Black and White

From Snapshots to Great Shots

John Batdorff

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Introduction

I've been taking photographs for nearly my entire life. My passion began when my mother handed me my first Kodak Instamatic in 1977. What started out as a way to keep a young boy out of mischief blossomed into a lifelong pursuit of personal expression. I have taken tens of thousands of photos since then and have come to love black-and-white photography for its honest feel and the potential for a simple frame to become a piece of art. The medium has changed a lot over the years, and while I have clocked my share of hours in the darkroom, I've always been intrigued by new technology. Film will continue to hold a special place in my heart, but I'll never regret the day I picked up a digital camera.

The quality of today's digital cameras has granted me the freedom to create the black-and-white images I always intended without spending hours in the darkroom. It's a brave new world. Black-and-white photography is no longer reserved for those of us with darkrooms, but instead embraces anyone with a love of the monochrome world. And for those of you who have a portfolio chock-full of film images, this is a great time to convert them to digital and explore the multitude of techniques available with today's digital darkroom.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

My number one goal for this book has been to simplify a complicated subject matter to the best of my ability. Photography can be confusing at times, but it doesn't need to be—it should make sense. While we'll be discussing nitty-gritty technical details some of the time, the true learning will come from an overall better understanding of the process of black-and-white photography. I hope you'll draw on my experience and combine it with your new knowledge to create your own style. There are many ways to create a black-and-white image: My goal isn't to overwhelm you with a laundry list of techniques but instead to provide you with a handful of tools that I've used successfully throughout the years. Simplicity leads to creativity!

WHAT WILL WE ACCOMPLISH?

We'll start off by discussing my basic camera kit, settings, composition, and exposure. My equipment is near and dear to my heart, but this book is not meant to focus only on what I use. You can apply the techniques regardless of what digital single-lens reflex camera (dSLR) and lens kit that you have.

We'll discuss what to look for when scouting out a black-and-white image. We will cover my mental checklist of characteristics for shooting in black and white: tonal quality, contrast, strong lines, and so on. Once we have our image, we are going to go over how to manage images in Lightroom and convert them to black and white using postprocessing techniques.

Finally, we'll spend a lot of time in Adobe Lightroom and delve even further into Silver Efex Pro 2 to harness its amazing black-and-white processing capabilities. I'll outline why I use these two programs, when I decide to use one over the other, and the detailed steps taken in editing an image from start to finish. We will cover mood, selective color, texture, how digital filters are used by today's black-and-white photographer, and other aspects that help you create your unique style.

HOW MUCH EXPERIENCE DO YOU NEED?

This book has been written with the beginning to intermediate photographer in mind. Regardless of your level, my hope is that you'll find the book to be a resource loaded with useful information, personal experiences, valuable assignments, and helpful shortcuts. Black-and-white photography can be fun and beautiful, so I encourage you to share your images on our Flickr site as you work your way through the book. This book is intended to be an open conversation, so please feel free to drop me a note to share your feedback. Learning is a two-way street; I enjoy learning from you as much as I hope you enjoy learning from me.

If you aren't enjoying the process, you won't be happy with the outcome, so let's relax and have some fun.

Share your results with the book's Flickr group!

Join the group here: www.flickr.com/groups/blackandwhitefromsnapshotstogreatshots

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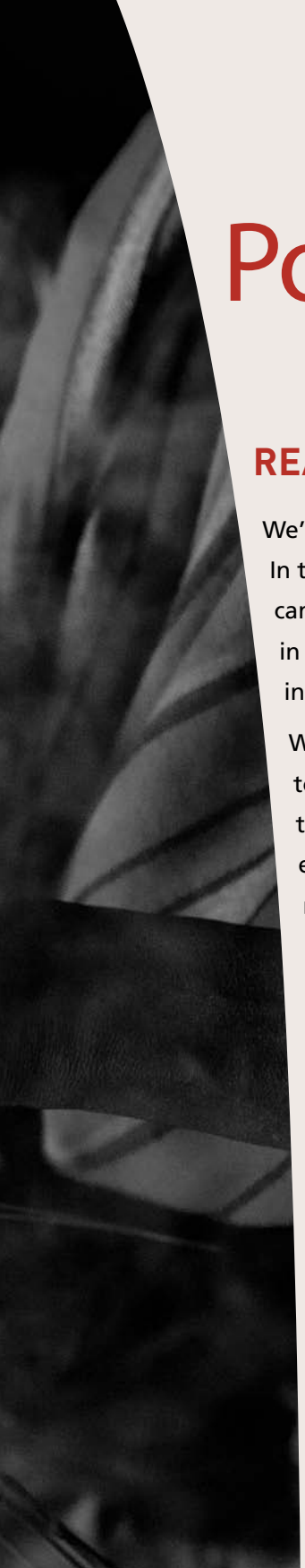
4

ISO 1600
1/500 sec.
f/3.2
85mm lens



Postprocessing

REALIZING YOUR VISION WITH LIGHTROOM

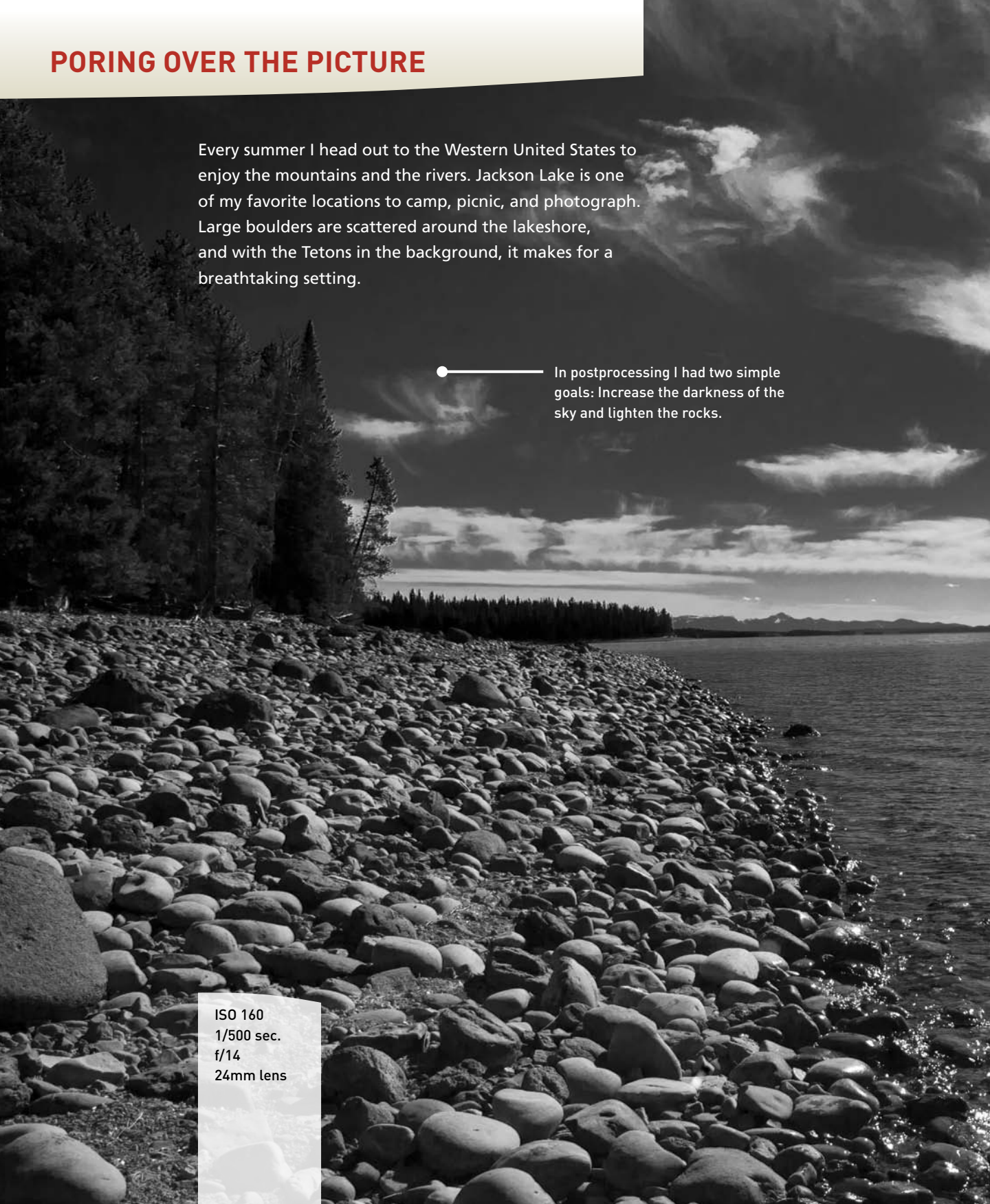
We've spent lot of time talking about how to get an image right in camera. In this chapter we're going to start to focus on taking that image out of the camera and creating your vision onscreen and eventually in print. Our goal in Chapter 4 will be to understand workflow and the basic tools available in Lightroom.

