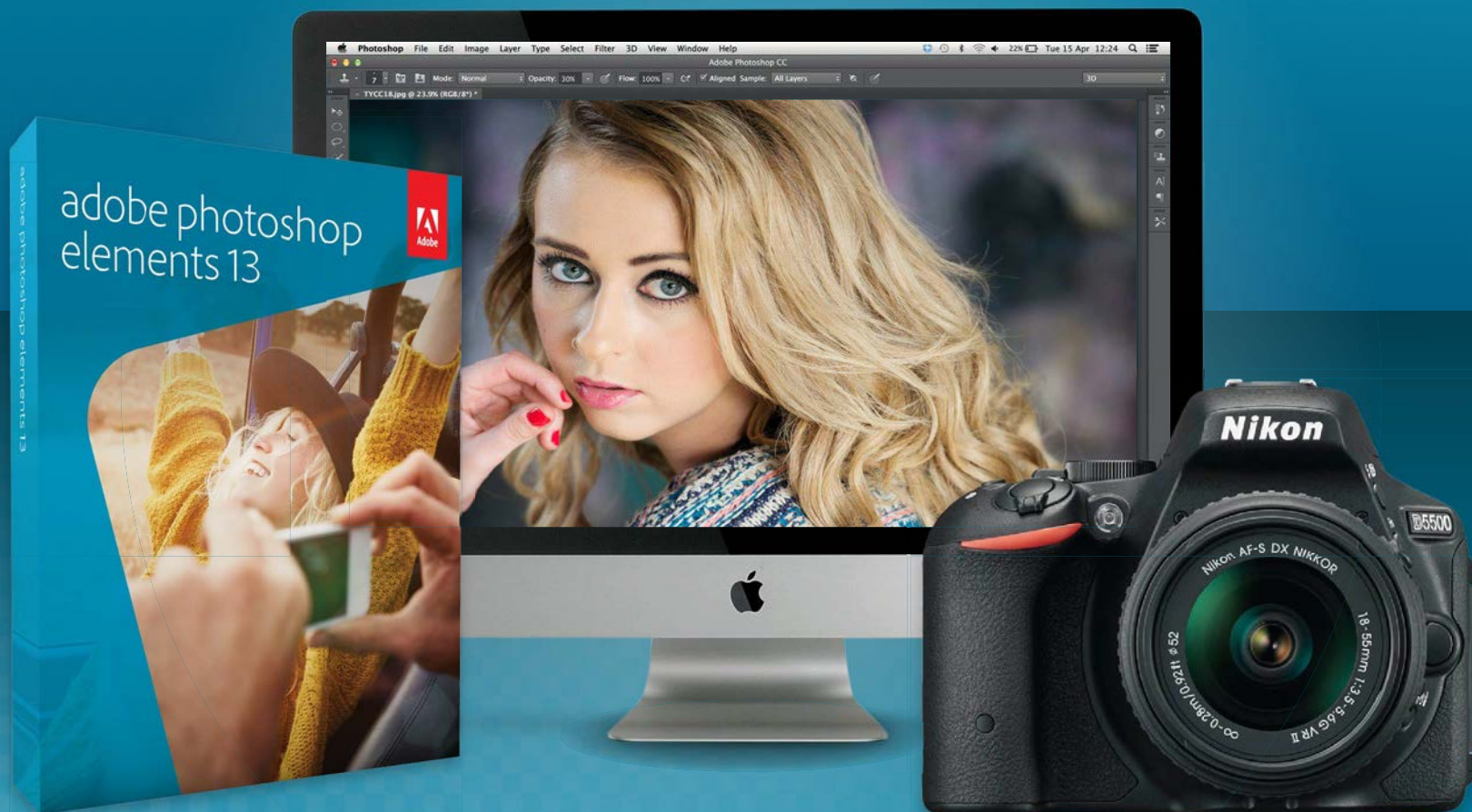**223 PAGES** OF EXPERT PHOTO ADVICE

Teach yourself

Photoshop Elements

Improve your photography the easy way!

✔ Transform your snapshots into stunning photos
✔ Expert guides explain every image editing step
✔ All the important tools and features revealed

A **Photo***masterclass*
from the makers of **Digital Camera**

Future

PMZ45   2015

Teach yourself
Photoshop Elements

T he technology in digital cameras these days is pretty impressive, but no matter how small or how fast or how capable modern cameras have become they still lack one essential element of photography: intelligence. Only you know how you want your pictures to look, and often, poor lighting, dull weather or other elements beyond your control can prevent you from making the images you wanted. To take control of the image-making process you need a sound workflow and capable software that offers a broad range of tools for making precise adjustments to your images.

While often regarded as the younger sibling to Adobe's flagship Photoshop CC software, Photoshop Elements is remarkably powerful, and offers photographers a phenomenal amount of control over the photo-editing process. As you'll discover over the 200+ pages of this book, this is the most in-depth guide available to mastering this latest version of the popular software.

We'll start you off with introductions to Elements' different workspaces, then work our way through classic editing steps every photographer should know, advanced edits, essential tricks, how to use Elements' Camera Raw editor, and finally, we suggest a handful of fun photo projects that incorporate using what you've learnt in Elements.

We hope you enjoy learning with this guide. And because you bought this book we'd also like to offer you a 40% discount off our extended 50-part *Teach yourself Photoshop Elements* interactive DVD training course. To claim the discount simply use the voucher code **MFMDVD** at **www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk/photo**

Chris George, Series Editor

A **Photo***masterclass*
from the makers of **Digital Camera**

Teach yourself
Photoshop
Elements

Mon 16 Feb 23:51

Create - Share -

ups

Effects

B&W Color Pop

B&W Selection

Black and White

High Key

Line Drawing

Low Key

Old Fashioned Photo

Saturated Film Effect

a Effects

Play

An introduction to Photoshop Elements

Find out how the Elements tools and interface work, and learn how to import, tag and sort your photographs

Organise your images in Elements

Discover how to sort and catalogue your shots into a fully organised image library using the Elements Organizer

In the days of analogue film cameras we were limited to shooting batches of 24 or 36 photos, depending on the size of our film roll. All the photos tended to get printed and many would end up in easy-to-access photo albums.

In these digital days we have the problem of managing our ever-growing collection of digital photos, especially now that phones shoot high-quality shots. By default, digital photos that are imported to our computers tend to get stored chronologically in the Pictures directory. This means we can spend too much time scrolling through folders and sub-folders in search of a particular shot, especially if we're

unsure when it was captured. Photoshop Elements' Organizer offers a host of tools to help you find favourite photos with ease, and even fix common problems with colour and tone. As we work through this chapter you'll discover how to organise shots by placing them in virtual albums, adding star ratings so you can find favourite pictures with ease and even filtering your searches to find pictures containing specific people (or locations).

We'll kick off with a look at some of the key features of the Elements Organizer so you can get a flavour of what it has to offer. We'll then talk you through the import and organise options in more detail.

1 Media
Imported photos and videos appear in the scrollable Media pane, with the most recent shots at the top. You can fine-tune the way shots are displayed by clicking the Sort By menu and choosing an option such as Oldest or Import Batch. You can also go to View and turn on Details.

2 Albums
You can organise your images by placing them in themed albums, such as Portraits. Click an album and its contents will appear in the Media tab. Click the + icon to create a new album, and add photos by dragging and dropping. Click a folder in My Folders to see the images it contains.
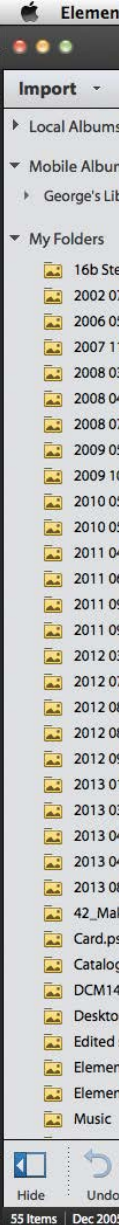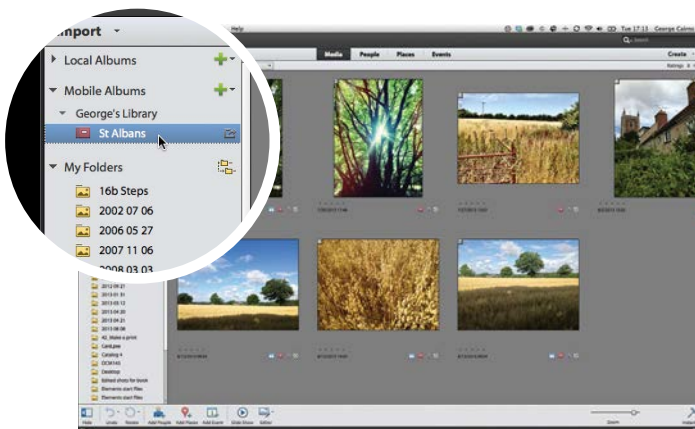
3 People and places

You can use tools such as the Add People button to find and tag friends and family members in specific shots. You can then use the People panel to organise your pictures by Groups such as Colleagues, Friends and so on. We'll look at ways to tag people in more detail in Chapter 3.

4 Mobile albums

You can automatically sync mobile phone albums with the Organizer courtesy of the Adobe Revel service. You need to sign up for the free service and download the app to your phone. Once you sign into Revel via Elements, it will import shots stored in the cloud directly to your computer.
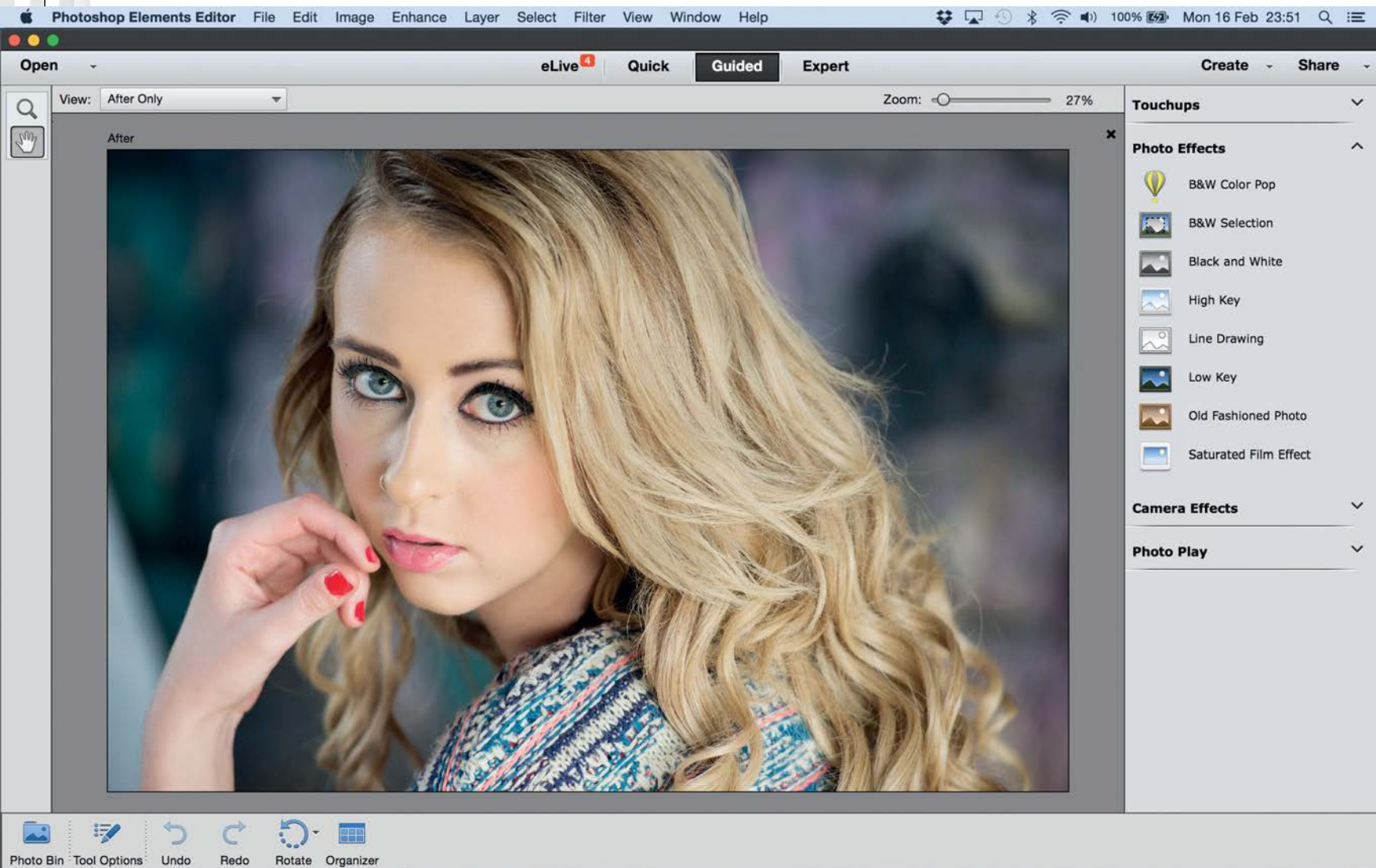
Introducing the Elements editing modes

Learn about the three modes for editing photos in Photoshop Elements

When you launch Photoshop Elements by clicking its icon you're presented with a welcome screen. One half of the screen gives you the option to jump to the Organizer, where you can import and organise your shots. The other half launches the Photo Editor. Don't worry too much about which option you choose, because you can switch between the Photo Editor and the Organizer by clicking the appropriate icon.

As its name suggests, the Photo Editor is designed to help you fix common picture problems. Its tone-tweaking tools enable you to restore more detail to under- or over-exposed shots. Its colour-correction tools allow you to counteract colour casts caused by incorrect camera White Balance settings. You can also tackle lens-related problems such as vignetted or curved edges.

The Photo Editor also enables you to be creative. The menu contains a wide range of filters you can apply to create artistic effects. You can also access these filters from the Effects panel by clicking a filter preview icon. You can use selection tools to isolate people or objects from one shot and place them in another, or swap a dull sky for something more interesting. We'll show you how to perform creative edits later in this book.

