



## **PROCESSING BLACK & WHITE IMAGES**

This presentation is mainly about using Gradient Maps but to start I would point out there are various ways of processing a colour photo and creating a black and white image.

### **ACR & Lightroom**

This can be done in ACR, Lightroom and Lightroom Classic.

This is the simplest method for example in Lightroom Classic all you need to do is select Black & White in the top right-hand corner of the basic panel and then move the sliders as normal to create the look you require.

Alternatively click on the four small rectangles below the Black & White label and various Adobe pre-sets will appear and you can scroll through these and pick one you like. Just hover the mouse over the pre-sets and it will show you the effect.

Remember this is only a starting point and you can still adjust with the sliders as normal.

The HSL Panel will have changed to a Black & White mix panel. You will find that the blue and Aqua sliders have the most effect and the other sliders may not do very much.

The Calibration panel is useful, and these sliders all have an effect so play around with these to see if they help to achieve the look you require.

### **DXO Silver Efex Pro**

If you have this software, it offers lots of pre-sets to try in the panel on the left and all can be adjusted using the sliders on the right.

In Lightroom go to the Photo menu, then down to Edit in and if you have the software, it will be listed.

You can just use the sliders on the right hand side or select a Pre-set from the left-hand panel, then adjust as required using the sliders and it also gives you the option of having Control points that you can place on an image to control where the effect will take place.

This is a piece of software that has become more powerful since its creation and is very useful and needs a separate presentation to go into its details.

Its also quite expensive so if you don't want to go to the expense of yet another piece of editing software, given you can get similar results by just using Photoshop, why would you and this is where Gradient Maps comes in.

## **Gradient Maps (YouTube video by PiXimperfect 24/02/2022)**

Open the image in Photoshop and create a new layer by pressing Ctrl J just so you can start again if you need to.

Select Gradient Maps from the adjustment layer icon on the bottom right and select Gradient Map.

You may need to select which gradient to use on my computer its under basic and it's the black to white gradient called foreground to background.

There are three options to choose from. Perceptual, which is very strong and will crush the blacks, this may work for some images but for others it may be too much; Classic, this is a middle setting that works well on most images; Linear, which is a bit flat.

Classic is the setting I use most often, Perceptual is very dramatic but does crush the blacks.

Double click on the Gradient Map icon to open it and as soon as you move the white or black end handles a diamond handle appears in the centre which you can use to fine tune the effect in addition to moving the white and black handles.

Just double check that you have black as the left-hand end colour, click on the handle and if it's not black click on the colour swatch and set it to black. Do the same with the white handle.

Move the Black slider to the right to increase the blacks and the white to the left to increase the whites and the central diamond to adjust the balance between black and white.

Be careful not to go too far with the white slider to avoid blowing out the highlights.

To add a bit more interest, add a Black & white adjustment layer under the gradient Map layer and change the blend mode to Luminosity. Turn on the gradient map layer and with the B&W layer selected play around with the colours on this B&W layer to see what it looks like.

This may work or may not but just experiment. If it doesn't work just delete the B&W layer.

To fine tune the image, add just below the gradient map layer add a curves adjustment layer. Focus on the area(s) you want to adjust say the eyes and take up the curve of the darks, minimize the layer and invert the mask by pressing Ctrl I then take a soft white brush and paint on the area you want to lighten. Adjust the opacity of the brush to suit the area you want to work on. Alternatively adjust the opacity of the whole layer. If you go outside of where you intended just paint on the mask with a black brush.

Name the layers as you go so you can easily see what you are doing, especially if you have several layers.

If you want to make the area around the subject black, select the background layer and then select subject by picking one of the selection tools and then the Select Subject box will open on the top layer. Click on this and it will select the subject.

Then select a solid adjustment layer (This will be just above the background layer) and choose black and a mask with the subject will appear beside it. Then invert the mask by pressing Ctrl I.

To blend the layer in, select the gradient map layer and duplicate it by pressing Ctrl J, then invert the mask and with a soft white brush carefully brush in where you want the background to blend in with the subject. Adjust the opacity and flow of the brush as required.

If the subject selection was not quite accurate you can just adjust it by painting on the solid colour layer mask with either black or white as required to correct the mask, then go to the top gradient map layer mask and paint on this to help the blend in on these touched up areas.

Then at the end you can go to ACR or back to Lightroom to carry out some final adjustments.

If you want to do this in Adobe Camera Raw (ACR), create a Stamp Visible layer Ctrl+Alt+Shift+E (this is a merged layer of the layers below) name this ACR, then from the Filter menu select Convert for Smart Filters, then select Camera Raw Filter from the Filter Menu.

Then something that often add a bit more drama is to decrease the highlights and increase the whites to compensate.

If some areas are too bright decrease the exposure slightly. Generally, play around with the sliders to see what they do to the image as every image will be different.

Sometimes moving the black's slider to the left can add a bit more drama and adding a bit of clarity and texture can add something but be careful as it can look very odd if you add too much. it's all a matter of what you want to achieve.

When you are happy hit Ok to go back to Photoshop. Take another look and if necessary, reduce the opacity to tone down the ACR effects.