn that dark area to some sort of gray. It is going to do this by wanting you to over expose the scene. To get it right, you are going to have to set your camera to actually underexpose the scene and keep the dark (or black areas) as close to what you are actually seeing as you can.

In cases where you have a lot of bright colors, for instance snow since winter will soon be here, the meter again is going to want to turn that nice white snow into something a bit grayer. In this instance it will try to get you to underexpose the image in order to achieve that grayness the meter is seeing. Remember - your meter sees the world in black and white and all the shades of gray in between true black and true white and is striving for the middle. In other words, 18% gray. So in order to properly expose that snow scene, you will want to set your exposure to what the meter will be telling you will over expose the image in order to retain the whiteness of the scene.

Unfortunately, there isn't a general rule of thumb in how to set your aperture, shutter speed, and ISO to achieve perfect exposure in every situation. Too much will depend on what is before you, how brightly lit the scene may be, for instance, and what parts of the scene are important and what aren't. This aspect requires a creative decision on your part, and this also necessitates a bit of practice to gain an understanding of how different settings will affect the image. Bracketing can be extremely helpful here. By bracketing I mean not only taking a shot based on what your meter is trying to tell you, but also taking additional exposures on either side of what the meter tells you is the perfect setting. This will increase your chances of getting it right.

Use your histogram when you are out shooting. It will give you a good indication of where you are at with a particular exposure setting. Simply put, the more to the left the bulk of the histogram is, the more underexposed the shot may be. And the more to the right is an indication that you may be overexposing the scene before you.

But understanding the three legs of the tripod: ISO, Shutter Speed, and Aperture, will go a long way towards your achieving your own creative vision.

Achieving perfect exposure can be a maddeningly frustrating thing at times. You'll swear at times that your meter is lying to you, or that shooting manually is totally beyond you. But with practice and a little bit of effort, you will find your results will improve, and you will start to "get it right" more and more as you pay careful attention to the scene before you and to what you are doing before you think about pushing that shutter button.

Thus ends part 2. If there is going to be a part 3 I am going to need some input from those that are reading this. I am willing to continue if you are finding this helpful, but I would much rather approach it by answering your questions or concerns instead of trying to write another book on exposure. I realize this may be a bit over simplified, so if you have any questions or just want to comment, send me a PM through the forum. My user name is GeneVH. If I get enough questions, I am willing to do as many "Parts" as there is interest in the subject.

Thank you all for your time and patience!!!!

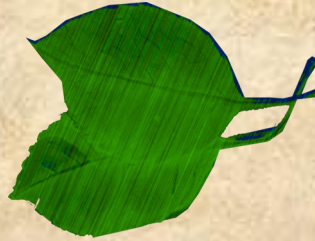
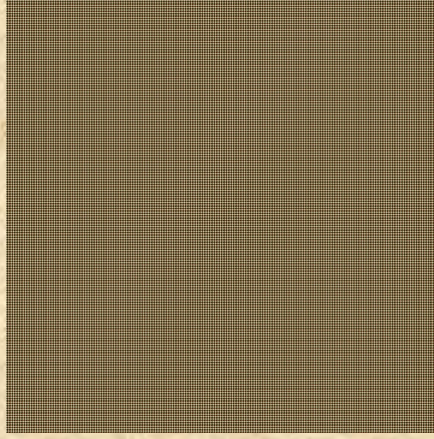
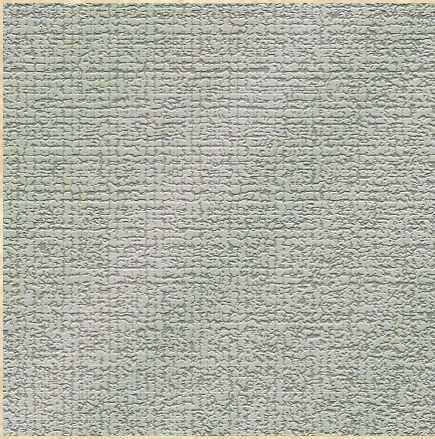
Gene

