



LIGHTROOM TRANSFORMATIONS

Realizing your vision
with Adobe Lightroom—
plus Photoshop

MARTIN EVENING

FREE SAMPLE CHAPTER

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LIGHTROOM TRANSFORMATIONS

REALIZING YOUR VISION WITH LIGHTROOM—PLUS PHOTOSHOP

MARTIN EVENING

Lightroom Transformations:
Realizing your vision with Adobe Lightroom—plus Photoshop
Martin Evening

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Acquisitions Editor: Valerie Witte
Developmental and Copy Editor: Peggy Nauts
Production Editor: Tracey Croom
Proofreader: Patricia J. Pane
Composition: Martin Evening
Indexer: James Minkin
Cover Design: Mimi Heft
Interior Design: Mimi Heft, with Martin Evening
Cover Image: Martin Evening

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INTRODUCTION

My first encounter with digital imaging was in the late '80s, when I had one of my photographs retouched by a Quantel Paintbox system operator. I was instantly hooked. A few years later, with the arrival of Photoshop, it became possible to retouch photographs on a home computer, and I remember telling my partner at the time that I really needed to get my own Photoshop system. "And what exactly do you need this Photoshop thing for?" she asked. It was a good question. Why exactly did I need Photoshop? Very few photographers I knew of were using it. None of my clients were requesting digital image manipulation. Occasionally on advertising jobs, photographs were retouched digitally, but this was always carried out by an agency-sourced operator and never the photographers themselves.

Even so, after a few years I had saved up enough money to acquire my first image-editing workstation running Photoshop. Once I had gotten over the usual excitement of swapping heads and skies and playing with the special effects filters, I settled down to a serious study of how to use Photoshop, and later Lightroom, as a digital darkroom tool. These days, you'd be hard put to find a professional photographer who never uses image-editing software. The type of Photoshop and Lightroom editing work I do now with my own photographs leans more toward an understated style of retouching, and it is not obvious that the photographs have been manipulated. For me, it is more about knowing how to configure the camera settings to capture the best possible raw file and then understanding how to best use the tools in Lightroom and Photoshop to perfect the image. In this book I share these skills and show how you can unleash the full potential of your photographs.

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Lastly, I would like to thank my wife, Camilla, and daughter, Angelica, for their patience while I was busy researching and writing this book.

DOWNLOADING BONUS MATERIALS

To accompany the book, I have produced a number of tutorial videos that will allow you to follow the steps used to transform the images featured in this book.

To access and download the bonus content:

1. Visit peachpit.com/register.
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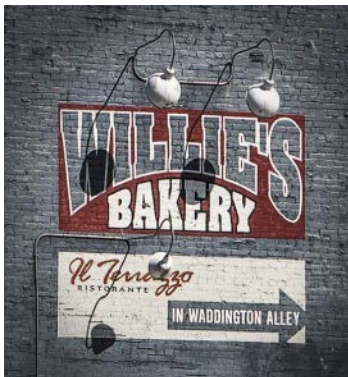
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4

DODGING AND BURNING

AND WHY WHAT YOU SEE IS NOT ALWAYS WHAT YOU GET

WHY WE NEED TO MANIPULATE OUR IMAGES

There is nothing new about image manipulation. Photographers have been doing this in the darkroom long before technology gave us the tools to process our photographs digitally. If you study the work of well-known photographers, such as Sebastião Salgado and Josef Koudelka, you will discover just how much dodging and burning was done at the darkroom stage to create some of their most iconic images. Some photographers still regard this as cheating. Perhaps they assume the camera faithfully records everything they saw at the time the picture was taken. However, if you consider how our eyes actually perceive the world, you'll realize this isn't the case. Our eyes constantly adapt as we look at the things around us, and what we think we perceive as reality isn't. This is because of the brain's ability to interpret what our eyes see and build a picture in our mind where everything appears to be correctly lit. There are limits, of course. We all know how difficult it is to see in the dark and how you would be ill-advised to go looking for sunspots through a telescope. But in everyday situations, our brain does this amazing conjuring trick where it cons us into believing the lighting in a scene is evenly balanced, when in fact it might well not be. For instance, when you look at a large white wall, your brain will perceive this to be evenly white, whereas if you were to take a photograph of the wall the image you capture will reveal the slightest variations in illumination. This is why for studio photography it is important to use a light meter to help determine the evenness of your lighting, rather than rely on what you think you see with your eyes.

When you photograph outdoors, there can be as much as several stops between the exposure required to capture the sky and that needed to record the foreground. Again, our brain doesn't notice this—it compiles an idealized version of the scene in front of us, one the camera can't always hope to match unless you are able to compensate for this at the capture stage or in postprocessing. Landscape photographers typically place a neutral density graduated filter over the front of the lens to darken the sky relative to the land. That's one way you can approach the problem. Another is to use the Graduated Filter tool in Lightroom to add a darkening effect, like the example in **Figure 4.1**.



FIGURE 4.1 The top image shows a landscape photograph of Bryce Canyon, which I processed in Lightroom, where I adjusted the tones to produce the best optimized version for the foreground. The lower version shows the same image, where a Graduated Filter adjustment was added to darken the clouds. This version is probably closer in appearance to how the scene was perceived at the time.

HOW YOUR CAMERA SEES

A digital camera records light values in a linear fashion, where the signal output of the sensor doubles for every EV stop increase in exposure. That is to say, as you open the lens aperture one stop, or double the exposure time, you increase the exposure by one stop and the sensor signal output is doubled. Typically, a sensor may be capable of capturing up to 4,000 levels of tone. When an image is captured and digitally converted (and gamma-corrected), around 2,000 levels will be used to describe the brightest stop value, 1,000 levels to record the next stop down in exposure, 500 the next, and so on. At the same time you have to bear in mind the optimum exposure setting is the point at which you can expose an image without clipping the highlights. As the light levels arriving at the sensor are increased, you reach the point where the photosites on the sensor become saturated with photons and are therefore unable to record additional photons. This determines the sensor's white clipping point.

