

PHOTOSHOP – BORDERS AND MORE

Adjustment layers...why use them? When you use an adjustment layer you do not alter the pixels of your image. When you use an adjustment layer, you can go back at any time and see what adjustment you made, change that adjustment or drag that adjustment layer to a new image to make the same change to that image. When you use an adjustment layer, you do not add to the size of your file, no matter how many adjustment layers you have.

Two of your most valuable adjustment layers are LEVELS and CURVES. These functions enable you to adjust your image to its maximum potential as to contrast and tonal values. Levels are easier to use, but Curves can give you more control over the process.

LEVELS – When you open your image go to your layers palette and click on the icon on the bottom that looks like a circle which is half black and half white. Choose levels. The top box shows you that you are in RGB. You will be altering the entire image. If you pull down on that box, you will see that you can alter one color at a time as well. Below that is a histogram. This tells you how the tones in your images are distributed. If most of your tones are midtones you will have a mountain of black in the middle tapering off to the two ends. If you have a light image, either because you overexposed or what you shot was primarily light in color, the mountain will be on the right hand side. If you underexposed or your image was primarily dark, the mountain would be on the left. In order to get a wider range of tonal value, you would want to pull in the white and black arrows below the histogram until they begin to touch the edge of the mountain slope. Watch the effect on your image as you do this and stop when the image looks the way you want it. Then you can adjust the middle arrow to lighten or darken the image. This also adds contrast to the image. Check off the preview box in the right hand corner to see the before image and compare it to the changes you made.

Another way of using levels adjustment layers is to set the white and black points in an image. Make a threshold adjustment layer. Move the arrow under the histogram all the way to the right. This will make your image black. Begin sliding your arrow to the left until you see the first white area. Make note of the threshold level number. Hit cancel or save if you want to change it. If you save it, you must turn that layer off or you won't see your image. That is your white number. Make a new threshold adjustment layer and move the arrow all the way to the left. Now start to move it slowly to the right until the first dark areas appear. Make note of that threshold number. Now you have the black number. Save or cancel as you wish. Now make a levels adjustment layer and enter the white number and the black number in the input boxes. The black number replaces the 0 and the white number replaces the 255. This enables you to color correct an image and to take out color casts. However, some color casts such as the warm glow of incandescent lighting, might be wanted but not as intensely. You can bring back some of that by lowering the opacity of the adjustment layer.

CURVES – Go to your layers palette and make a Curves adjustment layer. Think of curves as a before and after scenario. The Input figures are your “before” and the Output values are your “after”. The diagonal line is your range of tones from black to white. If you option/click on the grid it will be in 10ths instead of fourths which will make it easier to control your adjustments. Clicking on the gradients below the grid enable you to change the gradations from black to white to white to black. Use the one that best suits you.

When you click on the diagonal line, the input percentage of tone for that portion of the line will show. If you move that point up, you will see the output percentage telling you how much darker you are making that tone. As you move that point up and down you are also altering the rest of the tones by making a curve. You can control that by putting a point above and below that point. Adding additional points above and below can stop most of the movement of the rest of the diagonal line. Except for the part of the line you want to alter. If you make severe changes to the tonal diagonal line, you will see odd shifts of color. If you want to retain the original colors, change the mode of the adjustment layer from Normal to Luminosity.

MANY IMAGES CAN BE IMPROVED WITH A SIMPLE S-CURVE. To create an S-Curve, you would generally set an anchor point about 20% in from the dark and light ends. Slide the upper anchor to the left and the lower anchor to the right. The net effect is that the highlights are brightened and the shadows are darkened and contrast is increased in the

middle tones. You can also make color balance adjustments in curves. Select color under channel box. For basic color adjustments, make anchor point halfway up and move up or down.

Try these two methods of adjusting your images. You'll be glad you did.

BORDERS, BORDERS, BORDERS

- Simple borders can be made easily by selecting a foreground color and a background color from the image you are working on. This way you can be pretty sure they are compatible with your image. Make sure the color you want for your first border is the background color. Go to Canvas size. Enlarge canvas in both directions by one tenth of an inch. Click OK. Switch background and foreground colors and do the same thing OR make the second border slightly larger, perhaps two tenths of an inch.

- To have the image fade out to white, select the whole image, go to paths palette, make work path (pull down arrow, upper right). Go to brush tool, make brush size about 250, mode normal, opacity 100%. Go back to Paths palette, pull down arrow and stroke path. Experiment with other colors and modes to see what other affects you can achieve.

- Framing with masks. Open image. Turn background into a layer (double click background, new layer dialogue box comes up, rename layer if you want and click OK). Select portion of image you wish to frame making sure the selection is far enough inside so that soft vignetting will not hit edge of canvas. Turn selection into layer mask by clicking on "Add a Mask" button on bottom of layers palette. Add a white layer underneath (Make new layer, fill with white, and drag beneath image layer). Click on mask (You will see a mask icon appear next to the eye icon). Choose Gaussian Blur and experiment with radius until you get what you want. Then you can experiment with filters to stylize either the edge area or the entire mask. Some filters will do the entire mask, others will do the blurred edge only.

A few to try are: ROUGH PASTELS – Stroke length 27, stroke detail 20, texture sandstone, scaling 180, relief 34, light – Top Left. CRYSTALIZE – Cell size 38. PIXELATE – Color Half Tone, Max Radius 8, all channels 45.

- To achieve the look of something coming out of a frame, you need to put the frame on a separate layer, create a layer mask (Layer>add layer mask>reveal all) and erase the border where you want the subject coming out of the frame (Paint with black on the white mask, making sure your brush is set to 100% opacity and Normal Mode). If your border is on a separate layer, you can also add drop shadows and other good things by going to Layer>Layer Style and playing around a bit.