Freebie from Angie aka BoosAngel

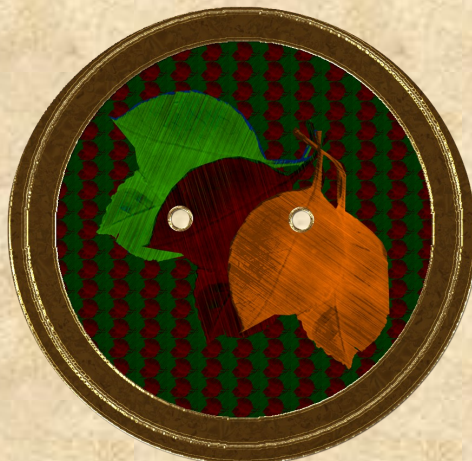
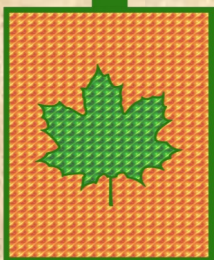
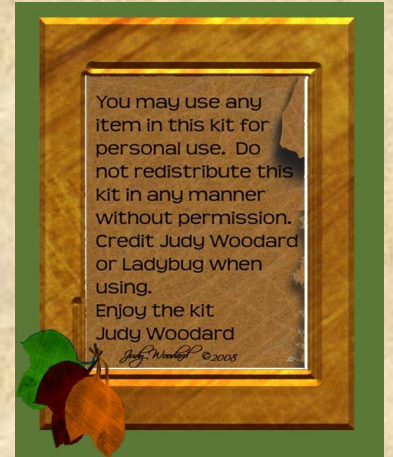
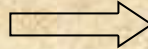
Angie offered this freebie on the forum and was having difficulty figuring out an easy way for everyone to download it. I offered to put it in the newsletter for her with a download link. Click on the image to download the Brandy Glass.



Fall Kit Freebie by Judy aka Ladybug



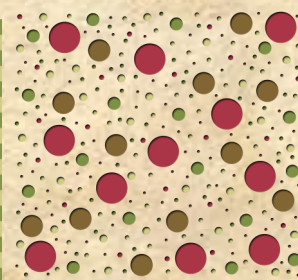
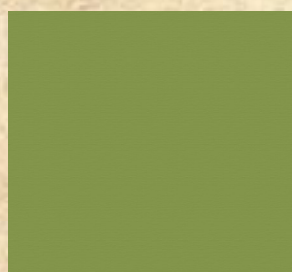
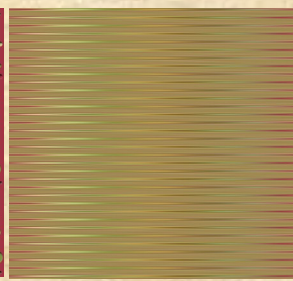
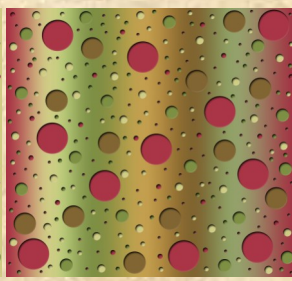
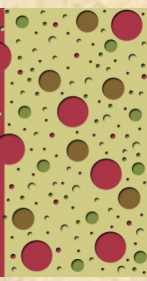
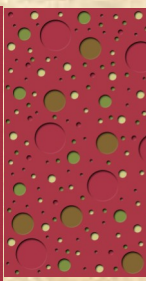
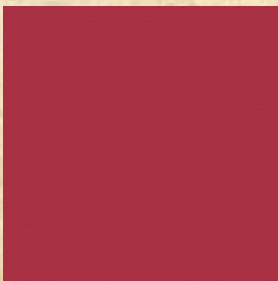
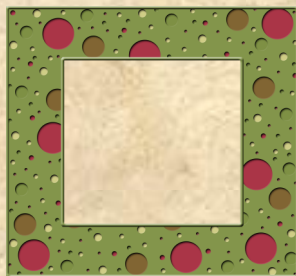
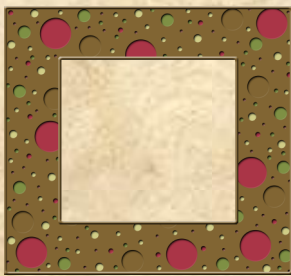
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This mini kit



Christmas Kit Freebie by Smiles aka Shari



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Hall of Fame Image of the Month October 2008

Thank you to this months Tag Hall of Fame Judge, Gene Van Horne. Another difficult month of judging.

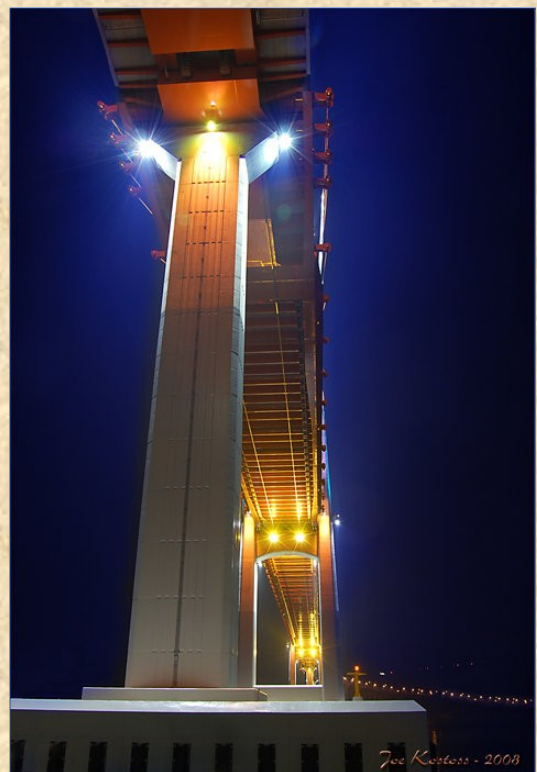
First place and the winner of a \$25 Gift Certificate for Viovio is