The raw image recorded by the sensor will also look rather dark compared with the way we interpret light hitting our retinas. In order to make a digital capture look like a recognizable image, a gamma-correcting curve has to be applied to the raw data. This is essentially a midpoint lightening adjustment, which effectively stretches the shadow levels further apart and compresses the highlight levels closer together. Therefore, a correctly exposed digital capture image (whether it is converted by the camera processor to produce a JPEG or is a raw file converted in Lightroom) will appear similar to how we viewed a scene, but not quite the same, because of the difference in the way our brain compensates for varying levels of illumination in different areas of the scene. And, as a result of the gamma correction, most of the levels information will be compressed in the highlights, while fewer levels will be available to edit the shadow areas.

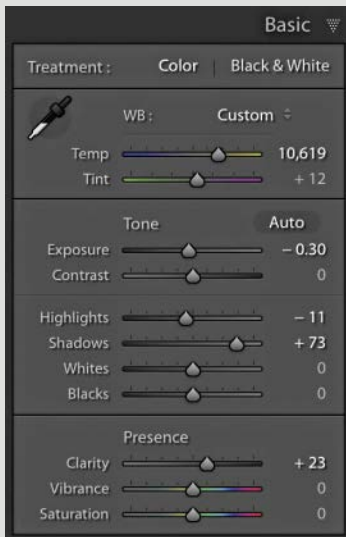
LOCALIZED ADJUSTMENTS

The Lightroom Develop module has three types of localized adjustment tools: Graduated Filter, Radial Filter, and the Adjustment brush. The localized adjustment sliders in Figure 4.1 are the same for each of these tools. They provide a wide range of options and are more or less direct equivalents of those found in the Basic panel. The exceptions are the Saturation slider, which is a hybrid of Vibrance and Saturation, and the Sharpness slider, which is effectively a Detail panel sharpening Amount slider, and similarly, the Noise slider, which is a Detail panel noise reduction Luminance slider. For darkening and lightening you can use the Exposure slider, but you can also use the localized adjustment tools to apply Tint adjustments, add more Clarity, or decrease Saturation. The possibilities are endless, although there are some particular combinations I find are good to use; I'll show you these later in this chapter. Let's dive in and look at how I was able to combine the use of the Radial Filter with the Graduated Filter to build up a series of localized edits to reshape the lighting in the following image example.

Basic dodging and burning



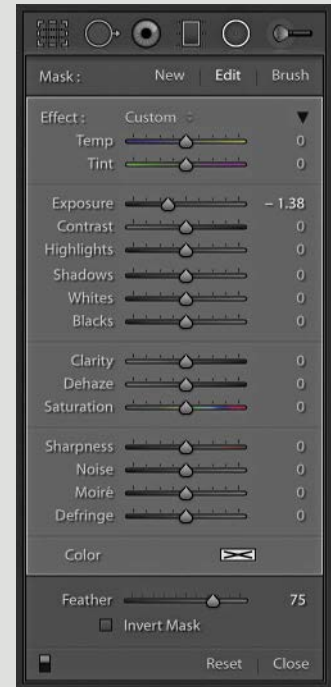
1 This is a photograph I took of my cousin, Marek, while visiting his studio, Marek Music, in Canada. I photographed him at work using just the available daylight.



2 I wanted the room to look darker and make it appear to be lit with tungsten lighting. To do this, I dragged the Temp slider to the right to set a warmer white balance and decreased the Exposure.



3 I then selected the Radial Filter tool, clicked on Marek's chest, and dragged outward. The Exposure slider was set to -1.38, which applied a feathered, darkening exposure adjustment to the area outside the Radial Filter ellipse.



4 With the Radial Filter still active, I clicked on the New button to add a second Radial Filter adjustment. Again, I clicked on Marek's chest, but this time defined a smaller ellipse. I dragged the Temp slider to the left so that the outside area would have a less warm color cast and set the Exposure to -0.55 to add some extra darkening.





5 Next, I selected the Graduated Filter adjustment, dragged from the right side of the image inward to the center, and set the Exposure amount to +1.95. This adjustment effectively canceled out the two Radial Filter adjustments for this portion of the image. Therefore, I was using the Graduated Filter here as an undo adjustment to restore the original luminance to this portion of the photograph.



6 I liked how the image looked in color, but I also created the black-and-white version you can see here.

Refining filter adjustments

In the previous step-by-step, the Radial Filter adjustments were applied using the default settings for the Feather and mask. This meant that the filter adjustments were applied to the areas outside the Radial Filter area and the Feather amount was 75. You can fine-tune the Feather setting to create a harder or softer feather edge when applying Radial Filter adjustments. Clicking the Invert mask option applies the adjustment to inside the Radial Filter area, which is useful if you want to select a specific area to apply the adjustment to. Typically, you might want to use the Radial Filter in this way to add cumulative adjustments, such as a series of lightening or darkening effects, where applying these as multiple filters allows you to define an area more precisely. To edit a filter adjustment, make sure the filter is active and the edit pins are made visible. If you know you have applied a filter adjustment but can't see the pins, check the Show Edit Pins menu in the Toolbar, or press the **H** key to make them visible again. To move a filter adjustment, click the radio button in the middle and drag.

When working with the Graduated Filter tool, you can adjust the angle and width of a Graduated Filter effect by dragging on the overlay directly. To rotate, move the cursor along the central overlay line till you see a double-headed arrow cursor and click and drag. To adjust the width, click on either of the outer lines and click and drag to make the filter edge harder or softer. With Radial Filter adjustments, move the cursor outside the radius overlay and click and drag to rotate. Click and drag the handles directly to edit the shape of the Radial Filter overlay (see **Figure 4.2**).



FIGURE 4.2 The Filter overlay controls that are available when working with the Graduated and Radial Filters.