The Photo Editor is split into three editing modes: Quick, Guided and Expert. We'll explore these modes in more detail as we work through the book, but check out our annotated grab on the right to familiarise yourself with the layout of the Photo Editor's default Expert mode. In the next chapter, we'll show you how to customise the Expert mode to suit your own needs.

Photoshop Anatomy **Workspace features**

Get to know the tools available in the Photoshop Elements workspace
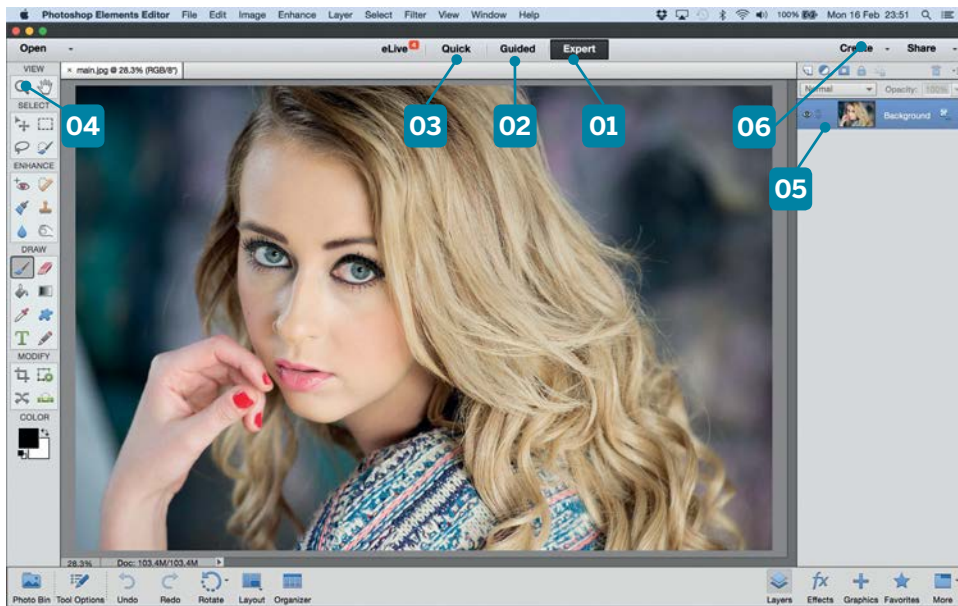
01 EXPERT MODE

In this mode you'll find Element's most powerful image-editing tools. They enable you to take control of a photo's colours and tones, boost its colour saturation and even add text and special filter effects.

02 GUIDED MODE

This helpful mode takes you step-by-step through various photo-fixing and creative image-adjusting tasks, such as removing scratches and blemishes or adding photo effects such as tilt-shift. It uses the tools found in the Expert mode.

03 QUICK MODE

This mode enables you to perform common photo fixes (such as sharpening a soft image) by clicking preview thumbnails. You can also apply textures and effects to your shots with one click. It's well worth experimenting in this section.

04 TOOLBOX

The Toolbox is packed full of handy photo-fixing tools. Some compartments contain similar tools. You can see and select these tools in the Tool Options at the bottom of the workspace. The Quick editor has a cut-down Toolbox.

05 PANEL BIN

Here you can work with a variety of panels. By default the Layers panel is visible, because it's the one you'll use most often, but you can click the icons at the bottom to jump to other panels, such as Effects. Click More to access extra panels such as the Navigator.

06 CREATE AND SHARE

The Create and Share links aren't technically editing modes, but they do unleash a host of handy tools such as ways to share your edited photos on Facebook, or turn a selection of photos into a printable greetings card, for example.

Understanding...
THE QUICK EDITING MODE

The Quick editing mode has an adjustments panel that enables you to adjust colours and tones with ease. Click an option such as Levels **[01]** to tweak the tones in an image. You can target a specific range of tones by clicking an option such as Midtones **[02]**. The slider beneath **[03]** enables you to increase the strength of the adjustment. Alternatively, you can preview tonal adjustments by looking at the thumbnails at the foot of the panel **[04]** and then click a thumbnail to adjust the slider. You also have the option of clicking the Auto Levels or Auto Contrast buttons to let Photoshop Elements decide the best results for you if you're unsure.
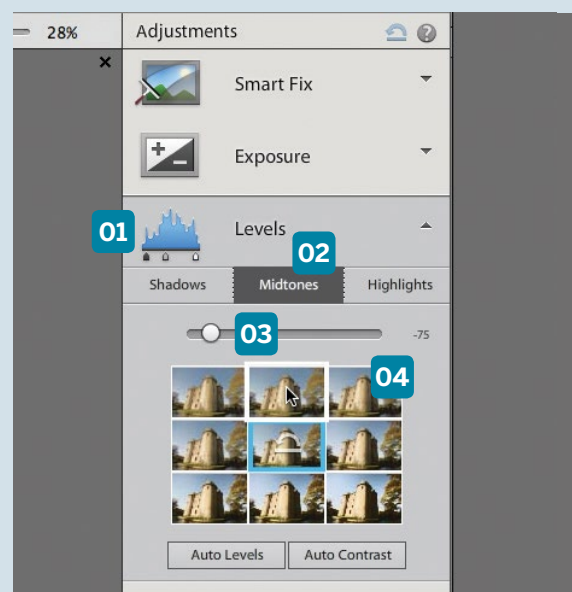
THE PHOTOSHOP ELEMENTS GUIDED EDITING MODE

If you're daunted by all the photo-fixing tools and commands in the Expert editing mode, then it may be better to kick off by exploring the many retouching options in the Guided editing mode. This editing mode provides you with a list of handy photo fixes (such as Remove a Color Cast). Each guided edit hands you the appropriate tool for the job, and if necessary breaks down the process into easy-to-manage steps. The creative guided edits show you a before-and-after example preview of an edited image, so you can see what you're working to produce, and change tack or start again from scratch if necessary.

An overview of the Toolbox and Tool Options

Customise the powerful array of tools in Elements with Tool Options

Traditional film photographers could use a host of darkroom tools to develop their negatives into prints. Some of these tools enabled them to change contrast. By placing a piece of card over part of the print they could selectively lighten (dodge) tones in that part of the photo. By cutting holes in card they could mask most of an already exposed image and let more light hit certain areas to darken (burn) details. Photoshop Elements is your digital darkroom, with its own

collection of photo-fixing tools. Indeed, many of the tools in Elements share the names of their analogue predecessors, such as the Dodge and Burn tools.

Most of the tools can be found in the Toolbox, located at the left of the Expert Editor's workspace. These tools enable you to produce a wide range of photo-fixing tasks. You can give reality a nip and tuck by removing unwanted objects (or even people) from a scene by using tools such as the Clone Stamp, or perform a bit of cosmetic

enhancement by erasing a model's blemishes with the Spot Healing brush. Elements has a new Content-Aware Move tool that enables you to reposition a subject with ease (and automatically fill in the space that they occupied with appropriate pixels). We'll look at this new tool in more detail in Chapter 7.

Once you select a tool, you can modify the way it behaves using the Tool Options at the bottom of the workspace. The Toolbox and the Tool Options work together to help you make a wide range of image adjustments.

Photoshop Anatomy Tools overview

Locate and recognise particular tools and modify the way they behave

01 LABELS

Labels break up the tools in the Toolbox into sections, enabling you to find appropriate tools more easily. The Enhance section includes retouching tools such as the Red Eye Removal tool, the Spot Healing brush and the Dodge and Burn tools.

02 TOOL TIPS

These handy pop-up labels enable you to identify a particular tool. Check out the quick tip below to find out how to turn these on (or off). Although one tool may appear in a compartment you can access its cousins in the Tool Options.

03 COLOUR SWATCHES

By default, the foreground colour swatch is black and the background colour swatch is white. Press D to set the default colours. Click a swatch to choose a new colour from the Color Picker. Press X to swap the foreground colour with the background one.

04 TOOL OPTIONS

When you select a tool, you can adjust the way it behaves by adjusting the controls in the Tool Options. Many tools are brush-based, so here you can adjust the Size of the tip, for example, or change properties such as Exposure.

05 OTHER TOOLS

The Dodge tool is visible in the Toolbox, but you can access related tools (such as the Burn tool) by clicking the icon revealed in the Tool Options. Compartments containing multiple tools feature a little fly-out icon in the top-right corner.

06 EXTRA OPTIONS

Different tools have different editable options. The Burn tool has a Range drop-down menu that enables you to darken specific tones. Here we've set it to darken the Shadows, so highlights will remain untouched when we use the tool on the photo.

Understanding...
BRUSH-BASED TOOLS

Many of the tools in the Toolbox are brush-based, such as the Selection Brush [01]. These brush-based tools have similar editable properties in the Tool Options, such as the size, opacity and so on. With the Selection Brush, you can click these icons [02] to make the tool add to or subtract from an initial selection marquee as you paint on the image. This is useful when selecting a sky, for instance, and you select, say, a tree along with the sky by mistake – simply switch to the subtract mode, and paint over the tree. You can also change the shape and texture of a brush tip by clicking the Brush Preset picker [03]. Scroll down through the tips, and click a tip preview [04] to modify it.
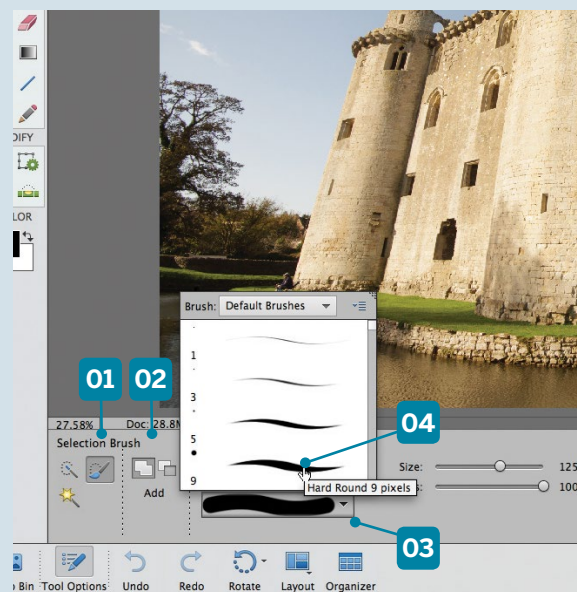
DISCOVER HOW TO SWITCH ON THE TOOL TIPS

To help you identify each tool in the Toolbox you can set up Photoshop Elements to display a Tool Tip. This little rectangular label pops up when you place the mouse cursor over a particular compartment in the Toolbox, revealing the name of the tool. To make sure that the Tool tips are turned on, go to Photoshop Elements Editor>Preferences>General. In the Options section tick the Show Tool Tips box. Click OK. These pop-up Tool Tips also display the correct keyboard shortcut, so you can summon a particular tool with a tap of the appropriate key. You'll learn these over time thanks to the Tool Tips.
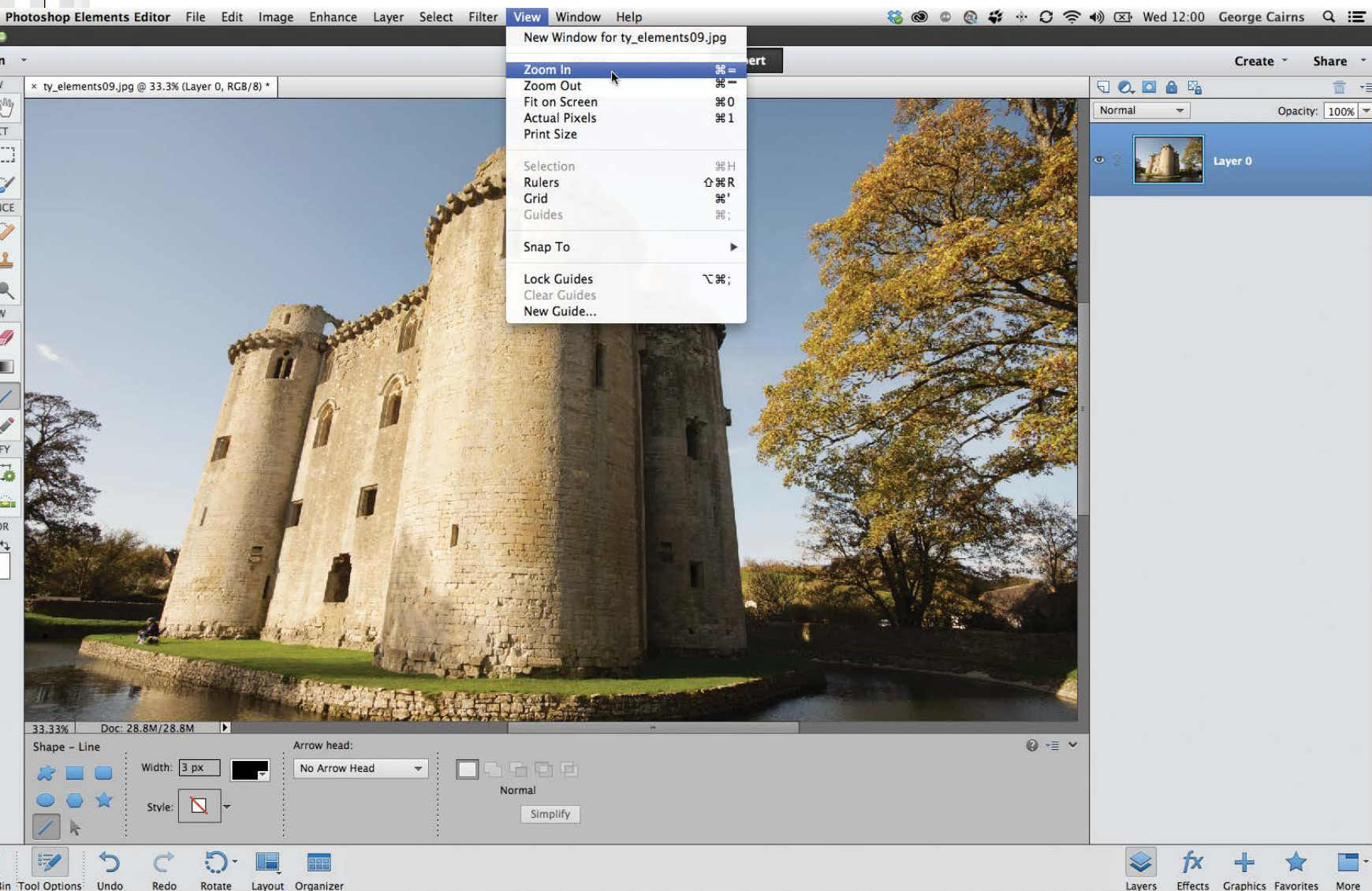
The menu bar options in the Expert mode

Access filters, effects and more via the drop-down menu options

On the previous two pages we looked at the various photo-fixing tools in the Expert mode's Toolbox and Tool Options. You can also edit a photo by combining various tools with the drop-down commands in the main menu bar at the top of the workspace. For example, you could use the Lasso tool to draw a selection marquee around a tree. You could then go to the Edit section of the main menu bar and click to open its options. By choosing the Copy option, you would copy the pixels within the selection marquee into

your PC's clipboard. You could then choose Edit›Paste to create a duplicate of the selected pixels on a new layer. This technique is very similar to copying and pasting words in a word-processing package, although in Photoshop's case you're copying and pasting pixels instead of text. You could then grab the Move tool from the Toolbox and drag the copied pixels into a new position, to extend the copied and pasted tree branches over more of the sky, for instance.