Without postprocessing software, it would be nearly impossible for me to create the black-and-white images I desire. I spent plenty of years in the darkroom, and while I get nostalgic every now and then, I've never enjoyed working in the dark. It's a brave new world, and Lightroom makes it all possible.

Now, I mentioned in earlier chapters that 95 percent of my work is done in Silver Efex Pro 2, but it's important to understand that 100 percent of my work flows through Lightroom in some fashion. The amount of time spent in either program really depends upon the image and what I'm trying to achieve, but more on that later. Let's go edit some photos.

PORING OVER THE PICTURE

Every summer I head out to the Western United States to enjoy the mountains and the rivers. Jackson Lake is one of my favorite locations to camp, picnic, and photograph. Large boulders are scattered around the lakeshore, and with the Tetons in the background, it makes for a breathtaking setting.



In postprocessing I had two simple goals: Increase the darkness of the sky and lighten the rocks.

ISO 160
1/500 sec.
f/14
24mm lens

The active sky is what drew me into this image, and the 24mm focal range really helped capture the entire scene.
Since I was shooting into the sun, I used a lens hood to reduce lens flare.
I was camping and traveling light, so I used my all-around shooting lens, 24–70mm.
I wanted to capture the reflection of the sun on the water, so using a higher f-stop created the starburst effect.

PORING OVER THE PICTURE

Not all your images are going to go as planned. I had only one opportunity to photograph Mount Kilimanjaro at sunrise. That morning we were faced with considerable amounts of haze. Instead of getting upset, I made a few adjustments to capture the best Image possible and decided this would be an image I would need to spend a little time with in Lightroom.

A Graduated ND filter allowed me to expose the foreground properly.

I switched it up in the field and took several shots at different exposures until I settled on this one.

Using the Tone Range sliders in Lightroom, I was able to create more contrast in the midtones region.

ISO 100
1/60 sec.
f/9
80mm lens

MY WORKFLOW

I'm not the most organized person in the world (just ask my family), but when it comes to photography I like having things nailed down. This means creating a system that provides me with easy and well-organized access to my files and a rock-solid backup plan for peace of mind.

IMPORTING INTO LIGHTROOM

Before we move on to editing images, I want to give you a quick overview of how I manage images. I think the key to managing any image library is organization and backups. Here's a quick rundown of my management essentials:

1. **Use a simple folder system that's easy to navigate.** I organize all of my images in one folder, labeled Pictures, and further group them into folders by year, then subject (as in Pictures>2011>Paris).
2. **Enter keywords before importing.** I'm a big fan of using keywords to help find images easily, so enter as many relevant keywords as possible before you import into Lightroom.
3. **Import each raw image and convert it to DNG (Adobe's Digital Negative format).** The benefit of this is having one archival-quality file.
4. **Pause before you delete images from your memory card.** First make sure you have imported them correctly and have at least one good backup. I recommend making a second backup to an external hard drive or RAID device, like a Drobo.

HOT TIP

DNG is Adobe's open source alternative to camera manufacturers' proprietary Raw file format. Files converted to DNG will work with any software that supports the DNG format. For more information on the benefits of the DNG format visit Adobe.com.

LIBRARY MODULE

Lightroom is an amazing image management database that allows you to quickly identify which images you want to select for future processing. Once I have finished importing my images (**Figure 4.1**), I navigate over to the Library module to select

images to be processed. I'm not going to process every image I photograph, so being selective in Library mode saves me a ton of unneeded processing time.

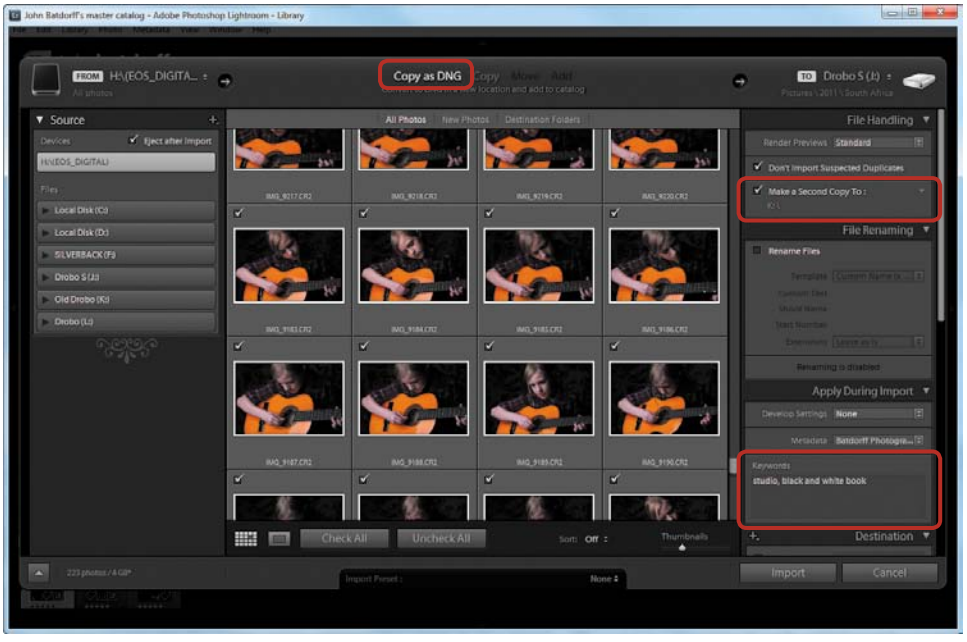


FIGURE 4.1
Taking a little extra time during the importing process can save you a ton of headaches down the road.

While in Grid (G) mode, I like to minimize the left and right panels (press the Tab key and adjust the Thumbnails slider), so I can review several images at time (**Figure 4.2**). When I land on an image of interest I toggle between Grid mode and Loupe (E) mode, where I can view the image larger (**Figure 4.3**).

I assign any image worthy of processing a five-star rating (press the 5 key) so that I can quickly group my "potential winners."

HOT TIP

Keep your rating system simple. The more complex it is, the less efficient it becomes. I use five stars for any image that's worth processing and a green label for an image that I have processed.

If you want to narrow down your team of winners even further, you can use Compare mode (C) to compare individual images to one another. This is a great feature to use in conjunction with the Zoom slider. I find it incredibly helpful when looking over portraits and trying to decide between them.

FIGURE 4.2
I label all my potential winners with five stars.