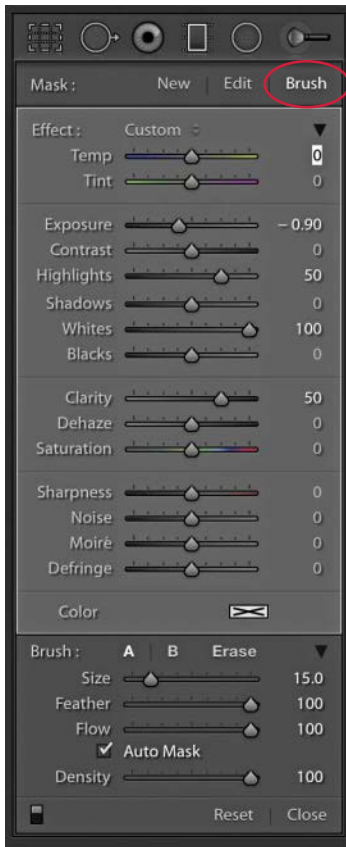


FIGURE 4.3 The Graduated Filter options in Brush edit mode with the brush options at the bottom. Brush A is currently selected.

TIP

You can hold down the **[Alt]** key when painting in Brush mode to temporarily switch to the Erase mode and vice versa.

Editing skies with the Graduated Filter

Figure 4.1 showed how to darken a sky by adding a negative Exposure Graduated Filter adjustment. This can work well in a lot of situations and is similar to placing a neutral density filter over the lens at the time of shooting. But there are other sliders to play with that can do more than just darken. You can use the Temp slider to make a sky appear warmer or cooler and use the Contrast slider to add more contrast. Subtle effects can be achieved using different combinations of Exposure, Highlights, Whites, and Clarity adjustments. For example, the Highlights slider can be used to make the cloud highlight detail darker or lighter. It all depends on the image and the brightness of the clouds in the scene, but a move either way can make the clouds stand out more. With the Whites slider, I find a positive Whites adjustment can be effective if you need to add more contrast to the highlight areas, especially if you mix an Exposure darkening with a positive Whites adjustment. The Clarity slider can be very helpful for adding more contrast to the midtone areas. With dark, cloudy skies that have lots of interesting cloud detail, you can increase Clarity to add more definition. I suggest you experiment with all these sliders to see which ones will help make the clouds stand out best. You can sometimes even add a Shadows adjustment into the mix.

Brush editing the mask

If you click the Brush button (circled in **Figure 4.3**), this switches you to the Brush edit mode, where it is possible to edit the mask for a Graduated or Radial Filter adjustment. Here, you have the option to configure separate Brush A and Brush B settings and paint on the image to define the areas you wish to add the filter effect to. Or, you can switch to the Erase mode to define the areas where you wish to remove the filter effect. The Size slider refers to the size of the brush, while the Feather slider determines how hard or soft the brush will be. The Flow slider can be used to control the rate at which the brushwork is applied. For instance, you can drag this to a low Flow setting and use multiple brushstrokes to build the brush opacity. The Density slider determines the maximum density that can be achieved when using a brush to edit the mask. If you are using a Wacom or similar tablet device, you can set Flow and Density to 100 and use pen pressure to determine the flow rate and density.

When the Auto Mask option is checked, where you first click records a sample color selection and uses this to limit the extent of the brushwork. In other words, if you click on, say, an area of blue sky, this creates something like a hidden magic wand selection of the blue sky area that constrains the extent of your brushwork. As you release the mouse and click again, this creates a new selection. It should be pointed out that the edges created as a result of using the Auto Mask mode can sometimes appear a little ragged. It is therefore best to carry out such brushwork at a 1:1 view so you can monitor it carefully.

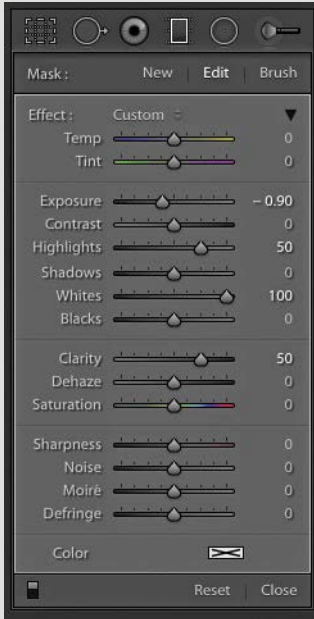
Brush editing a Graduated Filter adjustment



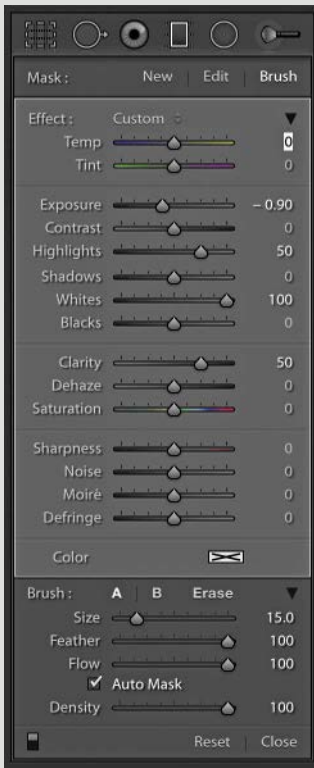
1 This photograph of Stonehenge was captured in the late afternoon, with a lovely cloudy sky. This shows what the image looked like with the default Develop settings applied.



2 In the Basic panel, I adjusted the tone sliders to darken the Highlights slightly and adjusted the Whites and Blacks sliders to expand the tone range and add more contrast. I also set Clarity to +20 to add more midtone contrast.



3 I then selected the Graduated Filter tool and dragged from just above the horizon downward to barely below the base of the stones. I set the Exposure to -0.90 to darken the clouds. At the same time, I increased the Highlights and Whites settings to add more highlight contrast. I also raised Clarity to add midtone contrast.



4 Having done that, I clicked to switch to Brush edit mode for the Graduated Filter and with Show Selected Mask Overlay checked in the Toolbar, used the Erase brush mode with Auto Mask enabled to remove the stones from the Graduated Filter mask.