Sunny aka Sarch99 for Seawall



2nd Place

SuziB with Final



3rd Place

Joe_Kostoss with Ma Chang Bridge II

Scraps of Fame Page of the Month October 2008

Thank you to this months Tag Scraps of Fame Judge, Turtlespirit, aka Angela

First place and the winner of a \$25 Gift Certificate for Viovio is

Kim aka Angelickim for Jacob Wyatt Ross



2nd Place

Sarch99 with Paige Through the Years

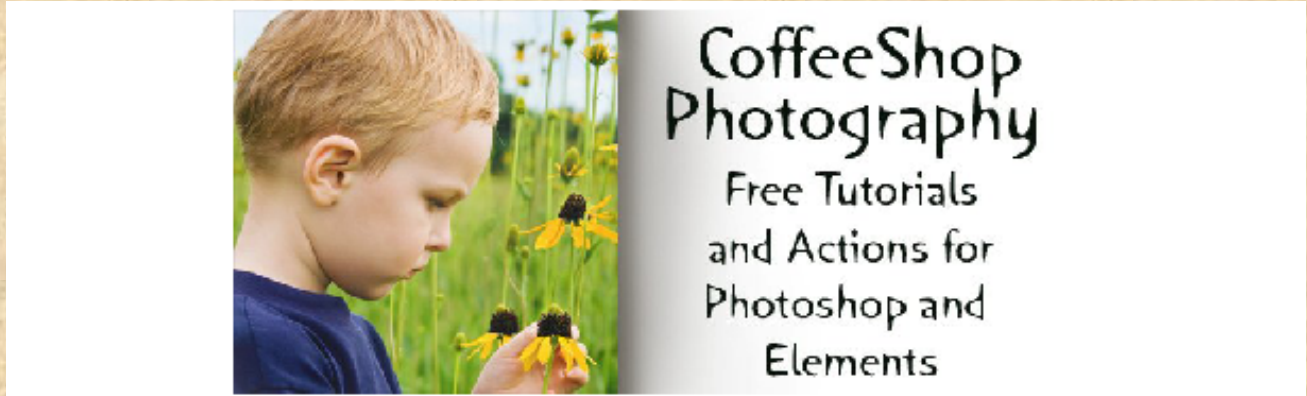


3rd Place

TNJewels with Rose Garden

Have You Seen This Site?

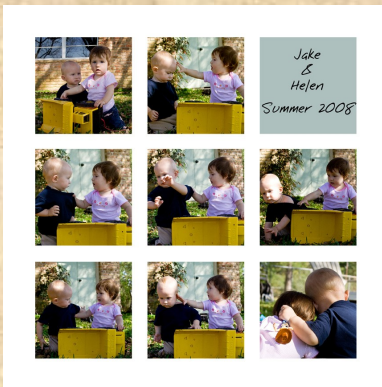
CoffeeShop Photography



Rita, aka Rita_from_CoffeeShop. Owns this blog with her husband. As you see in the above image you can get free tutorials and actions for Photoshop and Photoshop Elements. Rita has sent two actions and tutorials for the newsletter. I believe these are also available on her site. Instead of including the tutorial here, I am providing a download link for the files Rita has provided.

Make sure you visit CoffeeShop Photography often.

www.coffeeshopphotography.blogspot.com



Included in the file are:

Powder Room Tutorial

Powder Room Action

Powder Room Template

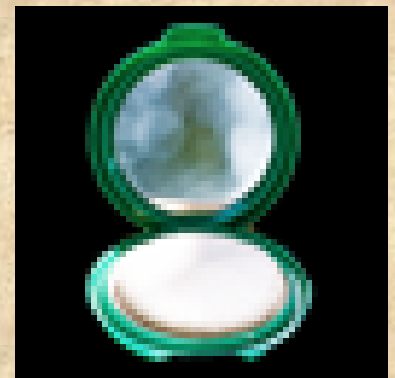
To the 9's Tutorial

To the 9's Template

To the 9's Actions for Elements and

Photoshop

Instruction for installing actions



Click [HERE](#) to download the file

Where in the World

An Introduction to South Tyrol



The Margreid brass band in traditional costume

When you think of Italy, you certainly don't think of sauerkraut and "oompah-pah" music. But that too, belongs to Italy. What many don't know is that Italy also has regions where more than just Italian is spoken. That is the case in South Tyrol, the province of Bolzano, where I have lived for nearly 24 years. The province was a part of Austria up until the end of World War 2 and even now, about two thirds of the population still speak German as their native tongue.

