THE COACHELLA VALLEY DESERT CAMERA CLUB's
e-NEWSLETTER FOR DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHERS

e-focus

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APRIL 2004

The long-promised articles on making good selections highlight this issue of *e-focus*. These are based on the DIPSIG talk that Stuart Lynn gave in January. There are two parts: an introductory overview in the Beginner's Page and a more advanced Feature Article. Making good selections lies at the heart of most work in digital image processing. So if you read nothing else in *e-focus*, it is worth studying these articles.

Joe Ramsey summarizes his March DIPSIG talk on how to use Photoshop (Elements) for packaging your images, including to how use the feature to make business cards. And Jerry Dupree reports on the Photoshop CS advances that were discussed at that meeting.

The Nikon D70 is introduced in "Love Me, Love my DIG". This camera will surely make its mark in the new realm of sub-$1,000 digital SLRs.

And there are our usual columns: Tip of the Month (how to "polarize skies"), Dear E-bby, and Woody's corner – with its usual tips, hints, and bargains. – *Ed*

Making Good Selections: Advanced Techiques

by Stuart Lynn

This article is essentially Part 2 of a summary of a talk on "selections" that I gave to DIPSIG in January 2004. Part 1 that describes basics selection techniques is presented in the accompanying article "Beginner's Page: An Introduction to Making Good Selections".

More Advanced Selection Techniques

You can accomplish much in the way of making good selections just by using the basic tools described in the accompanying Beginner's Page article. However, for the adventuresome, there are additional possibilities that are important to know, although some of them are only available in Photoshop and not in Photoshop Elements. Becoming familiar with these techniques adds to your arsenal in important ways that further your goal of making the best selections possible. So it is worth investing the time to learn them!

Using "Color Range" to Make Selections (Photoshop only)

One of the most powerful tools in making selections, albeit it one of the more complicated to use, is selecting by *Color Range*. It works something like the *Magic Wand*, but instead of just selecting points of color close to that of a selected point, it selects *all* points in the image that fit within the selected color range, somewhat like using **Select**>*Similar* only with more precision control. This makes it very useful in some tricky selection situations, such as when you want to select the sky in a landscape where there is tree foliage with bits of sky poking through the leafy branches. Unfortunately, it does not work in Photoshop Elements.

Let's see how it works. Look at Figure 1 that exemplifies the situation just described. It would be difficult to select the entire sky with any of the above tools, at least not
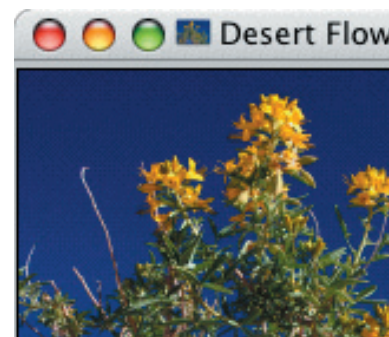

Figure 1: A Complex Sky

without much tedious work. Now from the **Select** menu, choose **Select**>*Color Range*. This produces the work panel illustrated in Figure 2. Note that your image has most probably gone black. Furthermore, if the *Selection* button in the work panel is checked, the window in the work panel will also be black. Check the *Image* button, and your
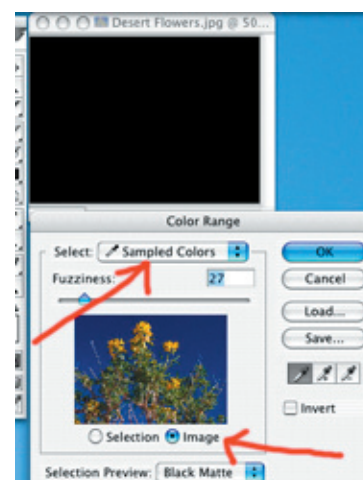

Figure 2: Color Range Work Panel

original image will appear in the work panel. Also make sure that *Sampled Colors* is chosen form the pulldown menu at the top of the panel.

Now, in the image in the work panel, click anywhere in the sky. Magically, all the points "close" (I will explain what this means in a moment) in color to the point where you
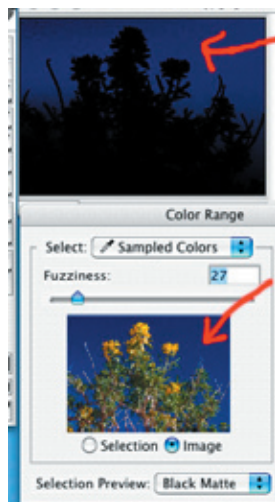

Figure 3: Clicking In The Sky

clicked "light up" in your original image; that is, they are no longer black but have reverted to their original color. These are the points that would appear in your selection if you were to end right here.

But it is unlikely that you have selected the entire sky with one click. Some of the "sky pixels" are still black. Holding down your shift key (because you want to add to the selection), click again on one of the black sky pixels to add them and others of the same (original) color to your selection. More of the sky "lights up". And do it again until you have selected the entire sky. Where foliage is involved, such as in the example illustrated, you may have to click on some points in between the leaves and branches. If you go to far, and include unwanted pixels, you can always step back with *Ctl/Cmd-z* (*Undo*); or click on an unwanted point while pressing the *Alt* key instead of the *Shift* key that you have been using to add pixels.

You may also have to adjust the *Fuzziness* slider in the work panel. This defines what Photoshop means by "close" as the term is
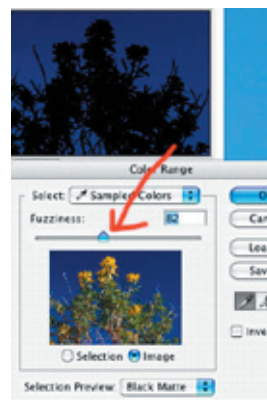

Figure 4: Using "Fuzziness"

used above. The more you move it to the right, the broader the range of colors that are included in your selection; the more you move
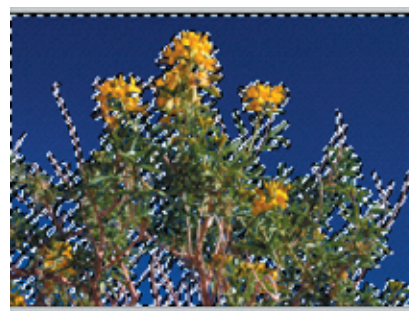
Figure 5: The Final Selection!

it to the left, the fewer colors are included.

When you are satisfied with your selection, click *OK* in the work panel. Lo and behold, the "crawling ants" of your selection appear in your original image. You may want to do a **Select**>*Grow* for extra insurance in filling out your selection.

Save your selection (of course). Test it out by radically changing the hue of the selected area (the sky), using *Ctl/Cmd –u*, and seeing whether you have captured the entire sky or whether any bits of blue sky are still peeping through.

It takes practice to use this tool, but it's worth it!

Using Channel View in Modifying Selections
(Photoshop only)

Did you know that you can "paint" in a selection? Let's first look at how it works for modifying an existing selection that you have previously saved.

When you save a selection it actually creates a new "channel" that goes by the abstruse name of an "alpha channel" (forget that: you don't need to know!). Create and save a selection, giving it a name such as "Test". Deselect your selection (*Ctl/Cmd-d*).

Click on the *Channels* tab to reveal the *Channels* palette. Usually that tab is next to the *Layers* tab; if it is not showing for some reason, you can invoke both the tab and the palette by invoking **Windows**>*Channels*.

Do you see that there is a new channel called Test. It is not "revealed", that is, the eye icon is not checked. Check the eye icon to "reveal" the
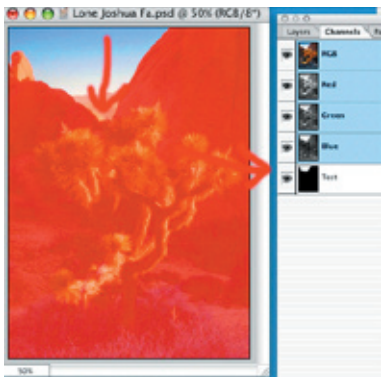

Figure 6: Channel View Of Selection

Test channel. Whoops! A red transparent layer covers your image *outside* of your selection. That is, any red parts were not included in your original selection.

Note that in the example in the illustration, the "bottom" of the sky is covered in red, too. That is because I deliberately did not include it in my original selection.

But the red part outside of the selection is not really red. That's just for convenience to distinguish the area from the rest of your image! It's really black. And the area inside

your selection is really white. I'm not kidding. To see this, just *uncheck* the Eye icon that is associated with the RGB channel at the top of your *Channels* palette so that only the Test
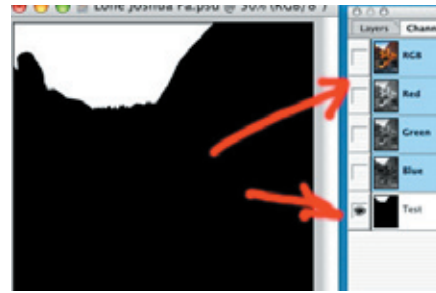
Figure 7: Test Channel Selected

channel is showing. See how it changes to black and white, as promised?