5 This shows the final version, where, if you compare with Step 3, you can see how masking the stones using the Brush edit Erase mode for the Graduated Filter tool allowed the filter adjustment to be applied to the graduated areas only, except for the mask-defined outline of the stones. If you compare the stone lintels in this version and the previous one, you will notice there is no darkening in these areas. It is worth mentioning here that when you brush-edit a Graduated or Radial Filter adjustment, the Brush edit mask remains independent of the filter adjustment. Therefore, with this image I could revisit the Graduated Filter and edit the range of the Graduated Filter adjustment independent of the Brush edit defined mask outline. The only other thing I did here was to go to the HSL/Color/B&W panel, where I lightened the grass and darkened the stones slightly.





FIGURE 4.4 The Adjustment brush controls.

Adjustment brush settings

The Adjustment brush controls (**Figure 4.4**) are the same as those for the Graduated and Radial Filters, but with the addition of the brush controls at the bottom. These are identical to the brush controls for the Graduated and Radial Filter brush modes that I described earlier.

Basically, the Adjustment brush allows you to apply freeform brush edits, which can be defined by applying single or multiple brushstrokes. Where you first click with the Adjustment brush will add a pin overlay to the image, and as you carry on brushing you will add to the defined area linked to that pin marker. You can use the Size, Feather, and Flow sliders to control the brush cursor and brush behavior and use the Erase mode to erase your brushwork. If you have a Wacom tablet and stylus, you can use varying amounts of stylus pressure to control the opacity, which can give you a fine degree of control over your painting. Once you have added a brushstroke, you can adjust the sliders to achieve the desired adjustment setting. If you want to add a new set of brushstrokes with a different combination of settings, you will need to click the New button at the top to exit the current pin editing and click again to apply a new Adjustment brush pin. A quick tip here is to press the q or r key when applying a brush adjustment to exit from the Edit mode and switch to the New mode, so that when you next click on the preview you will add a new pin.

Each time you add a new pin, this effectively adds a mask that records the brush edit information. This does increase the file size of the metadata, but not by as much as you would think, because the mask data is compressed. A bigger problem is what happens when you add multiple Adjustment brush pins. The Lightroom processing required to render a preview is quite intense. This is because Lightroom has to calculate the main slider adjustments, plus, in addition, the mask-defined brush adjustments. Every time you add a brush adjustment, Lightroom has to continually update the Develop preview on the fly. As you add extra Adjustment brush pins, you are adding to the complexity and effectively multiplying the problem. It is therefore best to keep the number of pins to as few as possible. Once you add up to five pins or more, you may see a significant slowdown in the Lightroom Develop module performance. Elsewhere in the program, Lightroom does not have a problem managing images that contain complex brush edits. This is because the other Lightroom modules all reference cached preview files instead.

Combining multiple localized adjustments

The location in this photograph, which was shot by Chris Evans, is a fairly ordinary service corridor that was livened up by placing a direct flash head to the right and slightly above the head height of the subject and synchronizing this with a second head, placed farther down the corridor and facing directly toward the camera with a strong blue gel on it. This provided the strong backlighting and added a blue color to the background. The flash lighting was also balanced with the corridor lighting, allowing the ambient exposure to be bright enough to record these other lights. As you can imagine, a lot of steps were required to achieve the end result. Most of this was done through the use of dodging and burning to produce a more dramatic lighting effect.

In this tutorial, you will notice how a Clarity adjustment can be applied as an Adjustment brush setting to enhance the skin tone contrast in a portrait photograph. This technique first emerged when photographers began experimenting with Photomatix Pro to process single-exposure portrait images. They noticed how, by adding more midtone detail contrast, they could achieve gritty, textured portraits. The Clarity slider in Camera Raw and Lightroom can also be used to achieve this kind of look by applying the effect as a localized adjustment.



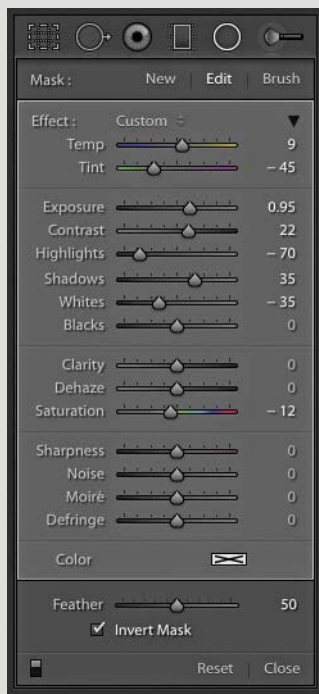
Photograph: © Chris Evans

1 Here is the uncropped before version, which was captured using a Nikon D800 camera with a 24 mm wide-angle lens and is shown here with the default Develop settings in the Basic panel.





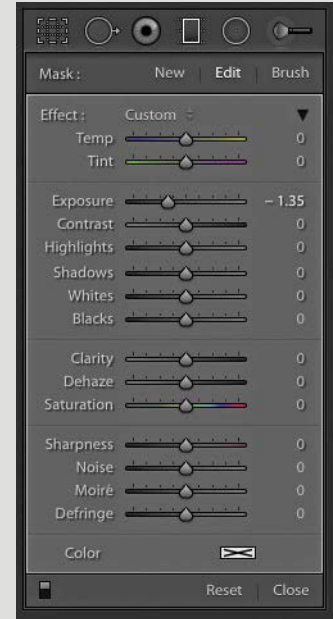
2 The first step was to go to the Lens Corrections panel and apply a Vertical Upright correction. I then selected the Crop Overlay tool, cropped to remove the fluorescent light that was directly above the man's head, and tightened the crop to remove the corridor corner that was visible on the left.