The commands in the main menu bar are grouped to help you find specific commands

more easily. For example, the File command enables you to open and save images, while Enhance allows you to improve contrast or colour. Many menus have a collection of sub-menus to explore, so you may need to dig a little deeper to access a particular tool. Some of the commands in menus and sub-menus can also be summoned by clicking icons. For example, you can create a new layer by choosing Layer›New›Layer, or you can click the Create a new layer icon in the Layers panel. Many commands can also be summoned with a keyboard shortcut.

Photoshop Anatomy Menu bar overview

Get to know more about the main menu bar's commands

01 MENU BAR

The main menu bar at the top of the Expert mode workspace contains a range of themed commands such as File. Click a menu label to access drop-down menu options such as Open or Copy.

02 SUB-MENUS

Many menu commands have a sub-menu, so you can perform a range of additional edits. If a sub-menu is present you'll see a little triangle icon such as this one. Move the mouse over the icon to access the sub-menu.

03 COPY AND PASTE

Here we used the Edit>Copy and Edit>Paste menu commands to extend the tree's branches over the sky. You can see the pasted pixels in their own layer in the Layers panel.

04 SHORTCUTS

To save time rummaging around in the menu bar's sub-menus, you can summon specific commands by using keyboard shortcuts. You can see a command's available shortcuts here.

05 THE FILTER MENU

The Filter menu enables you to apply a variety of creative effects to your picture. We'll look at this command in more detail in chapter 8, where we turn photos into paintings.

06 ICON ALTERNATIVES

You can summon powerful adjustment layers using the Layer>New Adjustment menu command. Alternatively, click the Create new adjustment layer icon at the top of the Layers panel.

Understanding...
THE ENHANCE MENU OPTIONS

The Enhance menu provides you with some of the most useful photo-fixing commands. Many of the commands (such as Auto Levels **[01]**) provide a one-click fix, but they may add undesired results such as shifts in colour or tone. The new Auto Smart Tone **[02]** command enables you to take more control over the amount of tonal changes that are applied to the picture (as you'll see in chapter 2.) This line in the menu **[03]** separates the one-click fixes with commands that you can adjust using sliders. Move your mouse over this triangle icon **[04]** to discover extra tone-tweaking commands, such as the Shadows/Highlights command for adjusting the tones of an image.
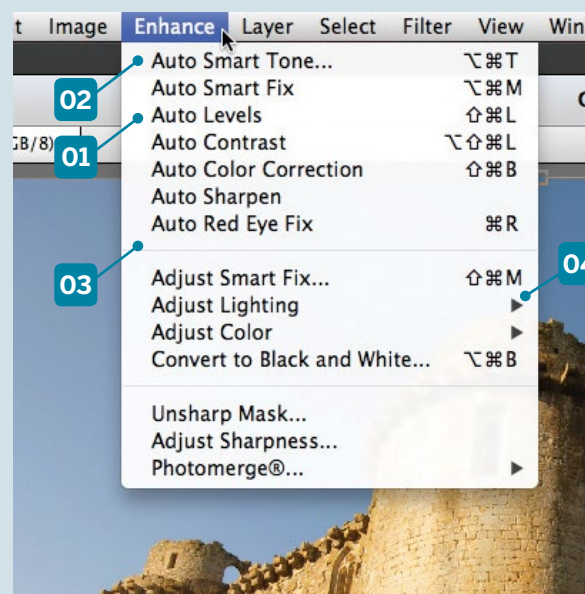
THE PHOTOMERGE SUB-MENU TOOLS

The Enhance menu gives you access to a powerful collection of photo-retouching commands housed in the Photomerge sub-menu. Photomerge Panorama takes multiple shots from the Photo Bin and repositions them in a new canvas so that their overlapping edges are aligned. The edges are then blended seamlessly together to create a huge panoramic image. The Photomerge commands can save you lots of time and effort when retouching your photographs. For example, in chapter 6, we demonstrate how the clever Photomerge Scene Cleaner tool enables you to quickly remove unwanted people from a scene you've photographed.

A simple workflow

Take your pictures from camera to finished image:
the six stages of photo processing explained

1 Import your photos

Launch Photoshop Elements and click the Organizer section of the welcome screen. The Photoshop Elements Organizer will open. Go to the main menu bar and choose File›Get Photos and Videos. You can then choose an option such as From Files and Folders. Browse to the folder of photos that you want to import. Tick Get Photos From Subfolder, then click Get Media. This will import the selected photos into the Photoshop Elements Organizer.

2 Organise your shots

The imported photos will be displayed in chronological order in a grid of thumbnails. To make specific images easier to find in the future, hold down Cmd/Ctrl and select their thumbnails. Click the green + icon in the Local Albums section to create a new album containing the selected images. Give it a name such as Landscapes. Click OK. You can now click an album's icon to display the shots within it. Click Back to see all the images in the Organizer.

3 Add ratings to your pictures

You can create as many albums as you like, just as you would with traditional photo prints. If you go to View›Details you'll see five grey stars under each thumbnail. Click to assign specific star ratings to help you find favourite images. You can also organise photos according to where and when they were shot, as well as tag them with the names of the people who are in them. We'll look at ratings and tagging options in much more detail in chapter 3.
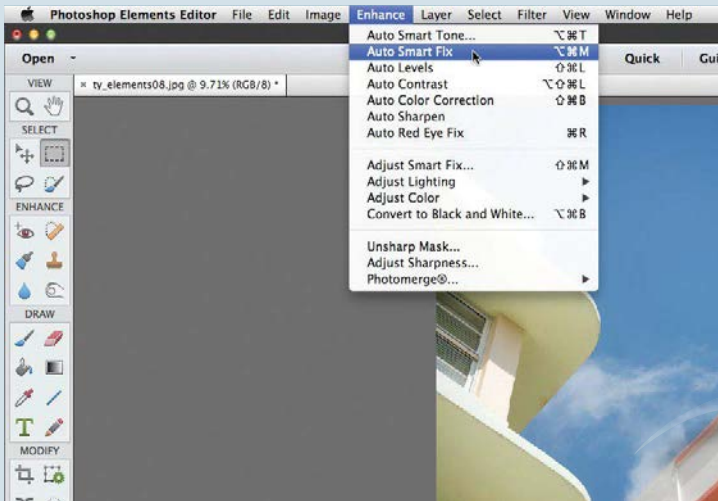
4 Improve your photos

If you see a shot that has problems with colour or tone, click its thumbnail, then click the Editor button. This takes the shot into the Photoshop Elements Expert editing mode. Here you can choose photo-fixing menu commands such as Enhance>Auto Smart Fix to try to boost colours and give an image a healthier spread of tones. In the following chapters we'll explore ways to improve colour, tone, composition and sharpness in the Elements editor.
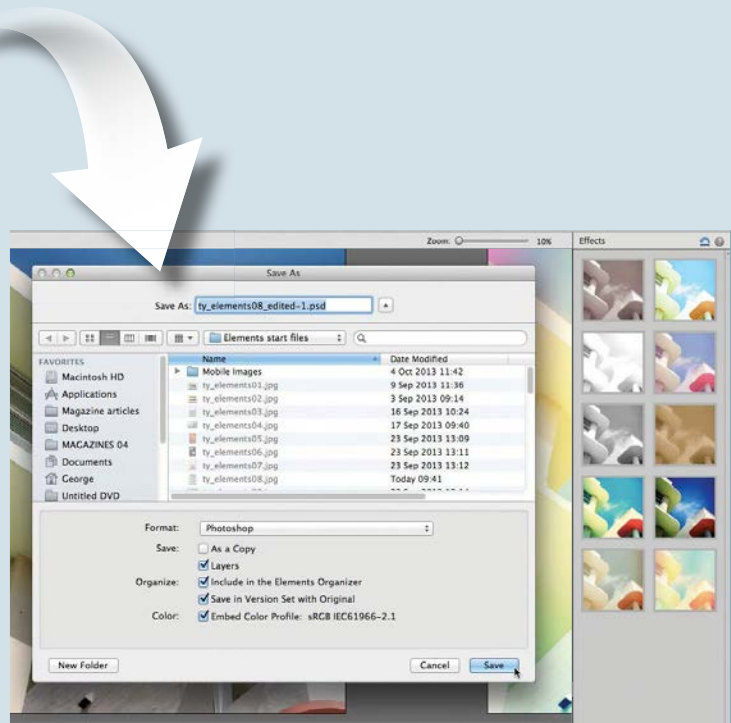
5 Make creative enhancements

Photoshop Elements has three editing modes — Expert, Quick and Guided. Each mode contains tools to help you overcome common picture problems. They also have tools that enable you to creatively process your shots. If you go to the Quick editing mode and click the fx icon, you can apply creative effects (such as Light Leak) to your photo with one click, for example.

6 Share your images

Once you've edited and saved a version of your photo, you might want to share it with family and friends. Both the Quick and Expert editing modes have a Share tab that enables you to upload your shots directly from Photoshop Elements to popular image-sharing sites such as Facebook and Flickr. You can also create a private web album using the free Adobe Revel service. These sharing options automatically resize your photo to make it suitable for displaying online.

SHARPEN UP IN THE ORGANIZER

If you plan to print a physical copy of a photo then it's well worth applying a little post-production sharpening to the image to give it more impact. You can do this within the Photoshop Elements Organizer. Click a photo's thumbnail and click the Instant Fix button. Then click the Sharpen icon in the Photo Fix Options panel.
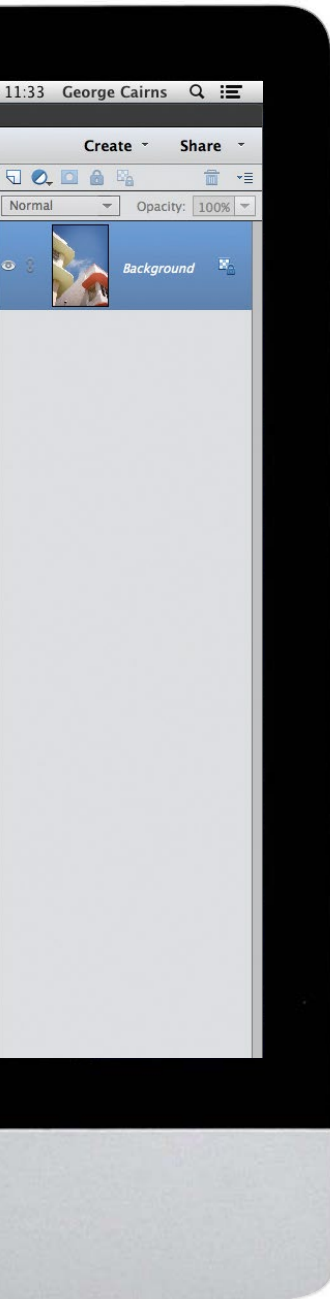
Get started fast in Photoshop Elements

Import your photos and make quick edits, or have Elements enhance them for you automatically

20 How to import photos from your memory card

Discover how to copy images from your camera's memory card to the safety of the Photoshop Elements Organizer, then copyright them and place them in Albums

22 Apply quick fixes to your photos

Identify and fix common photo problems with colours, tones and composition, courtesy of the Organizer's Instant Fix panel

24 How to set up your workspace in Expert mode

Work faster and smarter by customising Photoshop Elements' Expert editing mode workspace. Place popular panels such as the Layers panel closer to hand, access useful tools easily, and more

26 Enhance your images automatically

Correct common image problems such as colour casts and contrast issues quickly using automatic image enhancement tools

