BEFORE

AFTER

PRECISE PORTRAIT PROCESSING
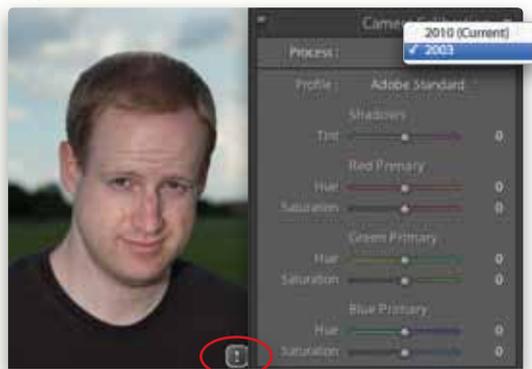
UPDATES TO LIGHTROOM 3 YIELD IMPRESSIVE RESULTS *by* A.J. WOOD

YOU HAVE TO ADMIRE THE PIONEERS OF PHOTOGRAPHY WHO CREATED AN IMAGE WITHOUT THE INSTANT GRATIFICATION OFFERED BY DIGITAL SLR CAMERAS (DSLRS) AND THEIR LCD DISPLAYS. WHILE THEIR PREDECESSORS WORKED PATIENTLY IN A DARKROOM AMIDST A WAFF OF CHEMICALS, TODAY'S DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHERS BENEFIT FROM THE LIGHTROOM DEVELOP MODULE. THE DEVELOP MODULE INTERFACE PRESENTS PHOTOGRAPHERS WITH A LOGICAL PROGRESSION FOR PROCESSING IMAGES.

THE CAMERA CALIBRATION PANEL

Our first step is the Camera Calibration panel, located at the bottom of the right-side panels area in the Develop module. It doesn't require changes every time you work on an image; however, there's a setting that distinguishes Lightroom 3 from previous versions—it's the Process pop-up menu option, which is set to 2010 (Current) for images newly imported in Lightroom 3. If you have updated an existing Lightroom 1 or Lightroom 2 catalog, you'll notice your images display an exclamation point warning at the bottom right, indicating the Process is set to 2003. To take advantage of all the new Develop features in Lightroom 3, you must use Process 2010 (Current). *See Figure 1.*

■ Figure 1

While you may consider updating your entire Lightroom catalog to process version 2010, this will change images you've already edited under the 2003 process version. For example, Sharpening and Noise Reduction look significantly different between the 2003 and 2010 processes. The good news is you can switch process versions any time you choose due to the Lightroom database design. A recommended approach is to update older images as necessary when making new adjustments.

The Profile setting in the Camera Calibration panel allows you to choose profiles that mimic your camera's custom settings. Canon and Nikon users specifically can emulate vivid color settings or settings for scenery and portraits. Profiles are best used to establish your baseline setting—your starting point—for the rest of the adjustments you make in the Develop module. For our example, we're using Camera Portrait.

THE BASIC PANEL

Working from top to bottom in the Basic panel, your first stop is adjusting the white balance in your image. When working with RAW images, the white balance (WB) pop-up menu will show all the settings available in camera, such as Auto, Daylight, Cloudy, Shade, Tungsten, Fluorescent, Flash, etc. When working with JPEG images, the white balance pop-up menu only shows three choices: Auto, Custom, and As Shot. It should also be noted RAW images show a Temp adjustment in degrees Kelvin, where JPEG images have a range from −100 to +100.

The White Balance Selector tool (W) is designed to target image areas that are neutral gray, not white. With the tool selected, click the eyedropper on a gray portion of an image for better control. As you mouse over your image, look in the Navigator panel for a preview. In our example, the initial white balance in camera is a little green, so we changed the white balance to Flash to warm things up.

After setting the white balance, you're ready to adjust the Tone controls. If you're not sure where to begin, or which controls you need to adjust, the Auto button is a good starting point. As Photoshop wizard Jack Davis points out, you'll find the Exposure slider locks in an appropriate value, and you can simply adjust the Brightness and Contrast sliders to your individual taste. What's the difference between the Exposure and Brightness sliders? Exposure targets the highlight areas first when brightening an image, while Brightness targets the midtone range. Our portrait is a little dark, so we adjusted the Exposure to +0.55. *See Figure 2.*

The Recovery slider is used to recover highlight details lost from overexposure. While it can simply be used in response to adjustments made with the Exposure slider, it's useful by itself as a single adjustment. We'll use the Recovery slider to pull back highlight detail in the face, then adjust Blacks to keep the shirt from washing out.

For a better idea of how your adjustments are affecting the exposure of an image, press J to toggle the shadow and highlight clipping warnings on and off. Blown-out highlights appear in red, while clipped shadows appear in blue. You can also press-and-hold the Option (PC: Alt) key while moving the Exposure, Recovery, or Blacks sliders to see individual clipping warnings for those adjustments. *See Figure 3.*

Once you've set the tonal range in the image, you can give it more pop by adjusting the Presence controls. Clarity increases local contrast and in some cases appears to thicken the outline areas or sharpen the image. Shiny objects, metals, and textured areas benefit well when adding positive Clarity values. When shooting portraits, women and children generally can do without too much Clarity. Choosing a negative Clarity value will reduce contrast, creating an appearance of surface blurring.

Portraits benefit from the Vibrance adjustment. This is due to its ability to target primarily muted colors compared to Saturation, which boosts all colors simultaneously in an image. Vibrance also does well at preserving skintones.

■ Figure 2

■ Figure 3

THE TONE CURVE PANEL

You can make an overall contrast adjustment targeting the midtones by using the Contrast slider in the Basic panel, but for greater control the Tone Curve panel works very well. We'll use the Point Curve pop-up menu and choose Strong Contrast. Notice the very shallow S curve created in the Tone Curve graph? The steeper this curve, the stronger the contrast in the image.