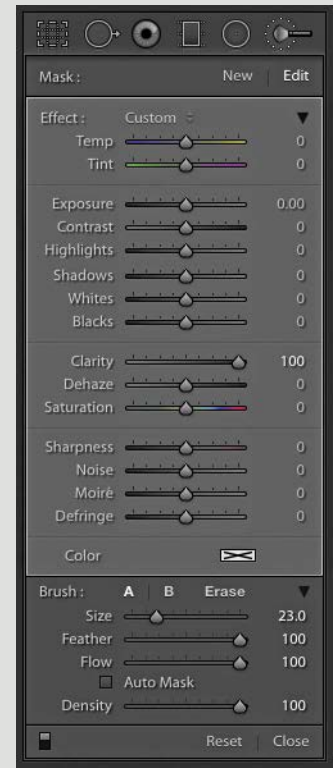
3 Next, I selected the Radial Filter tool and applied three lightening adjustments. I also added a Temp adjustment to the jacket to make it more blue and a Tint adjustment to the face to make it less magenta.



4 I then selected the Graduated Filter tool and applied the three adjustments shown here. One was used to darken the top, another to darken the left, and another to darken the right, using a -1.35 Exposure adjustment.

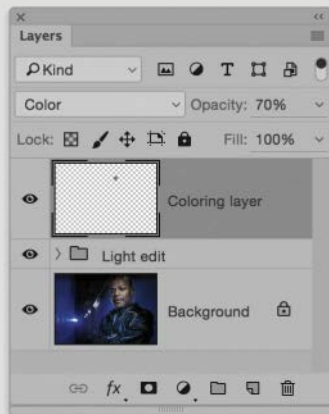


5 In this step, I selected the Adjustment brush, where I applied a darkening adjustment to the ceiling and a darkening adjustment to the corridor, with a blue Temp setting, and made a third adjustment to the face and body, where I applied a +100 Clarity adjustment.





Photograph: © Chris Evans



6 Finally, I opened the raw image as a TIFF in Photoshop, where I added a few further edits. The light in the background had clipped highlights that resulted in some sharp banding. To correct this, I added a combination of local noise, blur, and localized Hue/Saturation to smooth out the edges. There was also a blue clip light hitting just above the bridge of the nose. To remove this, I added a new layer set to Color mode and sampled local colors and painted with the Brush tool.

ADDING AN EFFECTS PANEL VIGNETTE

The Post-Crop Vignetting options in the Effects panel (**Figure 4.5**) provide a really simple way to burn in the corners of the frame, according to how the image is cropped. On the face of it, adding a post-crop vignette will appear to undo a lens profile correction adjustment. The thing is, with some photographs the inherent lens vignetting is a distraction, and photographers will want their pictures to appear evenly exposed from the center to the corners of the frame, which is why it is a good thing to apply a lens profile correction. But sometimes it is more aesthetically pleasing for the vignetting to be left in. This is because the inclusion or addition of a vignette can help direct the eye to the center of the picture. I prefer to have the Enable Profile Corrections option checked in the Lens Corrections panel so that a geometric and vignetting correction is always applied and then choose to add post-crop vignetting effects where I feel it is necessary or useful to do so. It may not always be apparent that a post-crop vignette is required. What I find happens is that as you edit the tones in a photo to produce a version where the shadows in the main subject are filled in more, these tonal adjustments can leave the surrounding areas looking rather flat. Adding a darkening post-crop vignette can therefore add more depth to such images. If I think the tone editing is at the stage where a post-crop vignette will benefit the image, I will do so at the end. **Figure 4.6** shows an example of where Post-Crop Vignetting was added to a photograph.



FIGURE 4.6 On the left is an image with no post-crop vignette and on the right, the same photo using the Post-Crop Vignetting settings shown in the Effects panel.

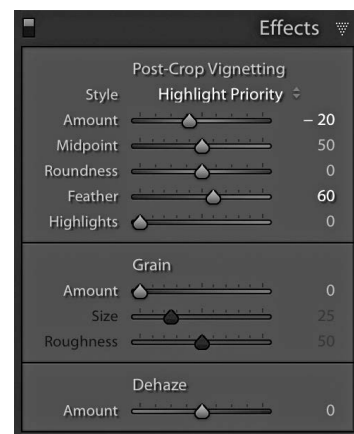
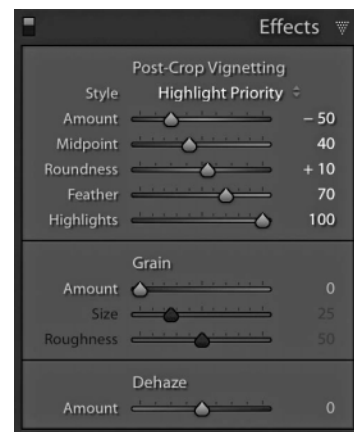


FIGURE 4.5 The Effects panel showing the Post-Crop Vignetting options.



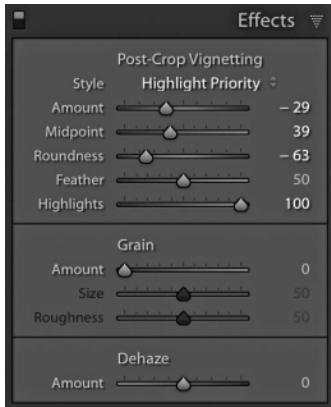
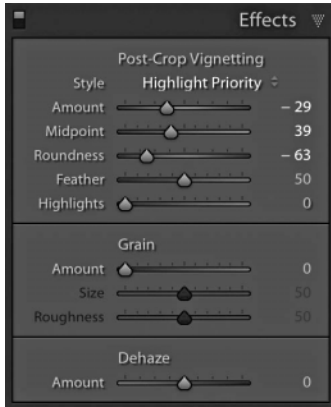
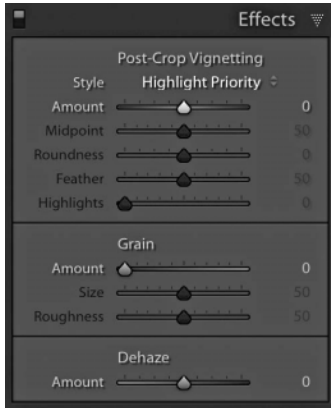


FIGURE 4.7 An example of a Highlight Priority post-crop vignette effect with and without a Highlights slider adjustment.

