

YOU, ME, THIS BOOK, AND THE BIG-SCARY-PHOTOSHOP THING.

So you want to be a better photographer?

I can't help you.

I don't think I'm a good photographer either. You can check out my average attempts at <http://bit.ly/fireicon>. See? Average. But they are better than my brother-in-law's, and that keeps me warm at night.

There are two types of photographer in this world, the professional and the rest of us, and being a professional is nothing to do with making money. You remember that chap that took your sister's wedding pictures? He probably wasn't a professional; he was just someone who paid his mortgage using a camera.

Here's how you tell if you're a professional. Let's run a thought experiment. I want you to imagine how you'd take a picture of someone changing a light bulb.

I'll wait.

You got it?

When legendary photographer (and owner of his own Nikon Speedlight factory), Joe McNally was asked the same question by National Geographic, he climbed to the very, very top of the Empire State Building in New York, and took a picture of a chap replacing that big red flashing bulb that scares away pilots. It took him four attempts and he's got a scar on his head to mark the occasion.

Joe is a professional. You can see the picture on page 3 of his book, "The moment it clicks".

Lets run another one. The city of South Lake Tahoe, California, celebrates the 4th July by setting off fireworks along the shoreline. Where are you going to stand to take the picture?

That's a harder question, of course, because you may not know the area, but if like me, you'd have wandered down to the shoreline with the crowds, then you're not a professional either.

Here's what a Flickr contact of mine did:

"MOST OF THE SPECTATORS THAT WENT TO THIS SHOW WENT TO THE BEACH NEAR WHERE THEY LAUNCHED THE FIREWORKS. IF I DID THAT, THE FOREGROUND WOULD JUST BE A BEACH, AND LOTS OF PEOPLE. THE BACKGROUND WOULD JUST BE WATER. AS USUAL, I WAS TRESPASSING ON PRIVATE PROPERTY WHEN I SHOT THIS. I AM GETTING ALL HIGH-TECH NOW, WHEN I TRESPASS. FIRST, I FIGURED OUT

WHERE THE BARGE WAS THAT THEY WERE LAUNCHING THE FIREWORKS FROM. THEN I WENT TO GOOGLE EARTH, AND ZOOMED IN ON LAKE TAHOE, AND TRIED TO FIGURE OUT WHAT SPOT ON THE LAKE WOULD HAVE THE NICEST ROCKY COASTLINE IN THE FOREGROUND, AND MOUNTAINS IN THE BACKGROUND, AND AN UNOBSTRUCTED VIEW OF THE FIREWORKS. THEN I PUNCHED IN THE EXACT COORDINATES FOR THAT EXACT SPOT INTO MY GPS. THEN I WENT AND CLIMBED OVER SOME FENCES, AND WALKED THROUGH A BUNCH OF PEOPLES BACKYARDS UNTIL I GOT TO THAT EXACT SPOT."

Mike's a professional. You can see his work at mikejonesphoto.com and the photo at <http://bit.ly/fireicon-mike>.

So back to you and me. I can't make you a professional photographer, but I can help you get your friends and family to believe you're a great one: mine do (poor saps). Here's how I fooled them – Adobe Photoshop.

That's it.

I take average shots like this :



And turn them in to "better than your brother-in-law's" like this:



They're still not award-winning "professional" shots, but they do have the WOW factor when compared to most peoples'. And it's not hard.

I once watched a friend sitting in front of Photoshop for the first time, I thought she was either going to cry or throw the computer out of the window. Photoshop has 4500 separate functions, and an average of 11 ways to operate each of them. That's a whole lot of frustration for the beginner.

I promise you, that if you make it to the end of Section Two of this book, you'll no longer feel that frustration. Make it through Section Three and your friends will be saying WOW. Complete Section Four, and who knows, maybe the Smithsonian will call you.

Of course, you won't be a professional, for that you're on your own, but lordy, your brother-in-law will hate you.

Contacting me

Need to contact me about something ? Drop me a note at andy@fireicon.com.

You can also download most of the images from this book, as well nice printable workflows, from www.fireicon.com.

· Completely made up rubbish but it certainly feels true most of the time.

1. LEARNING NOT TO BE SCARED OF PHOTOSHOP IN 4 BASIC STEPS

Firstly, let me apologize; the title is a lie. There's way more than 4 steps and some of them aren't basic. But there are 4 sections to this book, and they really are simple to follow.

Section One teaches you how to set up your computer so that you work smarter, easier, faster and more reliably.

Section Two teaches you how to take those 200 pictures of your Grandma's 80th Birthday and make them noticeably better.

Section Three teaches you how to take just the very best of those 200 and make them stunning by perfecting the light you captured.

And finally, Section Four teaches you how to alter the pictures themselves, so they can hang on a wall - should the Smithsonian call.

It all about the flow

Working reliably with Photoshop is all about perfecting your workflow. To many people workflow is a strange and alien thing, but it shouldn't be, we all rely on workflow every moment of every day. Lets take an example.

You wake up to the trill of your alarm. You hit the off button and stagger in to the bathroom pulling your dressing gown tight. You brush your teeth, hit the shower, dress, grab a coffee, and 40 minutes later you're sat in your office ready to face the day. Every day it's the same. Alarm, shower, dress, commute. That nice, perfected order that you do the little tasks, that enables you to arrive in the office with fresh breath and a clean shirt, that's called workflow.

Just to make life a little more complicated there's major (macro) workflow and minor (micro) workflow. The major workflow is the big stuff such as "dress", it doesn't explicitly call out the minor details, (knickers, bra, then socks, trousers, blouse, shoes) but as you can see, get the order of either the major or the minor things wrong, and you're in for an interesting time in the office.

Photoshop workflow is just the same; it's the order in which you perform tasks so that you can reliable produce WOW results every single time. Change the order and things will go wrong. The cool thing about computers is that we can always rewind, and correct. It's harder to do that in real life as you're sat in the office with your bra on the outside of your blouse.

Workflow is how this book is laid out. It's a series of flows that you link together to perfect your photos. You don't need every step every time, just like I don't always put on socks if the day calls for flip-flops, but I do consider if I should be wearing them as I'm getting dressed, and not when I'm sat waiting for my train.

An example workflow so you don't get put off.



Figure 1

See how simple that was? You're going to love this; Photoshop is easy, this book is easy, your friends are already practicing their WOWs. (And I hear your brother-in-law is feeling queasy.)

Now, on with the 4 sections.

SECTION ONE: ARRANGING YOUR TOOLS

This is the most boring section of the book, and of the 327 books I've read on photography and Photoshop, it's the one that they all miss out.

This is the most important section of the book, and of the 327 books I've read on photography and Photoshop, it's the one that blah blah blah.

Don't skip it. This is the backbone. Without this chapter you're going to find it much hard to walk (and work).

You're going to spend the next 30 mins (that's all it takes) setting up your computer so that everything is in exactly the right place for your workflow. I'll show you how to set up your hard disk, your workflow manager, your digital negative processor, and of course, Photoshop.

You'll also get your first glimpse of many of the tools that will become your best friends.

· Sorry, I just can't seem to stop making up these numbers

2. CALIBRATING YOUR MONITOR

I know this actually isn't the 1st thing you want to do but it is vitally important. Ever been to friend's house and thought their TV was a little blue? Looked at photo's you just got back from that cheap processing place down the road, and thought they looked a bit purple? Its because they haven't calibrated their equipment for a while.

I know you're not going to do this right now, but that's ok. By making this the 1st thing in the book, you can skip ahead, fooling yourself that you've broken the back of the book, and that you're really in to this Photoshop thing now!

The reason I know you're not going to do this right now? You have to spend yet more money. You need to buy a Monitor Calibrator. This calibrator is a small little "mouse like" thing that hangs over your monitor and reads the color, contrast and brightness. You use it every month because monitors change as they get older, or are exposed to varying temperatures.



I use the Spyder2express because it's cheap (about \$60 on Amazon.com), but there are many others. I've friends that swear the Pantone Huey is the biz, others that think Eye-One makes the best. I don't care. I really don't. Just buy one. And don't use the software that came with your computer (if any did), we need to do this properly and that means buying a little hardware device that looks at your monitor and adjusts it properly.

Lets say your monitor is just a little brighter than it should be, after all, you set it that way so the movies you watch are nice and clear. But if you stop and think about it, if your movies are artificially bright, then so will your photos too. Which means when you print them out, they're going to be their proper color – dark.

Still not convinced? What if your monitor was just a tad blue, like your mate's TV? You'd cleverly remove the blue from your photos so that your family dinner looked a happy occasion and not one populated by zombies. But then when you mailed them to your friends, all those lovely blue dresses would be a dull grey, and everyone's faces would be artificially ruddy.

Convinced? Good. Go and buy a monitor calibrator. It'll only take 2 minutes online. I'll wait here for you.



From Snapshot to Wowshot

3. CREATING A “NEVER LOSE” FILING SYSTEM

As I write this, you can buy an Iomega Prestige 1 terabyte external hard disk for \$99 at Amazon.com. I mention this because what I want you to do next, is to be prepared to make lots of copies of your photos.

I know I’m going to sound like a cheap TV advert here, but how much are your memories worth? I betting it’s a lot more than \$99. Do you know the failure rate of hard disks? 100 percent. That’s right, every hard disk ever made, will fail. So lets try and make sure you’ve not got your wedding pictures on one.

At an absolute minimum, you need to keep 2 copies of every picture, and they need to be kept on separate drives. I’m a bit of a nerd, so I actually have 4 copies spread over 6 hard disks. Possibly overkill, but I’ve married the girl of my dreams and I’m guessing she won’t do it again just because I want to recreate the photos I lost for the sake of \$99.

The other sure-fire way people loose pictures, is to accidentally delete them. That’s right, human error counts for over 80% of all lost photographs. The good news is that with the right workflow, neither hard disk nor human error will destroy your Smithsonian contenders.

Better hardware

If every disk fails, keeping stuff on two disks makes more sense right? The industry thought of that and they invented something called RAID. If you buy a RAID disk, (I used to use Maxtor OneTouch) you actually get 2 disks in one box. Your computer thinks that you’ve only got one hard drive connected because one of the disks is hidden, and acts as a mirror copy. So when you write to one disk, you automatically make a secret copy on the other. Genius. You can still accidentally delete stuff, but if the disk ever fails, the secret mirror copy kicks in and you can get to all your files. The downside of this genius is that you only get half of the advertized disk space. If you buy a 1TB RAID drive, you only get to use 500MB (because the other 500MB is the copy).

I now use a Drobo rather than a RAID disk. It’s the same idea but rather than 2 disks, the Drobo has 4. And rather than loosing 50% of the disk space, I only loose about 30. Because weddings are so very expensive, I back up my Drobo every other night to two other disks that hang off my router, and are not normally visible to my computer – no accidental deleting for me!

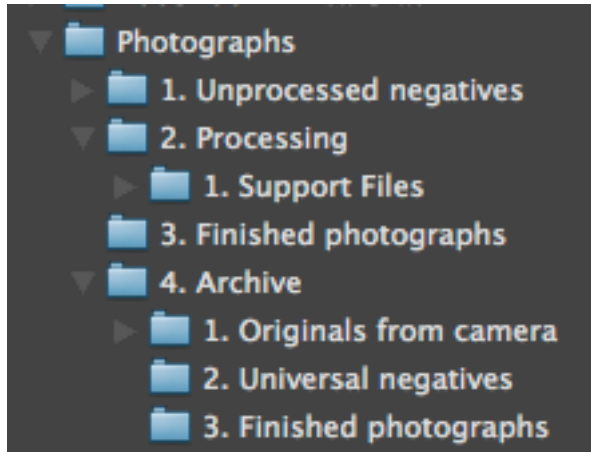
Accident free workflow

So now to the workflow bit. I want you to create a folder on your new external RAID drive called **Photographs**. Under that I need you to create 4 sub folders: **1. Unprocessed negatives**, **2. Processing**, **3. Finished photographs** and **4. Archive**.