The whole point is that you can modify the selection just by painting into the Test channel using a black or white paintbrush. However, it's easiest to do this with the RGB channel turned on, so you can see what you are doing. Turn it back on to reveal the red covering.

Now select white as your foreground color (just type "d" followed by "x" as a shortcut). Choose a brush of reasonable size and blurriness. If you paint any of the "red" areas (remember: it's not really red) with the white brush, you will add to your selection.

Figure 8: Painting In My Selection

In the illustration, I painted the "bottom" of the sky because I wanted to add it to my selection.

Now go back to the *Layers* palette and reload your Test selection. Surprise! The area you painted white in the Test channel is now

included in your selection! You have modified your selection by painting!
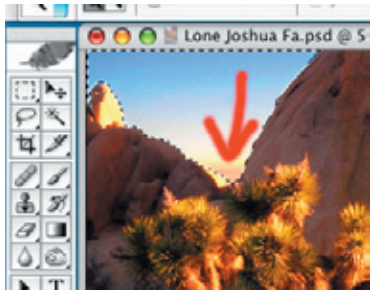

Figure 9: The Final Selection

If you had painted *outside* the red area in the Test channel with a *black* brush, you would "add" to the pseudo-red covering, and *subtract* this area from your selection.

Can you guess what I am going to say next? If you paint with various shades of *grey*, your selection will partially include what it is selecting, that is, you are making those parts of your selection transparent – the darker the grey, the more transparent so that more of the underlying layer will show through. It's rather like what happens when you set the *Feather* parameter. Try it and see!

One powerful application of this technique is to create really smooth transitions between selected parts of your image, such as between sky and foreground. To illustrate, select an image of a landscape with a clearly defined sky, and make the best selection of the sky that you can (by now, you should be an expert) using a *Feather* parameter set to zero. Save the selection, labeling it "Sky". Deselect the selection.

Now, switch to the *Channels* Palette where you see the Sky channel. Turn it on and turn off the RGB channel. You see the Sky channel in black and white. Now, using **Filter**>*Blur*>*Gaussian Blur*, blur the channel/selection slightly with, say, a 2 to 3 pixel blur. Notice how the edge of the selection is now slightly blurred.

Switch back to the *Layers* palette. Reload the Sky selection. Change the color of the sky

slightly, say using *Hue* in the *Hue/Saturation* window (*Ctl/Cmd-u*). The transition between the sky and foreground will likely be much smoother than if you had just used your original selection. Of course, you could accomplish the same effect by just feathering your original selection. But the *Channels* approach enables you to be quite selective as to where and by how much you want to blur, and you have much more control.

Brushing and Drawing in Selections
(Photoshop and Photoshop Elements)

OK, that's all very well for Photoshop owners, but how about those of us with Photoshop Elements? Well, here's a trick that can help you to do nearly the same thing.

Load again your landscape image with a clearly defined sky. Create a new empty layer (**Layer**>*New*>*Layer* or *Shift+Ctl/Cmd-n* or click the little new layer button at the bottom of your *Layers* palette). Now, using a medium to small sized brush and a dark colored paint (black?), paint along the horizon at the top of the foreground but not including any sky, going *all the way* from side to side across your image.

You will probably want to set the opacity of the layer to about 50% in the *Layers* palette so that you can see through the paint to make sure you are not including any parts of the sky. Of course, you can always correct your work if you have included too much, by using the eraser to wipe off any paint that has intruded into the sky area.

Figure 10: Another Way To Paint In A Selection

When you are pleased that you have done the best you can, choose your *Magic Wand* tool (type the character "w"). Making sure the upper layer is selected, click the *Magic Wand* anywhere in the sky area. Presto! The sky has been selected!

Obviously, you can adapt this technique to all kinds of different situations. And you can modify the "barrier" you have painted at any time to correct your work by adding paint or erasing old paint. And by using brushes of different blurriness, you can create the same effects as feathering selections.

How about that!

Turning Layer Masks Into Selections
(Photoshop only)

There's another way to paint in your selections, and that is to use layer masks (see *e-focus, December 2003* for information on how to create and use layer masks).

One way to see how this works is as follows. Choose your landscape image again, the one with a clearly defined sky. Duplicate the background layer, copying it to a new layer. Relabel it "Working Layer" to differentiate it from the background layer. Attach a layer mask to the new layer. Change the blending mode in the *Layers* palette so that the top image looks different – for example, change the blending mode to *Multiply* that will darken the image overall. This is so you will be able to see where you have made changes in your layer mask[1].

Now change your foreground and background colors to black and white, respectively (just type the character "d"). Choose a large brush (as you work through this example, you will need to make your brush smaller at each stage as you work in greater detail) that is very slightly blurry. Making sure the layer mask icon is selected in the "Working Layer" layer, start painting in the foreground in your image so that the bottom layer starts to show through in the foreground areas. Be careful to paint

reasonably close to the boundary between foreground and sky, but not over any of it. And make sure you have filled in all of the foreground below this boundary.

Now zoom in on your image and select a smaller brush. With this smaller brush you can paint closer to the boundary. Repeat as much as needed until you have very precisely painted in the entire foreground, that is, the layer mask is black over all the foreground. You may want to use a slightly blurry brush when you get really, really close to the sky to ensure a smooth transition, as discussed earlier.

You can correct any mistakes you make, such as painting into the sky area, at any time by switching to white paint (just type "x" to switch foreground and background colors) and painting over those areas where you have intruded. Just work back and forth in ever greater detail until you get it just right.

OK but how do you turn your layer mask into a selection? Photoshop makes it easy for you. Place your cursor over the layer mask icon. On a PC, press the *Ctl* key and click your mousebutton. On a Mac, do the same thing with the *Cmd* key instead. Voilà! You have made a selection of the sky! Save it, and proceed on your merry way (you may want to delete your "Working Layer").

Layer masks (see *e-focus December 2003)* can and should be used to refine your selections. Just copy your selection to a new layer, attach a layer mask to that layer, and work the layer mask to refine the *effect* of the selection if not the selection itself. Of course, once you have completed your refinement, you can turn the layer mask into a selection just as in the previous paragraph.

Easing the Task of Making Selections

Whichever selection technique you use, it is often it is a good idea to enhance your original image before making a selection, so that the area you want to select really stands out from the rest of the image. There are various ways

to do this, ranging from the simple to the more complicated. Whichever way you use, be sure to work on a duplicate of your original layer!

For example, increasing contrast (**Image**>*Adjustments*>*Brightness*/*Contrast*) can help. Or pumping up the saturation of the color blue if you are selecting the sky (you can do this in the *Hue*/*Saturation* window, selecting blue from the pulldown menu, and increasing the saturation).

In Photoshop, if you switch to the *Channels* view, it may be easier to make the selection in one particular channel, such as in the blue channel in the sky example. Or in two channels combined.

But there are also more sophisticated ways. You may find it better to make the selection in one of the channels afforded by working temporarily in *Lab* color mode rather than *RGB Color* mode. To do this, invoke **Image**>*Mode*>*Lab Color*. This is not the place to define Lab Color; suffice it to say that it is a different way to represent color other than splitting it into its red, green, and blue components. It splits into three components or channels, called *Luminance, a and b*.

Guess what? You can see these channels by switching to the *Channels* view, as by now you should know how to do. Now look at each channel separately. Does the area you wish to select stand out any better in or the other of these channels? If so, make the selection with that channel switched on and the others switched off. When you are through and you have made and saved your selection, change back to *RGB Color* mode by invoking **Image**>*Mode*>*RGB Color*.

You can refine the previous approaches when working with individual channels, whether working in *RGB* color mode or working in *Lab Color* mode. Select and duplicate the channel of interest (use *Duplicate Channel* from the pulldown menu invoked from the little triangle at the top right of the *Channels* palette). Now, making sure this new duplicate channel

is selected, invoke **Image**>*Adjustments*>*Threshold*. This will bring up the *Threshold* panel. Notice the slider underneath the window. Experiment with moving this slider back and forth. You may find a position where the area you wish to select has a really crisp boundary with the rest of the image. If so, you can click *OK*, and make your selection then and there using almost any of the techniques we have discussed. Save it!

In Conclusion

By now, you are probably supersaturated on the subject. The above is probably far more than you ever wanted to know! And you would only groan if I were to tell you that there is much more to the subject (well, not *that* much more!).

You have more than enough to be working with for now. But it is worth practicing. Good selections *are* important. Sloppy selections leads to sloppy results. So investing time in practicing at least some of the above will pay great dividends in improving the quality of your work.

May your selections ever be precise!