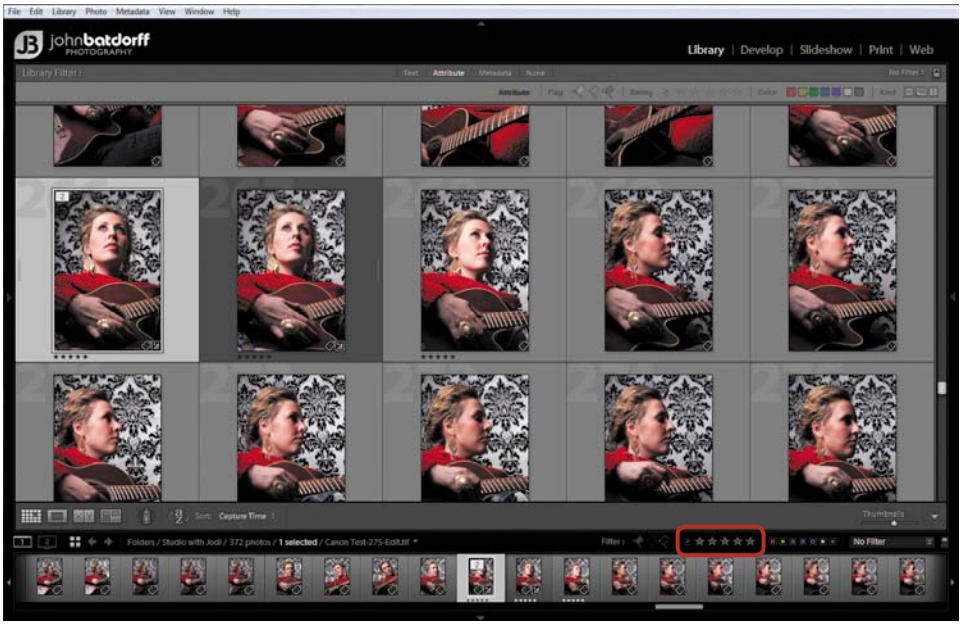


FIGURE 4.3
Use Loupe view when you want to see an image larger.

DEVELOP MODULE

Now it's time to head on over to the Develop (D) module and start having some fun with our images. Let's review the options for converting a color image to black and white within the Develop module. Once we review all the different ways to convert, we'll cover the details and how-to instructions for each method.

USING A PRESET

One of the simplest ways to do your black-and-white conversion is to use one of the many presets that come preloaded in Lightroom (**Figure 4.4**). A preset (**A**) is a set of adjustments that have been preconfigured to create a desired effect.

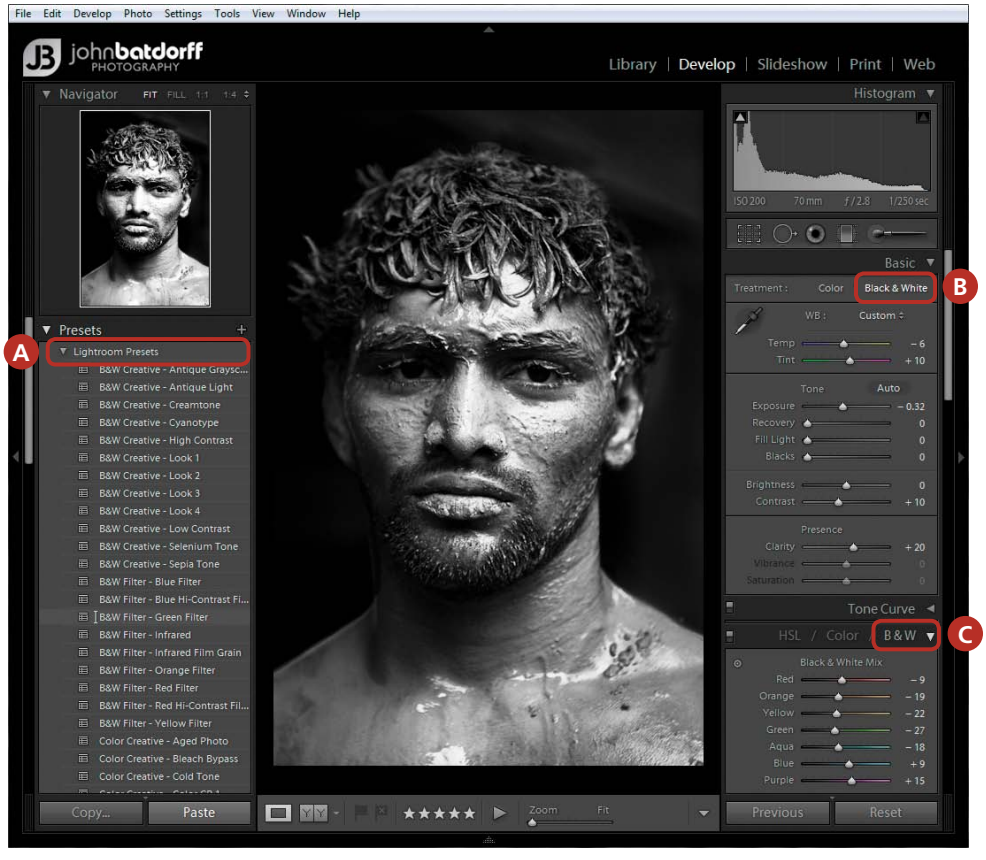


FIGURE 4.4
The Develop module is where you'll spend most of your time editing images in Lightroom.

The benefit of using a preset is it provides instant feedback on your image and can speed up your workflow. Many times I'll use presets to guide me in deciding which images I'll convert to black and white. It's like using a color filter in the field: It provides me with valuable feedback and a good starting point for my black-and-white conversion. Presets are so incredibly easy to use that you'll feel like you're cheating.

USING THE PANELS

You can also convert to black and white by navigating over to the Basic panel and choosing the Black & White treatment (Figure 4.4, **B**), clicking on B&W in the HSL/Color/B&W panel (**C**), or simply pressing the letter V on your keyboard. Using any of these methods will generate a monochrome version of a color image. Now, don't fret, your color image is still intact, as you can see if you toggle back to the color setting. Lightroom won't alter your original file—feel free to play with the Develop module sliders without worrying about what's happening to the original. It's called nondestructive editing, and it means you can rework images to your heart's content.

EDITING WITHOUT FEAR

How does Lightroom allow us to edit images without running the risk of altering our JPEG or raw files? It keeps a history of all adjustments to an image. Whenever we export, it generates a new file, which duplicates the original image, then applies the adjustments made in postprocessing; thus, it never alters the original.

The Basic panel Black & White conversion generates a monochrome image based on white balance. By moving the Temp and Tint sliders you can make global adjustments to the image.

The B&W selection within the HSL/Color/B&W panel offers the most control over a black-and-white image. Black & White Mix is very similar to Photoshop's channel mixer, creating a grayscale version of red, green, and blue color channels that make up the RGB version of the color image. We're able to influence independent colors that blend together to make the monochrome image simply by increasing or decreasing the saturation. (Refer back to the example of the Volkswagen Bugs, in Chapter 1, where we used saturation to increase contrast.)

THE PRESET WORKFLOW

My number one goal in this book is to help you start making beautiful black-and-white images, and the best place to begin learning is with presets. Presets can be addictive, and for good reason. They do a pretty decent job. It is extremely rare, though, for me to bring an image into Lightroom, click on a preset, and say, "Wow, that's it, I'm done!" Typically, what happens is I land on a preset that gives me a great starting point or baseline that I can tweak as I move forward in creating my vision. We're going to look at a few examples in the coming pages, but first let's make a few adjustments to our workspace, as well as to Lightroom.

WORKSPACE

As I mentioned in Chapter 3, controlling the light in your workspace is crucial to photo editing, so try to work in an environment where you can control it, whether by window shades, dimmer switches, or both. Shelter your monitor from direct light and try to avoid working in the dark, as well.

BACKGROUND COLOR

Consider changing Lightroom's default background color. I like to work with a black background when I'm reviewing potential black-and-white images. It helps me visually when I'm looking for contrast within an image. You can change your background by right-clicking your mouse anywhere on the background and selecting a color (**Figure 4.5**).