· You know the drill by now

Under the **2. Processing** folder, I need you to create **1. Support Files**, and under **4. Archive** I need you to create **1. Originals from camera**, **2. Universal negatives**, and **3. Finished photos**.

It should look like this



(The reason you numbered the directories is so that they always appear in the right order when you view them in Finder / Explorer / Bridge)

Congratulations, you just outlined your first workflow. Whenever you copy photos from your camera to your computer you'll place them in **1. Unprocessed negatives**, when you're ready to edit them, you'll copy them to **2. Processing**, and when you've finished them, you'll move them to **3. Finished Photographs**. Along the way you'll also create an archive for safety's sake.

I don't have to do this because of my Drobo, but I highly recommend that each of those 1,2,3 & 4 directories be on a separate hard drive and that you create the above directory structure using Aliases / Shortcuts rather than real folders.

If nothing else, spend that \$99 and keep the Archive folder on a separate drive.

You can never be too safe with your memories.



From Snapshot to Wowshot

4. WELCOME TO ADOBE PHOTOSHOP

Now we're motoring. Your monitor looks good. Your hard disk is ready. Its time to configure the software. We'll be configuring 4 separate applications, all of which are collectively known as the Adobe Photoshop Creative Suite (CS for short).

First up we'll be looking at Bridge. Bridge is your control center; your workflow management system, the only Adobe application you need to launch – all the others are controlled from here.

Then we'll look at the Photo Downloader, an automatically loaded program that moves photos from your camera's memory card, to the workflow file system we just created.

Thirdly, we'll look at Camera Raw, a tool that allows you to edit the basic negatives that your camera can produce.

And finally, we'll look at big-bad-scary-Photoshop itself.

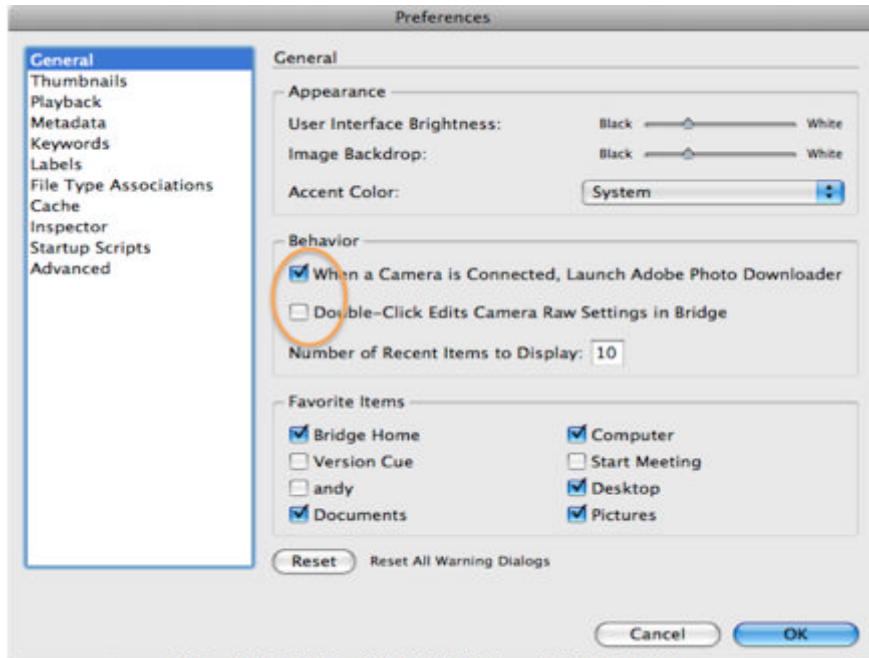
During this section of the book, I'll not tell you how to use these programs, just how to configure them. So don't worry if you don't understand what we're doing yet, it'll all be clear in Section Two.

Configuring Bridge

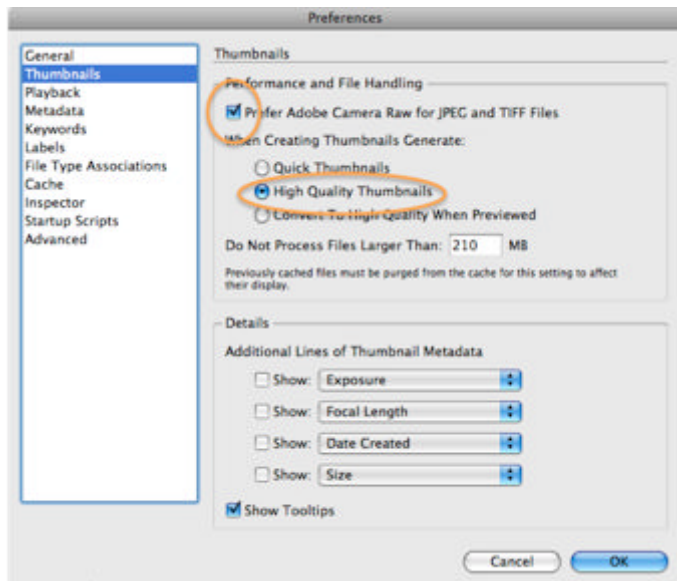


Launch Bridge and open the **PREFERENCES** dialog. In here we define how Bridge will respond to us when we get to Section Two. We'll not worry what these settings do just yet, just make sure they're set the way I outline below.

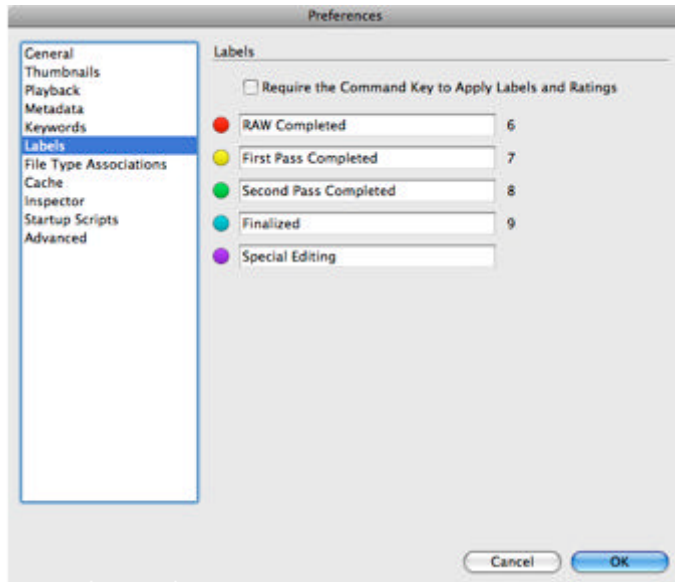
On the **GENERAL** pane, make sure **WHEN CAMERA IS CONNECTED...** is on, and **DOUBLE-CLICK EDITS CAMERA RAW...** is off.



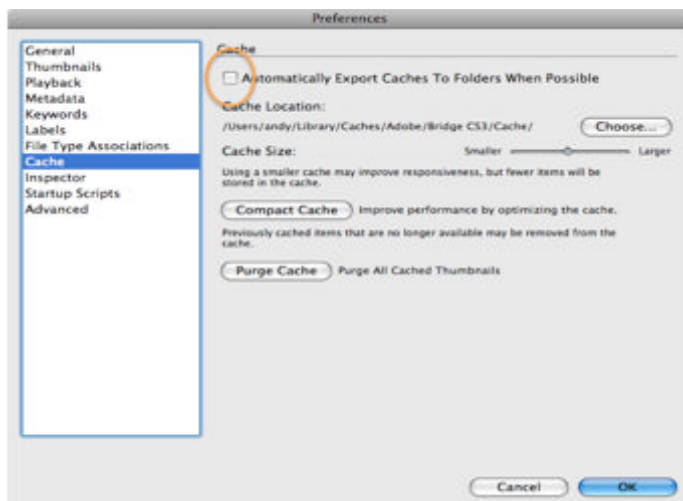
On the **THUMBNAILS** pane, make sure **PREFER ADOBE CAMERA RAW...** is on, and that **HIGH QUALITY THUMBNAILS** is selected.



On the **LABELS** pane, set the entry fields as shown below.



On the **CACHE** pane, make sure **AUTOMATICALLY EXPORT...** is off.



That was easy, Bridge will now respond the way we need it to. Next we need to make it look the way want so that our workflow will be efficient.

When you start Bridge for the first time, it should look something like the below image. If it doesn't, select the **WINDOW** menu item, and choose **WORKSPACE** then **RESET TO DEFAULT**. You almost certainly want to maximize this window so it fills your monitor.

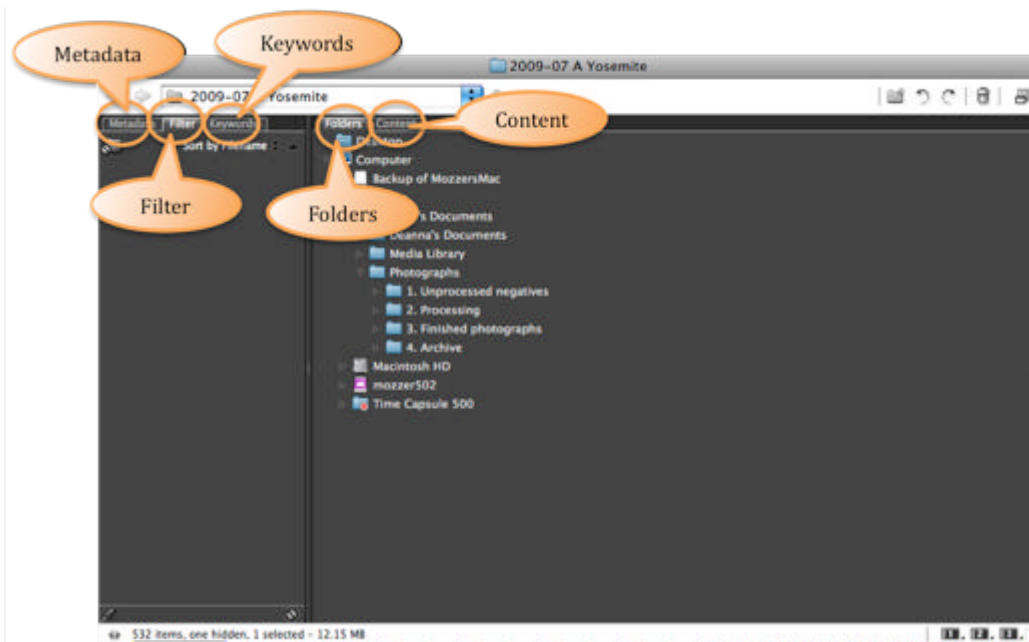
What you're looking at is a very advanced version of the Finder / Explorer you usually view files in. Each of the tabs, such as the one marked **PREVIEW**, can be moved anywhere you wish, simply by dragging it. Give it a try. You can't break it. And if you don't like what you've done, just do **WINDOW**, **WORKSPACE**, **RESET TO**

DEFAULT again. You can hide or show any of these tabs using the **WINDOWS** menu item.

Here's a quick tour of the default workspace.

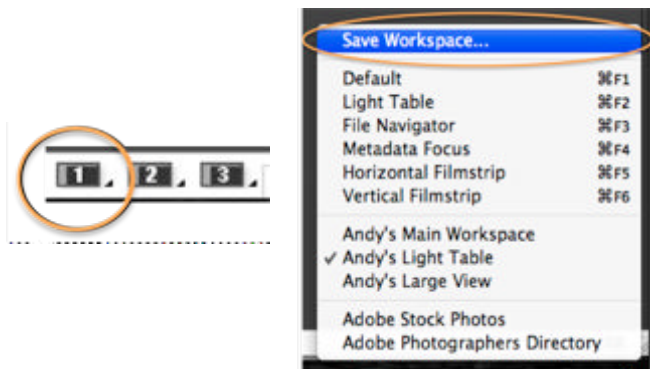


Now what I need you to do is to drag the various tabs around until you have something that looks exactly like the one below.