Post-Crop Vignetting options

In the Style menu you are best off ignoring the Paint Overlay option and choosing either the Highlight Priority or Color Priority options. Highlight Priority produces a more pronounced effect as it applies the post-crop vignette prior to the Exposure adjustment and provides better highlight recovery at the expense of producing unwanted color shifts in the highlight areas.

The wintry panorama in **Figure 4.7** was shot just outside Aspen, Colorado. The top image shows the before version without any Effects panel settings, while the middle image has a Highlight Priority post-crop vignette applied to it. With the bottom image, the Highlights slider was set to +100. If you look carefully at the edges, you will notice how this preserved more of the highlight detail. The image still has a vignette applied to it, but the effect is now less obvious in the highlights, and the edge darkening has become more concentrated in the shadow regions.

The Color Priority option produces a more gentle post-crop effect, which is applied after the Basic panel Exposure adjustment but before Tone Curve adjustments. This helps minimize color shifts in the darkened areas but won't apply any highlight recovery. I recommend you try the Highlight Priority option first, and if that looks too strong, choose the Color Priority method instead. With either of these methods, whenever you apply a negative setting, the Highlights slider will be active. This can be used to increase the contrast in the midtone to highlight tone areas (but not in the darker midtones). Basically, increasing Highlights counteracts the Post-Crop Vignetting effect in the brighter areas, such as the sky, but has less effect where the vignetting affects the darker areas of an image.

PHOTOSHOP ADJUSTMENTS

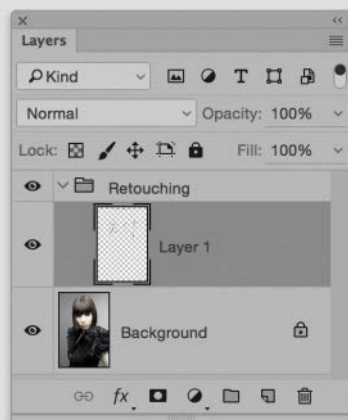
Lightroom localized adjustments are great because they are, in most instances, quick and easy to apply. That is, until you attempt to apply complex edits using the Adjustment brush. It is possible to use the Adjustment brush to do all sorts of things, like hand color a photograph, but as I pointed out earlier, if you make a complex selection or start adding multiple pins, Lightroom's performance soon slows down. The same is also true if you extensively use the Spot Removal tool in Lightroom. Where the benefits of using Lightroom become outweighed by the processing overhead, it is time to switch to Photoshop to carry out complex image-editing tasks. This is because Photoshop is quicker for brush painting and retouching work and makes for a more versatile and flexible workflow. It therefore helps to have a good understanding of Photoshop image adjustments and how to apply localized adjustments nondestructively.

ADDING MASKED CURVES ADJUSTMENTS

1 Here, you can see a photograph I edited in raw mode with the default Basic panel settings.

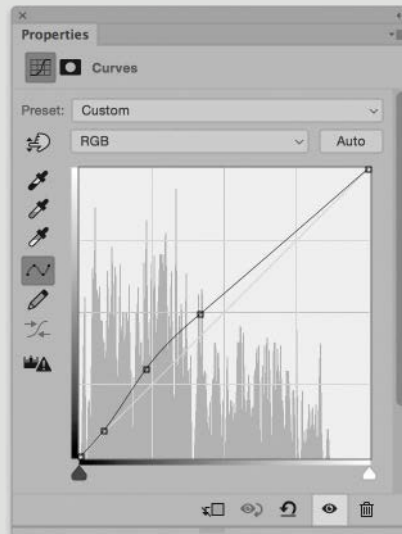
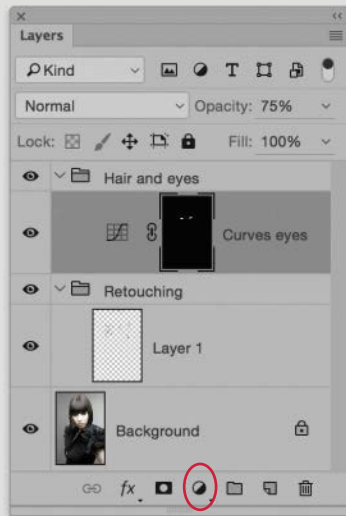


2 I optimized the image in Lightroom to achieve the desired contrast and then opened it in Photoshop, where I applied the Clone stamp and Spot healing brush tools to retouch the photo.