GET THE START FILES HERE: http://bit.ly/type-start
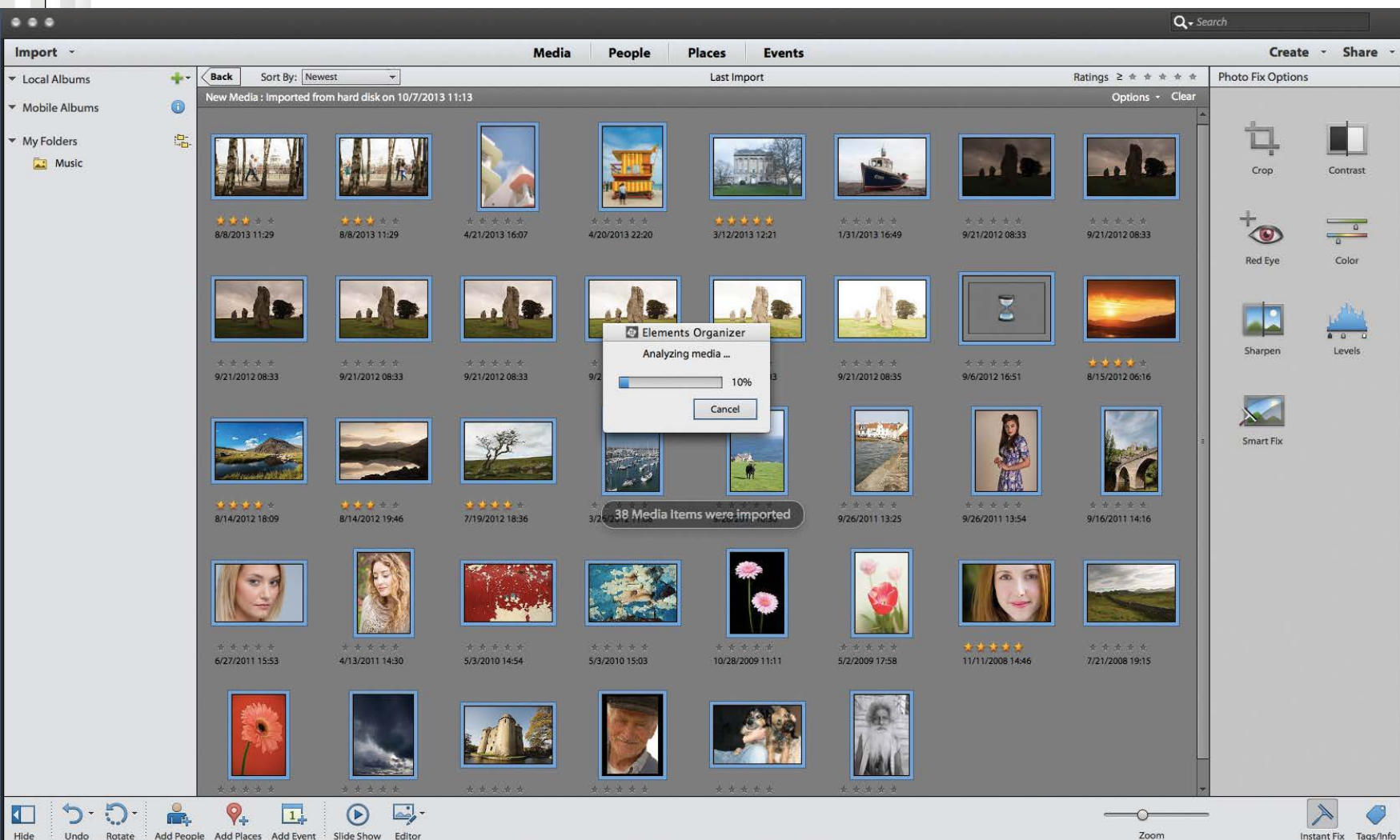
Import photos from your memory card

Copy images from your camera's memory card to the safety of the Photoshop Elements Organizer

Modern memory cards (such as a 16GB SD card) can store a huge number of photos, especially if you tend to shoot in JPEG format. This means that hundreds of your precious pictures may only exist on a small piece of plastic that's very easy to misplace. To protect your irreplaceable pictures you should import them from the memory card into the safety of the Photoshop Elements Organizer as soon as you return from a shoot. In the following walkthrough we'll show you how to set up the Organizer's Photo Downloader to copy your shots into folders on your PC and display them in the Organizer.

The Photo Downloader can handle your imported shots in a variety of ways. We'll show you how to batch rename files

so that they aren't simply a list of meaningless numbers. We'll also talk you though key options in the Photo Downloader's Advanced dialog so that you can automatically organise your photos as you import them. For example, you can ask Elements to analyse the shots as it imports them, and then stack similar pictures in a pile in the Organizer. This means that multiple shots won't take up lots of space.

We'll also show you how to batch edit shots to remove lens-related problems such as flash-induced red eye. This can save you lots of editing time in the future, especially if you're importing a selection of party pictures that feature flash photography. The Downloader even enables you to assign metadata to your shots as they're imported.

1 Launch Photoshop Elements
Plug your camera into your PC and double click the Photoshop Elements icon. Click the welcome screen's Organizer section, and go to File›Get Photos and Video›From Camera or Card Reader. Click the Advanced Dialog button. Untick any thumbnails that you don't want to import.

2 Process files automatically
If you have similar photos, they can clutter up your Organizer's workspace. Toggle open the Advanced Options on the right and tick Automatically Suggest Photo Stacks. If you shoot JPEG and raw files, tick Automatically Stack Raw and JPEG to save Organizer space.

3 Place photos into Albums
Elements places each shot into a folder based on the date it was captured. You can then scroll through them in chronological order. If you want to put your files into a themed album, tick Import into Album. Click the Settings button, then click the + icon to create a new album. Click OK.

4 Import and delete
The Photo Downloader leaves all the shots on the memory card after they've been copied to the PC. You could select After Copying, Delete Originals, but to be safe, leave this set to the default. Once the images are imported into Elements, you can use your camera to wipe the card.

5 Assign copyright details
It makes sense to assign your name to your images. Go to the Apply Metadata section and type your name into the Creator field. In the Copyright field you could put your website's address. This information will be attached to every shot you import. Click Get Media.

6 Stack similar images
The Downloader copies the files into folders on your PC and imports them into the Organizer. It will try to fix red-eye problems. It will then analyse the shots for visual similarities and suggest images that you might like to stack (such as those with similar compositions). Click Done.

Apply quick fixes to your photos

Fix common problems with colours, tones and composition, courtesy of the Organizer's Instant Fix panel

It's likely that most of your photos will require a few post-production tweaks in Photoshop Elements to look their best, much as a traditional roll of film requires processing in a darkroom to get the most from the negatives. There are many reasons your shots may not turn out quite the way you hoped. Cameras struggle to reveal detail in contrasting lighting conditions, so some areas in a scene will be over- or underexposed. Cameras also struggle to balance the colour temperatures produced by different lighting conditions, so your shots may suffer from warm orange or cold blue colour casts. You may not have composed our shots in the right way, or failed to spot a distracting object at the edge of the frame.

Photoshop Elements is packed with image-editing tools that are designed to help you tweak each photograph's colour, tone and composition. We'll explore these photo-fixing tools in more detail throughout this book, but we'll kick off by looking at some of the quick methods you can use to fix photographs using the Organizer.

Adobe recognises that you might prefer to spend more time shooting and less time editing, so it's placed the most useful and common photo-fixing tools in the Organizer. This handy Photo Fix Options panel means that you can overcome typical photo problems without needing to delve more deeply into other editing modes such as Expert, Quick or Guided. Check out some common fixes on the right…

1 Access the Photo Fix Options panel

Use the File›Get Photos and Videos›From Files and Folders command to import the start files. This is almost the same process as the one described on the previous pages. Click the boat shot (ty_elements13.jpg). Click the Instant Fix icon at the bottom right of the Organizer workspace.

2 Crop and recompose

The boat has lots of dead space around it. Click the Crop tool. Set the Ratio to Use Photo Ratio. This gives the cropped shot the same shape and proportions as other photos from your camera. Drag the corner handles to crop the edges. The boat is now off-centre and looks into the frame.

3 Stack the shot

Click Preview to see the new composition, then click Done to crop the shot. This creates a cropped copy of the image that's stacked with the un-edited version, so you don't need to worry about destroying the original. Click the triangular stack icon to toggle the stack open or closed.
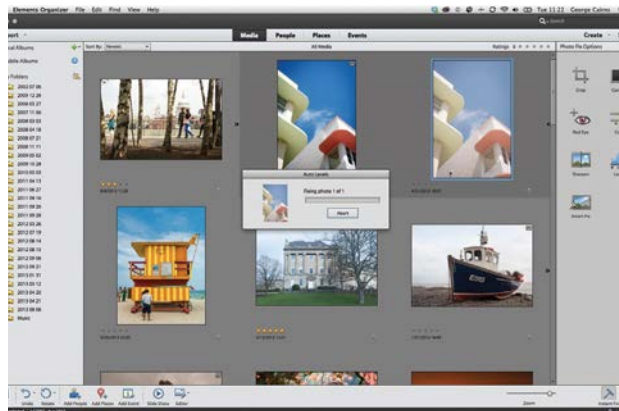
4 Improve the tones

Some shots, such as our ty_elements08.jpg low-angle building picture are over-exposed and lack strong shadows. Click the thumbnail in the Organizer, go to the Photo Fix Options panel, and click Levels. This command boosts the images's contrast and saturation.

5 Improve blown-out skies

Click the over-exposed standing stone (ty_elements26g. jpg). When faced with blown-out highlights such as these, it's worth clicking the Smart Fix icon. This is designed to improve colours and tones. In this case it claws back cloud detail in the sky and cools down the colours.

6 Sharpen the detail

If you plan to print a shot you'll get a print with more punch if you sharpen it a little. This reveals more texture and detail. Double click the tree on the moors shot (ty_elements22.jpg). Click the Sharpen icon in the Photo Fix Options panel. We'll look at sharpening in detail later. ●

Set up your workspace in Expert mode

Customise the Elements Expert editing mode workspace

The Organizer enables you to perform common photo fixes with a couple of clicks, but these tools won't always get your shots looking their best. Automatic fixing tools such as Levels can end up changing an image's colour in unwanted ways, for instance. The Auto Sharpen command doesn't let you control the amount of contrast change around the edges of objects in the shot, so they may not look sharp enough. At some stage you'll need to take an ailing shot into the Expert mode to access its

more sophisticated (and creative) image-editing tools. We'll take a look at the Expert editing mode to help you find your way around it and make it work for your specific image-editing needs.

Kick off by holding down Shift and clicking a couple of shots in the Organizer (such as our ty_elements02.jpg and ty_elements12.jpg landscapes). Go to the main menu and choose Edit›Edit with Photoshop Elements Editor. Alternatively, click the Editor button at the bottom of the Organizer workspace. This will display your shots in

the Expert editing mode workspace. As its name suggests, the Expert mode workspace gives you access to the biggest collection of photo-fixing tools.

Each editing mode — Expert, Guided and Quick — has its own unique workspace, as you'll discover while working through this book. Here we'll focus on the Expert editing mode because this contains all the main tools and commands. You can also customise the Expert editing mode so that it suits your needs, such as placing popular panels like the Layers panel closer to hand, for example.

Photoshop Anatomy Tweak the workspace

Change the layout of the Expert mode workspace to access useful tools more easily

01 CUSTOMISE THE WORKSPACE

Click the More fly-out icon and choose Custom Workspace. This enables you to drag panels such as the Layers panel out of the Panel Bin so that they float wherever you like. Tick any panels in the list to summon them.

02 DOCKED OR FLOATING

Here some panels are docked in the Panel Bin. You need to click the tab to see a particular docked panel. We've dragged the Layers, Histogram and Navigator panels out of the dock so that they're floating.

03 HISTOGRAM

The Histogram panel enables you to see the spread of shadows, midtones and highlights in the image. This helps you to diagnose problems with exposure. Set the Channel drop-down menu to RGB to see a mono version of the histogram.

04 MORE OR LESS

Click the More icon at the bottom right and tick a panel's label to hide or show it. This works with docked or floating panels.

05 LAYOUT

When working with multiple photos click the layout button to present them onscreen at the same time. Here we're looking at the All Column option. The Default layout places each shot in a tabbed window that fills the screen.

06 ALTERNATIVE MODES

Here we're looking at a customised version of the Expert editing mode. You can click to jump to the simpler Guided and Quick modes, but you can't customise either of those.

Understanding...
THE LAYERS PANEL OPTIONS

In its Default mode, the Layers panel displays small thumbnails. If you want a larger preview of the contents of a layer, click the little fly-out icon here **[01]** and scroll down to Panel Options. This opens the Layers Panel Options dialog **[02]**. You can now click the button to a specific Thumbnail Size **[03]** to change the size of the thumbnails.

If you paint a small brush stroke onto a new transparent layer, you won't see it very clearly. By clicking the Layer Bounds button **[04]** you'll see a relatively bigger preview of the brush stroke without displaying all the layer's unused transparent space. This is useful when you've made many small changes to a multi-layered image.
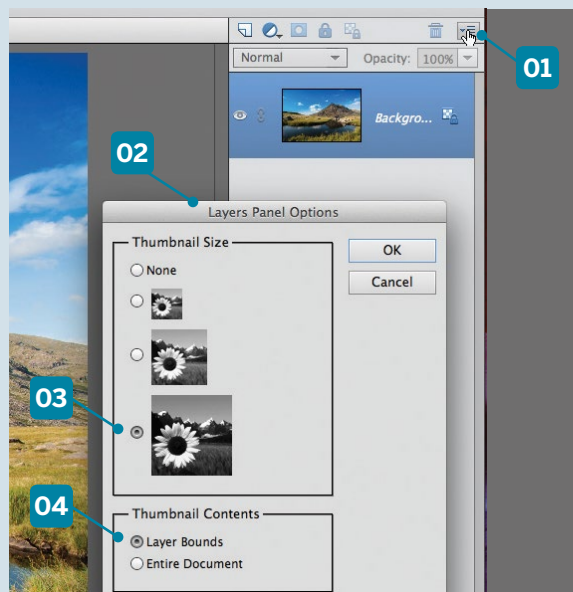
KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS

Using keyboard shortcuts is a great way to speed up your image-editing workflow, not only when selecting tools and commands, but also when changing various features in the workspace. By tapping the Tab key, for instance, you can hide or show all floating or docked panels, enabling you to get on with the business of photo fixing in an uncluttered workspace. You can then summon panels (such as the Layers panel) as and when you need them. You can also press Cmd/Ctrl+Tab to cycle through all open images instead of clicking their tabs. Most tools can be summoned by a keyboard shortcut too. See the tip on page 13 to discover the best way to learn shortcuts for Toolbox tools.

Enhance your images automatically

Correct common photo problems quickly using automatic enhancement tools such as the powerful Auto Smart Tone

Most people would probably prefer to spend more time taking photographs than editing them. For this reason Photoshop Elements' editing modes are crammed full of menu commands that are designed to automatically enhance your shots with the minimum of time and effort on your part.

The automatic enhancement commands are designed to overcome common photo problems with a few clicks. For example, some shots will be over- or under-exposed, or simply suffer from flat contrast. Photoshop Elements can quickly analyse the tones (or 'levels') in a shot and then attempt to adjust them to create a healthier spread of shadows, midtones and highlights.

You're also likely to encounter problems with colour. You may have used an inappropriate Picture Style setting in your camera, resulting in drab, desaturated colours.

Your camera's Auto White Balance (AWB) feature may have failed to get whites looking white in a particular scene, resulting in a photo that suffers from cold (blue) or warm (orange) tints. Fortunately, you can apply an Auto Colour Correction command to warm up or cool down shots in an instant, producing more natural-looking colours.