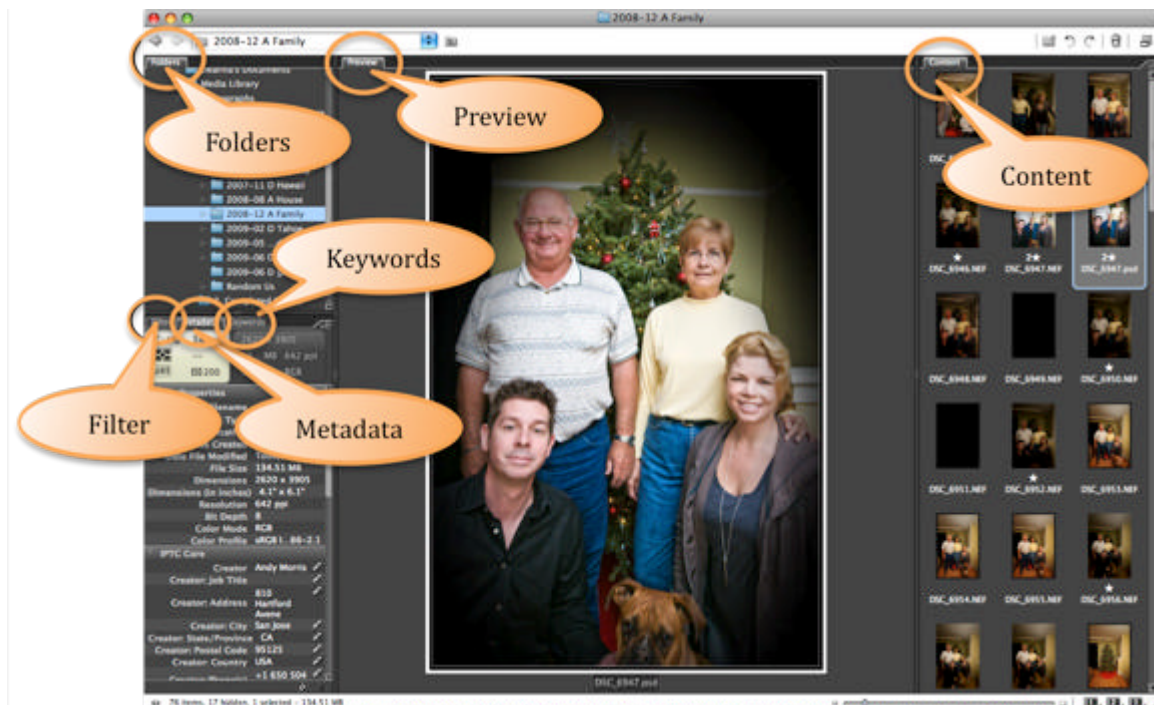
Once you're happy you've got it right (and you can tweak this as many times as you want over the coming years), press and hold, that little button on the bottom-right

marked **1**. When the menu appears, select **SAVE WORKSPACE**, and call this arrangement of tabs **{YOURNAME} LIGHT TABLE**.



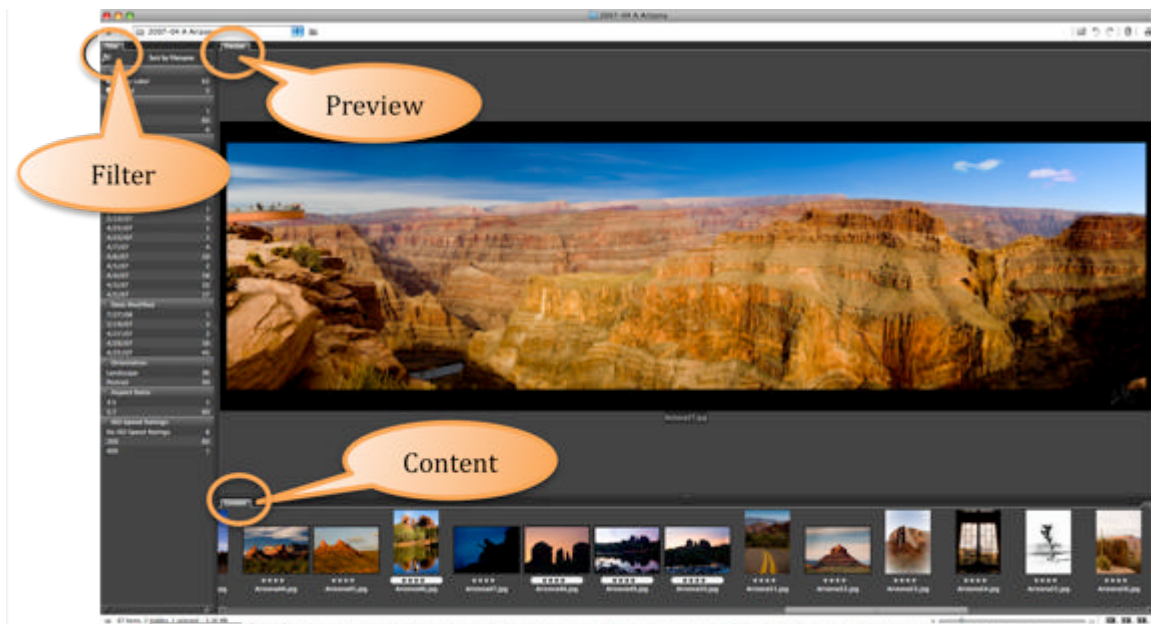
You've just told Bridge, that whenever you press the **1** button, you want it to move all the windows so they look the way you just drew them.

Now do the **WINDOW**, **WORKSPACE**, **RESET TO DEFAULT** thing again, and this time move all the tabs so they look like the below image.



Now pressing and holding the **2** button, save the workspace as **{YOURNAME} MAIN WORKSPACE**.

One more time now, reset the tabs, arrange them as below, as save them under the **3** button as **{YOURNAME} LARGE VIEW**.



Make sure that when you press and hold the **1**, **2** & **3** buttons, the **{YOUNAME}** items are checked and not the default layouts.

Right then, play time! Press **1**. Now press **3**. Now press **1** again. See what you did? You just told Bridge how you want the tabs laid out during the 3 different phases of workflow that we'll get to later.

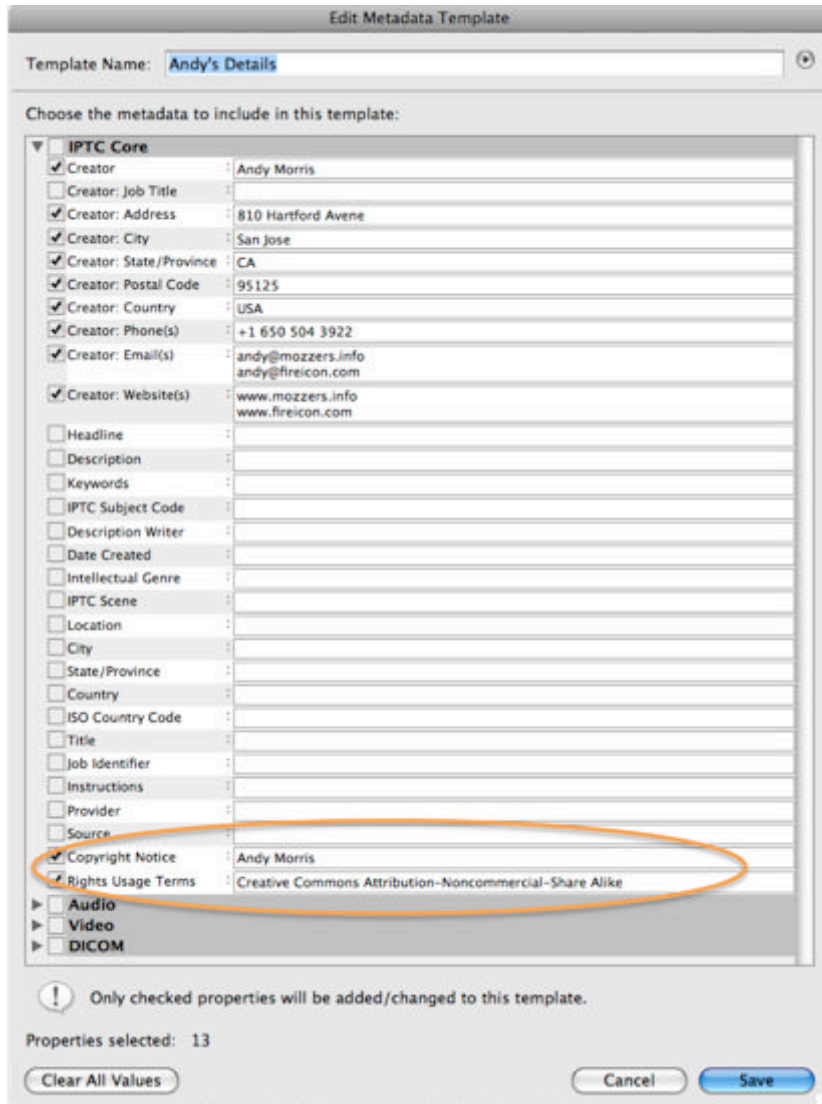
Assuming that wasn't too scary, lets move on and configure some more stuff.

Configuring Metadata.

Every photo you ever take has some secret information hidden in it that was put there by the camera manufacturer. They call this hidden data, EXIF data (Exchangeable Image File Data). It's a very detailed record of your camera's setup at the moment of image capture. It records your ISO, your aperture, your exposure, and loads of other really useful information about the picture you took.

You can add to this information so there's no doubt that you took the shot. To add to EXIF data you need to create a master EXIF data record, something called Metadata. To do this, in Bridge, select **TOOLS**, **CREATE METADATA TEMPLATE**. Call it something useful like "{yourname}'s Details" and type in as much of your personal information as you feel you want to record. Just use the fields in IPTC Core, don't bother with Audio, Video or DICOM - they're not for us.

Here's mine.



One more thing you'll want to record, and that's your copyright. I know it sounds silly to claim copyright of that picture of your dog pushing your daughter in to the paddling pool, but when she grows up and is a mega-rich celebrity, you're going to wish you did.

There are many different forms of copyright and writing "© yourname" isn't really a 21st century solution. The proper way protect your information is to visit www.creativecommons.org and use their free tool to find out what license you should have. I want people to share my pictures freely, to alter them if they wish, but to make no money from them unless I approve in advance. In Creative Commons lingo that's an "Attribution Non-commercial Share-alike" license. So that's what I write in my metadata.

The other popular one, by people who want total control and ownership, is "Attribution Non-commercial No-Derivative". You should note, that whilst all this sounds very legal and water tight, it isn't. These words only record your wishes. If

you wish to really, totally, completely, protect your work, you have to register them with the copyright office. It's easy to do, and all professional, and a good deal of the rest us, do it as a matter of course.