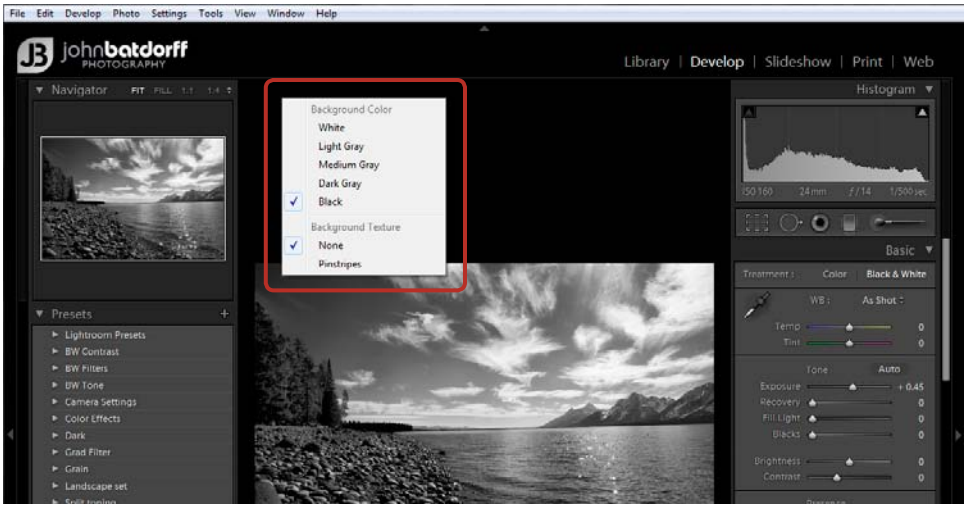


FIGURE 4.5
Don't forget to consider your background color. I prefer to use a black background when viewing my images.

PRESET PREFERENCES

Next, we want to make sure that our auto mix black-and-white conversion function is turned on. Whenever we make an adjustment to White Balance and click on Black & White in the Basic panel, it will automatically update the color channels (**Figure 4.6**).

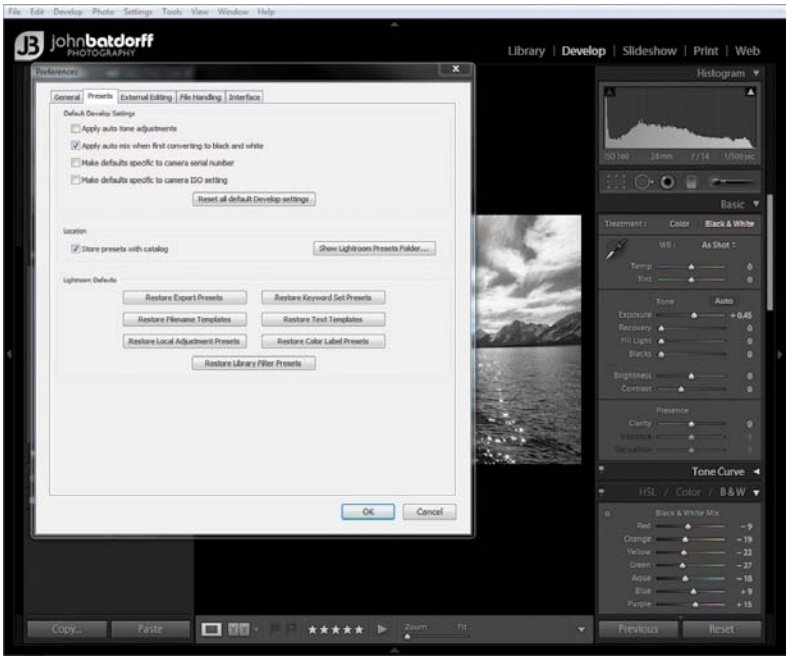


FIGURE 4.6
Customize your presets to save time and energy.

1. Navigate to Lightroom Preferences.
2. Click on the Presets tab.
3. Make sure the check box "Apply auto mix when first converting to black and white" is checked.
4. Click OK.

CREATING A PRESET

Presets are wonderful tools for streamlining repetitive tasks or creating your own particular style for future use. Let's review how to create a preset (**Figure 4.7**).

1. Start by making any adjustments in the Develop module that you wish to record for future use.
2. Go to the Presets module and click the + sign.
3. Give a name to your preset and put it in the folder of your choice.

4. Select and adjust only the settings you wish to correct.
5. Click Create.

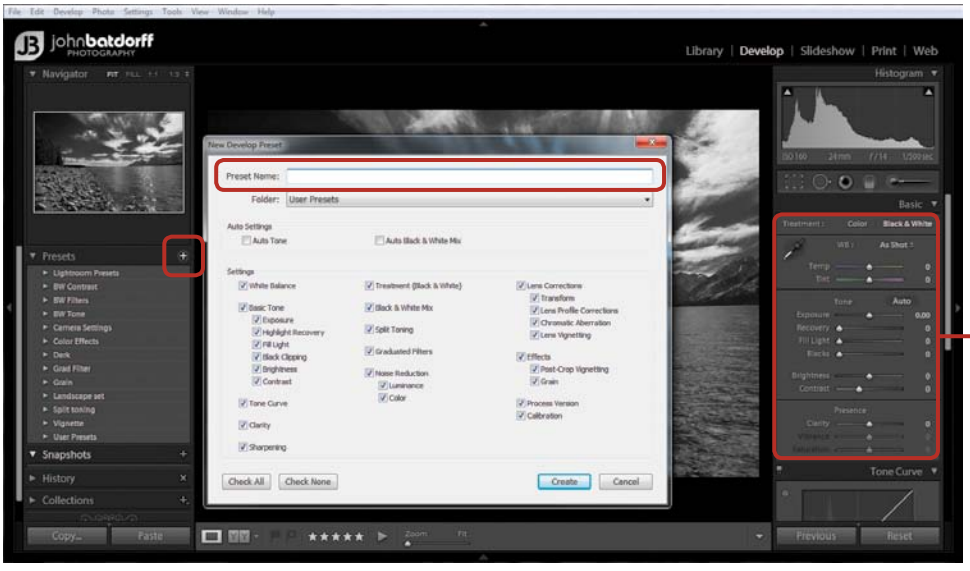


FIGURE 4.7
Creating a preset with your signature style is a great way to add consistency to your work.

Begin by making adjustments in the develop module that you wish to save as a preset.

That's it. Now you have your very own preset that you can use on future edits. As I warned you, this can be addictive. But it can save you a whole lot of time!

SELECTING AN IMAGE

The first thing I like to do in the Develop module is narrow down my field of candidates. I do this by filtering my view so that I see only my five-star-rated images. This allows me to focus on just those images I think are worth taking to the next level.

My next step is selecting images that I think will work well as black and whites. I start by scanning my five-star images, looking for those that have interesting light, shapes and forms, lines, or any of the other characteristics we discussed in Chapter 2.

Once I land on an image of interest I move my cursor over the Presets panel slowly, working my way down the black-and-white presets. I normally start by selecting BW Contrast while reviewing the effect on the image in the Navigator panel (**Figure 4.8**). Case in point: While I was in Africa visiting the Maasai, we ventured into one of the huts for a lesson on fire building. The hut was fairly dark, but we had nice light coming from the doorway. The image didn't work for me in color, but once I converted it using the B&W Creative - Look 2 it was an interesting, high-contrast image.

FIGURE 4.8
Highlighting presets and reviewing the changes in the Navigator window helps me determine if I should convert an image to black and white.

The presets are there for a good reason: They're a fast and easy approach to converting your color image. I'm not a big fan of reinventing the wheel (improving it, yes; reinventing it, no), so if a preset is 75 percent of the way there, I'll use it. However, one click of a preset will rarely get me to my final image. If that does work, trust me, I wouldn't feel guilty about using the preset, and neither should you. That just leaves us with more time to work on our other images. In the case of the Masai warrior I ended up going one step further and cropping the image before I was finished.

CROPPING

I try to do most of my cropping in camera by carefully composing my image, but at times it doesn't work out or I simply miss something. In the case of the Masai warrior, I found the hand on the right side of the frame distracting. Because it was dark, I didn't see it when I was framing the shot. No need to worry; Lightroom has an excellent cropping feature.