(Footnotes)
[1]   Another – and even better – way to do this is to switch to the Channels view of the layer mask, just as you did earlier in modifying your selection. A layer mask produces an "alpha channel" just as does a selection. You can work in the Channels view with layer masks just as you can with selections. Try it!

the dipsig page

by Joe Ramsey

**DIPSIG Meeting
Tuesday, April 20, 2004
6.30pm
*Curves, Conversions, and More!***

CURVES ARE YOUR FRIENDS

Well, maybe not everyone's friend but after our March meeting you may wonder why you have overlooked them for so long. The fact is using Curves adjustments can vary from simple to complex. And, sometimes the results can be made downright bizarre.

It only takes a few minutes to learn how Curves adjustments can be applied for best effect. For instance, they can be used to adjust brightness, fix over- or underexposed photos and increase or decrease contrast. Curves adjustments can be pinpointed to specific areas in an image giving you very precise control which is difficult at best using other adjustment techniques such as Levels.

If Curves adjustments are a mystery to you come to our meeting where we'll give you some 'straight' talk with no 'curve balls'. You will be able to practice on a few photos from a practice CD as you learn.

See Note Page 24 regarding CD handed out at March meeting

B&W CONVERSIONS

We'll give you a leg up on the May Special Project, "Color to Black and White" which involves converting a color image to B&W. There are at least 4 or 5 ways to make these conversions in Photoshop varying from good to acceptable to bad. We're going to revisit them and discuss the merits of each method. Then we will show you two newer techniques. The first, developed by Russell Brown, Adobe Photoshop Guru, assures that you have a full range of tones from black to white and it can be used on 16-bit images for superb B&W renditions. The second technique from The Design and Publishing Center website, <http://www.graphic-design.com/Photoshop/stepwedge.html>, is similar to Russell Brown's but with a slightly different twist. Both are very effective and easy to use.

It's not required, but you will get more out of the meeting if you are able to bring laptops and power cords!

Report on March DIPSIG Meeting: PHOTOSHOP CS FEATURES REVEALED
by Jerry Dupree

The main purpose of the meeting was to introduce features of the new Photoshop CS.

SHADOWS AND HIGHLIGHTS

Jerry Dupree gave a presentation on the *Shadows and Highlights* tool - in itself is worth the price of the upgrade from Photoshop 7 just to salvage photos with too much shadow. It is a very useful, for example, when applied to a photograph of someone wearing a hat where their face seems to always be lost in a shadow. There is no way to make a poor picture into a masterpiece, but a good picture can be improved with shadow reduction. There are places where there are no opportunities to photograph a location with favorable natural lighting, such as when a side of a building or other feature is facing north and does not get direct sunlight, especially in winter.

FILTERS

Jerry also demonstrated the new *Filters* tool and how they can be used to enhance a photograph. We are familiar with how filters are used on cameras. Now they can be added after the fact in Photoshop CS.   Some of the filters are unique, such as the *underwater* filter. In many cases, weather does not cooperate with the photographer and the sky is overcast. While that may be good for fewer shadows, it can also make for a dreary picture. By using the magic wand and a blue filter, a drab sky can turn suddenly blue.

16 BIT RAW

Stuart Lynn presnted the *RAW* format available in most recent digital cameras, and on the *RAW* and 16-bit capabilities of Photoshop CS. Previously Photoshop had only limited ability to handle 16-bit images and did not integrate the *RAW* format. 16-bits per channel (red, green, and blue) means that the images can contain trillions (theoretically) of colors compared with millions of colors with 8-bit images allowing for much greater color richness. The greater number of colors also implies that smooth color gradations can be maintained even after several image adjustments have been applied, avoiding the "staircasing" effect that often happens with 8-bit images.

RAW format is what the camera sensor sees before the camera's computer applies any internal adjustments, such as color balancing, sharpening etc. There is no reason not to defer these adjustments until the photographer has complete control and can see the results. That is, in Photoshop CS. See *March 2004 e-focus "The RAW Facts" by Stuart Lynn.* RAW images are much larger in terms of memory usage. However the capacity of computer media continues to increase and the cost keeps coming down, therefore it is not a major factor to consider. We are now in another dimension of digital imaging.

OTHER PHOTOSHOP CS FEATURES

The browser is improved and is no longer a palette, but a full window and thumbnails can be customized in three standard sizes and can be made for custom sizes. It is much easier to delete unwanted photos before they are saved and stored. Photos can be flagged and categorized for archive storage and retrieval. There is also an expanded "metadata" window that shows date, size, camera used, lens, *f*-stop, add keywords, create PDF and proof sheets, and much more. Stuart demonstrated these new *Browser* features. He also demonstrated the new *Lens Blur* function, but was not enthusiastic about its utility.

BUSINESS CARDS

Joe Ramsey showed how business cards can be created and printed. See this issue of *e-focus* "Using Picture Package for your Photoshop Printing" *by Joe Ramsey.*

TIP OF THE MONTH: "Polarizing" Those Skies!

In last month's Tip of the Month, we showed how to add clouds to a cloudless sky. This month we go a step further: we show how to intensify the clouds to make them really stand out just like the effect of putting a polarizing filter in front of your camera lens, only with much more control when done digitally.

Open your image with clouds in the sky (by the way, this method works to intensify your sky even if there are no clouds!). Make a careful selection of the sky, using one or more of the techniques described in the two articles on selections contained in this issue of *e-focus*. Be sure to pay careful attention to the boundary between the sky and the horizon (mountains or whatever) because any carelessness will be accentuated by the intensification described here. Remember, it helps to blur the selection slightly (by feathering or by blurring it in *Channels* view).
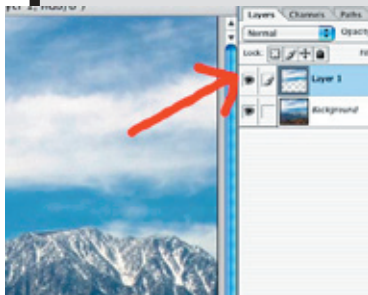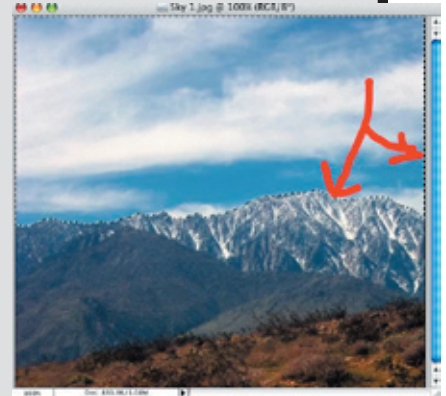
As described in the articles on selections, it's a good idea to save your selection. That way, you won't have to tear your hair out when something bad happens!

Now copy your selection to another layer, either by *Copy* and *Paste*, or, in Photoshop, with the shortcut *Ctl/Cmd-j*. With this new layer highlighted, choose *Multiply* from the pulldown menu of *Blending Modes* in the *Layers* palette.

Your sky will probably look much too dark. Don't fret. Just pull back on the *Opacity* slider in the *Layers* palette until it looks "right" to you. You may need to pull it all the way back to 30-40% or so.
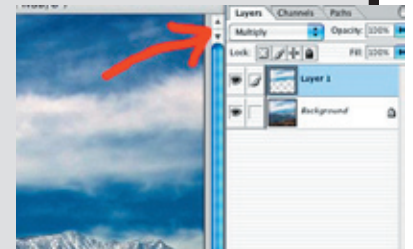
What multiply does, in effect, is to darken the darks much more than it darkens the light, creating a more intensified blue in the sky against the highlighted clouds. But it still maintains smooth transitions (particularly if you work in 16-bit mode: see Jerry Dupree's report in this issue on the March DIPDIG meeting), unlike the effect of increasing contrast that *decreases* the possible number of shadings.
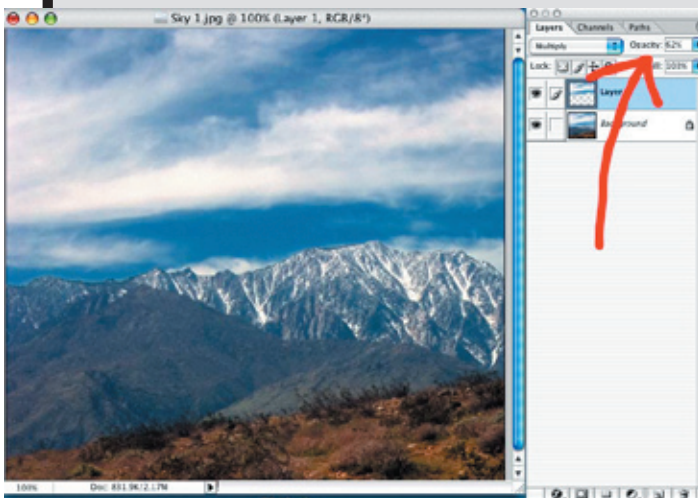
And you can apply this technique to other parts of the image, not just skies. It is a good way to add richness to washed out images!