To target specific areas in an image, use the Target Adjustment tool in the Tone Curve panel. It's easy to overlook, but click the target icon to the left of the Tone Curve graph. Click-and-drag up in your photo to lighten specific areas, or click-and-drag down to darken areas of the photo. When you're finished making adjustments, click the icon again to dismiss the tool.

THE HSL PANEL

The Vibrance and Saturation controls work well, but sometimes you want more precise color control. The HSL panel allows you to adjust Hue, Saturation, and Luminance one color at a time. We have good separation of colors in this image, allowing us the freedom to play with our HSL adjustments. Here we can adjust the blue in the sky (which also affects the eyes), as well as make minor adjustments to the red and orange in the skin. In the Saturation section, we set Red to –20, Orange to –25, Green to –40, Aqua to +10, and Blue to +60. Under Luminance, we set Yellow and Green to –100, and Blue to –20. Notice there's a Target Adjustment tool here as well, so you can easily click-and-drag in the photo to adjust color. *See Figure 4.*

THE DETAIL PANEL

As previously mentioned, you'll appreciate the improvements made to Sharpening and Noise Reduction in the Detail panel. To see the adjustments in your image, be sure to set the view to 1:1 or higher in the Navigator panel.

Sharpening deserves special attention because the settings you used with Process 2003 *will not* be the same settings you use with Process 2010 (Current). This may be why some of your favorite sharpening presets seem broken. The Amount and Radius sliders determine how much sharpening will be applied to a photo, while the Detail and Masking sliders determine the areas of focus for sharpening. Using the 2010 process version in Lightroom 3, you'll find it's better to use smaller values than you're used to for the Amount slider.

Press-and-hold the Option (PC: Alt) key while moving the Sharpening sliders to display focus previews. The Amount preview is black and white to remove color distractions, while the Radius and Detail previews are embossed to show area localization. The Masking preview shows areas sharpened in white, while areas in black will not be sharpened. In our image, the Amount is set to 39, Radius is kept at 1.0 for small areas, Detail is lowered to 3 to reduce edge artifacts, and Masking hovers around 89 to allow the edge of the nose to show. *See Figure 5.*

Prior to Lightroom 3, you probably never used the Noise Reduction sliders and resorted to making these corrections elsewhere. It's worth finding that old photo that had noise you couldn't remove and running this adjustment on it. When you move the Luminance slider for the first time, you won't be disappointed. You reduce the graininess by adjusting the Luminance, and balance the image details with the Detail and Contrast sliders.

"WHEN YOU MOVE THE LUMINANCE SLIDER FOR THE FIRST TIME, YOU WON'T BE DISAPPOINTED."

■ Figure 4

■ Figure 5

THE SPOT REMOVAL TOOL

It's true that Photoshop is the standard for image manipulation, but Lightroom has its share of brushes. The Spot Removal tool (Q) comes in handy for quick touch-up work in portraits (and the occasional dust spot). Unlike the Clone Stamp or Healing Brush tools in Photoshop, you don't use a brushing motion with this tool. Simply hover over the spot you want to clean up, then click-and-drag to a clean spot, and release the mouse button. Make sure the brush options are set to Heal for portraits. You can also resize the Spot Removal tool by using the scroll wheel on your mouse. No more reaching for the Bracket keys to size up or down. *See Figure 6.*

THE ADJUSTMENT BRUSH

The Adjustment Brush (K) is another tool that can be used for localized adjustments. It's a powerful tool in that once you've painted the area you want to adjust, you can change what adjustments are applied as often as you like. As with the Spot Removal tool, you can quickly resize the Adjustment Brush by using the scroll wheel on your mouse. Press-and-hold the Shift key while using the scroll wheel to adjust Feather.

To begin, simply paint in an area on your photo where you want to make an adjustment. A pin will be set where you first clicked. You can toggle the paint overlay on and off by pressing O, which is useful if you're using a subtle adjustment. There's no need to lock in the slider adjustment (e.g., Exposure, Saturation, etc.) prior to painting because you can move the sliders and adjust the area as long as the pin is in place. An active pin shows up as black, and inactive pins will be gray. To create a new adjustment area, simply click New in the Adjustment Brush panel. You can toggle visibility of the adjustment pins on and off by pressing H.

The following nose trick is a favorite, as we would normally jump into Photoshop. To remove the extra bit of red, paint the nose as shown (Overlay preview is left on for your review). We'll set Saturation to –30 then select a color by clicking on the Color swatch. We set the Hue to 40 and the Saturation to 18% in the Select a Color dialog, which balances well against the skin. You'll find if you sample directly from the face, the sampled color is too red. *See Figure 7.*

For the eyes, we'll add a tiny bit of Exposure and set it to 0.26, and set Clarity to 11. If you want, you can also use the Color option to change the eye color. *See Figure 8.*

When Lightroom first came out, an Adobe employee commented that, "Using Lightroom makes photography fun again." There's a lot that can be done in the Develop module. After building a foundation with some basic adjustments, you quickly realize the untapped potential that awaits. 📷

■ Figure 6

■ Figure 7

■ Figure 8

BIO | A.J. Wood is an Adobe Community Professional and Adobe Certified Instructor in Photoshop, Lightroom, and InDesign. He's a NAPP Evangelist, belongs to the Professional Photographers of America (PPA), and is an instructor for the Special Kids Photography of America (SKPA).

In addition to creating video tutorials for LayersMagazine.com, A.J. contributes art and technology content for ajwood.com, TipSquirrel.com, GeekBeat.tv, and WebBeat.tv.