Elements' automatic enhancement commands aren't magic bullets that will solve any photo's problems with a click. The Auto Smart Fix command may do a great job of improving flat contrast, but it can also add nasty colour casts to the image (such as tinting a white background blue). Fortunately, there's an Auto Contrast command that will change the image's tones without creating unwanted shifts in colour. Here we'll look at some of the most useful automatic enhancement commands, including the new and versatile Auto Smart Tone command.
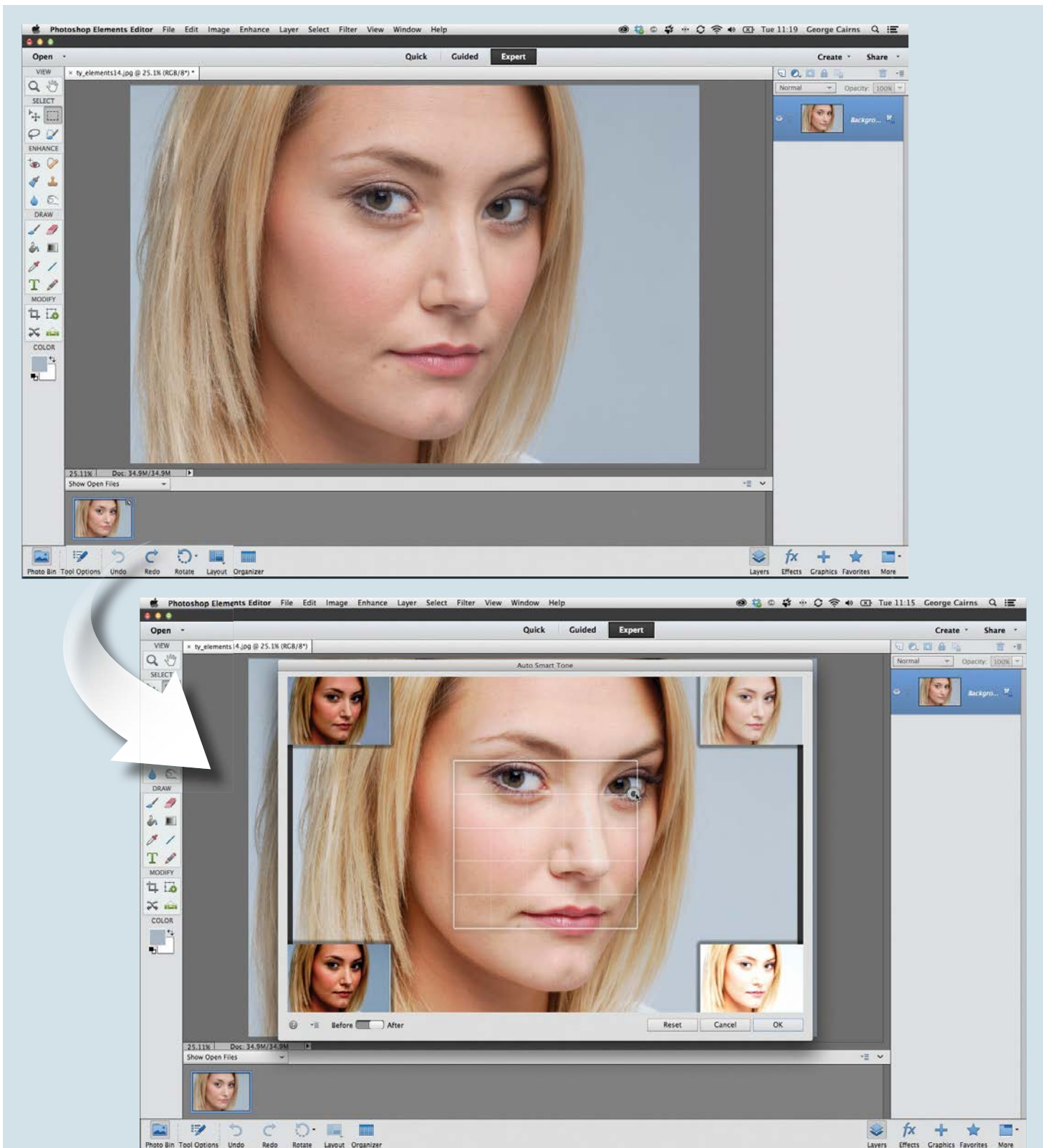
1 Improve contrast with Auto Smart Tone

Our ty_elements14.jpg start image has flat contrast so it lacks impact. By choosing Enhance›Auto Smart Tone you can preview differently contrasting versions of the shot. You can then manually fine-tune the look of the tones in the image by dragging the cursor towards particular preview thumbnails. Here we've brightened the highlights and darkened the shadows. Click OK to apply the changes. The Auto Smart Tone command can also learn your preferences, which enables you to work more quickly in the future. ▶
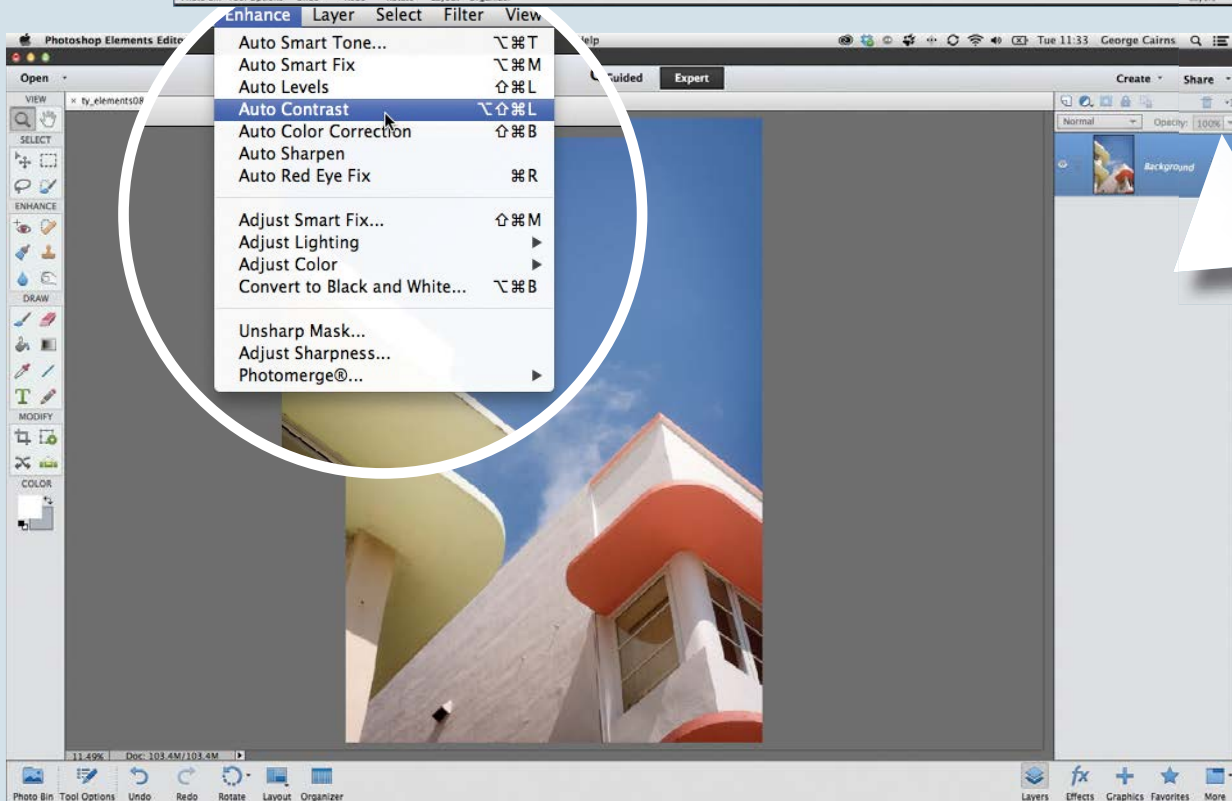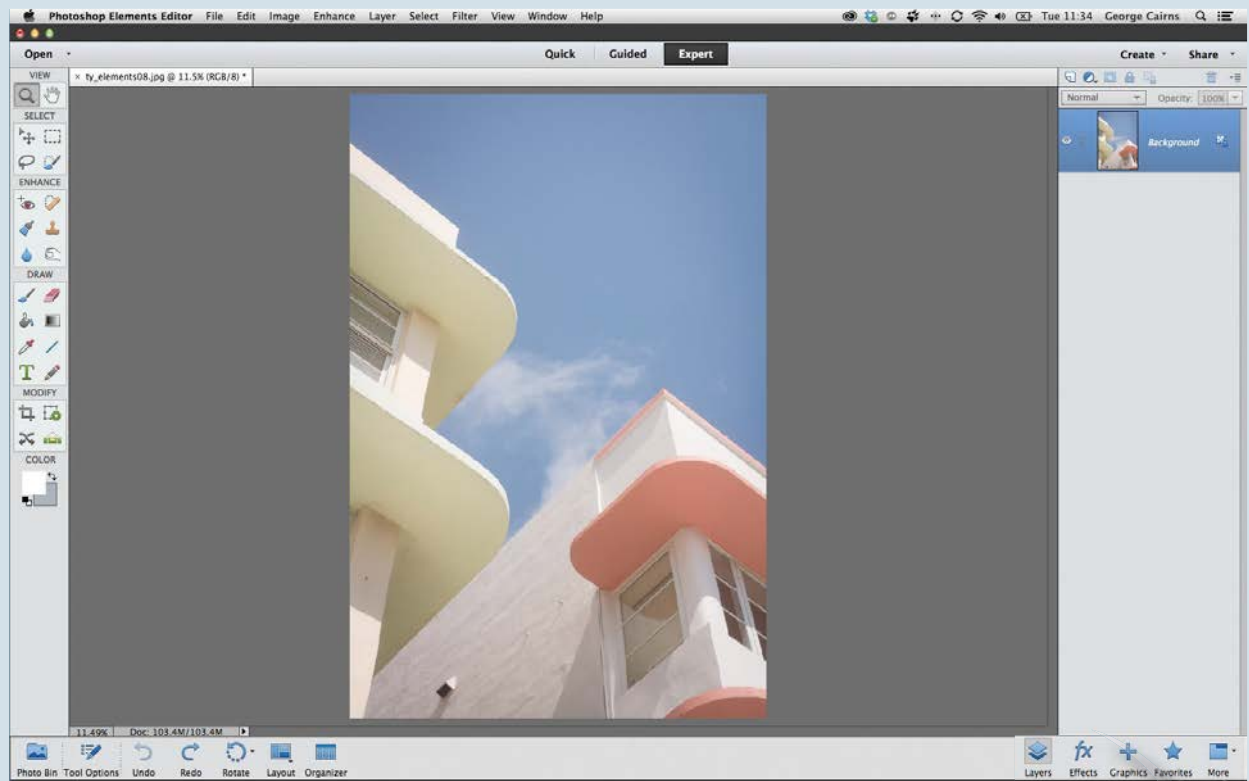
2 Avoid unwanted colour shifts

Our ty_elements08.jpg starting image is over-exposed and lacks strong shadows. You could try using Enhance›Auto Levels to create stronger shadows and increase the midtone contrast, but this will make the building's yellow paintwork look a little green. By choosing Enhance›Auto Contrast you can make the shadows look darker and the highlights brighter without adding unwanted shifts in colour. If the automatic commands fail to do a good job you can adjust the tones manually, as we'll demonstrate in chapter 4.
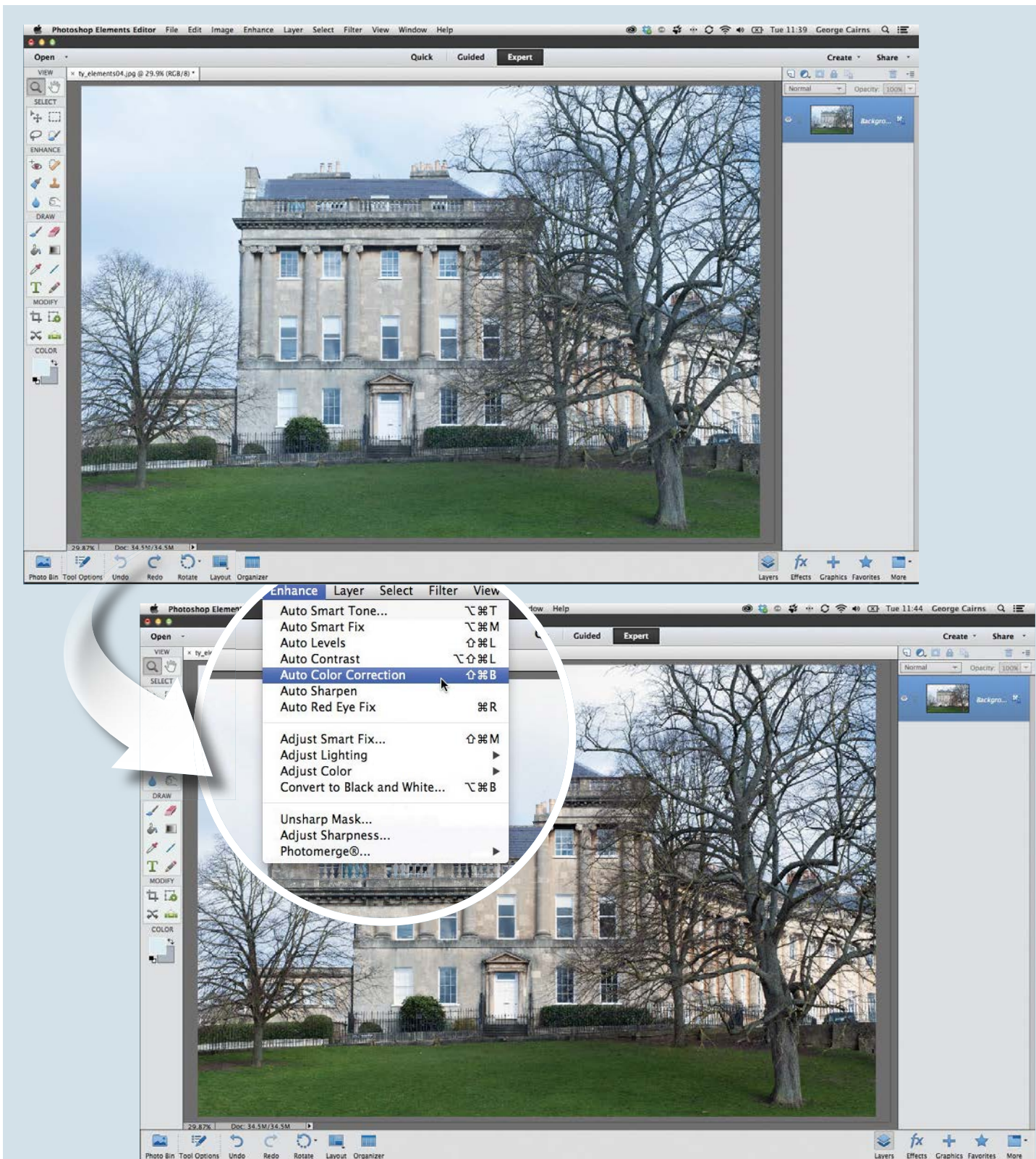
3 Correct colour casts

Our ty_elements04.jpg starting image looks a little too cold, due to a slight blue colour cast. Choose Enhance > Auto Color Correction, and Photoshop Elements will analyse the whites in the shot. They suffer from a slight blue tint so it warms them up to make the whites appear a neutral white. This warms up the colours in the rest of the image, which brings out the oranges in the building's brickwork. This automatic command won't work on every problematic picture, so we'll show you how to correct colour casts manually in chapter 4.