An Introduction to Making Good Selections

This article summarizes the first part of a talk on "selections" that I gave to DIPSIG in January 2004. It presents some of the basic tools one should master to make good selections. Some of the more advanced techniques that were discussed in the talk are summarized in the accompanying article: *"Advanced Techniques in Making Good Selections"*. But first things first!

Introduction: Why Are Good Selections So Important?

Photoshop and Photoshop Elements are both powerful tools for image editing, and there are many other good image editing tools. There is much that can be accomplished with these Good selections allow you to limit your actions to the selected area. Suppose, for example, you just want to sharpen or blur a selected area of your image, or to clone into a selected area. You can do this if you have an active selection to limit the effect. Or if you want to use the noise removal filter selectively – it's good idea, by the way, to use it selectively because it otherwise blurs the entire image! (I don't advocate this filter just because it does its work by blurring)! Or if you want to intensify your sky (see **Tip of the Month**, this issue) without intensifying the entire image. And there is much more.

Practising Safe Selections!

It is good practice, by the way, not to modify your original image unless you have a good backup. There are two things you should do before buckling down to work on the (most often) *jpeg* image you downloaded from your camera:

1. Convert the image to a *tiff* image, by saving it to a new file with the *tiff* format

selected from the pulldown menu in the dialog box. If you manipulate and repeatedly resave your *jpeg* image, you will likely introduce unwanted artifacts as your image is repeatedly recompressed.

2. Copy your entire image to a new layer (see *e-focus*, January and February, 2004 on layer management). From then on, you can modify this new layer to your heart's content knowing you can always revert to the original layer in the event of total disaster.

OK, this takes up much more storage than your original little *jpeg*. But storage is cheap, and your good images are precious! Don't even think twice about it!

(By the way, those of you who are using Photoshop CS may also want to convert to 16-bit mode. See this month's **DIPSIG Report**).

Basic Selection Tools

Let's start off by taking a look at the basic selection tools. There are several of these. Most to be found in your *Toolbox*. Some are not available in Photoshop Elements as will be noted.

Selecting "All"

The most basic selection of all is to select the entire image. Just use **Select**>*All*. Better still, use the shortcut Ctl/Cmd-a (here, as always, this means Ctl-a on the PC and Cmd-a on the Mac, where Cmd is the key with the Apple symbol on it).

Marquee

The *Marquee Tool* (top left in the *Toolbox* or just hit the "m" key as a shortcut) comes in four

flavors: rectangular, elliptical, single row, or single column. If the one you are interested in is not showing in the toolbox, just position your cursor over the *Marquee* tool in the *Toolbox* and hold down your mouse button. Move your cursor to the selection tool you want and release.
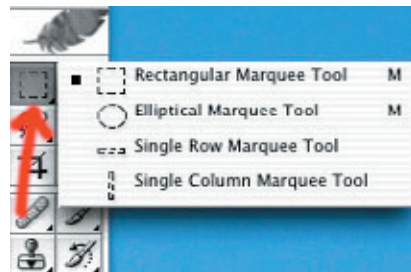
The names are suggestive of the shapes each flavor will select. To select a rectangle, drag the rectangular selection tool over your image where you want the selection to appear. If you want to select a square, hold down the *Shift* key while dragging (similarly, to create a circular selection, hold down the *Shift* key while dragging the elliptical selection tool).

If you want to constrain the selection to a fixed size, change the select *Fixed Size* from the pulldown menu in the *Toolbar* (see Figure 3); then enter the width and height of the selection desired in the units desired (5 in for five inches, for example). If you just want to constrain the ration of width to height, however, select *Fixed Ratio* from the pulldown menu, and then enter the width and height ratios (with no units). For example, you may want to create an 11 x 14 ratio for future printing.

Another important feature that will recur with other selection tools is that of setting the *Feather* parameter in the toolbar. This sets the degree of fuzziness of the selection, the greater the number of pixels, the greater the fuzziness.

As an example (see Figure 3) choose the elliptical marquee tool. Set the *Feather* parameter to a high number, such as 35 pixels (the precise number should be higher the higher the resolution of your image). Now drag an elliptical selection across your image. Copy this selection to a new layer (Ctl/Cmd-j in Photoshop; *Copy* (Ctl/Cmd-c) and *Paste*

Figure 1: The Marquee Tool

(Ctl/Cmd-v) in Photoshop Elements). Now turn off your Background layer in the *Layers* palette. You will see that your new layer shows a vignetted elliptical selection – a particularly nice trick for creating vignetted portraits!

Magic Wand

The *Magic Wand* (second row on the right of your *Toolbox,* or simply key in the letter "w" to select it) is a useful tool for selecting all pixels of a certain color (or close to that color) adjacent to where you click in your image. The *Tolerance* parameter in the *Toolbar* defines the degree to which colors close to the color of the selected pixel are included: the higher the *Tolerance* parameter, the more colors are included. Be careful though: too high a number

Figure 2: The Feather Parameter

can result in the inclusion of unwanted colors!

The *Magic Wand* can be useful, for example, in selecting pure blue desert skies. Just click it somewhere in the middle of the sky. See Figure 5. Often one click will not select the entire
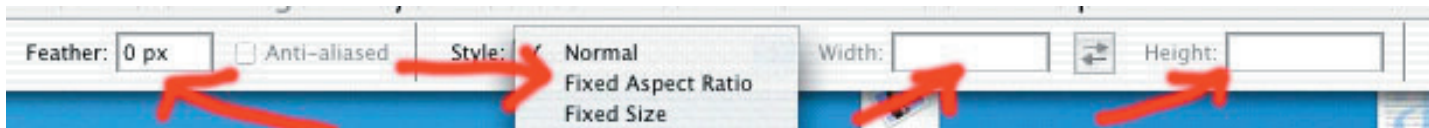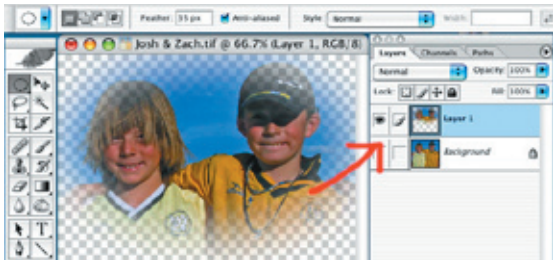

Figure 3: The Marquee Toolbar

Figure 4: Vignetting

sky and you need to add to your selection. We shall see how to do this later.

Lasso

The *Lasso* tool (second row on the left in your *Toolbox* or just type "l" as a shortcut) also comes in several flavors, and you choose among them just as you did the *Marquee* tool.

Figure 5: The Magic Wand

The two most important are the plain vanilla *Lasso* tool and the very powerful *Magnetic Lasso* tool. Practisving with these tools is essential to good selection-making.

The plain *Lasso* tool allows you to make freeform selections just by dragging your cursor around the shape you want to select. It's the first selection tool that most of us learn and with practice many of us become quite adept at making careful selections using it, particularly if we use a device such as a tablet and stylus to draw the selections. Or we kid ourselves that we are adept!

Try this experiment: open an image of a landscape with a well-defined sky (that is, say, no distracting foliage protruding into the sky). Make the most careful selection of the

sky that you can using the *Lasso* tool, dragging the tool out of the frame of the image where the sky hits the top and sides so as to include everything. Now use the *Zoom* tool (key in "z" as a shortcut) to magnify your image substantially at some point where the sky meets the land (you may have to click it a few times over the same spot to get sufficient magnification).

Now what do you think of your selection? You can clearly see all the boo-boos you made (see *Figure 7*)! Again, later we will show how to add and subtract from selections so that you can refine your handiwork. This way, you can improve what you did and eliminate many of your boo-boos.

At the very least, you should work at a high level of magnification to make sure you are doing the best job possible. One of the most important shortcuts is, at any time, to press
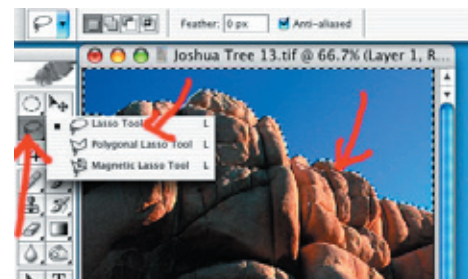
Figure 6: Lasso Hand Selection

and hold down the *Spacebar*: this reveals the *Hand* tool that allows you to move your image around in the open window just by dragging. This is critical when working at high levels of magnification.

Again, you can set the *Feather* parameter. This is a useful way to ensure smooth transitions between, say, sky and land. Sharp transitions can cause hard edges that may be unsightly – for example when you intensify the sky (see this month's **Tip of the Month**).

The *Magnetic Lasso* tool lets Photoshop do much of the work for you, particularly where you have a clearly defined boundary , such as

– 13 –

the boundary between sky and land, that is, the horizon.

Figure 7: Magnified Boo-Boos!