From Snapshot to Wowshot

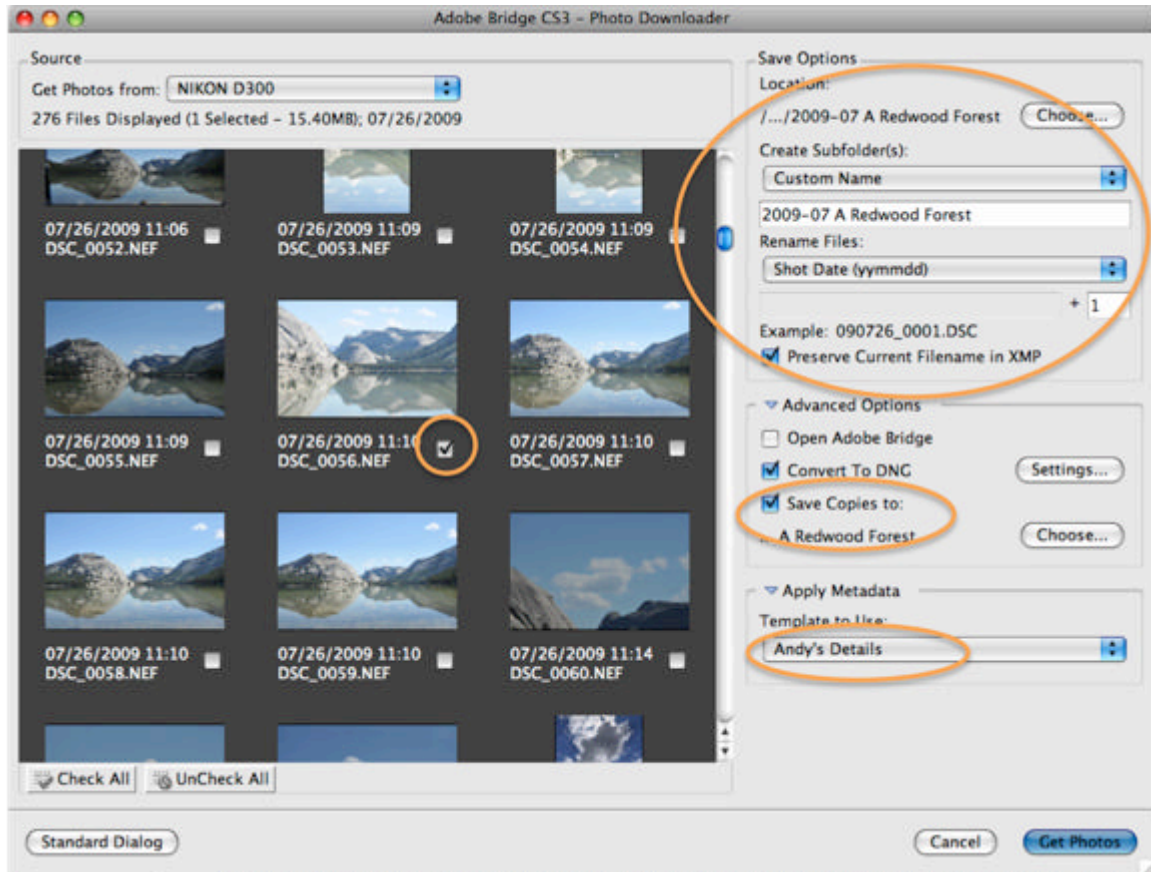
Configuring Photo Downloader

To configure the Photo Downloader we're going to need a memory card or camera with at least 1 picture on it in RAW format. Pop the memory card in to your reader, or connect your camera to the computer, and Photo Downloader should pop up. If it doesn't, go to Bridge, select **FILE** then select **GET FILES FROM CAMERA**. (You should also backtrack to the Bridge settings chapter and check to make sure you did it right.)

The job of the Downloader is to move photos from your camera's memory card to the file system we set up earlier. Whilst it's doing that, we're also going to tell it to make backups, to convert to a better file format, and to add all that metadata you just typed in.

But first a word about connecting your camera to your computer. That little connection cable costs about \$2. A card reader costs about \$10. A memory card about \$30, and your camera was anywhere from several hundred to several thousand. Why then, would you plug your camera in to your computer, putting all that wear-&-tear on the most expensive part, leaving it connected so your kids can run past and snag the cable and spill it on to the hard floor? Do yourself a favor; never connect your camera to your computer. Buy a card reader – if you break that, you're only out of pocket \$10.

Sorry, pet peeve of mine. Back to the Photo Downloader. Press the **ADVANCED DIALOG** button. If you've got lots of pictures on your card, hit the **UNCHECK ALL BUTTON** and then just select one picture at random – we're just using this as a test at the moment.



Firstly we'll set the location. Select the **1. Unprocessed negatives** folder that you created earlier. We're going to put your pictures in subfolders based on the rough date they were taken, so that we can find them easily later on. To do this, set **CREATE SUBFOLDERS** to **CUSTOM NAME**.

The custom name we're going to use is:

{year}-{month} {ID} {description}

For me, that translates as **2009-07 A Redwood Forest**.

I don't shoot every day, and when I do, I'm usually on vacation so I don't need separate folders for each day, but if you do, then simply use **{year}-{month}{day}**. The reason we put the date in this order, is, just like when we created the file structure earlier, we want to tell the computer which order to display the folders. If you're the only camera user in your family, then you can skip the {ID} part. I use it because both my wife and I take pictures of the same place. So **2007-09 D Scotland** are Deanna's pictures, and **2007-09 A Scotland** are mine - saves all the arguing later about who took what picture.

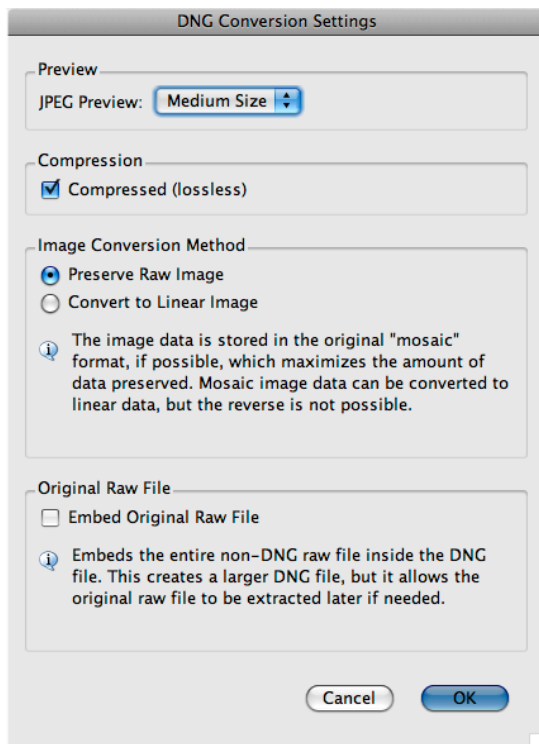
Now let's set **RENAME FILES**. If you only take 5 pictures a year there's really no point with Bridge and the folder structure we're using, to rename files. However, if you're

getting more ambitious, you'll soon find that your camera's 4 digit numbering system is woefully inadequate. (That HDR Panorama in Section Four, took over 300 captures alone!). We're going to tell the Photo Downloader to create a completely unique name for every picture we shoot. Set rename to `SHOT DATE (YYMMDD)` and then set the counter field below to `1`. So that we can later tie this renamed file back to the original in the Archive, we also need to set the `PRESERVE CURRENT FILENAME IN XMP` option.

Switch off `OPEN ADOBE BRIDGE` – its already open and we don't want two copies.

Your camera takes proprietary format electronic negatives. If you have a Canon, they're called .CR2 files, if you've a Nikon, they're .NEF. There are many, many more formats, but the universally accepted and understood format is called DNG (digital negative), so we want your negs converted to this open standard.

Click `CONVERT TO DNG` and then press the `SETTINGS` button. The default settings are fine and should look like the below.

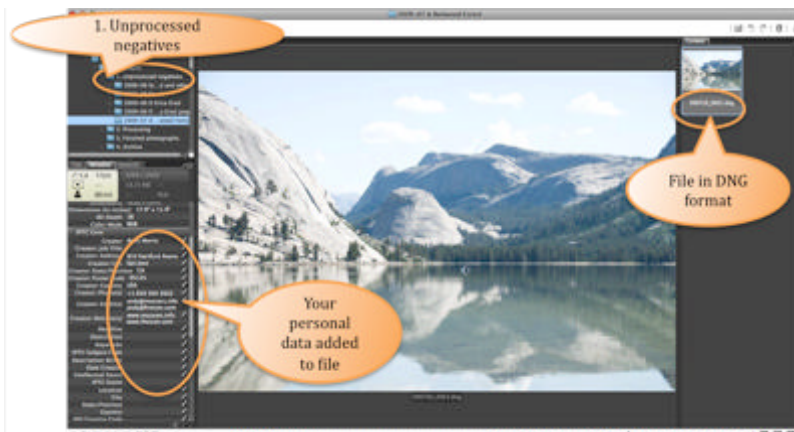


Back on the main page, I want you to select `SAVE COPIES TO` and then hit the `CHOOSE` button. You'll recall from the previous chapters that I'm paranoid about loosing pictures, so this setting lets me keep the original, unprocessed, camera negatives. Navigate to `4. Archive / Originals from camera` and create a subdirectory with the same name you gave above (`2009-07 A Redwood Forest`).

And finally, set your metadata template to whatever you called it previously.

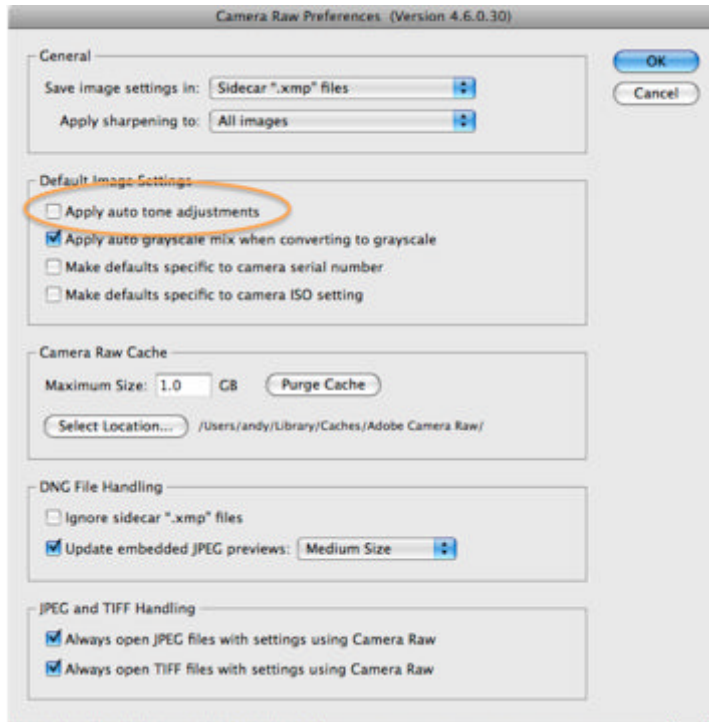
Hit **GET PHOTOS**, and lets see if it worked.

Back in Bridge, if you press the **2** button, you'll be presented with you main workspace. Using the **FOLDERS** tab on the left, navigate to your **1. Unprocessed negatives / 2009-07 A Redwood Forest** folder. You should have your new DNG file(s) there, complete with all that lovely metadata you typed in. Now move to the **4. Archive / Originals from camera / 2009-07 A Redwood Forest** folder, and you should see the original camera raw image (in CR2, NEF or whatever format).



Configuring Camera Raw

Camera Raw doesn't have many settings but getting them right is crucial to a good workflow. From within Bridge, select **CAMERA RAW PREFERENCES** and you get the below dialog box.



Make sure that you save your image settings in Sidecar XMP files, and that you apply sharpening to All Images.

The next option is the most vital of all the settings, with this set incorrectly, your workflow will be totally broken. Set **APPLY AUTO TONE ADJUSTMENTS** to OFF. Just in case you missed that, Camera Raw can do some very funky things with your photos in Bridge before you even start the tool, setting this to OFF tells it to back the heck away from your photos until you're ready to take control. Set it to off.

Make sure you've got all the other settings lined up with the diagram above. The only ones I'm ambivalent about are the two **MAKE DEFAULTS SPECIFIC TO...** options. At this stage in the game, having them on or off makes no difference. Now later, when you turn Pro, you might want to double back and take a look at what these two do.

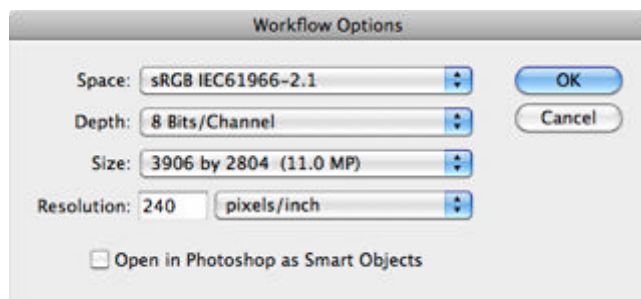


From Snapshot to Wowshot

One more setting to go, but its hidden in Camera Raw itself. So close the **PREFERENCES** window and double click a DNG file. You'll wait a while now as Photoshop starts up, and then you'll be presented with the below window. At the bottom of it, in the middle, is some text that Adobe refers to as Workflow Options.



