

## Seven Useful Photoshop Actions

### 1. Basic Initial Sharpening up of an Image with 3 Unsharp Mask Filters.

**Start to Record a New Action** with a basic image already open:

- Convert to a Smart Object (right click on the base image in Windows)
- Select Filter > Sharpen > Unsharp Mask and set Pixels = 0.2; Amount = 250%; Threshold = 0 (DON'T use this if you have already sharpened in RAW or are starting with a JPEG). Click OK
- Select Filter > Sharpen > Unsharp Mask and set Pixels = 30; Amount = 20%; Threshold = 0; OK
- Select Filter > Sharpen > Unsharp Mask > Pixels = 250; Amount = 10%; Threshold = 0; OK

**Stop recording the Action.**

In use you may increase or decrease the sharpening effects by adjusting the Amount up or down, or the Threshold (0 is most aggressive, 1, 2 or 3 is less aggressive). These settings are for 10-12 MP images. If you have higher resolution images, scale accordingly: e.g. 0.2, 50 and 500 pixels for a 36 MP camera. If you don't want to use a Smart Object (it allows editing of the filters, but takes twice the storage space), then you can add an Edit > Fade > Luminosity blend and adjust opacity of each sharpening.

Note that Hi Radius, Low Amount (Hirloom) USM is the basis of most plug-in "Structure" (Nik), "Clarity" (Lightroom), or "Detail" (Topaz) sliders. USM should be managed to avoid blowing highlights or developing halos (e.g. with lower amount or local masking). HiPass sharpening has a similar effect that can be controlled further with Blending Options, but requires a separate image layer for each pass (which should be set in Soft Light blending mode).

### 2. Multiply Action for Snow & Bright Areas

Make a selection of a bright area in an image layer with Select > Color Range (Fuzziness = 100; Localized Color Clusters = OFF).

**Start to Record a New Action**

- Add a Curves Adjustment Layer in Multiply Mode. This should create a masked adjustment layer with the mask equal to the selection.
- Select the Mask (click on it or Alt-Click to see the B&W Mask) and apply a Gaussian Blur of 7-12 pixels (for 12 – 26 MP images).
- Rename the new layer "Multiply for Snow" and Set the Opacity to 40%.
- Click on the Histogram Update triangle in the Curves Adjustment Window

**Stop Recording the Action.**

In use, you may adjust opacity up or drag the curves adjustment 0,0 to the right (up to 100,0) to further increase the contrast enhancing effect. For bright clouds you can Gaussian Blur the mask by more (but look out for halos on your skyline!). If you have blown highlights, pull down the 255,255 point to 255,240+. If your whites are not blown, you can drag the 255,255 point left to the edge of the actual histogram. I also recommend inspecting the mask to paint black back into subject areas that were inadvertently selected. The Fuzziness is the width of the histogram (range of colors) selected: 100 is 4 stops; 25 is one stop). I might use 25 to select only really hot highlights.

### 3. George deWolfe's Perceptool™-like 3D enhancement

**Start to Record a New Action** with a basic image already open:

- Duplicate the Background Layer to a New Layer; Rename the new layer "Background Copy"
- Select the new layer and apply Filter > Other > High Pass > 250 pixels
- Select the background layer and press CTRL ALT 2 (PC; or Command Opt 2 Mac) to load the Luminosity as a selection
- Click on the top layer; Click Add Mask (rectangular icon in Layers Palette with circle in the middle). This should put a B&W version of the background layer in the mask of the Copy layer.
- Set the blending mode of the top layer to Soft Light.

#### **Stop recording the Action**

In use, you may decrease the opacity of the top layer, turn off or adjust the mask if you like. The result should be a little deeper shadows emphasizing edges – a more 3D look. I look at the effect of this action on almost every image I work on. If the brights get too hot I use the Multiply for Snow action.