Select the *Magnetic Lasso* tool. Now click on some point, say, on the horizon (or, in some other image, on any other point on a well-defined boundary). Now, *without clicking on your mouse button*, just pull your cursor along the edge you wish to select. Note how the selection line just hugs that edge even if your mouse wanders off the edge! Occasionally, you may want to click your mouse button to "fix" an anchor point, particularly when navigating rapidly turning edges, to ensure that the tool behaves itself and stays "on message".
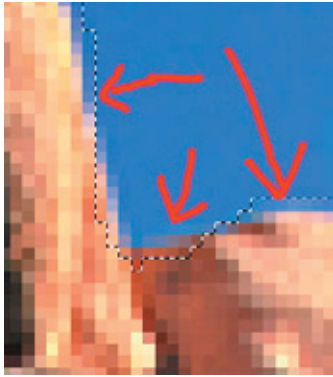
Eventually, to complete the selection, you will have to pull your cursor around to where you started or near where you started. When you are at this point, just double-click: the loop will automatically close and turn into the "crawling ants" of the selection. In the next section, we will see how to add to your selection.

With this tool, you can speed many of the tasks of making good selections. It can do an astounding job! In varying circumstances, you may want to adjust the parameters in the *Toolbar* (not just the *Feather* parameter), but that is beyond the scope of this article.

Adding To or Subtracting From Selections

Whichever of the above tools you are using, you can always *add* to your selection by holding down the *Shift* key while dragging another selection. This combines the original selection with the new selection. Note that when you press down the *Shift* key, a little "+" sign appears next to the cursor, indicating that you are adding to the original selection.

Furthermore, you can combine selection tools. For example, you might make a selection with the *Elliptical Marquee* tool, then add to the selection with the *Magic Wand* while pressing down the *Shift* key. That way, you gradually build up your selection, bit by bit. Again, while refining your selection in this way, it is important to "zoom" in on that part of the image where you are making your addition.

And if you over do your selection, you can also *subtract* from it by holding down the *Alt* key (also labeled the *Option* key on the Mac) while "drawing" the area you want to subtract. Note that now a "-" symbol appears next to the cursor.

So you refine your selection by adding and subtracting small areas of your image to make your selection as precise as possible.

Undoing Your Most Recent Selection

Whoops, you just made a mistake in adding to or subtracting from your selection. Just use the *Undo* command to take you back a step (Ctl/Cmd-z). Or if you need to go back several steps, just use your *History* palette.

Deselecting the Entire Selection

Then again, you may want to remove the entire selection. Just use the shortcut Ctl/Cmd-d (the longer way is *Select*>Deselect). The "crawling ants" will disappear from your screen.

Saving and Loading Selections

Experienced "selectors" soon learn the value of saving their selections from time to time as they are building them. Just use **Select**>*Save Selection*. The first time you will need to give your selection a *Name*, then just click *OK*. After that, as you add to your selection, choose the name of the selection from the pulldown menu next to the *Selection* box before clicking *OK*.

Selections remain saved even after you close the image or close Photoshop (Elements). You can reload the selection at any time by using **Select**>*Load Selection,* choosing the named selection from the same pulldown menu and then clicking *OK*. Note that you can invert the selection you are loading (that is, produce a selection of everything in your image that was *not* in the original selection) by just clicking the *Invert* checkbox before clicking *OK*.

You can also *add* your loaded selection to an existing selection. Or *subtract* from an existing selection. The option is presented when you use **Select**>*Load Selection*. There is no end to the powers of selection tools!

Do use these saving and loading tools. There is not much worse that can happen to you in the world of selections than spending 30 minutes making a very careful selection when
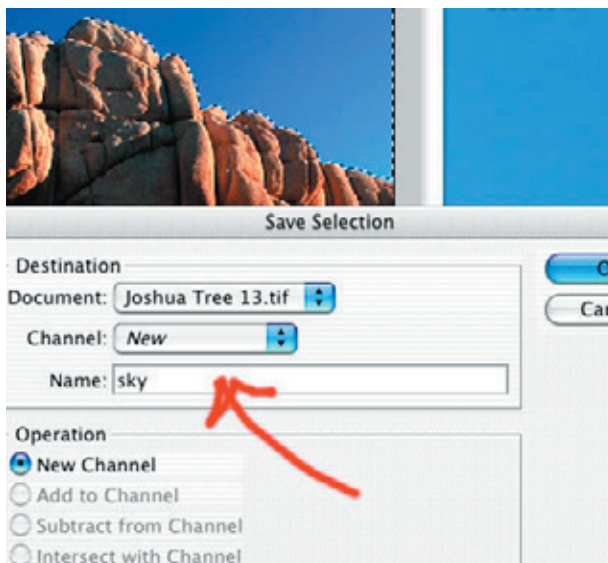

Figure 8: Saving Selections

your computer crashes and you lose all the work because you did not save your selection periodically and save your file periodically. You have been warned!

Manipulating Selections

We have discussed several important features above regarding the *manipulation* of selections, such as using the *feathering* capability. But there

are other manipulation tools that come in handy.

Inverting Selections

As discussed in the previous subsection, you often want to *invert* your selection, that is, select everything in your image that is *not* currently in your selection. Suppose, for example, you have done a very careful selection of the sky in a landscape and saved it. But you now want to select the land only, that is, everything but the sky.

How do you invert a selection? One way is to do it on loading as discussed earlier. But if the selection is already active, just hit *Shift+Ctl/Cmd-i*. Or use **Select**>*Inverse.*

Let's take a sidestep. One reason you might want to do this is because you want to apply Unsharp Mask
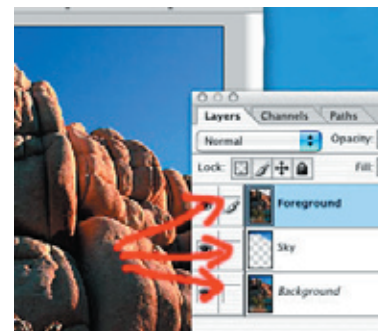
Figure 9: Separating Sky & Foreground

to sharpen the land in the foreground, but you do not want to sharpen the sky (it is almost <u>never</u> a good idea to sharpen the sky. Just use the inverse of your sky selection to choose the foreground, copy it to a new layer (a good precaution) and then apply the Unsharp Mask filter to the new layer consisting only of the foreground. You might also want to blur the sky slightly. Reload your original "sky" selection making sure that your original layer is selected. Now copy the selected sky to a new layer, and blur the new layer, using Gaussian Blur. One trick: make sure the layer containing the foreground is higher up the stacking order than the sky layer, so that the expanded blurred sky "tucks in" behind the foreground layer with it sharpened "edge".

Grow. Modify or Transform Selections

You can also use Photoshop (Elements) to grow your selection by automatically selecting points adjacent to your selection that fit the same color parameters that vmake up your current selection. Just use **Select**>*Grow*. You can use this tool repeatedly to grow your selection incrementally, although at some stage there is a point of diminishing returns.

Want to expand or contract your selection by a fixed number of pixels? Just use **Select**>*Modify*> *Expand* or *Contract*. Or you can use **Select**>*Modify*>*Smooth* to smooth your selection to remove unwanted kinks. Or suppose you just want to select the border of your selection, such as you might
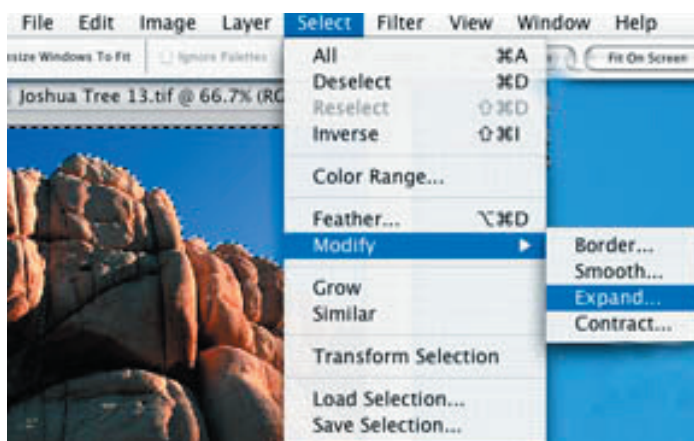

Figure 10: Grow, Modify, Transform. Similar

use if you want to construct an outline of a flower or some other object: just use **Select**>*Modify*>*Border*.

You can even scale, rotate, or otherwise *transform* selections. Use **Select**>*Transform Selection*. This will bring up a "bounding box" around your selection that can be reshaped at will by moving one or more of the "handles" in and out (remember: to maintain the same proportions of your selection, press the *Shift* key while moving the handle). Moving the cursor just outside a corner of the bounding box invokes a little curved cursor: moving it rotates the selection.

When you are done, click the checkmark in the *Toolbar* to stabilize the new selection. Before that, you can revert to the original selection at any time just by hitting the *Esc* key.