1. Click on the Crop Overlay mode button in the Develop module, or use the keyboard shortcut R.
2. Select a crop overlay. You can do this by pressing the letter O while in the Crop & Straighten tool panel (**Figure 4.9**). You can also choose Tools from the menu, then select the Crop Overlay tool and choose your preferred overlay. I use only two overlay designs: Golden Ratio for cropping portraits, and Rule of Thirds for cropping landscapes.

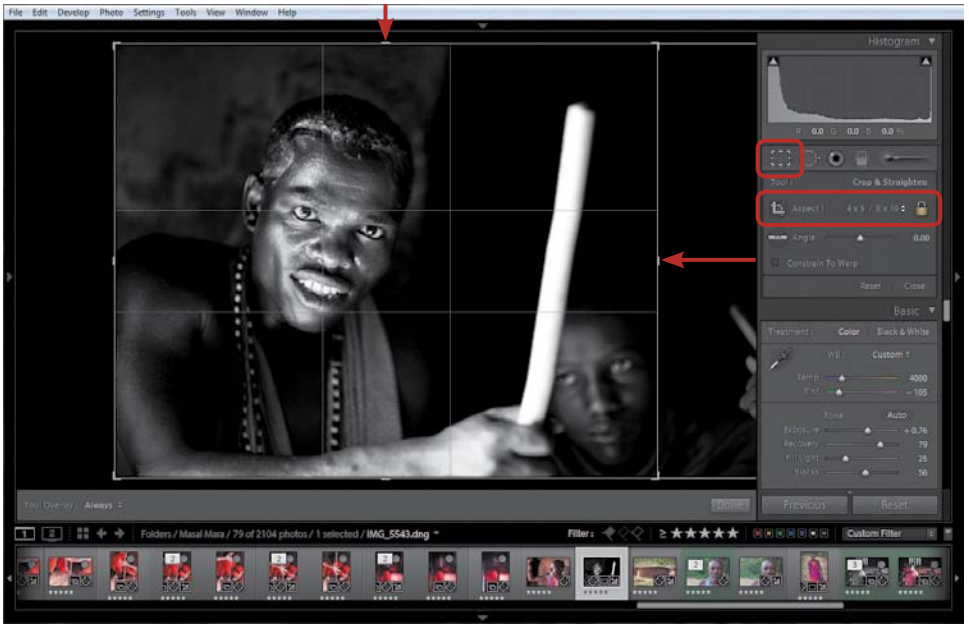


FIGURE 4.9
I used the 4x5 / 8x10 preset to crop in tighter on my image.

3. If you're going to do a lot of printing, try to crop using the aspect ratio of your desired print size. The crop tool preset will provide a list of some of the most common print sizes (**Figure 4.10**). Click on the word "original," left of the small lock icon, to view the available ratios.

FIGURE 4.10
You can create your own custom crop preset or use one of the many available.

LEARN THE SHORTCUTS

Lightroom has a keyboard shortcut for nearly every action imaginable. Head over to Adobe.com and search for *Lightroom Shortcuts*. Learning these will save you a ton of time.

USING THE BASIC PANEL

Let's review using the Basic panel to convert your image to black and white. I'm going to convert an image that I like in color but I think will work well in black and white, too. First I'll create a virtual copy of the image by pressing Ctrl (PC) or Command (Mac) plus the apostrophe key. The virtual copy will be the thumbnail in the Filmstrip with the bottom corner turned over (**Figure 4.11**).

FIGURE 4.11
Create a virtual copy for images that you wish to have in color and black and white.

Next, I'll convert to monochrome using Black & White in the Basic panel. There are several schools of thought on converting an image using the White Balance setting in the Basic panel. Some people like to make all the adjustments to the image while it's in color, and others prefer to convert the image to black and white, then make the adjustments. I tend to do the latter, since I've already made most of my adjustments in camera. I feel that by converting the image up front I get a better feel for its overall aesthetics while adjusting its white balance (**Figure 4.12**).

FIGURE 4.12
I prefer to convert my image to black and white before making changes to its white balance.

The Auto Tone setting is a good place to start when you first begin correcting image exposures. It will automatically adjust Exposure, Recovery, Fill Light, Blacks, Brightness, and Contrast settings. Many times it will create a nice starting point, and we can tweak as needed.

Occasionally, though, Auto Tone can make erratic adjustments. Don't worry—if this happens and you don't like the result, simply undo the last move by clicking Alt (Option on a Mac) and Reset Tone in the Basic panel, or go back to your history and click on the previous setting.

Slide the Temp and Tint sliders to adjust an image's white balance while reviewing the effects in the main window. I typically try to work the Temp slider first, then the Tint slider, until I get the desired effect. In the case of Figure 4.12, I wanted to darken the sky and lighten the rocks. I was able to achieve my goal by decreasing Temp and increasing Tint.

USING THE HSL/COLOR/B&W PANEL

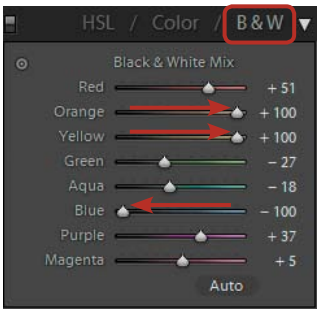


FIGURE 4.13
Converting using this method will give you more control than using the White Balance sliders.

Overall, our results were not too bad, but let's take a different approach and see if we can make the image better. This time we're going to convert my virtual image using the B&W section of the HSL/Color/B&W Panel (**Figure 4.13**).

1. Convert the image using either B&W setting.
2. Click Auto for the Tone setting, as we did in our previous conversion.
3. Experiment by adjusting the color sliders.

There are two approaches to working with color sliders. First, you can simply move the sliders around and stop when you achieve a desired look. Or (my preferred method), you can use the Targeted Adjustment tool to select specific areas you wish to lighten or darken. You can darken or lighten the sky, for instance, by selecting it with this tool and using your keyboard's arrow keys.

To darken the sky, tap your down arrow key; to lighten, tap your up arrow key. For this image I darkened the sky (-81 blue slider) and lightened the rocks (+100 orange and +45 yellow slider) (**Figure 4.14**). Let's compare the two images (**Figures 4.15** and **4.16**).

FIGURE 4.14
I darkened the sky and lightened the rocks using the Targeted Adjustment tool.

FIGURE 4.15
I converted this image using the Basic panel and adjusted the Temp and Tint sliders.

FIGURE 4.16
I converted this image using the HSL/Color/B&W panel and adjusting the color sliders.

CONTRAST ADJUSTMENTS

We've discussed contrast at length in earlier chapters. We know that contrast is highly important in black and white, so now let's discuss how to work with it in Lightroom. The tools for adjusting contrast in the Develop module range from the basic Contrast slider to the precise Tone Curve.

FIGURE 4.17
This is the basic Contrast slider—a good place for beginners to start.

The Contrast slider (**Figure 4.17**) is a very blunt tool that is available in many postprocessing software applications. Its ease of use and immediate global effects make it a favorite for photographers who are just starting out. If you're new to Lightroom, then start experimenting with contrast by using this slider.

By moving the slider to the left, you decrease contrast; by moving it to the right, you increase contrast. Take note of your histogram as you play with these adjustments. When you increase contrast, you get that classic "U" formation in the histogram. Conversely, when you decrease contrast, you see a peak in the midtones. Observing the image as you make adjustments with the slider, and then checking out the resulting histogram, is a wonderful way to understand the relationship between contrast and histogram—and how histograms can help you.

The more advanced option, and my preferred method for manipulating contrast, is through the use of Tone Curve (**Figure 4.18**). It provides us with precision control over an image's highlights, lights, darks, and shadows with use of the independent sliders (**A**) or the Targeted Adjustment Tone tool (**B**). The Tone Range split sliders (**C**) below the tone graph allow you to increase or decrease the range of tones to be affected. Point Curve Presets can be set at Linear, Medium Contrast, or Strong Contrast (**D**). Let's review how I typically tackle Tone Curve.