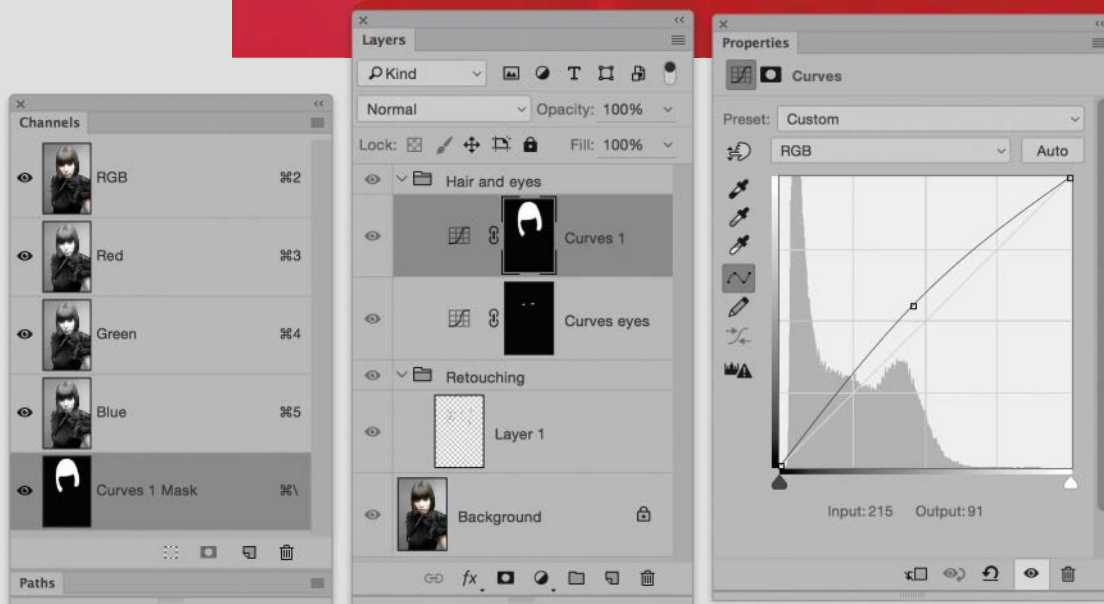




3 I used the Lasso tool to make a selection of the eyes. I then clicked on the Adjustment menu (circled in the Layers panel) and selected Curves. This added a Curves adjustment layer and automatically added a layer mask based on the Lasso selection. Here, I added the curve points shown below in the Properties panel to add more contrast and gently lighten the whites of the eyes (but not so much that it would make the eyes look as if they had been artificially lightened). I also placed this adjustment layer in a new layer group titled “Hair and eyes.”



4 I added a second Curves adjustment layer and used the **(Alt) (Del)** keys to fill the Curves layer mask with black (where black was the default foreground color in the Tools panel). A black mask will hide any adjustment and white will reveal it. Making white now the foreground color and with the mask still active, I selected the Brush tool and painted over the hair. I went to the Properties panel and added a Curve point to lighten the curve and add more contrast to the shadows. I then reselected the Brush tool and fine-tuned the mask. I made the mask visible here by selecting it in the Channels panel.





Client: Russell Eaton, Model Christine Lecoeur @ M&P Models

5 This shows the final image where the Curves adjustment selectively added lightness and contrast to the hair. As the Curves adjustment blend mode was set to Normal, this contrast boost increased the saturation as well.

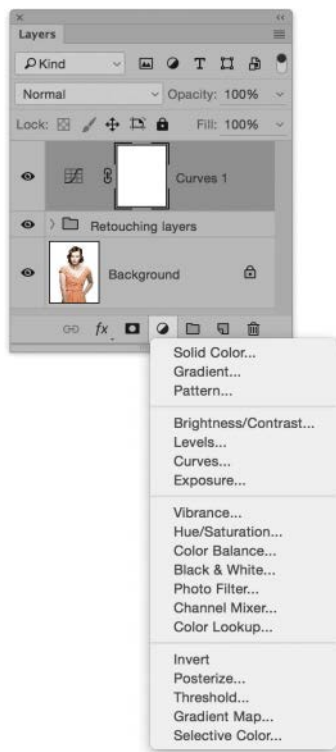


FIGURE 4.8 The Layers panel showing the adjustment layer options.

TIP

You can also use the Dodge and Burn tools in Photoshop to lighten or darken an overlay-neutral gray layer.

Adding masked adjustment layers

The previous example showed how it is possible to add a Curves adjustment as an adjustment layer. To do this, go to the Layers panel, mouse down on the Adjustment layer menu, and select the adjustment you want to apply (see **Figure 4.8**). This adds an adjustment layer above the current selected layer, which is applied globally to all the layers below the adjustment layer. I typically select Curves to apply lightening or darkening adjustments, but you can choose any of the items listed in Figure 4.8 to apply other types of adjustments as well. When you add a new adjustment layer, the adjustment layer mask will be filled with white. This applies the adjustment to the entire canvas. If you set Black as the foreground color in the Tools panel and use **Alt** to fill the mask with black, this hides the adjustment completely. If you then select the Brush tool and paint with white (or add a white to black gradient), you can selectively unhide the adjustment and apply it to the selected areas (as was shown in the previous step-by-step).

If you **Alt**-click the gap between an adjustment layer and the layer below, this clips the adjustment layer to the contents of that layer. That is to say, if the layer contains an image element or a graphic shape, when you apply a clipped adjustment, the effect is applied to the contents of that layer and no others.

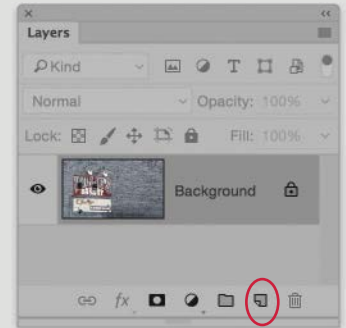
ADDING OVERLAY LAYERS

Another way you can add a localized adjustment in Photoshop is to add a neutral adjustment layer and change the layer blend mode. If you **Alt**-click the Create a new layer button, this pops up the New Layer dialog, which allows you to select the layer blend mode for the new layer. Below that is a Fill with Overlay-neutral color option, which is available for all the layer blend modes, except Dissolve, Hard Mix, Hue, Saturation, Color, and Luminosity. This allows you to create a new layer filled with an overlay-neutral color. For example, with the Screen mode, Black is the neutral color and with Multiply, it is white. For the Overlay, Soft Light, and Hard Light modes, the neutral color is 50% gray. If you add a new layer filled with a neutral color, it will have no effect on the layers below until you modify the layer color. So, if you select the Screen blend mode and paint with white, this applies a lightening adjustment, which you can undo by painting with black again, or you can achieve in-between results by painting with varying shades of gray.