Using "Similar"

Suppose you have made a selection of part of an image, and want to add to the selection all pixels in the image that fit the color parameters of your selection. No problem. Just invoke **Select**> *Similar*. This is a very powerful tool in building selections, but should be used carefully because it will often add parts of the image that are inappropriate. Of course, these unwanted parts could always be subtracted from your selection as described above.

Moving Selections

Finally under the category of "Manipulations", you can always move your selection lock, stock, and barrel to another part of your image. This is not something you want to do very often, but should the need arise, just invoke the *Move* tool from the top right of your *Toolbox*, or just type the letter "v", one of the few shortcuts that is not the first letter of the tool (typing "m" invokes the *Marquee* tool as mentioned early on in this article). Then drag the selection to its new location.

Next Steps

The above are the basic selection tools. However, to make even better selections, it pays to learn some of the more advanced techniques. Some of these are described in the accompanying article in this issue: **"Advanced Techniques in Making Good Selections"**. When you have thoroughly practised the above techniques, you may want to turn your attention to this more advanced article.

Happy selecting!

Love me, Love my Dig: the new Nikon D70
by Stuart Lynn

In this column in the March 2004 issue of e-focus, I wrote about my love affair with my new Canon Digital Rebel. the first Digital SLR to break the $1,000 barrier. In the last four weeks, my love affair has deepened, particualrly as I have Canonized myself further with a 100mm macro lens and Canon's +2 close-up adapter.

LOVE ME....

As expected, Nikon has now responded competitively and announced the Nikon D-70, an attractive camera that skirts the $1.000 price mark. It is sure to appeal to Nikon users who have a store of Nikon lenses. See http://www.nikonusa.com/template.php?cat=1&grp=2&productNr=25214 for details on the D70. By the way, the D70 pretty well obsoletes the much older and heavier Nikon D100 with which it competes very favorably.

Now, since I don't own one and have no actual experience with it, I should not be writing about it in this column. But I could not resist the opportunity.

Warning: probably everything I say here will be wrong. Experience with a camera is, in my view, the only thing that counts! Much of what I have to say is based on my scan of a comparison of the Nikon D70 with the Canon Digital Rebel to be found at http://www.digitalreview.ca/cams/NikonD70_page5.shtml.

Both cameras weigh in at 6+ megapixels but the physical weight of the Canon is actually 20% less. Clearly, the Nikon has several advantages (it has to, for competitive reasons), but not necessarily for my kind of photography, and several disadvantages. For example, it has a built-in spot meter; the Reb does not. However, I no longer need spot metering, and I find Reb's built-in average metering to be excellent ...and I can adjust for minor imperfections in Photoshop, anyway; besides which, I usually bracket. I can always use an old separate spot meter.

The Nikon also has some disadvantages. I'm surprised that it does not shoot at ISO 100 it's slowest "film speed" equates to ISO 200. Generally, slower "film speeds" are less noisy, particularly in the shadows....I have seen a few reports on the net concerned about shadow noise in the Nikon D70. This iis a particular problem with CCD receptors at faster "film speeds" (ISO 200 and above (I had a lot of shadow noise problems on my old Nikon 5700 at higher "film speeds"). The CMOS receptor on the Canon is inherently less noisy anyway.

The D70's greater buffer capacity (12 jpegs vs 4 jpegs) and the higher shutter speed (1/8000 vs 1/4000) of the Nikon are useful if you do action photography (I don't!). It also bursts at 3 frames per second, compared with 2.5 on the Rebel. The D70 incorporates flash compensation which is handy if one does not use a separate off-camera flash ....which one should, and I do....on-camera flash is boring and too harsh for most purposes.

The D70 has more customization functions, such as hue and white balance fine tuning adjustments. However, these

LOVE MY DIG...

are not an issue if one shoots in RAW mode, as I now advocate and practise (see my article in March, 2004 e-focus "The RAW facts").

Each has advantages and disadvantages. My bottom line: If you have old Canon lenses, buy Canon. If you have old Nikon lenses, buy Nikon. Neither camera, as of itself, will turn a lousy photographer into an Ansel Adams! I will look forward to a real report from any member (or non-member) who has actual hands-on experience with the D70.

Woody's Corner
by Woody Kaplan

AROUND THE e-BLOCK

Looking for easy way of learning Digital Photography, look no more:
http://www.123di.com/ebook_feat.htm

Color of your picture different then what you saw on your screen? Maybe you need to calibrate your screen, monitor, scanner, and printer:
http://secure.colorvision.com/index.html

Not too late for a week at Martha's Vineyard without Mrs. Stewart but with Eliot Cohen, May 17 / 21 Workshop on "Introduction to Digital Cameras and Editing With Photoshop or Elements":
http://www.eliotcohen.com/

Or you may prefer a more advanced workshop by Eliot Cohen, May 24 – 28 on "Advanced Camera and Editing Techniques".:
http://www.eliotcohen.com/adv.htm

Need some action in your life? Look over photo.net auctions and classifieds for equipment bargains:
http://www.photo.net/gc/domain-multi
-
Philip Greenspun tells little people like us how to choose a digital camera:
http://www.photo.net/digital/cameras/choosing

Need just a little bit extra storage? Coming end of March, up to 1TB (that's 1 terabyte or one thousand gigabytes!) on a 11.5 X 4.75" footprint:
http://www.kanotechnologies.com/kano/prod/main_hard_drives.cfm

The FUJIFILM 1 GB USB 2.0 Drive is a revolutionary way to save, share and store files. Small enough to fit in the palm of your hand, it's also big enough to hold hundreds of photos, documents, presentations, MP3s and more! Cross-platform compatible with Windows 98SE+ PCs and USB-enabled Mac computers!
http://www.jandr.com/JRProductPage.process?RestartFlow=t&Section_Id=1&Product_Id=3712410

Can't decide what to buy? Decisions, decisions! This site will help you pick out what is right for you. Not just photographic, but all kinds of equipment:
http://www.jandr.com/templates/promos/activeDecisions.tem

Before leaving J&R website I came across what every member of club should have while working in PhotoShop CS. Small little monitor, only 30" widescreen for less then your first born (but doesn';t last as long!):
http://www.jandr.com/JRProductPage.process?RestartFlow=t&Product_Code=WET+W33001&JRVendor.HPB.WET+W33001

Do you know the newer Apple iPod can also be used to store pictures as well as music? With a little help from Belkin. 10gb memory, 2500 songs, Stuart will figure out for you how many pictures. But be sure you have the right model iPod:
http://datavisioncomputer.com/webapp/commerce/command/ProductDisplay?prrfnbr=1233325&prmenbr=2000

Read all about Martha Stewart and her magazines. Nothing to do with camera club, just testing to see if your reading.
http://www.marthastewart.com/page.jhtml;jsessionid=R120FACJHF1SVWCKUUXCHPWYJKSS0JO0?type=shop-cat&id=cat1&rsc=sc31424

Like to go back to school? Don't have time? Learn from yout own home in your own time. One month class, $20, one year class, $60. Learn everything from lighting to shooting your own family (with a camera!). Such a deal!:
http://www.webphotoschool.com/newschool/Default.asp

Why can you see such a difference on memory price from same manufacturer? Is there a difference in speed? Quality? Check out what one company has to say:
http://www.kingston.com/products/cf.asp

Woody

Your questions answered! e-focus has assembled a team of international inexperts to help you with your digital problems. Please send your questions to e-focus@cvdcc.org.

Dear e-bby: Photoshop CS has a new Hard Mix blend mode. I read somewhere that it can be used for image sharpening. How can I do that?
Duplicate the Background layer and apply a 1-2 pixel Gaussian monochrome blur. Now set the Blending mode to Hard Mix. It will look awful. Use the Fill slider to reduce the Fill level on that layer to adjust the amount of sharpening.
Adobe says: ...with Hard Mix "in general the results when blending the two layers together are: lighter colors lighten the result, darker colors darken the result, lowering the fill opacity creates less posterization/ threshholding. Hard Mix blending of a blurred version of an image with itself, for example, will sharpen the image with Fill opacity...controlling the sharpeniong strength."

Dear e-bby: What is the difference between Auto Contrast, Auto Levels and Auto Color adjustment commands? Should I ever use them?

The Auto commands adjust images with no input from the user other than clicking on them. There are no adjustable controls but each one works from a consistent set of rules. If you know those rules you will have a general idea of what to expect when you apply them.

Auto Contrast, the most basic, finds the darkest color in an image and makes it as dark as possible without changing the color. Then it finds the lightest color and makes it the lightest part of the image. If the image has proper colors to start it will make them pop. If there

is an initial color cast the result will probably be less than desirable.

Auto Levels makes similar adjustments except that it is channel-by-channel. It analyzes each color channel and makes the darkest area black and the lightest area white. If the color balance needed fixing it may help otherwise you will probably see a shift in color balance not necessarily to the good.