09:17   George Cairns
Search
Create   Share
Calendar   Clear
All Years
Jan   Feb   Mar
Apr   May   Jun
Jul   Aug   Sep
Oct   Nov   Dec
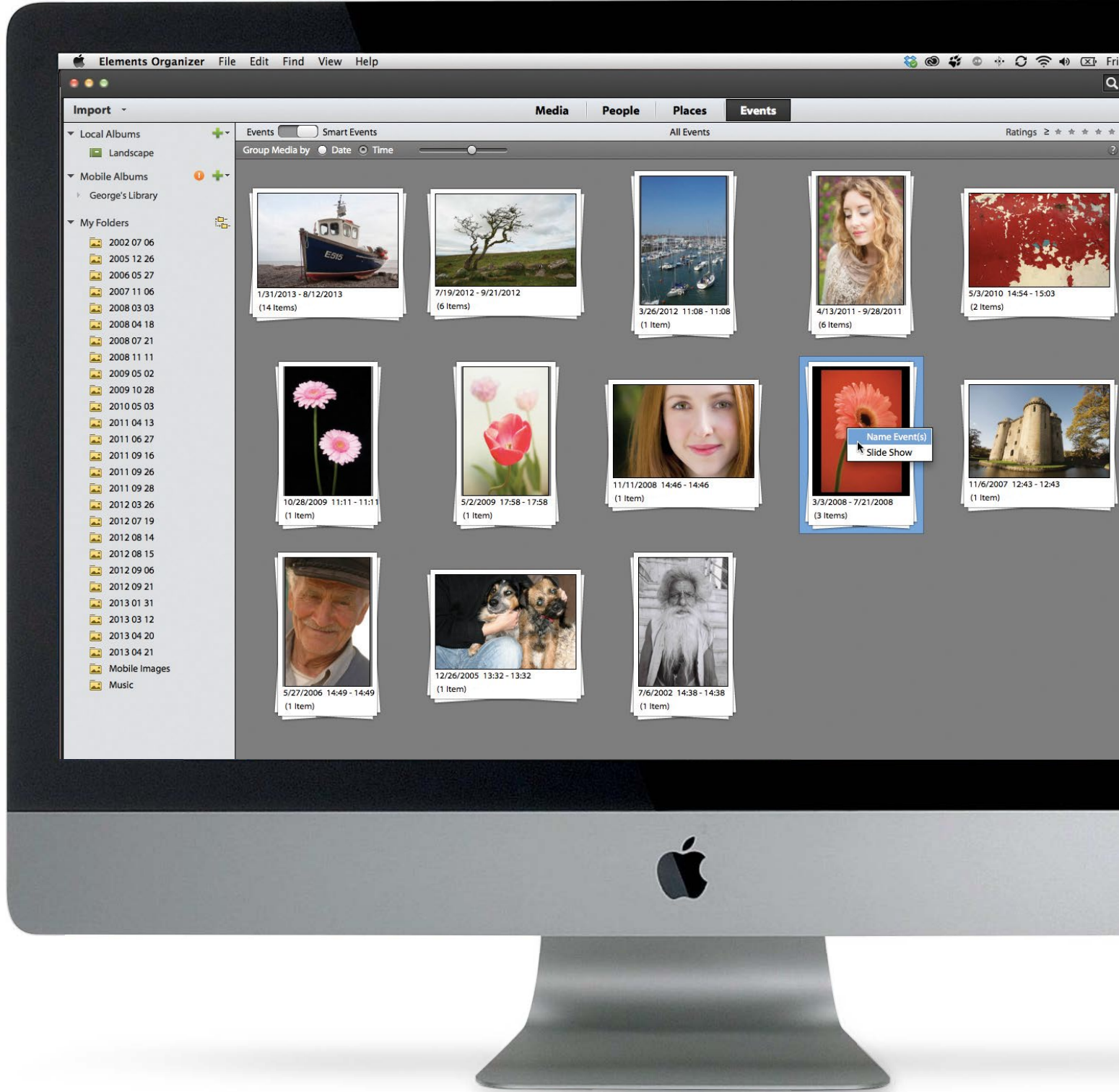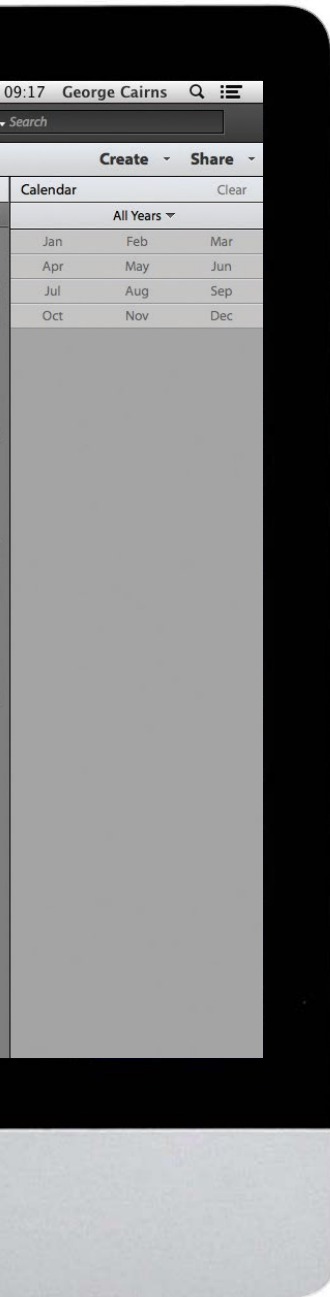
Organising photos

Find any photo in seconds by grouping your pictures according to who's in them and where they were shot

32 Sort your images by rating them

Rate your favourite images with stars and tag them according to who's in them or where they were shot, so you can find specific pictures easily in the future

34 Find and tag your people pictures

Use Elements' face-recognition feature to download your Facebook contacts, tag your portraits, and place them in Groups

36 Geo-tag your photographs

Organise your photos according to where they were captured so you can explore your photos using a map — see a flagged location and click to see any photographs captured there

38 Add keywords to your pictures

Set up the Photoshop Elements Organizer to automatically generate and assign tags to your whole image collection, courtesy of the Smart Tags function

40 How to create an Event

Group photographs according to when they were shot, then browse them via a handy calendar in the Events tab

Sort your images by rating them

Find your favourite photos quickly by assigning star ratings in the Organizer

In the first two chapters we showed how to import photos from hard drive folders and memory cards into the Photoshop Elements Organizer. We touched on ways to start organising your images, such as placing them into themed albums.

An even quicker way to sort out the gems from the duds is to assign star ratings to your photos as soon as you've imported them. You can then use the Ratings filter to make the Elements Organizer display high-rated shots, or shots that fall between a certain range. Here, we'll show you how to rate your favourite shots quickly, and demonstrate how

the Ratings filter separates the wheat from the chaff. If you haven't already done so, you can copy our supplied project files into a folder on your computer's hard drive. Open the Organizer and choose File›Get Folders and Videos›From Files and Folders. You can then import our project files into the Organizer and follow our step-by-step organising and editing walkthroughs using the images featured in this book.

After showing you how to rate your shots, we'll move on to demonstrate how to tag shots according to who's in them or where they were shot, so you can find specific pictures easily.

1 Assign star ratings

Choose View›Details. It can be a challenge to assess the merit of images from thumbnails, so drag the Zoom slider to the right to enlarge them. You can then move the cursor over the grey stars below each thumbnail and click to assign a rating of between one and five stars.

2 Take a closer look

For a closer look at an image, double click it. The image will fill the Organizer workspace. You can then click the stars at the bottom left of the shot to rate it. You can also assign a rating to the selected image by tapping any of the number keys between one and five.
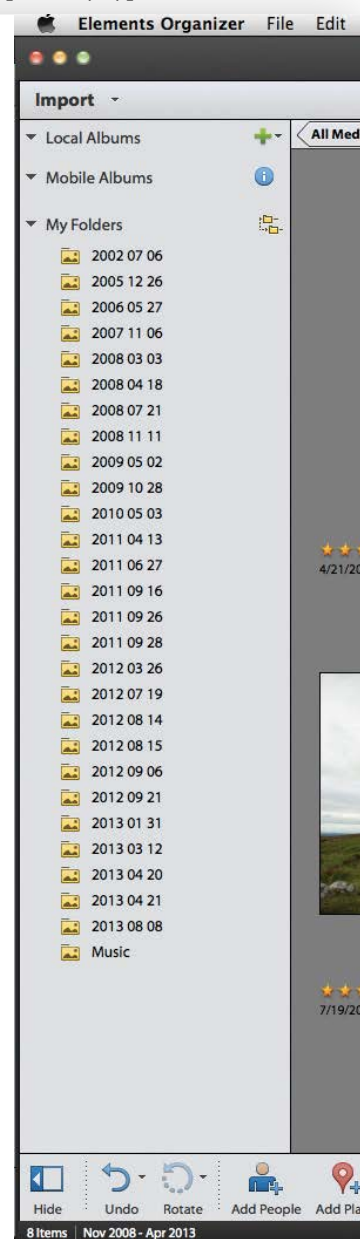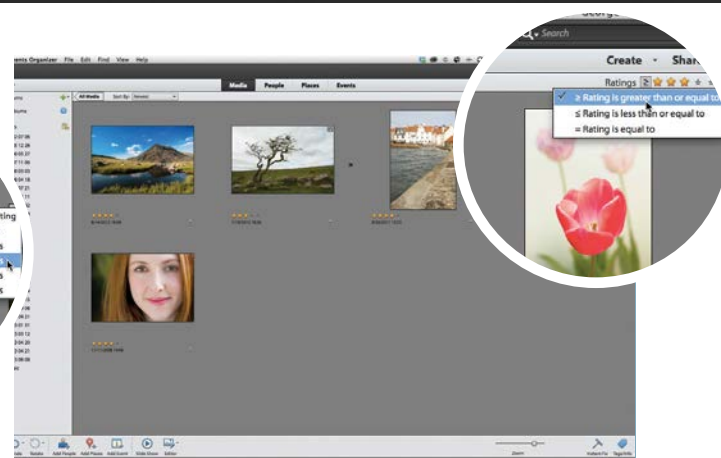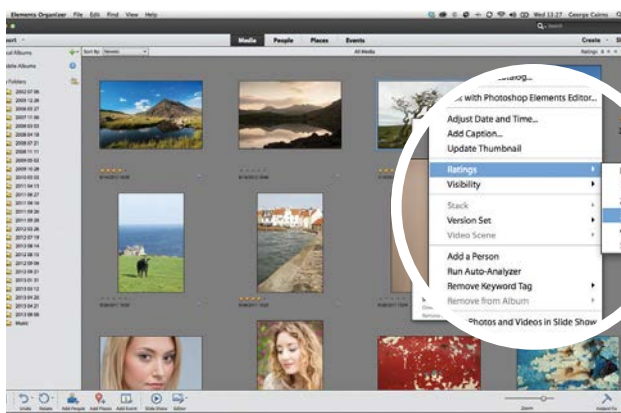
3 Rate more images

Click the Grid icon at the top to see all the thumbnails again. You can also rate an image by right clicking it and choosing from the Rating sub-menu. Rate some more shots — give some two stars and others five so that you have a bit of variety — so you can then filter the images.

4 Filter the images

Go to the Ratings filter at the top right. Click the symbol to refine the criteria for your search. Choose the Rating is greater than or equal to option for a range of results. If you then choose three stars, the Organizer will display all rated shots that match or exceed this rating. ●

Find and tag your people pictures

Use Photoshop Elements' face-recognition feature to tag your shots according to who's in them and then place them in Groups

On the previous page we demonstrated how to find favourite files more easily by adding star ratings and then filtering the results. This is a fairly general way to organise your shots. You can organise your photos in a more specific way by tagging images according to who is in each picture. This is a particularly handy feature because many of your photos are likely to feature friends and family members.

To help you tag people in your images, Elements is capable of searching through its library of images and presenting you with any people pictures that it can find. You can then tell the software who each face belongs to, and it will create

an appropriate people tag for that particular person. You can then sort your people tags into groups (such as Friends, Family and so on). Photoshop Elements' People Recognition window will even download your Facebook contacts, which will help you tag members of your social network more quickly and easily.