Click the words and you get a simple pop up that tells Camera Raw how to interpret the negatives your camera made. You want to set the Space to be Adobe RGB, with 8 bits per Channel Depth. Don't alter the Resolution or the Size.



And again, we'll talk about all these settings later in the book.

Hit **OK**, then **OPEN IMAGE**, (not **DONE**).

Setting up Photoshop

Now we're in Photoshop proper. Just like in Bridge, you can move all the tabs and panels anywhere you want. I'm not going to tell you how to set up your workspace this time because its dependant on how you like to work, and how big your monitor is. Unlike Bridge, where the layout affects your workflow, in Photoshop, it's a personal taste issue. (By the way, I like Anchovies on my pizza. I mention this as a way of demonstrating that you shouldn't listen to me on matters of personal taste.)

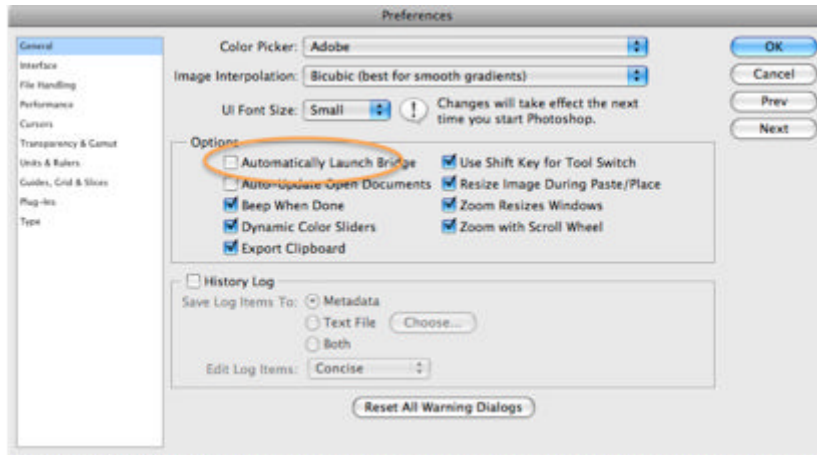
Here's how I keep mine. I like to keep the Layers, Channels, History and Actions close by, the other stuff, I don't really care about.



Just for giggles, hit your **TAB** key. Scary huh? Do it again.

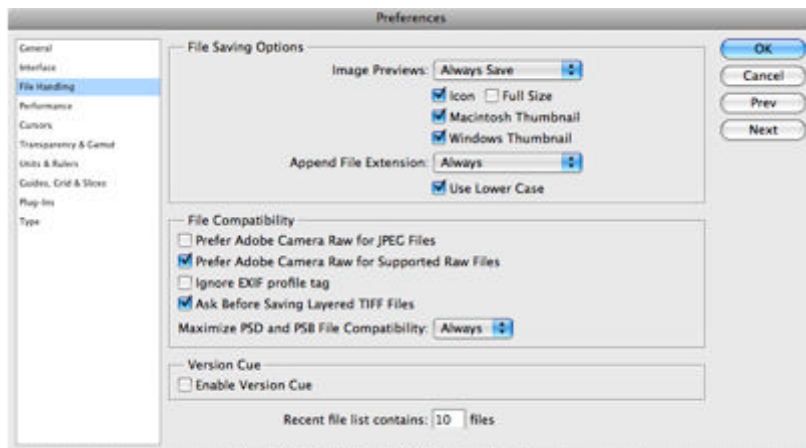
Photoshop has many, many settings so this may get a little tedious. I'll try and keep it as brief as possible. Open the **PREFERENCES**, **GENERAL** dialog box.

There's nothing special on this screen, just set the preferences as I've shown them below. Make sure that **AUTOMATICALLY LAUNCH BRIDGE** is off, after all, Bridge launches Photoshop, so getting Photoshop to launch Bridge makes no sense.



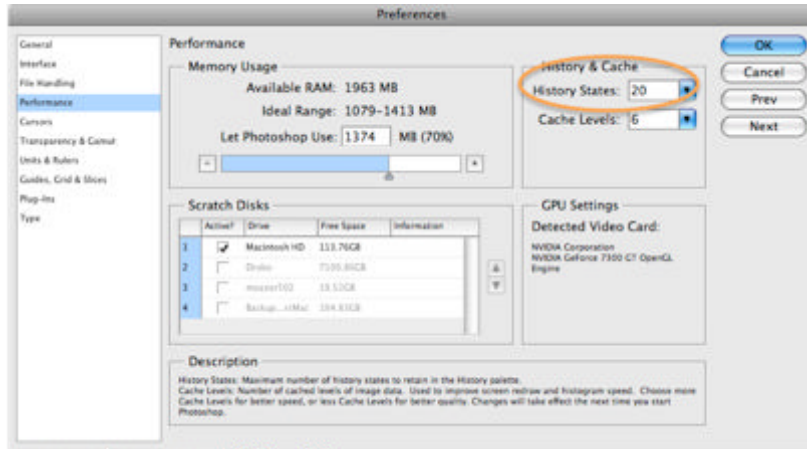
The one item worthy of discussion is History Log. Every change you make to a photograph, when you started editing it, when you stopped, how your various brushes and tools were set, can all be saved as a text file so, at a later date, you can review the steps you took to create an image. It's a very powerful feature. But we're not going to use it. Set it off. Of course, if you want to set it on, it won't change anything in this book so feel free to experiment. I recommend you start by saving Concise data to Metadata. You can then view this information by selecting **FILE**, **FILE INFO**, **HISTORY** (but only after you've hit save).

Hit **NEXT** twice to bring up the **FILE HANDLING** pane and make sure the settings are as below.



Hitting **NEXT** again brings up the **PERFORMANCE** pane. The settings here are entirely dependant on your hardware and disk configuration, so don't copy mine. Photoshop does a lot of work when making your pictures look good, and so requires a lot of "working" disk space; places where it keeps temporary files. In Adobe terms, these temp spaces are called Scratch Disks. Giving Photoshop as many as you can seems like a good idea, but only if they're really, really fast disks – and that usually means internal drives not ones connected by a USB or Firewire cable.

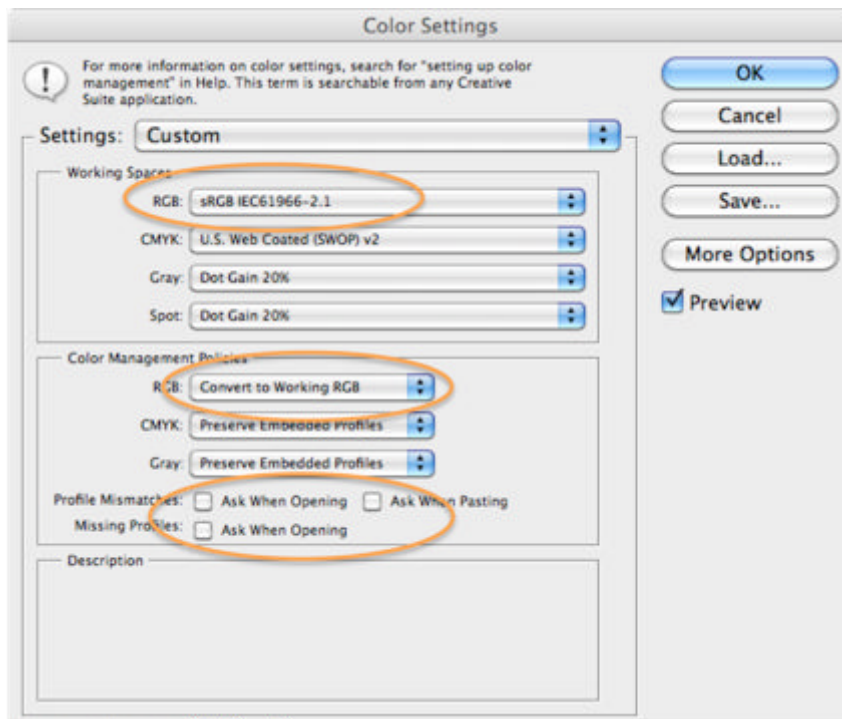
The number of **HISTORY STATES**, is the number of times you can hit Undo before Photoshop gives up on you. You can set this value to whatever you like, but remember, every state is a full copy of your work, so set it too high and you'll bring your computer to a dead stop.



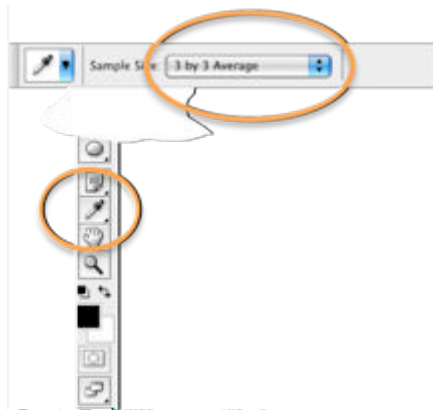
That's it for this dialog box, hit **OK**.

Back when we were setting up Camera Raw, we specified something called Adobe RGB. We're going to do that one more time. Select **EDIT**, **COLOR SETTINGS**.

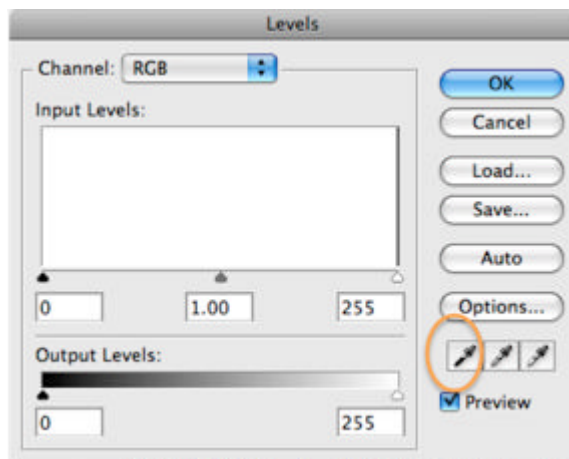
Color can be described in many ways, from black and white to the billions of shades of the rainbow. There's a chapter on this later but for now, let's just tell Photoshop to use Adobe RGB at all times, to do it silently, and to not bug us with warnings.

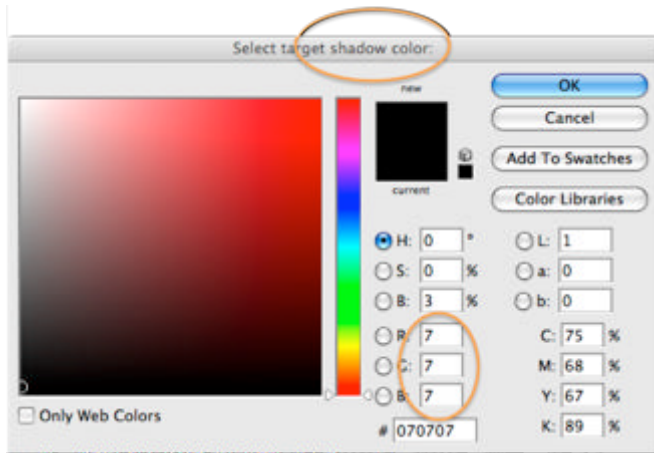


While we're talking color, select that little eye dropper on the left. This is the color picker. Whenever you move and / or click it, Photoshop records the exact color of your image at that point. The problem is, in the photo world, we don't like exact colors, we like color impressions and tones. At the top of your screen you'll see a **SAMPLE SIZE** box, set it to 3 by 3. This tells Photoshop to not worry about exact colors but to give you the color impression based on an average of the colors close to where you clicked.



