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B-n-W and MyPublisher

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First off, if you are going to be doing any major B&W Digital work, you need to get “Advanced Digital Black & White Photography” by John Beardsworth, ‘A Lark Photographic Book’

I could teach for a year of Fourth Tuesdays out of this great book! It is based on CS3, but has notes for CS2 folks as well. What I’m going to talk about tonight barely scratches the surface of Digital B&W. Get the book!

In the old days, there were few ways to convert color images to B&W, Image > Mode > Greyscale and Image > Adjust > Desaturate were two of the quick and dirty ways though not at all satisfying for quality B&W work. There was Image > Calculations, but it was not at all easy to understand/use.

-Prep work Before you start, be sure to do your Levels adjustments to get your image ‘in the ballpark’. You can do your Curves adjustment layer after the B&W to touch up contrast or to adjust areas that need to be lightened or darkened.

-Channel Mixer The first controllable ‘tool’ was Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Channel Mixer. This really allowed control of the image by controlling the percent of each color and made life much easier. If you are using CS2, Channel Mixer is still your go-to tool for B&W. Once you have the control box up, check the monochrome box in the lower left. Move the Red, Green and Blue sliders, either positive or negative to get the effect you want. Adobe recommends a “total” of 100 for the three combined. You can adjust the ‘Constant’ slider to brighten/darken the image if the other adjustments have caused density to shift. You can also try the Presets, set for the color filters used “in the old days” to bring out clouds etc. For an ‘Ansel Adams’ Effect, set the Blue channel to -185, Green to 40 and Red to around 120. It really gets the blacks and whites going!

-Black & White With CS3 comes the best thing to happen to B&W in a long time, Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Black & White. This new tool is a bit like the Channel Mixer in the use of sliders, but it includes RGB and CMY as well. It has a much better selection of Presets and allows you to create and save Custom Presets. Just click Preset > Custom, adjust the sliders and then click the small box to the right of Preset and ‘Save Preset’ give it a name and you now have a custom Preset in the Preset drop down menu. The next and BEST part about Black & White is the “scrubby sliders”. Just mouse over an area of the image you’d like to adjust, click and drag! To the right, lightens that area and dragging it to the left darkens it. How easy is that? Photoshop senses which color you’d like to adjust and as you scrub, you can see that slider moving back and forth. So, you can scrub green leaf, then the red apple and get one lighter than the other or, both the same. Once you have the image the way you want it, you can then click the “Tint” check box and using the Hue slider select the tint you’d like and adjust the Saturation slider for the amount. For a Sepia tone, I have the Hue slider somewhere around 40, and Saturation around 17.

-More Black & White There are times that after you adjust the sky using one set of slider settings, the foliage does not look like you’d like. You can do the initial Black & White Adjustment layer and set the sky the way you want it, then MASK (Black blocks) everything but the sky and add another Black & White adjustment Layer for the foliage. Since the sky is already

done (B&W) you don't need to mask the second adjustment layer. (unless there is a third for another area.)

-Still More B&W If you'd like, you can reduce the Opacity of the Black & White Adjustment Layer to allow a small amount of the color layer to show thru. It can give an old time look to the image. Mask out a part of the image, one flower or a face or... to allow color to come thru in that one area.

-Curves for Contrast & Brightness Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Curves is used to adjust the Contrast of the image. To increase Contrast drag the curve Down a bit in the shadow (dark) area and Up a bit in the highlight (light) area, this gives the classic 'S' Curve. As you increase the angle, the steeper the line is, the more Contrast there is. If you have too much Contrast (NEVER HAPPEN!) raise the dark end of the curve and lower the light end. To increase Brightness, drag the center of the line UP and to decrease, drag it Down.

-Split Toning Since Toning can now be done in the Black & White Adjustment Layer, where we normally used a Hue and Saturation adjustment layer or a Fill layer, we'll use a Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Curves to do our Split Toning. (Split toning is having a tone for the light areas and a different tone for the dark areas. An example would be to have a blue tone in the dark areas to make it feel cooler and a yellow tone in the highlights to give it warmth.) Select Layers > New Adjustment Layer > Curves and change the (Blending) Mode to Color. Now, select the Blue Channel. When you adjust the Blue curve, you will only be adjusting the color and not the luminance (density). Drag the dark end of the Blue curve up to add Blue to the shadows and down in the highlights to reduce the Blue (minus Blue = Yellow) or if you'd like another color in the highlights, leave the Blue highlights alone and pick another Channel color to adjust. Again, you can Mask and or decrease the opacity of the Curves layer to fine tune your effect.

-Litho Image Black or White, NO greys here! Go to Image > Adjust Threshold and move the slider until you get the cutoff between Black and White where you want it!