Elements' face-recognition feature can speed up your organising workflow, but of course, it's not infallible. Occasionally, it might suggest naming people when there aren't any people present in a shot. So we'll show you how to tell Elements to ignore unsuitable shots in future people searches.
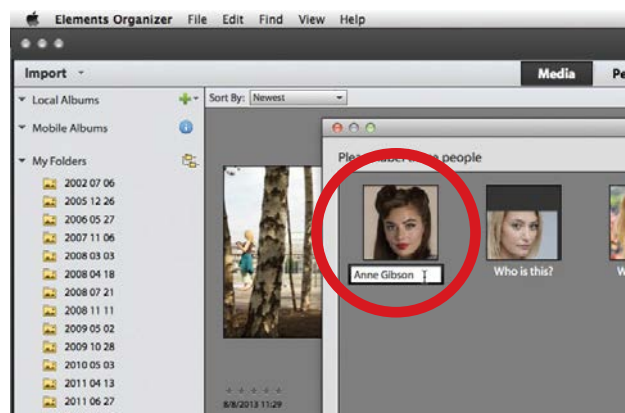
1 Scan your images
Click the Add People button in the Organizer, and click Yes. Elements will scan your files to look for faces. The results will appear in the People Recognition — Label people window. Each thumbnail will have a message asking, 'Who is this?'. Click the text field and type a name.
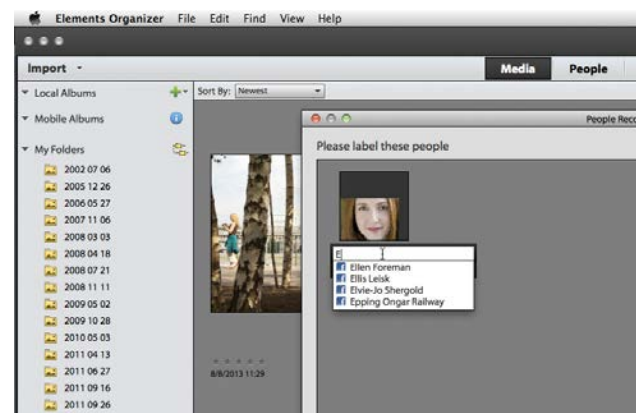
2 Label the faces
Once you've started labelling people, the People Recognition window will give you a choice of names when it finds a new person. Click a name to assign it, or type a new one. If Elements displays thumbnails of shots that don't feature people, right click them and choose Ignore.
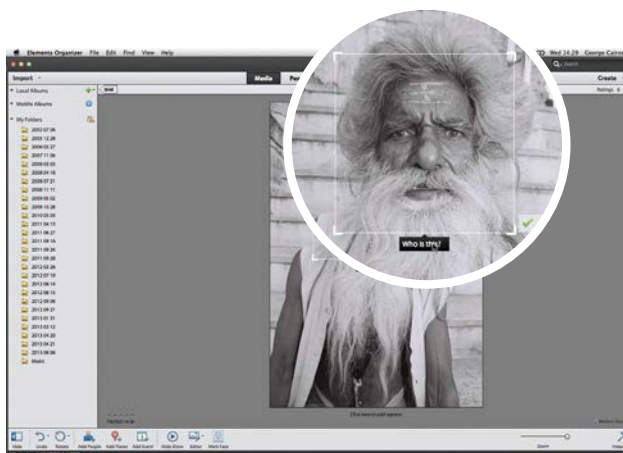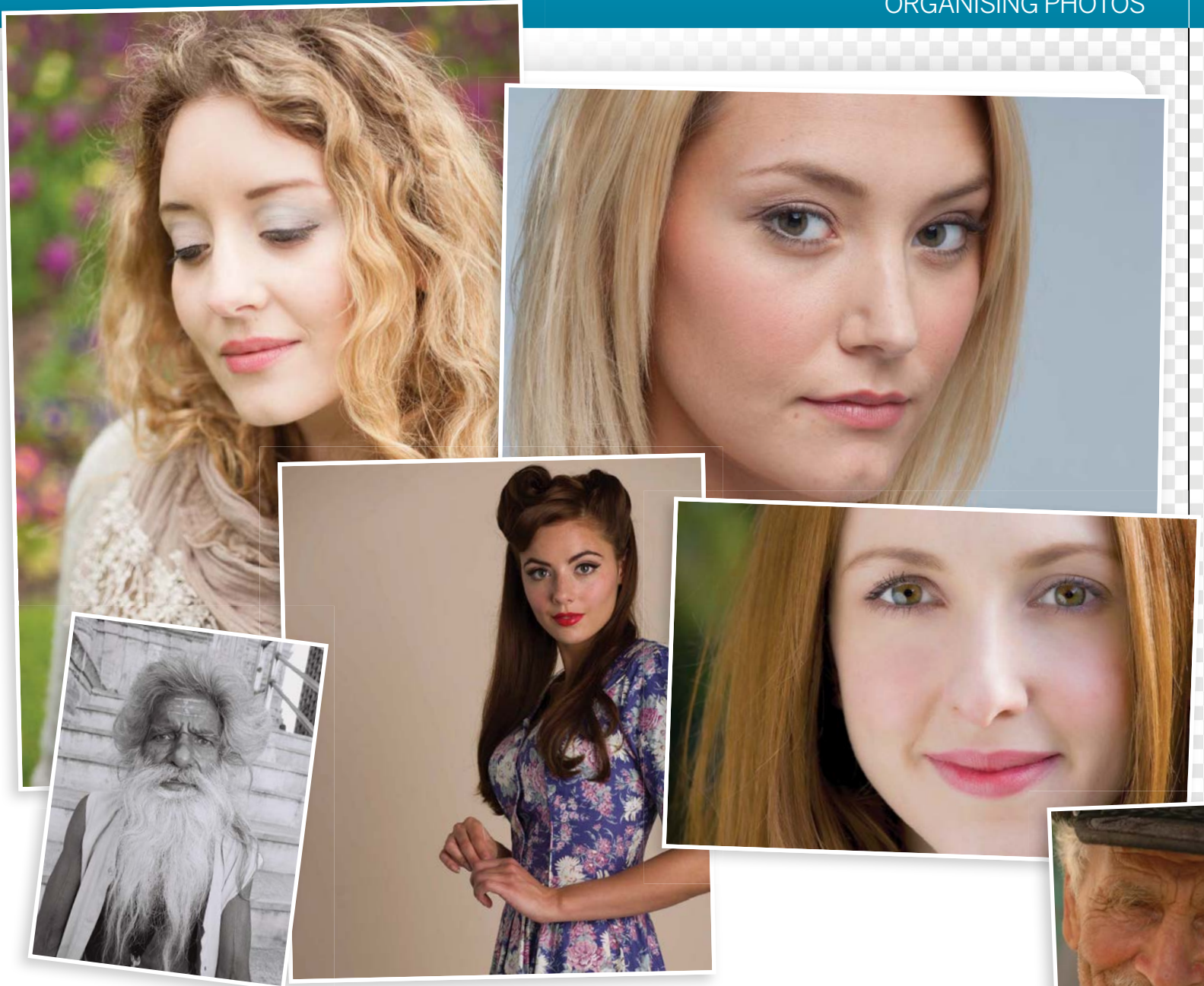
3 Find missed people

Click Save when you've finished. If People Recognition has failed to spot a person, double click the image and click the Mark Face icon. Drag the box around the face, label the person, and click the green tick. You can now click the People tab to see all your tagged people pictures.
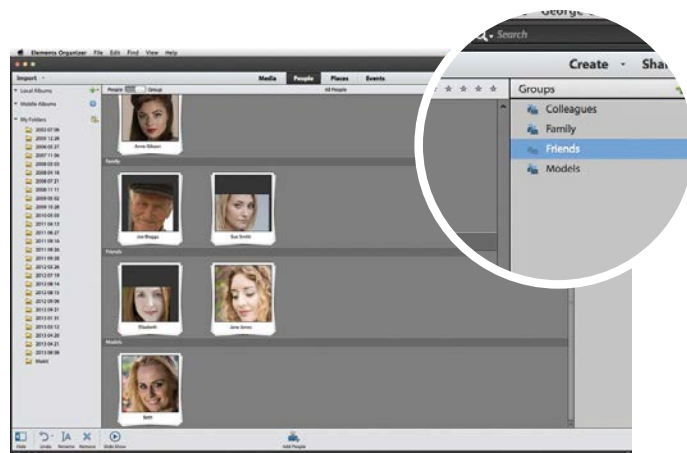
4 Group your people

On the People tab you can toggle the display to Group and add tagged pictures to groups such as Colleagues and Friends. Drag one of the preset categories such as Family onto the appropriate thumbnails. The tagged shots will then appear in a separate category within the Group view.

Geo-tag your photographs

Discover how to organise your photos according to where they were captured so you can explore your holiday snaps on a map

A fter travelling abroad it used to be traditional practice to print your holiday snaps and store them in an album. Indeed, you can create holiday albums in the Elements Organizer with ease, and browse through them at your leisure. The Organizer's Places panel provides you with a fun alternative way to see your pictures according to where they were shot.

When you shoot a snap on your smart phone, the software records the location of the shot using GPS (the satellite-based global positioning system). Thanks to the Adobe Revel service (see chapter 1), you can sync your mobile phone shots

to a cloud service and then automatically import them into the Organizer. Elements can then read the map coordinates in each mobile-sourced photo's metadata, and display its location in the Places panel. You can see a map and flagged locations, and you can click to see any photos shot there. This is a useful new function in Photoshop Elements, especially if many of your shots are captured via a phone.

If your camera doesn't automatically geo-tag your shots you can still enjoy using the map-based Places panel to organise them. We'll demonstrate how you can manually add location data to a photo by dragging them to the appropriate location.

1 Import phone shots
Go to File›Get Photos›From Files and Folders. Browse to our mobile images collection. Click Get Media. The files will appear in the Organizer. Click the Places panel, then click the Map icon at the bottom right. You'll see a collection of little red flags. Zoom in to the St. Albans cluster.
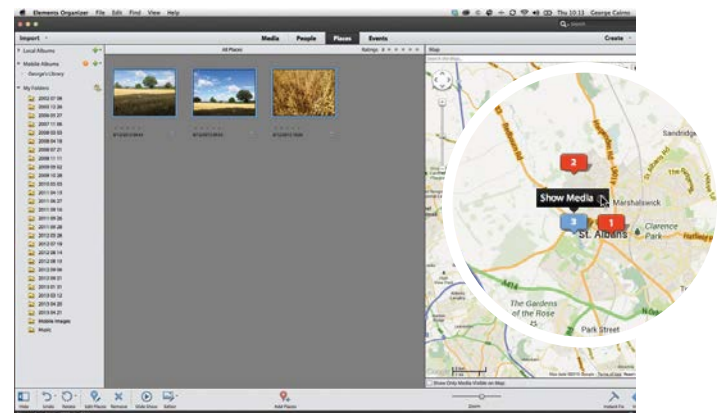
2 View by location
Click a flag to turn it blue. Any photos captured at that location will be highlighted with a blue border. Click the arrow by the flag's Show Media label and only the relevant shots will be visible in the Places panel. This is a great way to discover what was shot where.
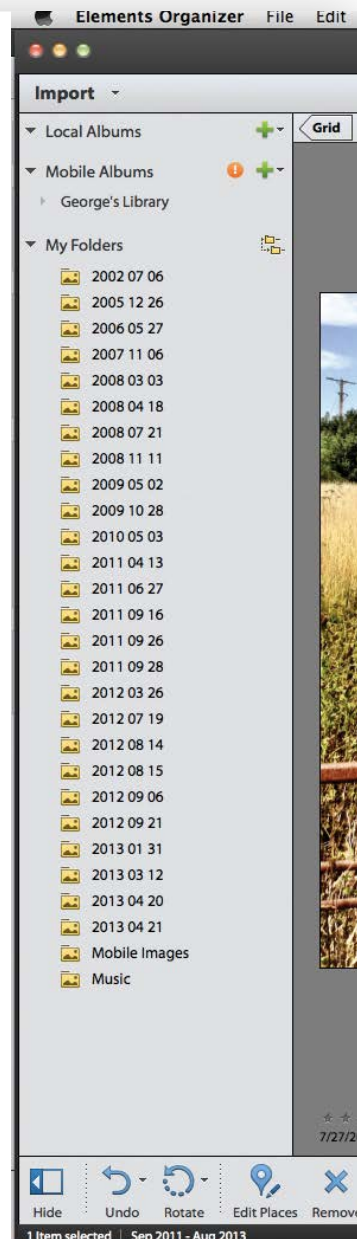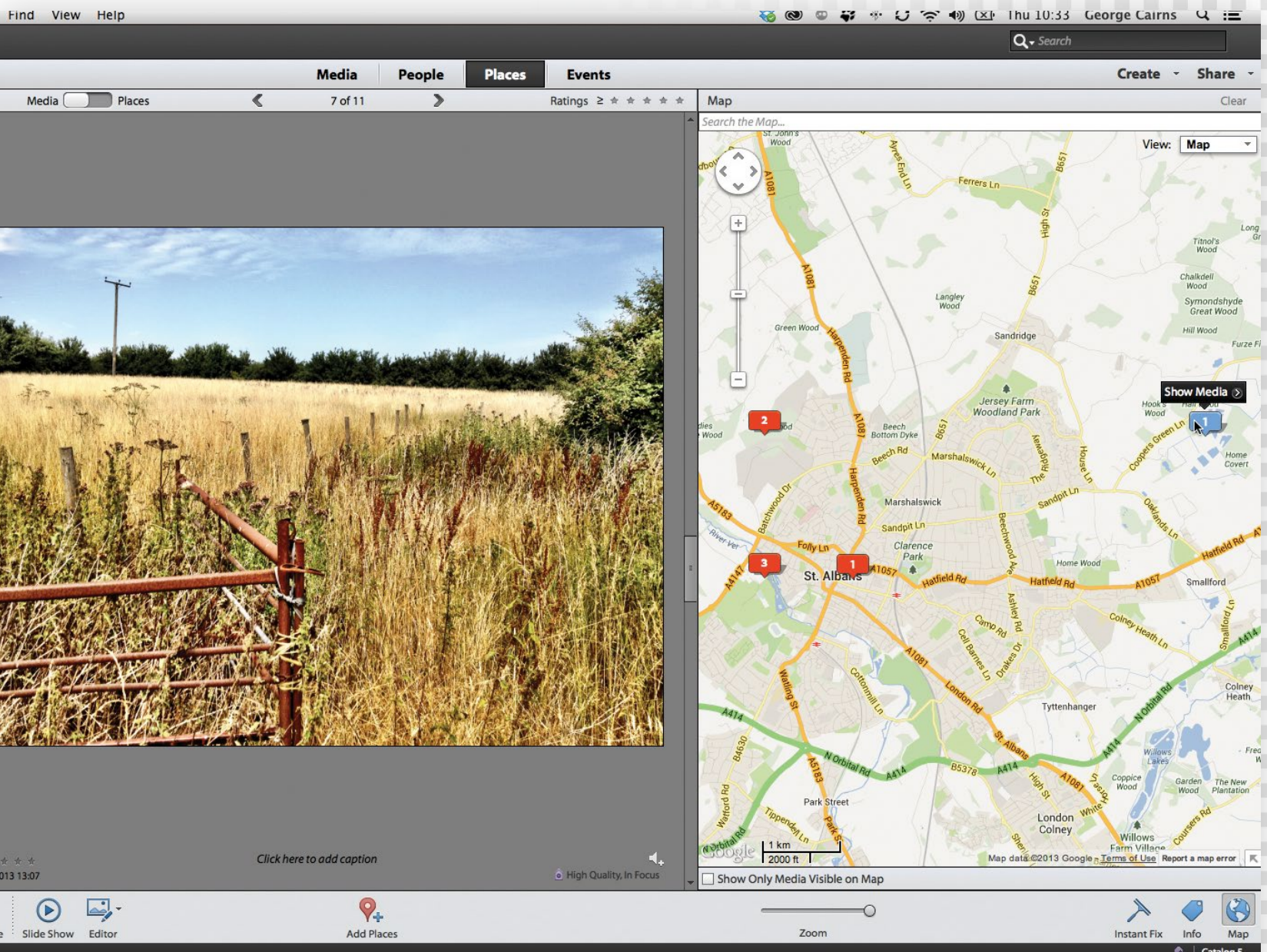
3 View by image