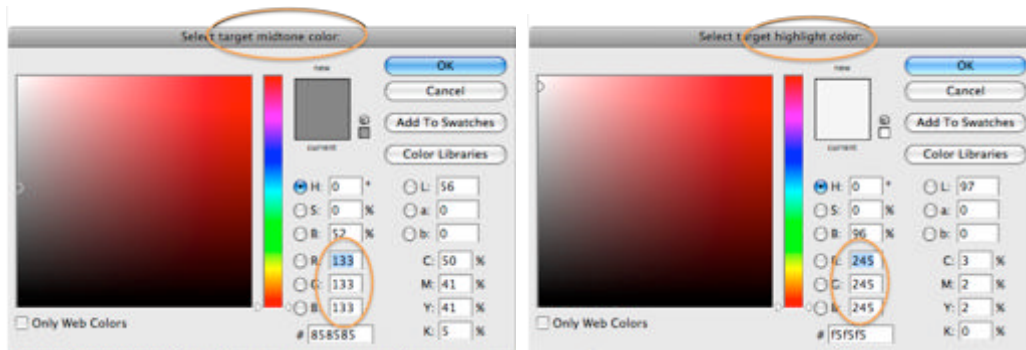
Next, select **IMAGE**, **ADJUSTMENTS**, **LEVELS**. This dialog displays, and allows you to adjust, how much color information is stored in your pictures. Later in the book, we'll tune this dialog to match your printer but for now, let's just set it to have some good starting points. Double-click the black eye dropper on the left and set the RGB color to 7s.



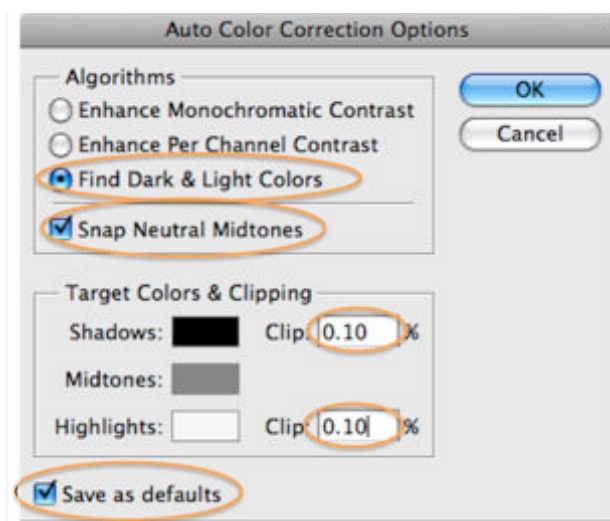


Now double-click the middle dropper, and set the RGB values to 133.

And finally, set the right dropper's RGB values to 245.

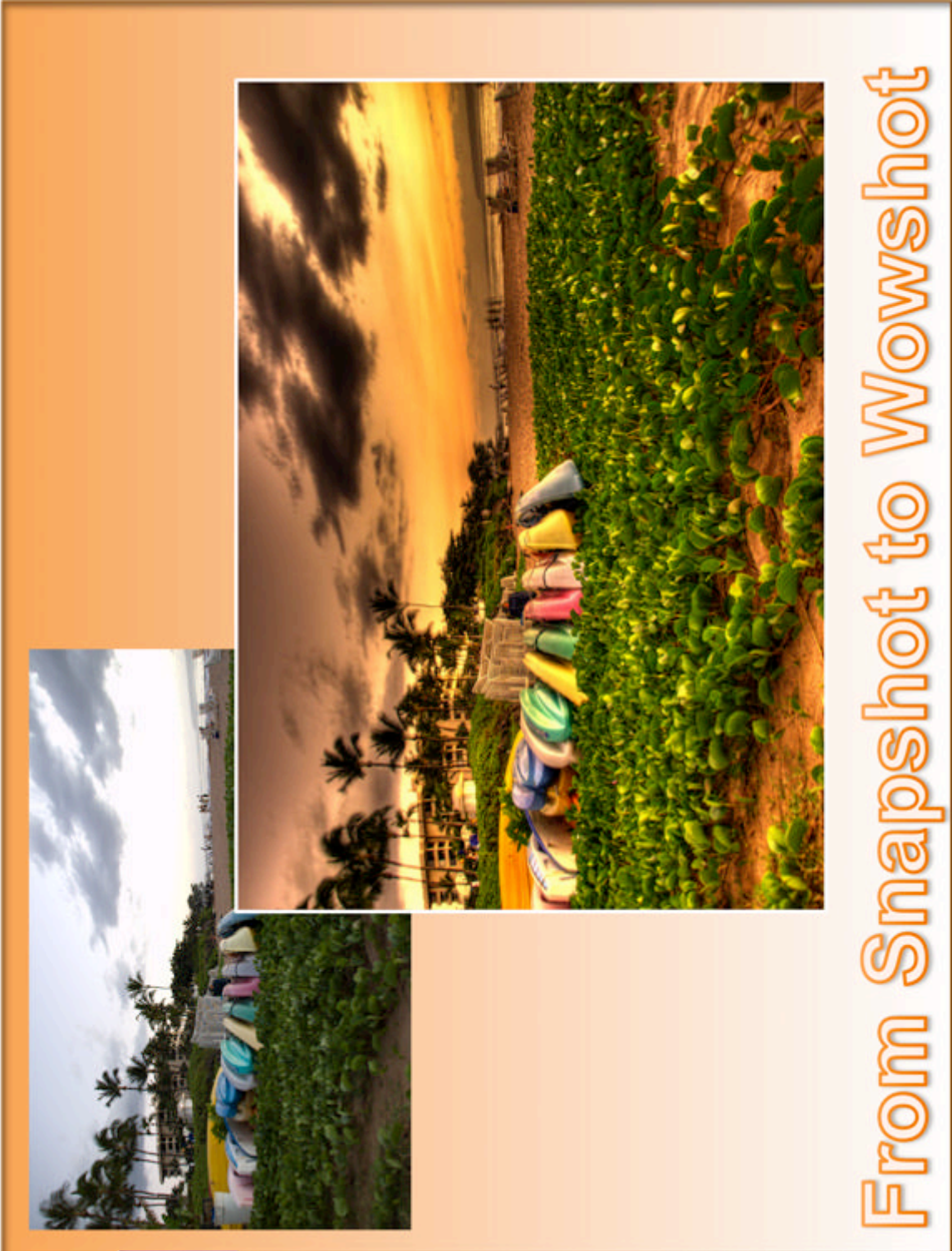


Thank you Scott Kelby for those RGB numbers. Back on the **LEVELS** dialog, press the **OPTIONS** button and configure the screen like this.



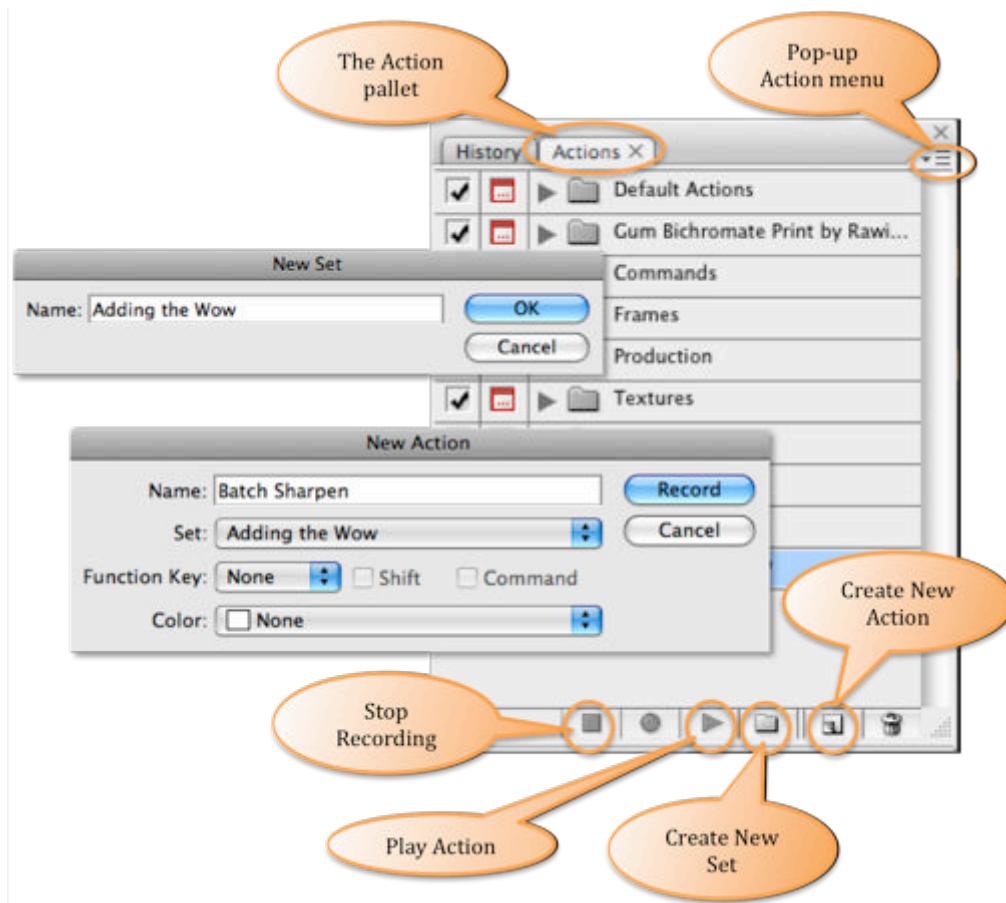
And finally we're going to record a set of Actions that we'll use later when batch processing lots of pictures. What's an action you say? If we were using Microsoft

Office, we'd be talking about macros. Did that help? How about this, do you have one of those TV remotes that can turn on your TV, your DVR, and your satellite box all with one button press? That's what an Action is, it's a single button press that can perform lots of tasks without you having to lift a finger.

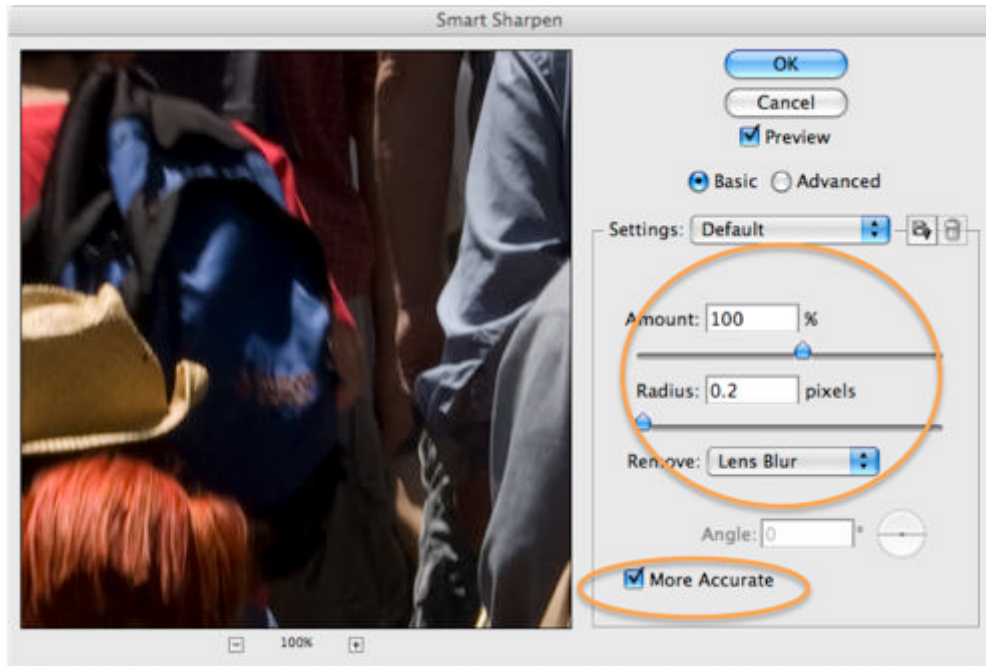


From Snapshot to Wowshot

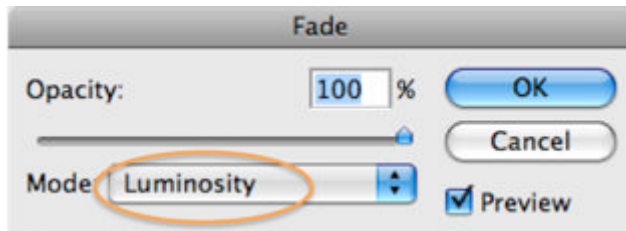
On the **ACTIONS** pallet click the **CREATE NEW SET** button calling it “Adding the Wow”. Now click the **CREATE NEW ACTION** button and call it “Batch Sharpen”, and press **RECORD**.