Auto Color does even more. Like Auto Levels, it darkens shadows and lightens highlights on a channel-by channel basis. But, as noted above Auto Levels may shift those colors whereas Auto Color changes them to neutral black and white. In addition, Auto Color also finds all the midtones that are trending towards gray and then "leeches" away the color. According to Deke McClelland in his Photoshop User article "Automatic Image Correction", Auto Color is currently "the best gauge for automatically correcting the color cast of a photo".

However, e-bby's experience is that Auto Color does not work well where there are skin tones involved that do not dominate the entire image, since Auto Color averages over the entire image. In this case – as with all Auto Commands – it is a good idea to apply the command to a duplicate layer of your image, then use the Opacity slider to blend the original and duplicate layers until you get the most satisfying result. After all, some color casts are desirable if not too accentuated, such as in shots taken at sunrise or sunset.

The Auto Commands are there for your convenience but when you use any of them keep in mind what each does so that you can choose the one best suited for improving the image you are working on.

Dear e-bby: What's a good way to carry a tripod in my vehicle to keep it from banging around and getting dusty?
This is not strictly a "digital question", but my adviser suggests that you "buy a roll of carpet and a couple of bungee cords and roll it up."

Dear e-bby: What's a good way to carry a couple of spare lenses in a small camera bag (that has no compartments) to protect them from each other and to keep dust off of them? Thanks,
Put them in socks. Digital socks, of course ;-)

USING PICTURE PACKAGE FOR YOUR PHOTOSHOP PRINTING

by Joe Ramsey

The Picture Package function – available in all versions of Photoshop – allows printing of multiple copies of a single image, single copies of multiple images or any combination between those extremes on a single sheet of paper. Wouldn't it be convenient if you could print an assortment of photos all at once on a single large page instead of having to repeatedly run the Print command and feed smaller pages into your printer one at a time?

Picture Package window and look at the Layouts that are available. In Photoshop click on **File**>*Automate*>*Picture Package*. You soon discover that the sizes and combinations included in Photoshop are designed for professional portrait and wedding photographers who promote add-on sales. For most of us the combinations of sizes available are not useful. After all how many times have you wanted to print (1)5x7, (2)2.5x3.5 and (4) 2x2.5 prints on the same page? See *Figure 1, Picture Package Showing Layout Choices*.

Well, luckily for Photoshop users Layout files can be readily modified or new ones written from scratch right on our computers. If you were at our DIPSIG March meeting you saw how to construct a file that had been written to allow printing of ten business/calling cards on an 8.5x11 page. I have several layouts that I have written for print sizes that were not available in the Photoshop Layouts folder. One is for 4x6 prints, a common size that photo finishers regularly offer. Another is for 4x5.33 prints which is the same aspect ratio as the uncropped images from my digital camera. You probably have other sizes and combinations that you print regularly. Writing Layout files is not difficult but they must be carefully written following a few simple rules.

Figure 1: Picture Package Showing Layout Choices

PRACTICE LAYOUT FILE PROJECT

For a practice project let's write that Layout file – discussed at the DIPSIG meeting – to print (10) 2"x3.5" business/calling cards in an 8"x10" document. Document size specifies the printable area where your images will be placed. Actual paper size you print to must be large enough to allow for margins added by your printer controls. My Epson 2000P adds 0.12" on the top and each side and 0.56" on the bottom. For an 8x10 document I must use paper measuring at least 8.25x10.68 inches to avoid clipping off edges of the image area. Paper size of 8.5x11 is an obvious choice here but you could use larger paper if desired.
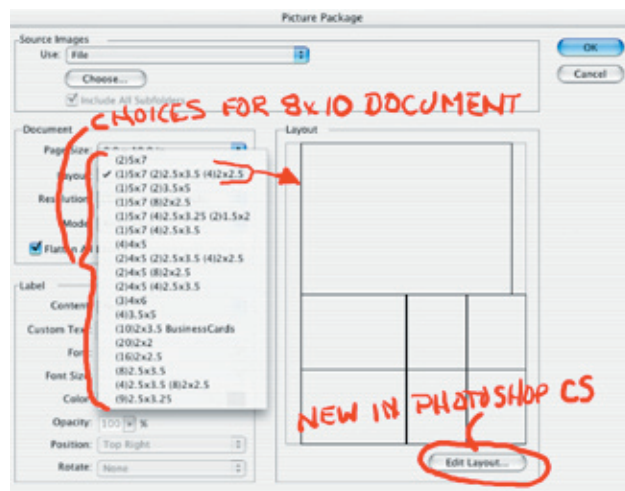
Please note that <u>all</u> the Layouts are *.txt* files. They cannot be opened and visually read in Photoshop,. However, when you use the Picture Package function, Photoshop reads the data in the file and opens a window with the selected layout displayed graphically.

Here are the steps to follow in order to edit or read and write a Layout file:

First, load a word processor program such as TextEdit, Word or Appleworks that supports *.txt*

files and open a new document window. When writing your file use the default font with no modifications such as **bold** or *italics*. When you are finished writing the file must be saved with the *.txt* extension.

FIRST LINE OF LAYOUT FILE

On the first line enter i, p or c (may be lower case or caps) to tell Photoshop that all dimensions to follow will be in inches, pixels or centimeters. For an 8x10 document the first line should read as follows,

    i 8.00 10.00 0

The 0 (zero) following the document dimensions is a Preset flag. Existing *Adobe* files have a 1 for the preset flag, indicating it is an Adobe preset. Files *you* write should use a 0 (or be left blank at the preset flag position as it is not required).

SECOND LINE OF LAYOUT FILE

The second line contains a description such as '(20) 2x2' or the description can be all text such as 'Business Cards'. This is the name of the layout that appears in the Picture Package window when you are selecting the desired layout for your project. In this exercise the second line will read

    (10) 2x3.5 BusinessCards

THIRD AND ALL SUCCEEDING LINES OF LAYOUT FILE

Beginning on the third line each subsequent line indicates the location of the upper left corner of the placeholder measured from the left side towards the right and from top downwards followed by the horizontal and vertical dimensions of each placeholder. For our business cards the finished layout will have 2 columns of placeholders by 5 placeholders high.

The height of 5 placeholders high will measure 10 inches so we start the top vertical dimension at 0.00 but because the width of 2 placeholders totals 7 inches we will start horizontal locations 0.50 inches in from the left side. Thus the first

placeholder is written as follows:

    0.50 0.00 3.50 2.00

That is 0.50″ from left side, 0.00″ from the top, 3.50″ wide by 2.0″ high.

To get a second column the second placeholder will be 0.50″+3.50″=4.00″ from the left and 0.00″. from the top written as follows:

    4.00 0.00 3.50 2.00

The next line down for the placeholder on the left will then be:

    0.50 2.00 3.50 2.00

The remaining follows in a step by step fashion until in the end you have a complete Layout file for business cards as follows:

    I 8.00 10.00 0

    (10)2x3.5 BusinessCards

    0.50 0.00 3.50 2.00
    4.00 0.00 3.50 2.00
    0.50 2.00 3.50 2.00
    4.00 2.00 3.50 2.00
    0.50 4.00 3.50 2.00
    4.00 4.00 3.50 2.00
    0.50 6.00 3.50 2.00
    4.00 6.00 3.50 2.00
    0.50 8.00 3.50 2.00
    4.00 8.00 3.50 2.00

After you have typed and saved this file you need to move it to the *Layouts* folder in Photoshop. Find the Photoshop folder then go **Presets**>*Layouts* and move or copy your new *Layout* file there. If you have Photoshop already loaded when you move the new file into the *Layouts* folder you must restart Photoshop in order to use it otherwise Photoshop won't see the new file.

YOU ARE NOW READY TO MAKE NEW CARDS

Make your business/calling cards by opening a new file in Photoshop measuring 3.5x2 inches
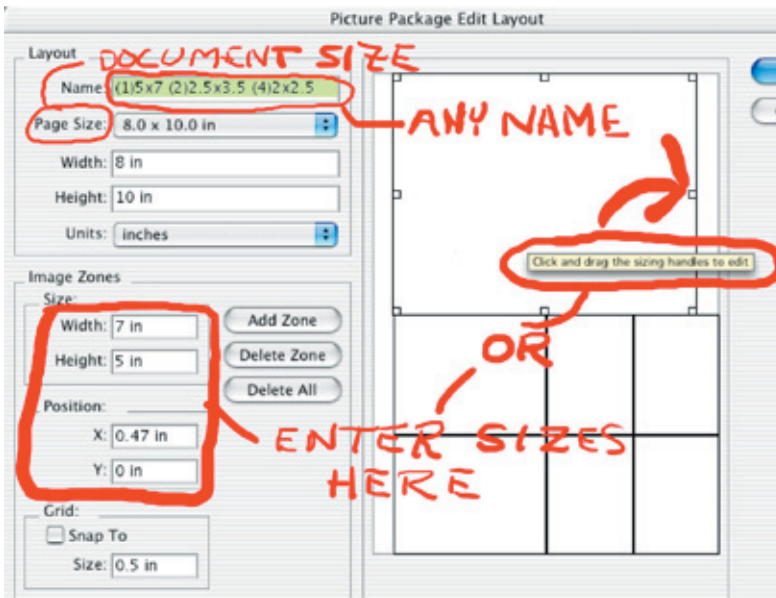
Figure 2: Edit Layout Window

with resolution of at least 150 ppi. Click **File**>*New*. In the window that appears enter the dimensions and give it a name before clicking OK. You can add type, photos or illustrations, anything you can do in Photoshop to make it really creative. After saving the new file, why stop with one design? The beauty of Picture Package is that you can print an assortment of designs on a single page. And, only as many cards as you want with each design. Happy printing!