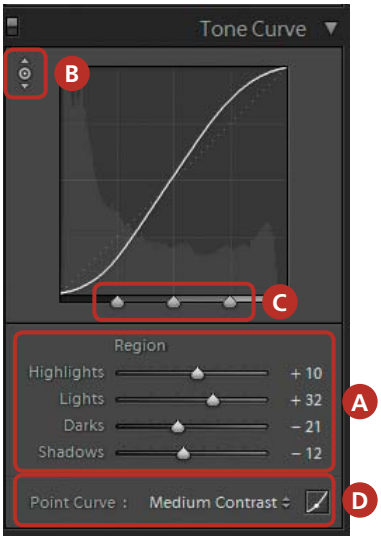


FIGURE 4.18
Tone Curve gives you precision control over contrast.

USING TONE CURVE

1. First, finish making all of your main tone adjustments in the Basic panel (Exposure, Recovery, Fill Light, and so on). These will affect the Tone Curve adjustments that we're about to make.
2. Select a Point Curve preset: Linear, Medium Contrast, or Strong Contrast. Choose Medium or Strong Contrast if you want to lighten your highlights or darken your shadows.
3. Adjust the tone curve by using sliders or the Targeted Adjustment tool. I use the Targeted Adjustment tool and select an area on the image where I wish to increase or decrease the brightness. Often I end up with a very gentle S shape in my tone curves.
4. Fine tune the contrast with the Tone Range sliders.

ADVANCED CURVE ADJUSTMENTS

If you want more control over adding contrast to your images, then let's unlock the power of the Tone Range split sliders. Take a look at this image of Mount Kilimanjaro that I photographed in the morning. I'll walk you through the process from start to finish. I've already made my adjustments to the tone curve, but now we want to use the Tone Range sliders to selectively add more contrast to the image (**Figure 4.19**).

FIGURE 4.19
The default position of the Tone Range splits is equally divided on the tone curve between shadows (black), darks (red), lights (blue), and highlights (yellow).

The Tone Range split sliders are a great place to fine-tune contrast. If we wanted to add contrast to the midtones, then we would move the two outside sliders into the middle, thus compressing the midtone range and creating more contrast (**Figure 4.20**). If we move the two outside sliders to the furthest point from the center, then we decrease contrast in the midtone region (**Figure 4.21**).

If we wanted to add contrast to the light and highlight regions, we would move the Tone Range sliders to the right. This increases our shadow region while restricting our highlights region, thus making our image darker and creating more contrast in the highlights (**Figure 4.22**).

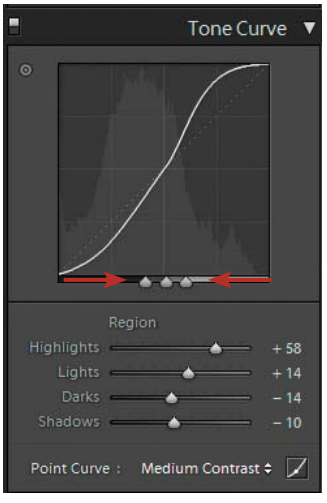


FIGURE 4.20
Moving the sliders to the center adds contrast to the midtones.

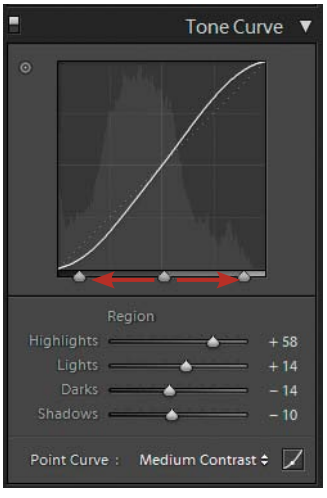


FIGURE 4.21
Move the sliders outward as indicated by the arrows to decrease midtone contrast.

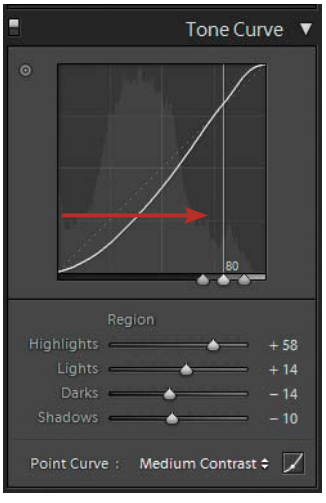


FIGURE 4.22
Moving the sliders to the right will increase our shadow region.

Moving our sliders all the way to the left will increase our highlights region and create contrast in our shadows. Keep in mind, any move to the far right or left might be too much (**Figure 4.23**), but understanding the basic idea is what matters here.

Moving the middle slider to the left and the right slider to the far right allows us to add contrast and detail in our shadow region without blowing out the image. This gives us our desired effect (**Figure 4.24**); I am now happy with the amount of contrast in the image.

FIGURE 4.23
Moving the sliders all the way over created way too much contrast in the shadows—not the desired look.

FIGURE 4.24
By experimenting with the Tone Range sliders we're able to add contrast to our shadows and get the desired effect.

SELECTIVE COLOR

Sometimes I like to add a little selective color back to my black-and-whites to help breathe some life back into the image. While I don't do this often, it's still a popular style of photography, especially with portraits. First we're going to create a new preset we can use in the future that will trick Lightroom into desaturating an image but still allow us to paint color into it.

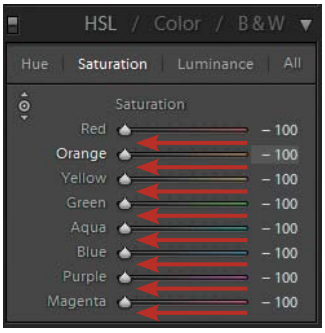


FIGURE 4.25
Move all color sliders to the left so they read -100.

1. Create an HSL B&W Preset.
2. Locate the HSL panel in the Develop module.
3. Move all the color sliders to -100 (**Figure 4.25**).
4. Head to the Presets panel and click the plus sign to add a preset.
5. Name the new preset HSL B&W.
6. Click Treatment (Color) and Color Adjustments. This way only these changes will be affected by this preset.
7. Click Create (**Figure 4.26**).

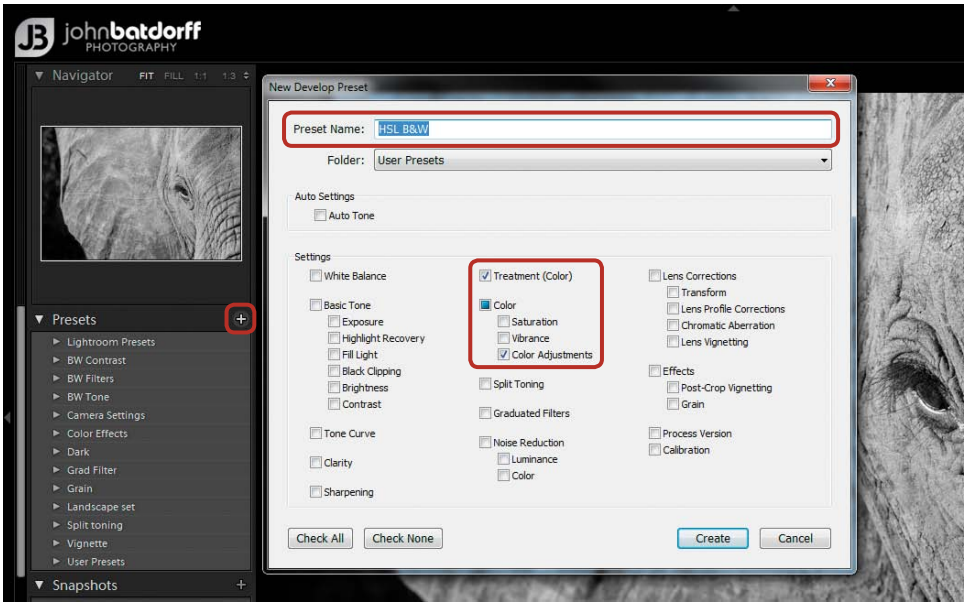


FIGURE 4.26
Now we've created a new preset we can use anytime.