Using the main menu, select **LAYER**, **FLATTEN IMAGE**, followed by **FILTER**, **SHARPEN**, **SMART SHARPEN**. We need to set this dialog box to sharpen an average picture an average amount. Normally, each picture requires precise sharpening depending upon subject, and hundreds of other factors. However, for this batch action, we’re just going to set some general parameters, which I lifted from Ken Rockwell’s website.



Press **OK**, and then, again from the menu, select **EDIT**, **FADE UNSHARP MASK**. Set the mode to Luminosity at a maximum strength of 100%. Press **OK**, and we're done.



All we have to do stop recording the action, so press the **STOP RECORDING** button.

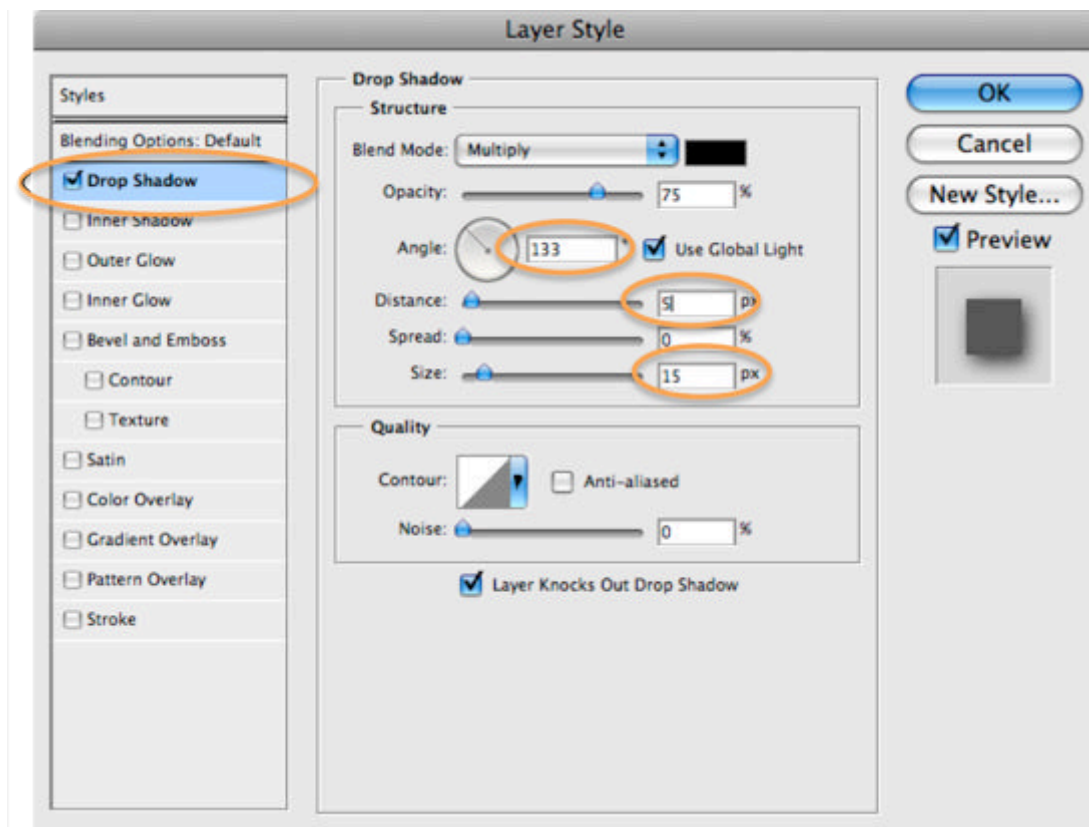
OK, this one's a bit more complex, not complicated, just complex. Let's start with another thought experiment. I want you to imagine a very small white table. On top of that table is a photograph. The photograph is the same size as the table. I want you to place a black picture frame over the photograph. Looks nice, right? Now, lift up the photo and the frame. You see how it's casting a shadow on the white table, letting everyone know it's 3-dimensional and not just sitting there? Also notice, that because the table is the same size as the photo, you can't see all the shadow? Let's try this again with a bigger white table. Now do you see all the shadow?

We're going to recreate that thought experiment as a Photoshop action. How very cool.

Firstly create a new Action called "Web Frame". On the Layers pallet, click the **NEW LAYER** icon. Using the main menu, do **SELECT**, **ALL**. (There are faster ways to do all of these operations but I'm just taking the opportunity to show you around the

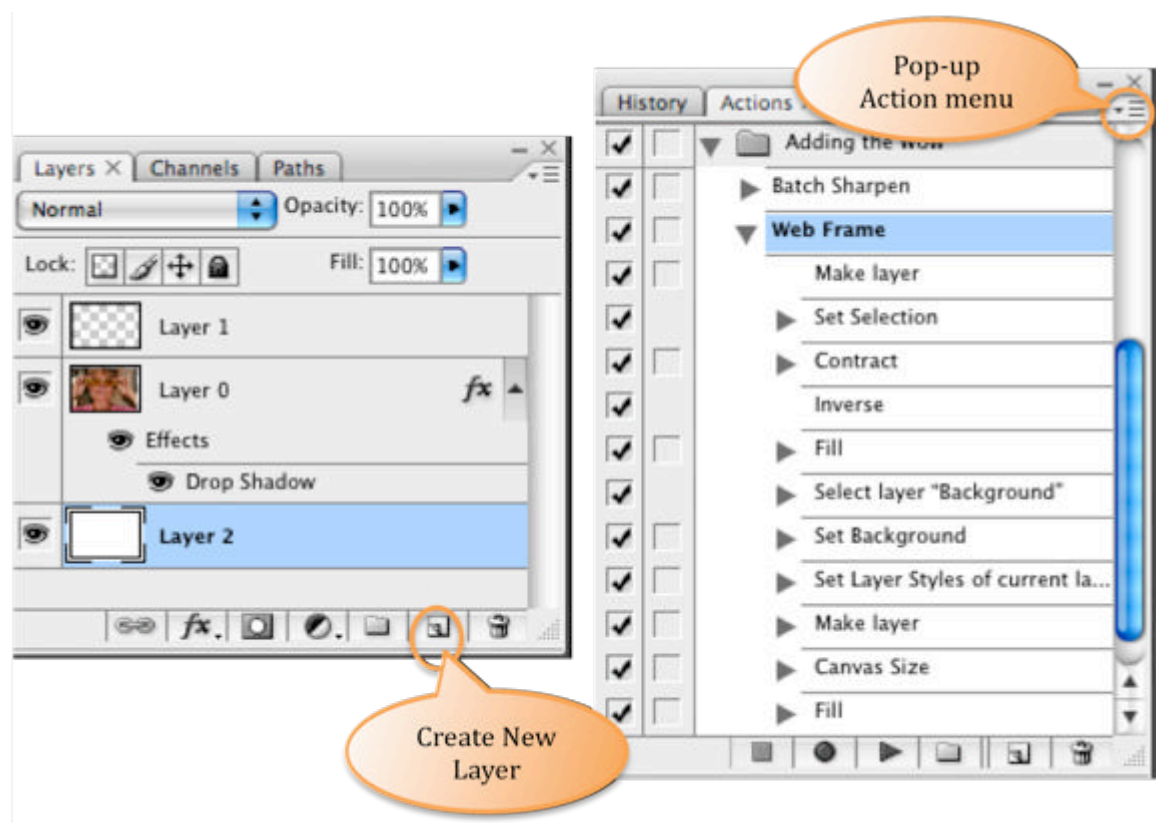
menu system a little.) Now, same menu, do **SELECT**, **MODIFY**, **CONTRACT**, and shrink your “marching ants” by 15 pixels. One more time on the menu, do **SELECT**, **INVERSE**. Now do **EDIT**, **FILL**, and set the color to **BLACK**, the opacity to **100%** **NORMAL**. You can make great borders by adjusting these values. I like a 75% White Multiply border, but we’ll start with the basics and let you adjust them later. Hit **OK**, and you now have a picture frame called “Layer 1”.

Lets make the shadow. **Double-click** the word “Background” on your photo layer and just hit **OK** to dismiss the box that appears. You’ve just made your picture capable of floating high over the table. The astute amongst you will notice that your picture has stopped being the “background” of your work, and is now something called “Layer 0”. **Right+Click** on the layer and select **BLENDING OPTIONS**. Fill the dialog box out as below and hit **OK**.



Command+Click on the **NEW LAYER** button on the layers pallet. This will make a layer under your picture that will eventually become the table. Now back to the menu bar. Select **IMAGE**, **CANVAS SIZE**, and set the picture to be 2% wider, and 2% taller than it was. You’ve just made table bigger so you can see the shadow but it needs to be white, so from the main menu, select **EDIT**, **FILL**, and use **WHITE**, **100%** **NORMAL**.

You should now have 3 layers and list of steps in your Action like this:



One final thing, your picture is made up of all these layers that we don't want that. So do **LAYER**, **FLATTEN IMAGE**, **STOP** recording.

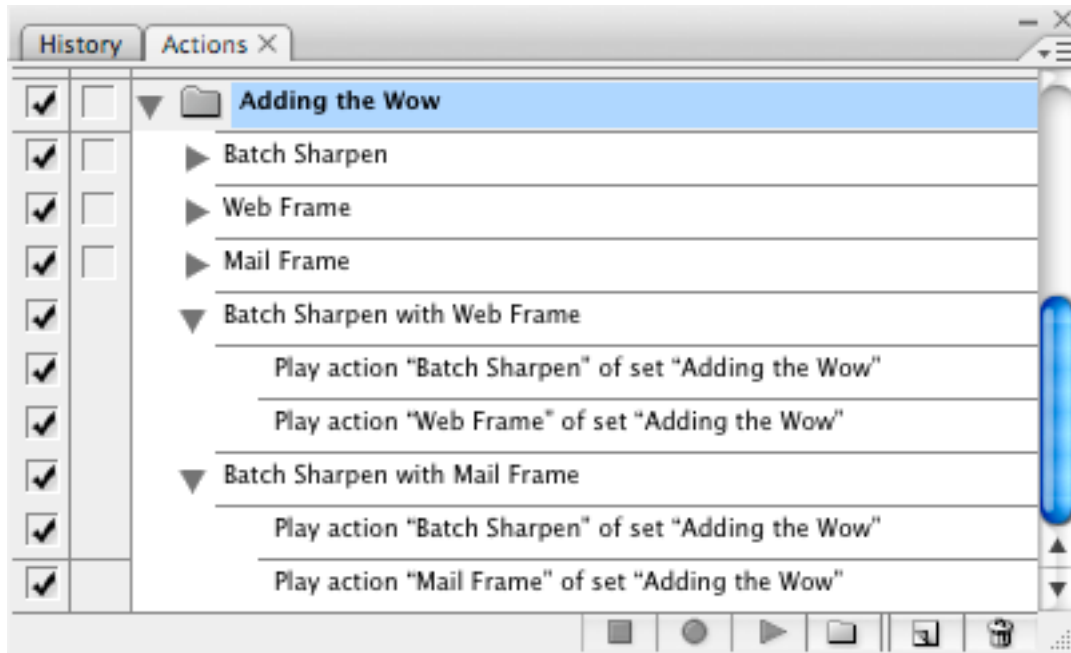
We're eventually going to use this cool frame on big images and small, and because it's a fixed size, its going to look a bit silly, so we need to make a smaller frame for our smaller pictures.