USE PHOTOSHOP CS TO MAKE IT EVEN EASIER

Users of Photoshop Elements and versions 6.0 and 7.0 have to follow the process just described but now there is a much easier way in Photoshop CS. Click on **File**>*Automate*>*PicturePackage*. Select a Layout to use. If you want to revise the Layout click on the newly added *Edit Layout* button. A Layout edit window opens where you can specify not only the document size but also print sizes for each placeholder in the layout. See *Figure 2 Edit Layout Window*.

Writing *Layout* files in Photoshop CS is simply a matter of adjusting each placeholder (print) size and position on the page either numerically or by dragging the Placeholder sides and/or outlines. When you are finished editing save the file with whatever name you want to assign. Photoshop CS

does the writing for you and stores the file in the *Layouts* folder.

When you examine Layout files written by Photoshop you will see these three additional lines;

  ; line 1, page size
  ; line 2, description
and
  ; line 3 - n, drop zones

These are comment lines that precede and describe each of the three components in a Layout file. The semi-colon beginning each line tells Photoshop to bypass that line and go to the next line. These comment lines are not required if you write your files as we did in the exercise above although if you are making a special layout you may want to add a line or two of pertinent information. Just be sure each comment line begins with a semi-colon. See *Fig 3 Business Card Text for Layout File* written in Photoshop CS.

Besides writing its own *Layout* files Picture Package in Photoshop CS is unique in that you can use the file immediately after saving without being forced to restart the program. And, you can even edit a layout on the fly so to speak. After selecting the images to be printed but before clicking OK use the Edit Layout function as if the images were not yet selected. It seems strange but it works.

```
; line 1, page size
I 8.00 10.00 0

; line 2, description
(10)2x3.5 BusinessCards

; line 3 – n, drop zones
0.50 0.00   3.50 2.00
4.00 0.00   3.50 2.00
0.50 2.00   3.50 2.00
4.00 2.00   3.50 2.00
0.50 4.00   3.50 2.00
4.00 4.00   3.50 2.00
0.50 6.00   3.50 2.00
4.00 6.00   3.50 2.00
0.50 8.00   3.50 2.00
4.00 8.00   3.50 2.00
```

Figure 3: Business Card text For Layout File

MAKING PICTURE PACKAGES EDITABLE

There is an interesting feature in all versions

of Picture Package that we haven't mentioned. If you leave Flatten All Layers checked in the Picture Package window and click OK the result is a single layer with all the images in place. Any adjustments or changes to a specific image in the layout is more difficult because you must select the image carefully to be sure any editing does not affect other images on the page. An easy way to overcome that limitation is to uncheck Flatten All Layers before clickingOK.Each image is placed appropriately but on a separate layer. Individual images are then easily edited and can even be replaced if desired.

For more information you will find instructions for writing Layout files in the ReadMe.txt file inside the Layouts folder of your Photoshop program. Reference *Figure 4 Layouts ReadMe.*

A very extensive discussion of Picture Package can be found in Photoshop Help. If you click on **Help**>*Photoshop Help* it will take you to Adobe's online Help, a virtual encyclopedia of Photoshop information, where you can find several pages of discussions and illustrations regarding Picture Package.
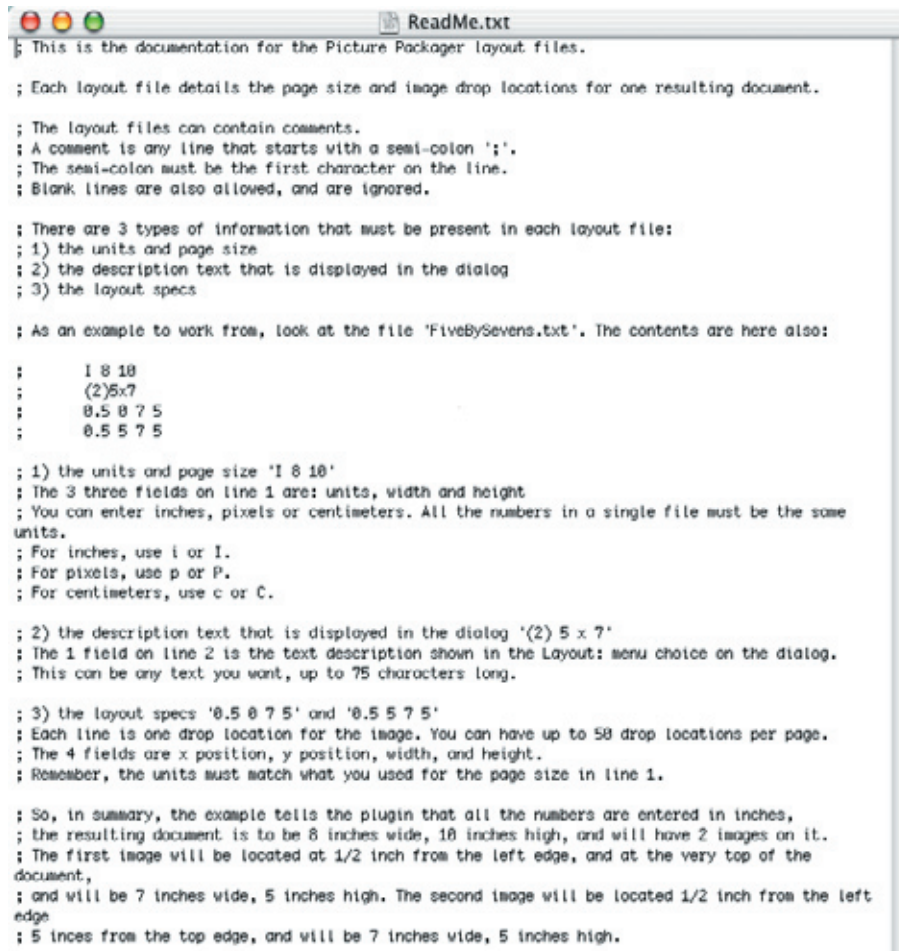
```
; This is the documentation for the Picture Packager layout files.

; Each layout file details the page size and image drop locations for one resulting document.

; The layout files can contain comments.
; A comment is any line that starts with a semi-colon ';'.
; The semi-colon must be the first character on the line.
; Blank lines are also allowed, and are ignored.

; There are 3 types of information that must be present in each layout file:
; 1) the units and page size
; 2) the description text that is displayed in the dialog
; 3) the layout specs

; As an example to work from, look at the file 'FiveBySevens.txt'. The contents are here also:

;        I 8 10
;        (2)5x7
;        0.5 0 7 5
;        0.5 5 7 5

; 1) the units and page size 'I 8 10'
; The 3 three fields on line 1 are: units, width and height
; You can enter inches, pixels or centimeters. All the numbers in a single file must be the same
units.
; For inches, use i or I.
; For pixels, use p or P.
; For centimeters, use c or C.

; 2) the description text that is displayed in the dialog '(2) 5 x 7'
; The 1 field on line 2 is the text description shown in the Layout: menu choice on the dialog.
; This can be any text you want, up to 75 characters long.

; 3) the layout specs '0.5 0 7 5' and '0.5 5 7 5'
; Each line is one drop location for the image. You can have up to 50 drop locations per page.
; The 4 fields are x position, y position, width, and height.
; Remember, the units must match what you used for the page size in line 1.

; So, in summary, the example tells the plugin that all the numbers are entered in inches,
; the resulting document is to be 8 inches wide, 10 inches high, and will have 2 images on it.
; The first image will be located at 1/2 inch from the left edge, and at the very top of the
document,
; and will be 7 inches wide, 5 inches high. The second image will be located 1/2 inch from the left
edge
; 5 inces from the top edge, and will be 7 inches wide, 5 inches high.
```

Figure 4: Layouts ReadMe

NOTE:

USING PICTURE PACKAGE *(followup from March DIPSIG meeting)*

Some attendees at our March meeting had difficulty copying the Business/Card Layout file from the CD that was distributed. Apparently some were attempting to open the file which you cannot do in Photoshop and is not necessary. The file's contents are included in the above article so that you can construct your own if you wish. Otherwise I will have the files on CD's at our April meeting and go step by step through the procedure to copy the Business Card Layout file and place it where it belongs. Never fear it will work on Windows PC's as well as Macs. – *Joe Ramsey*