The province has autonomy which allows the independent regulation of many areas of its dealings. One of the most important of those for the South Tyroleans is school autonomy. Each language group (German, Italian and the small minority of Ladin speakers) has its own schools taught in their native tongue. The second language of either German or Italian is taught from the first grade on as a foreign language, with English following starting in the fourth grade. Thanks to this, most students are at least fairly proficient in three languages by the time they finish their studies. The school system, due to German efficiency and precision, is excellent, and our PISA test scores, were they ranked as a separate result, would be second only to Finland in Europe.



Members of historic "Schützen" groups



Lake Kaltern

This is advantageous in South Tyrol, whose landscape varies from palm trees and warm alpine lakes to craggy peaks popular with climbers and skiers alike. The area is popular with both Italian and foreign tourists, and tourism is one of the most important economical factors. We have every type of accommodation, from luxurious 5 star hotels down to cozy B&Bs with only one or two rooms in century-old farmhouses.

The cuisine is also many-faceted, drawing from both Italian and Austrian heritages. *Schlutzkrapfen*, local pasta like ravioli filled with spinach and fresh cheese, and *Käsenocken*, bread dumplings with local cheese and brown butter appear on the menu next to pizza and gnocchi. You can eat some of the best meals at high altitudes at one of the huts on the Alpine meadows. And as my mom always says, it is darn near impossible to get a bad meal here!



Gschnagenhardtalm and Geisler walls



One of many castles and a sea of apple blossoms

All this good food is accompanied by the excellent local wines. South Tyrol is well known in Europe for its wines, some of which originated here. Many of you have surely heard of Gewürztraminer wine; what you probably don't know is that it originates from a town on the South Tyrolean Wine Road, Tramin, which hosts an annual symposium dedicated to Gewürztraminer. Lagrein, a wine whose color I liken to ink, is also an indigenous wine which can be made as a rosé or a full-bodied red wine with lots of character. Vernatsch, also known as Schiava, is a garnet red wine with a scent of violets. Then, of course, there are all of the international varieties such as Chardonnay, Cabernet and, most important, our prime Pinot Noirs which can easily hold their own against world competitors.



Prime fruit production

South Tyrol is also Europe's apple basket, producing 10% of the entire European apple supply. The valleys are a sea of blossoms in the spring and filled with shiny red and yellow apples in the fall.

Visitors have many choices of sights to see and things to do. Sports fans can choose from cycling and mountain bike routes, swimming, hiking and many other sports in summer. Even less active visitors can enjoy leisurely walks with breathtaking views of the Dolomites, our part of the Alps. Those same mountains are home to perfect slopes and tracks for downhill and cross-country skiing in the winter.



Seiser Meadow and the Dolomites

For those who prefer cultural activities, we have a good selection of museums ranging from a brand-new museum of modern and contemporary art to the archeological museum housing, among many other exhibits, the 5000 year old Ice Man. We have an excellent botanical garden as well.

South Tyrol is home to over 400 castles and fortresses, many of which can be visited and even quite a few which offer room and board. Traditions are cultivated here, and tourists can take part in local traditions through the festivals offered. Some of the most popular festivals are the local Christmas markets, the Oswald von Wolkenstein riding competition and the Egetmann Carnival Parade.



Castle Boyment

Our village, Margreid an der Weinstraße (It: Magrè sulla Strada del Vino; En: Margreid on the Wine Road) was once a silk producing town, of course in earlier times, the property of the church and nobility. The village is characterized by its many arched doorways and fountains and has beautiful old houses, many of which have been restored. It is home to two excellent wineries, [Alois Lageder](#) and [Kellerrei Nals Margreid](#). Most of the circa 1200 inhabitants are farmers or commute to one of the larger towns to work. It is also home to one of the oldest grapevines in Europe, dating back to 1601.



Löwengang and the old grapevine



Königssegg, Margreid

So, no matter what your interests are, there is something for you here in South Tyrol!

I hope you have enjoyed my little introduction to the area I live in, and, who knows? Maybe we can meet here for a traditional morning glass of white wine or a cup of steaming cappuccino some day?

Reka Hukari Ranigler

Links:

[General info](#)

[Museums](#)

[Botanical Gardens](#)

[Wine](#)



St. Gertraud, Margreid



Iron crosses in Margreid Cemetery



Margreid City Hall



Kurtatsch church with Margreid in the background