From the **POP-UP ACTION MENU**, making sure that your "Web Frame" action is selected, choose, **DUPLICATE**. Now **double+click** the words "Web Frame Copy" to rename them as "Mail Frame". Expand your Action list by clicking on that little triangle before the name, and hunt for the **SET SELECTION** command. **Double-Click** this. Now **Double-Click** the **CONTRACT** line below. This time change the value to 10. Finally **Double-Click** on the **SET LAYER STYLES** line, and change the Distance & Size entries to be 2, and 5.

Two more Actions to create, but these are really simple. We're going to batch your Actions together so that we can run both the sharpening and the picture frame from one click. Hit **CREATE NEW ACTION**, and call it "Batch Sharpening with Web Frame". Now click on your Action called "Batch Sharpen" and hit **PLAY**. When its finished, click on your "Web Frame" action, and hit **PLAY** again. Now hit **STOP**.

Lets do that one more time. This time the Action will be called “Batch Sharpening with Mail Frame”. Do exactly as you just did, but run the “Mail Frame” action instead of the web one.

You should end up with an Action pallet looking like this.



You can close Photoshop now. When it asks, don't save the photo we just totally trashed.

Doctor Russell Brown

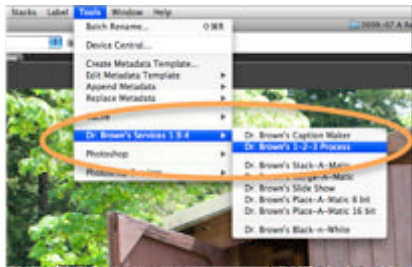


We're nearly done with the software configuration, just one more thing. There's a chap you've never heard of called Dr. Russell Brown. He seems to style himself on Doc Brown from Back to the Future: either that or he needs to get out more. Anyway, he works for Adobe, and does all sorts of electronic magic with Photoshop. Some of the tools you'll be using were invented by him.

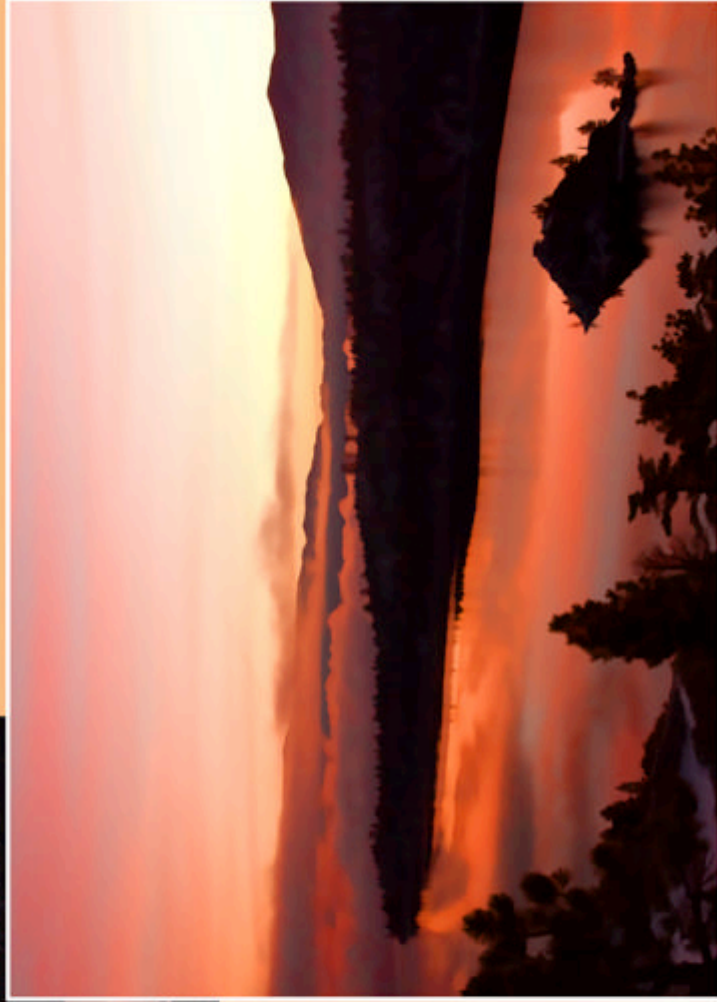
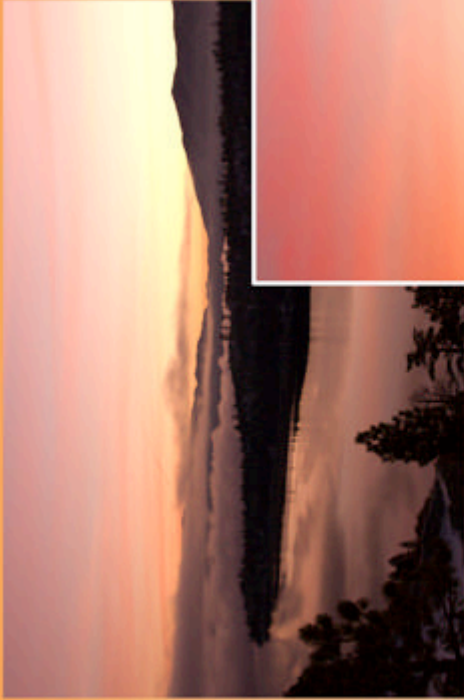
For reasons that I don't understand, some of the Adobe tools seem to be version 1 of his ideas, and on his website www.russellbrown.com he has version 2, and in many cases version 3 and 4. You need to visit the website and download some of his scripts.

Specifically we're looking for "Dr. Brown's 1-2-3 Process". You'll find it packaged in something called "Dr. Brown's Services Installer".

Once its installed, it should appear on the Bridge menu like this.



I don't know why you need to know this, but I thought I'd mention that the good Doc won an Emmy in 2008.



From Snapshot to Wowshot

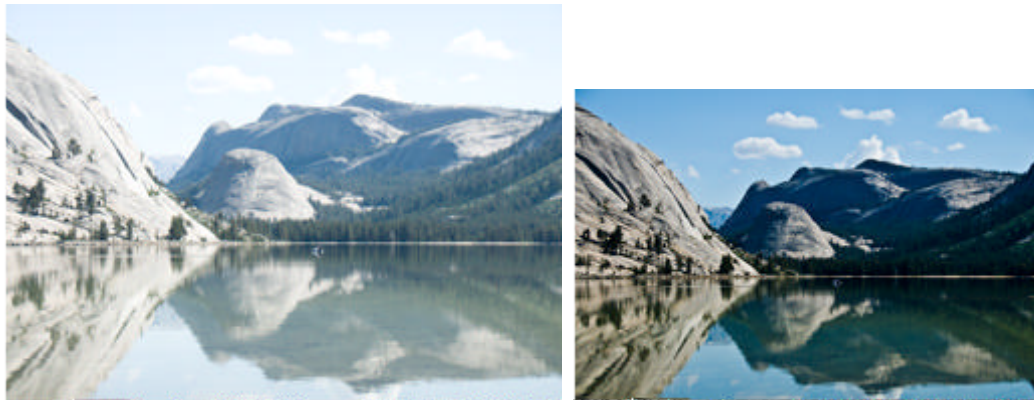
5. SETTING UP YOUR CAMERA

When you started reading this book, I told you that I'll not be teaching you how to be a better photographer, and by extension, I implied that I'd not be telling you how to take pictures and how to control your camera. I'm going to backtrack on that implication for this chapter, and then a bit later on, I'll do it again – I know a killer tip for removing unwanted things from pictures that Bert Monroy taught me at a seminar. Shh, more later.

Back to your camera. The first setting we need to discuss is file format. I've already mentioned a quazillion times that I expect you to be shooting raw. But what is raw, and why am I so insistent on it?

Firstly, let me state that I'm assuming you have a camera that can shoot raw. After all you dropped a \$1000 on Photoshop, you purchased all those external hard drives, and the card reader, you wouldn't be doing all that for something that fits in your back pocket now would you?

When that little back-pocket camera you used to own captured images, it too captured raw data – pure digital magic. It then went about the business of sharpening all the edges in the picture so they looked perfectly in focus. It boosted all the colors so the sky was every so blue, and the sand ever so yellow. It cropped the image so that it would look great printed on a 4x6 post card. And finally, crime of crimes, it threw away up to 80% of the image's details as it crushed it down to a 90k JPEG file. You'll notice the first time you shoot raw, that your old point-and-shoot camera took a better picture.



What you're going to be doing in Photoshop is a very, very advanced version of what a point-and-shoot does automatically, and that's why we want raw. We want all that potential, before the automated processes zap it to within an inch of its life.

Raw files are huge: I shoot a Nikon D300 and every picture is somewhere between 10 and 13 megabytes. The JPEG version of those pictures is typically 500 kilobytes,

· ED – Really, I thought we were done with the made up numbers?

that's 1/26th of the size. You don't throw away 25/26^{ths} of the captured image data and still have the ability to print a poster of your daughter for over the living room fireplace.

Let me put it another way, in the old days of film, did you ever make a super size print by taking the 4x6 in to the shop, and when it came back it looked all distorted, pixilated, and the colors were wrong? It wouldn't have happened if you'd used the negative instead.

Shoot raw. Really. Don't listen to your friends. Why buy a super-duper camera and then set it on automatic? Come on, you're better than that. Shoot raw.

Okay.

Deep breath

I don't always shoot raw.

There, I've said it.

I feel dirty.

Let me explain. My camera can take about 3 photos a second in raw, that's damned impressive in my book, but it's not always fast enough. When I shoot sports, like the image below, things are happening so fast that I just need the shutter to be a blur, so I shoot JPEG Super Fine. On my camera, a Super Fine JPEG is about 5MB, so my camera can take 2 of them for every raw, meaning I now capture 6 pictures a second. And once in a while I get lucky and I capture the ball squashed against the racket.



There. Shoot raw. (Unless you're a sports photographer.)

There are other settings in your camera that I'm not all that concerned about; white balance, sharpening mode, and color space. All these apply when you're shooting JPEG or TIFF; when you're shooting raw, we can change them all later.

One small note through, when you shoot raw, the saved file has a very tiny JPEG thumbnail embedded in it, so that Bridge can quickly display something without having to process all 12Mb of the file. The JPEG uses those previously mentioned settings. It's not a big deal because as soon as you edit the picture, we save a new, better, thumbnail. But if you set your camera's white balance to tungsten, the first time you view them in Bridge, they'll be bright blue. (Unless you were standing under a tungsten light fitting that is.)

One last thing for your camera, it should have a menu item called something like "file number sequence". You want to set this so that, to quote from my Nikon manual:

"WHEN A NEW FOLDER IS CREATED, THE MEMORY CARD FORMATTED, OR A NEW MEMORY CARD INSERTED IN THE CAMERA, FILE NUMBERING CONTINUES FROM THE LAST NUMBER USED..."

We do this, just to avoid the confusion of having 2 files on one memory card, both with the same name – its unlikely but it could happen.

Setting up your memory card

There is no setting up of your memory card, the title is bogus, but I have something important to share with you, and I couldn't work out how to cram it in to this chapter.

NEVER fill up your memory card when you're out taking pictures.

When you're happily clicking away, your camera is capturing all those fine Smithsonian contenders in its own little memory. When it gets the chance, it pauses and writes them out to your removable memory card. The problem is, every picture is a different size, depending on what the scene was and how the camera is set up. So the camera has to guess when to stop taking pictures, and when to start writing on the off chance that the next shot will be so huge it won't fit on the card.

Once in a while, it'll get it wrong, and you'll have just captured Brad Pitt having coffee at the next table to you, and your camera won't be able to save the image.

Always stop using a card when your camera reports there's only space for one or two more images. It's safer that way.

Coffee Time

We're done here. I'm sorry if that was tedious, but it was vital. And it didn't take long did it? Thirty minutes I reckon; that's nothing to the hours you're now going to save creating masterpieces.

Lets get on with the show.