HOT TIP

If you'd like to test this preset, first undo your desaturation by selecting the previous button—Ctrl+Z (PC) or Command+Z (Mac)—then selecting your new HSL B&W preset. If all works correctly, you should be looking at a grayscale version of your image.

Now that we've used our HSL preset to create a monochrome image, it's time to explore the benefits of this technique. We can add color back into an image using either the Targeted Adjustment tool or the adjustment brush. Let's review the pros and cons of both approaches.

TARGETED ADJUSTMENT OR SLIDER

Let's say I want to add color to the eyes of this elephant to bring a little life into the image. I can select the Targeted Adjustment tool, click on the pupil, and use the up arrow key to add color back to the image. You'll notice that the red and orange sliders are both increasing in saturation, and color is being added back into the entire image (**Figure 4.27**). This is not what we want.

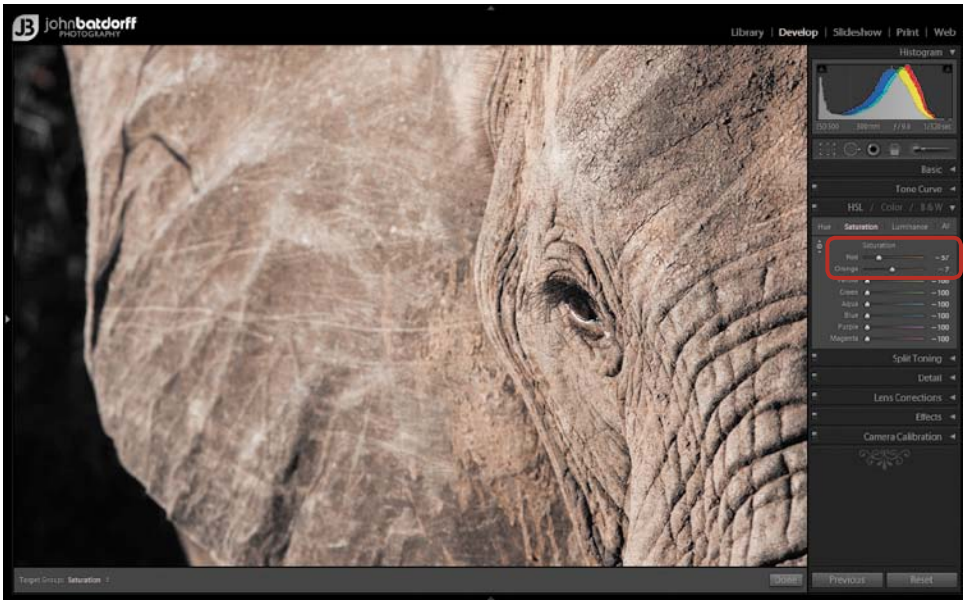


FIGURE 4.27
The Trageted Adjustment tool added too much color globally.

Essentially, using the Targeted Adjustment tool to add color is a quick process that often only works if you have isolated colors in the image (such as an extreme close-up portrait where the subject has blue eyes). Because there probably isn't any other blue within the frame, you can just increase the sliders. But if your subject's blue shirt is also in the frame, you'll reintroduce color there as well. Let's try a more direct approach.

PAINTING WITH COLOR

Our other option is to use the adjustment brush to paint in the areas where we want to bring the color back. While we have more control with this method, the downside is that it takes a little extra time. However, it's worth it if it lets us achieve the effects we want. Let's go through how we would do this, step by step.

1. Zoom in on the elephant's eye by clicking in the screen or using the Navigator window to locate the elephant's pupil.
2. Select the adjustment brush and create a smaller brush by decreasing the Size slider. We want a small slider since we'll be painting in around the eyes. I like to do most of my painting using the Mask Overlay tool so that I can see what I'm doing. Check the Show Selected Mask Overlay box. Now we use our tool to paint in the eyes. Once we've finished, increase the Saturation slider to 100 percent. We press the letter O (not zero) on the keyboard to toggle our mask on and off so we can see the changes. If you missed a few spots, just fill them in, or if you went outside the lines click on erase and brush away your overspray.
3. Now, we'll zoom back out of the image and make some final adjustments using Tone Curve. We're going to place a gentle S in the tone curve, something I do quite often, but this time we're going to compress the Tone Range sliders, as we learned earlier in the chapter, so that we get more contrast in the midtones (**Figure 4.28**).
4. We are almost there. Since there's a lot of texture in this image, I'm going to add a little clarity by increasing the Clarity slider (**Figure 4.29**) and finish the image with a very small vignette using the Highlight Priority slider (**Figures 4.30** and **4.31**). Voilà!

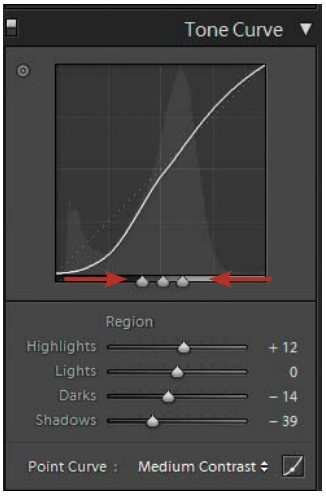


FIGURE 4.28
We increase midtone contrast by moving all three sliders to the center.

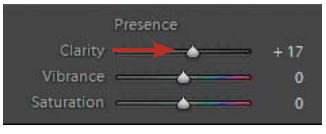


FIGURE 4.29
We increase the Clarity slider to bring out the texture and lines.

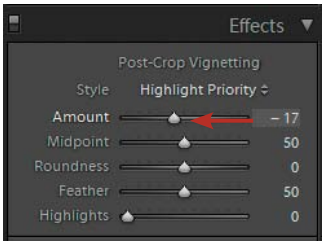
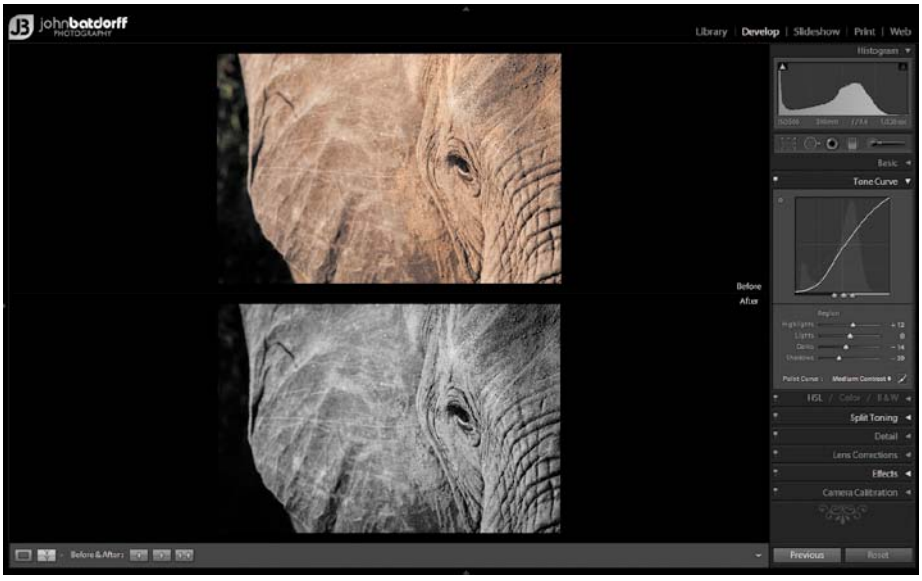


FIGURE 4.30
This is my preferred method for adding a vignette.

FIGURE 4.31
Here you can see how all of these adjustments came together in the final product.



PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Let's step things up a notch and learn more about dodging, burning, adding contrast, and sharpening. Imagine that you're helping me process a portrait that I took in India. I'll walk you through it from beginning to end so that you can get a feel for my flow. I think our original, **Figure 4.32**, will look great in black and white, too.