MyPublisher.com

Many of us have a BUNCH of images and what better way to show them off than to create a Photo Book! They make great coffee table books AND great gifts!

The best site I've found so far for ease of use AND book quality, is MyPublisher.com. You download their program for either Mac or PC and work at your own pace off-line. You do need to be on-line to up-load your finished book and to download different book options. I changed to the 'Vintage' book option and the program downloaded a file of page masks etc. for that specific book style.

-Getting started Get all of the images that you'd like to use in your book copied into one folder. You can have sub-folders under the main folder, but the idea here is to get all of your images into one place so you don't have to go looking for them. Formats that I've used so far are JPEG or TIF. I don't think I'd try a layered file as I'm not sure if/how it would process them or, IF it could. Also, from what I've read, keep to around 1900x1900 ppi/dpi max/min and I've seen no mention but suggest Adobe RGB.

-Start MyPublisher Start the program and it tells you that you are about to select size, style of book and cover style and asks you to "Enter the name of your Book" you can have several and switch between them. Give it a name and click 'start my book'. Now, select the Size you'd like. There is much more info on style and size and price on their web site so a bit of research is in order if you aren't sure of the answer(s). You now need to "Select a Book Style" click the drop

down menu and click thru the different styles and look at the samples at the bottom of the page. You can change styles in mid-stream, but it might mess up some of your text and images, no guarantee. I've used Modern, but played around with Vintage and Storyteller, just to see the results. Click Next and select a Cover style. I'm not much for "Book Jackets" but it is an option. Next, "Confirm Choices and Get Photos"

-Finding your images When you open MyPublisher, on a Mac it looks in iPhoto for images and on a PC, My Pictures. To get to your folder, File > Open Picture Folder and go to the folder and click 'Open'. Once you have your folder listed, you can click to open it and then drag your mouse over all of your images to select them, or click on one and do a CTRL – A to select all of the images in the folder. Then, drag them to the picture area, or click the ADD PICTURES button. It may take a couple of minutes to get them all in, so be patient. You can now organize the images and/or open another folder and drag those in. IF they are to be kept separate, make sure that the last image is select and that you drag the new images after the last one there. Once the images are in, click on "Make Book"

-Make Book The first thing to come up is the Cover. Add an image and text. The Image can be adjusted by double clicking on it to zoom it in/out or make basic adjustments. If the image is low resolution, or zoomed too far in, you will get a RED BORDER around the image warning you that it is too low resolution to print properly. Text, when selected, can be resized or the font changed. After your Cover, click NEXT and the Index page comes up. This is text only. When you are thru with this, click NEXT to get to the first page of images. I prefer to select side by side view so I can see the two facing pages together to tell what the layout will look like. Set this in the lower left.

-Picture pages In the Page Type section, Select how many images for that page and whether they have captions or not. You can also select the background for the page, black, white or grey. Watch your horizontals and verticals and always double click the image to see how it's been cropped.

-Misc You can drag images in or out or swap by dragging one over the other. You can also see what your book is looking like by clicking pages to the left of the image strip on the top row. Keep going and do all of your pages. You can add title pages if you have different sections.

-Sending it off! Once you are done, click the Preview button and "Check your work!". When you are HAPPY, click Purchase and, it asks you to "Check your Work!" and if you like what you see and are HAPPY, click the "YES, I have Previewed all the pages..." Once you say OK, the program tells you if you have blank pages or blank picture places, check if you need to and OK them if you don't and off you go, you are on the net and can log in and buy/upload your book.

A note here to COSTCO members, if you start at COSTCO.com in the Photo Section and get to MyPublisher from there, you get a substantial discount!

Here are a few web pages where you can see other Photo Book publishers and some rating sites where they rate different publishers. I prefer a site where I can download and play at my leisure. ALSO, check the SHIPPING and Handling!!! One site charges \$16.95 to ship your book regular mail!!!

This is a list of review sites that Jeff Nelson found after the "MyPublisher" talk last month at SYVCC...

If you are interested in checking these sites, please let me know which publisher you found most interesting and why.

also, a BIG caution, check the 'shipping charges' on the sites!!! some as high as \$16.95 for regular shipping!!!

thanks to Jeff for the info!

shawn

from Jeff...

seems there are lots of reviews of the photobook publishers.....and lots of opinions.

here is one such site, but there is lots of info. Shutterfly is always near the top....My Publisher varies. Haven't even seen MPIX listed. How confusing!!!

jn

<http://www.fotobookreview.com/>

here is an even better site.

<http://www.make-your-own-photobooks.com/photobook-publishers.html>

I am going to investigate Picaboo. It seems the most flexible and has the most options. May make it less user friendly. Given an A+ by a comprehensive review site. You might want to check it out.

<http://www.picaboo.com/photobooks/index.html>