### 4. Vignette (George DeWolfe's Edge Burn)

**Start to Record a New Action** with an image already open:

- Make a new Gradient Fill Layer with Dither, Reverse, 90°, Reflected Type, 150%, Black to Transparent Gradient, Aligned with Layer
- Select the Background Layer
- Make another Gradient Fill Layer like the other, but with Angle = 0 degrees instead of 90.
- Select both Gradient Fill layers and Merge them into one.
- Set the Blending Mode of the single layer to Soft Light
- Set the Opacity of the new layer to 33%

#### **Stop recording the Action.**

In use you may optionally adjust the opacity of the Vignette to 10-100%. Some B&W images might benefit from 100% opacity. This layer may cause some overall darkening of the image requiring compensation.

### 5. A Quick Snappy B&W Conversion via LAB space and HiPass 250 Pixel Structuring.

Save the image. **Start to record a New Action** with the image open:

- Flatten the image
- Convert to LAB color (Image > Mode > LAB Color)
- Duplicate the base layer (e.g. with CNTRL J)
- Select the duplicate layer and perform a 250 - 500 pixel Hi Pass Filter (Filter > Other > Hi Pass) depending on the image resolution (10 - 36 MP)
- Rename the top layer "High Pass 250". Set the Blending Mode to Soft Light
- Add a Hue Saturation Layer and Set the Saturation to Zero

#### **Stop recording the Action.**

In use you may increase or decrease the sharpening effect by adjusting the High Pass Layer opacity. Most likely you will also flatten and convert to RGB when you are satisfied.

## 6. Method to replace George deWolfe's History Brush Local Adjustment Approach:

**Start to Record a New Action** with a basic B&W image already flattened and open (in RGB mode)

- Add a New Adjustment Layer > Curves > Blending Mode Color Burn > 70% Opacity. Select the mask for this layer and fill with 95% black (Edit > Fill > Black; Normal; 95%). This will automatically apply a 3.5% color burn to every image. Rename the Adjustment Layer as Color Burn. Color Burn darkens already dark things the most and light things the least.
- Duplicate this layer to another layer. Rename the New Layer as Color Dodge and change the Blending Mode to Color Dodge. Select the mask and fill it with 92% black. This will automatically apply a 4% color dodge to every image. Color Dodge lightens the lightest things – opposite to Color Burn.
- Select the Color Burn layer again and duplicate it to a third layer. Select the new layer. Rename it “Darken”. Set the blending mode to Multiply and the Opacity to 100%. Select the mask and fill with 100% black. Go to the curve Adjustment box and drag the top right of the diagonal to RGB 255 input = 245 output. This allows blown highlights to be reduced a bit with a darken operation which would not otherwise affect pure white (255, 255, 255). Multiply Blending Mode is the same as pulling the middle of the Curves down from 128,128 to 128,64 in Normal Blending Mode.
- Copy the Darken layer to a 4<sup>th</sup> layer. Rename it “Lighten”. Set the blending mode to Screen. Go to the curve Adjustment box and drag the bottom left of the diagonal to RGB 0 input = 10 output. Drag the top right back to 255,255. This allows the very darkest pixels to be lightened in Screen mode. Screen Blending is equivalent to pulling the middle of the Curves up to 128,192.
- Select the Darken layer again and duplicate to a 5<sup>th</sup> layer. Rename this layer “Contrast” and set the blending mode to Soft Light. Go to the curves layer and reset it to Default (0,0 to 255,255).
- Select the top layer and add a new adjustment layer > Curves > named as “Viewer”. This will be used to look at a higher resolution histogram later.
- Select the 5 adjustment layers EXCEPT Viewer and make them a Group (Layer > Group Layers). Rename the Group George DeWolfe Adjustment Layers.

### **Stop recording the Action**

In use, you paint on the black masks with a white brush with opacity 15-20% for Lighten, Darken and Contrast or 3-5% for Color Burn or Color Dodge. You may do Outlining in the Darken and Lighten layers, too. The Group may be opened or closed by clicking on the triangle to the left of the file folder. Turn off or reduce the opacity of the Color Dodge layer if highlights get blown out. There is a triangle in the bottom left of the Viewer Adjustment view. Click on it to get a high resolution histogram to check for extreme values.

## 7. Hal Schmitt Luminance Mask for Sharpening in Photoshop

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jns605IRTw8&playnext=1&list=PL65286BD17DFC1549&feature=results\\_video](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jns605IRTw8&playnext=1&list=PL65286BD17DFC1549&feature=results_video)