FIGURE 4.32
Create a virtual copy so that we can edit without making changes to the color version of the image.

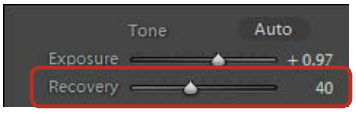
1. Create a virtual copy so that we can edit without making changes to the color version of the image.
2. Convert the image to black and white using the Basic panel.
3. Using the Golden Ratio crop guide, crop in a little tighter.
4. Click Auto Tone to get a starting point for exposure.
5. In evaluating the baseline produced by Auto Tone, it becomes clear that the image is now a little too dark (**Figure 4.33**). Auto Tone added black and decreased the exposure. We increase exposure using the Exposure slider to get the image where we want it. This slider affects the entire image, whereas the Brightness slider affects only the midtones. We need a full shift in our histogram, which is why we choose the Exposure slider.

FIGURE 4.33
We used Auto Tone, but this image is still too dark and will need to be adjusted manually.

6. Now we turn on Clipping Alerts. This will let us know if we've lost any detail in the highlights, shadows, or both. We can activate it simply by pressing J while in the Develop module. Blue represents the shadow areas where we've lost detail, and red shows us the highlights where we've lost detail—for instance, note the red in the man's white shirt (**Figure 4.34**). We can bring that detail back by using the Recovery slider. Move the slider to the right until the red diminishes or disappears (**Figure 4.35**).

FIGURE 4.34
The red (highlights) and blue (shadows) near his hands indicate loss of detail.

FIGURE 4.35
The Recovery slider is a great tool for bringing detail back into blown-out whites.



7. Increasing our Recovery slider will darken our image a little, so we may need to balance that once again with the Exposure slider until we find our happy medium.
8. Once we've finished making adjustments, we'll turn clipping off so that it doesn't distract us, by selecting J on the keyboard. Check it periodically while you are making adjustments to ensure that you aren't losing details. Remember, you will naturally lose some details in some images. Just make sure that you are willing to sacrifice them in creating your vision.
9. Next, darken the background by using the brush and burning in the background (**Figure 4.36**). We burn to darken and dodge to lighten. I like having Mask Overlay turned on so that I can see what I'm doing. Click on the Brush tool, or hit K, then click the box that says Show Selected Mask Overlay or click O on your keyboard. This will turn the areas you are brushing red.
10. Next, select a brush size. Generally I use a brush size of 10–12 when I need to cover a large area, as we are doing with the background of this image. I like having my Feather setting at 75 and Flow at 35.
11. Now, let's paint in the background around the subject while holding down the mouse and covering the areas we want to darken with the brush. Once finished, we'll uncheck the Show Selected Mask Overlay box or hit O again, and use the

Brightness slider to burn or darken the midtones in the background. This helps the subject come forward from the background.

FIGURE 4.36
Using the adjustment brush allows us to darken the background.

12. The subject's eyes are still a little dark, so we use a much smaller brush this time to dodge the area around his eyes. Once finished, we increase the exposure to brighten the areas where we've brushed (**Figure 4.37**).

FIGURE 4.37
We use a smaller brush size for the delicate work of painting around the eyes.

13. We also want to lighten the subject's turban, so we go to the HSL/Color/B&W panel and use the Targeted Adjustment tool to click on his turban. Then we use the keyboard's arrow up key to lighten it (**Figure 4.38**).

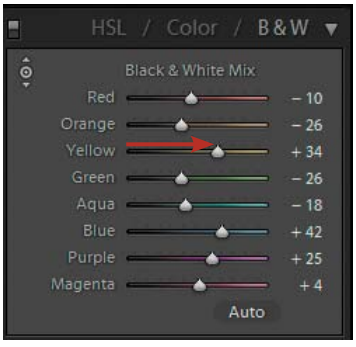


FIGURE 4.38
The selection tool lets us target a particular area of an image.

14. This is when I typically add contrast to my image. The easiest way to do this is to use the Contrast slider in the Basic panel. But I prefer using the Targeted Adjustment tool in the Tone Curve panel. We use the tool to select areas on the image that we think need to be darkened or lightened. Click on a point in his face to lighten it and a point in the background to darken it. In the end, we put a very small S-shape in the Tone Curve graph (**Figure 4.39**). (If you're a beginner, begin with the Contrast slider and work your way up to the Tone Curve panel.)

15. In many portraits I add a small vignette. Here, we choose the Highlight Priority style vignette that is located in the Effects panel. I don't like to go overboard, but I think a small vignette does a nice job of focusing your attention on your subject (**Figure 4.40**).

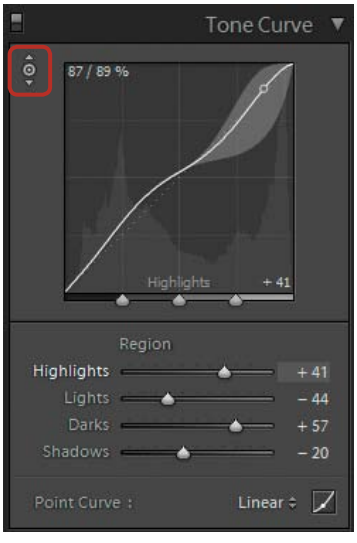


FIGURE 4.39
Our work has produced a small S-shape in the tone curve.

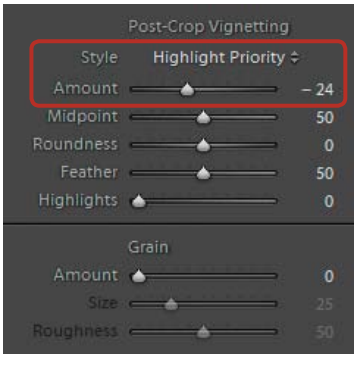


FIGURE 4.40
I like creating a light vignette using the Highlight Priority preset.

16. Finally, we sharpen the image a little using the Wide Edges preset that is standard with Lightroom. It is located in the presets under Sharpening (**Figure 4.41**).

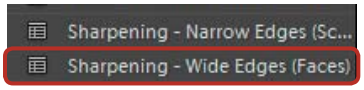


FIGURE 4.41
I use Lightroom's Wide Edges preset for sharpening portraits.

17. To review our final image, we hit the L key twice to turn the lights out. This gives us a true sense of how our final product will look (**Figure 4.42**). If we're happy with it, we'll give it a green label (press 8 on your keyboard). For me, that means it's ready to be shared on my blog or printed.

FIGURE 4.42
I review all my final images in Lights Out mode.

HOT TIP

When using Lights Out mode, select L once to dim your screen, twice to view only the image, and three times to go back to your original screen.

TERMS TO REMEMBER

Nondestructive editing Nondestructive editing means you can make changes to an image without overwriting the original image data, so the original is always available for future edits.

Virtual copy A virtual copy doesn't exist as an actual photo; instead, it is metadata in the catalog that stores the various sets of adjustments.

Chapter 4 Assignments

Create a New Preset

A simple way to create your own preset is to begin by modifying an existing one. Click on an existing preset and make adjustments that suit your style of photography, then rename and save it as a new preset.

Organize Your Presets

Once you've been working in Lightroom for a while, I recommend organizing your presets based upon your workflow. If you find yourself working with particular presets over and over, consider grouping them in their own folder.

Organize Your Library

Lightroom provides great tools for organizing your image library. Create a system using star ratings, color labels, and flags to help you get a grip on your growing collection of images.

Understanding History

Make several adjustments (cropping, exposure, and so on) to an image in the Develop module. Now review those changes in the History panel, located on the left side of the screen. Practice moving your cursor down the History panel and selecting previous edits. Notice how your image reverts to that stage in the history. Understanding the History panel helps you avoid resetting the entire image to its initial state.

Share your results with the book's Flickr group!

Join the group here: www.flickr.com/groups/blackandwhitefromsnapshotstogreatshots

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