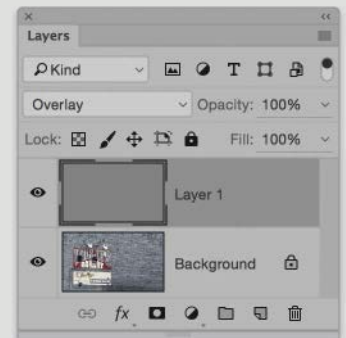
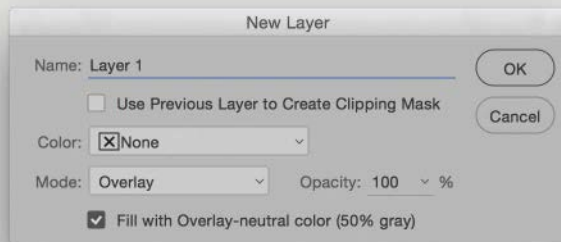
The Overlay, Soft Light, and Hard Light modes are interesting, as these increase contrast. Here, the overlay-neutral color is 50% gray. Painting with a light gray or white has more of an effect lightening the light colors and less so on the darker tones, while painting with dark gray or black has more of an effect on the darker tones. The Overlay blend mode effect is quite strong, the Hard Light mode even stronger, but Soft Light applies a nice, delicate contrast adjustment. For some specific tasks, it is a good technique to be aware of. Most of the time I find adding a Curves adjustment layer and editing the layer mask is better because you have fine control of the tone adjustments and masking.

Using overlay layers to apply local adjustments

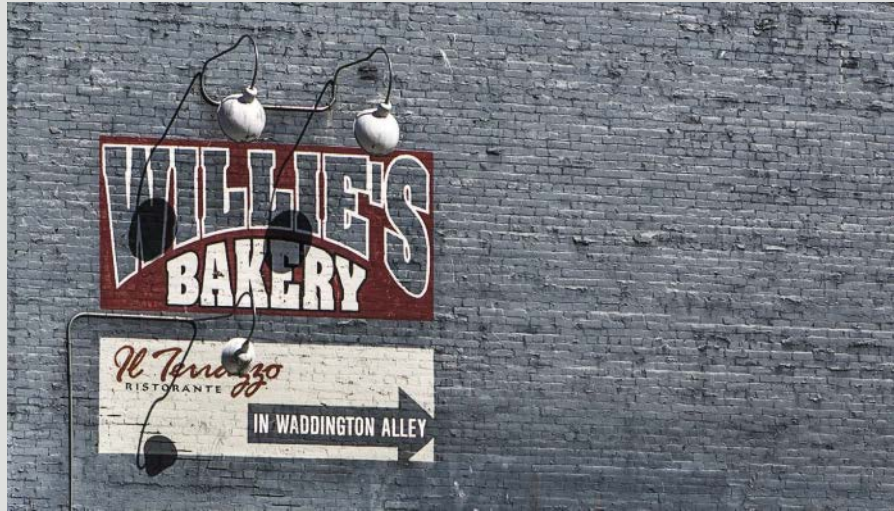
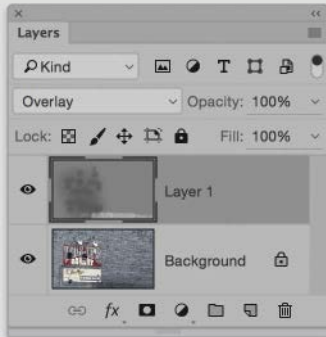
The following steps show how I was able to add an overlay-neutral layer and adjust the layer blend mode to produce different types of localized adjustment effects.



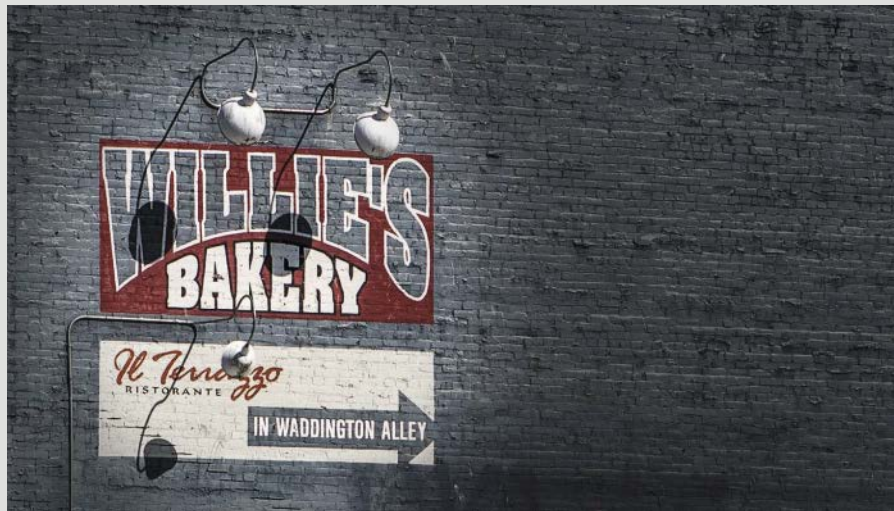
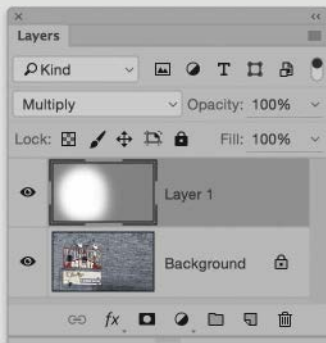
1 This photograph was optimized in Lightroom and opened in Photoshop. In this step I **[Alt]**-clicked the Add new layer button in the Layers panel (circled).



2 This opened the New Layer dialog. From the Mode menu, I selected the Overlay layer blend mode, which in turn allowed me to check the Fill with overlay-neutral color (50% gray) option. When I clicked OK, this added a new layer with the layer blend mode set to Overlay filled with a 50% neutral gray color. The neutral gray had no effect on the image below.



3 I was now able to modify the overlay-neutral layer to make it darker or lighter than a 50% midgray. In this instance, I selected the Brush tool, and with a slightly darker gray selected as the foreground color, painted on the layer to add more density plus more contrast to the selected areas. I also selected a lighter gray color to paint the bottom area to lighten (see the modified layer thumbnail).



4 This shows an alternative version, where I reverted to Step 2 and changed the layer blend mode to Multiply. In this example, the 50% gray applied an overall darkening adjustment to the image. I selected white as the foreground color and painted on the layer to remove the Multiply effect (because white has no effect in Multiply mode).

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