Click a thumbnail, then click the Info icon. Toggle open the Metadata tab. You'll see properties such as the shutter speed and aperture used to capture the image. Tick the Complete icon to the right of the metadata label, and scroll down to see the GPS data attached to the photo.
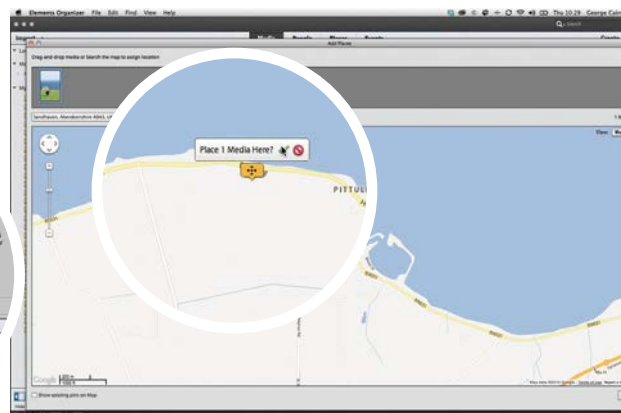
4 Geo-tag your images manually

Click back to the Media tab, then click the cow shot (ty_elements03.jpg). Click the Add Places icon, type Sandhaven into the search field and choose the Aberdeenshire option. Drag the crosshairs to fine-tune the location of the shot. Click the tick to geo-tag it. ●

AFTER

BEFORE
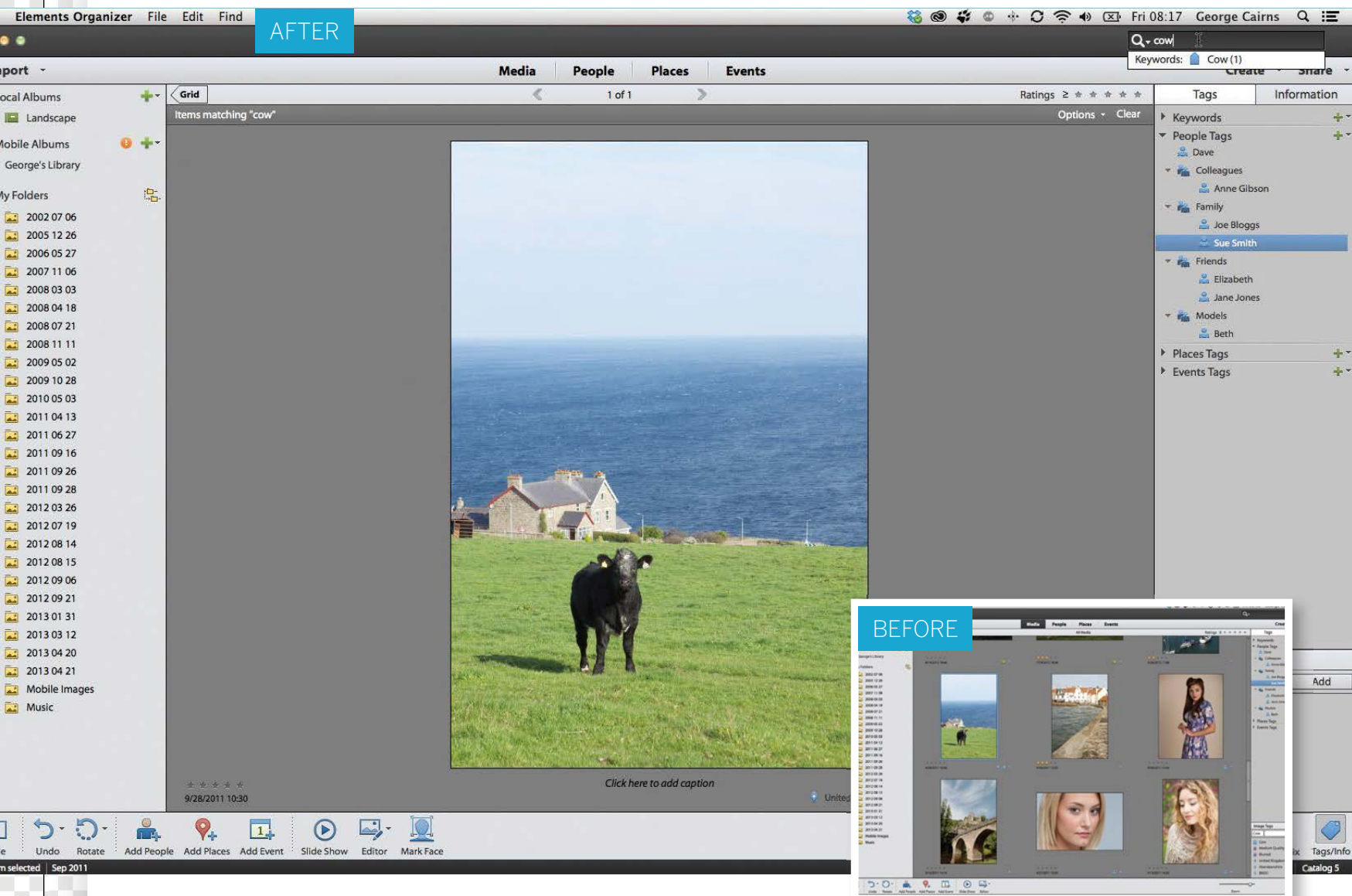
Keyword your images

Discover how to find any shot with ease in the future by adding keyword tags to the image metadata

Over the previous pages we demonstrated how to tag photos according to who is in them (Add People) or where they were captured (Add Places). These tags enable you to search for shots by browsing through the pictures in the People or Places panels. You can also type a person's name into the Search field at the top right of the Organizer's workspace and reveal all photos tagged with that name. By placing a shot in an Album you also add a tag to it.

The Organizer automatically attaches the People, Place and Album tags to a shot's metadata. This metadata also describes properties such as when the shot was taken, the camera model used and so on. When you share a photo

via email, any tags will remain attached, such as copyright information you might have assigned when importing the images with the Photo Downloader (see chapter 2).

To save time, you can get the Organizer to automatically generate and assign tags to your whole collection, courtesy of the Smart Tags function. Smart Tags can help you search for specific files more easily in the future – such as over-exposed or out-of-focus photos. We'll talk you through the Smart Tag assigning process in the walkthrough.

As well as People, Places, Album and Smart Tags you can create customised keywords for any photo. For example, if a photo contains a cow you can assign the Cow keyword to it, enabling you find the image in seconds.

1 Identify your image tags

Go to View›Details. Attached tags are displayed as icons below thumbnails in the Organizer's Media panel. People tags are represented by blue head-and-shoulder icons. If a shot is in an Album it will feature a green photo-album icon as a tag. Hover over the tag to see its label.

2 Get smart

To assign Smart Tags, press Cmd/Ctrl+A in the Organizer's Media panel. Choose File›Run Auto Analyzer. A purple Smart Tag icon will appear below each thumbnail. Move the cursor over it and you'll see a Smart Tag keyword such as High Quality In Focus.
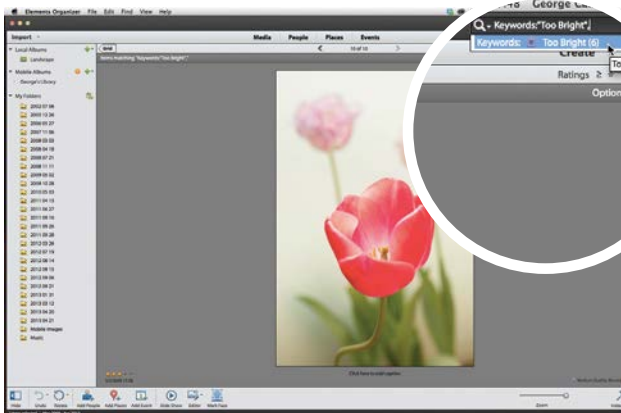
3 Find images with problems

Smart Tags indicate common picture problems such as Low Contrast or Too Bright. By typing problems into the keyword search field at the top right you can quickly discover photos that need work. You can then try using the tools in the Instant Fix panel to overcome these problems.

4 Tag new images

Click Clear or Back to see all the shots again. To assign more tags, click the Tags/Info panel icon. You'll see existing people tags, plus any Groups you've created. You can tag new people shots by dragging the appropriate tag onto a thumbnail. You can also drag and drop Places tags onto shots.

5 Assign preset tags

Click the Image Tags text field at the bottom of the Tags panel. A scrollable list will appear containing a range of preset tags such as Nature, One Face and so on. Click to choose a preset tag, then click a thumbnail and click Add to assign the tag to the photo.

6 Create new tags

Double click the cow image. Any tags already assigned to the shot will be visible in the Tags panel. To add a new custom tag, click the text field and type the word Cow. Click the Add button. When you type cow into the search field at the top right, this shot will be found. ◼

ORGANISING PHOTOS

Create a new Event

Group photographs according to when they were shot, and browse them via a handy calendar in the Events tab

By default the Organizer's Media panel displays your most recently shot photos at the top of the workspace, so you need to scroll down to find older photos. You can click the Sort By drop-down menu and get the oldest shots to appear at the top if you prefer. You can tag shots according to the place that they were captured or the people that they feature, but most of us are still likely to browse through our pictures according to when they were shot. To help us do this more effectively, the Organizer provides us with a time-based Events tab.

Elements knows when a shot has been snapped by reading that information in its metadata. As we saw from the previous pages on Smart Tags, this metadata can provide various ways to speed up your photo-organising workflow. The Events tab can also use image metadata to create Smart Events, so that you can group and view photos captured on a particular day without having to manually sort them. We'll show you how this time-saving feature works in our walkthrough. You can also browse for photos by clicking dates on a calendar in the Events panel, which provides a faster and more accurate way to search for photos than scrolling through reams of thumbnails in the Media panel.
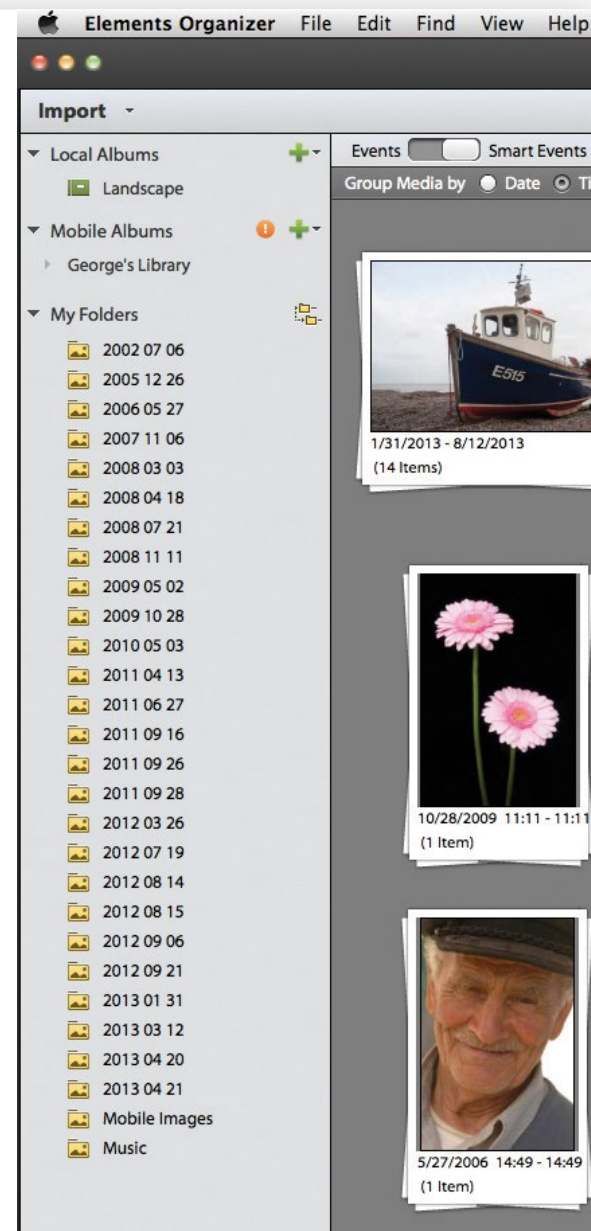
1 Add an Event
Click the Events panel tab. Toggle the button to display Smart Events. Drag the cursor across a Smart Event's thumbnail to see all the images in that Event. You can right click and choose Name Event. In the Name Event window, type a suitable name and click OK.

2 Search by date
For more control over Smart Events, tick the Group Media by Time button. You can now drag a slider to refine your search. When the slider is on the left you'll see fewer Groups, with the oldest shots in one Group and the newest in another.
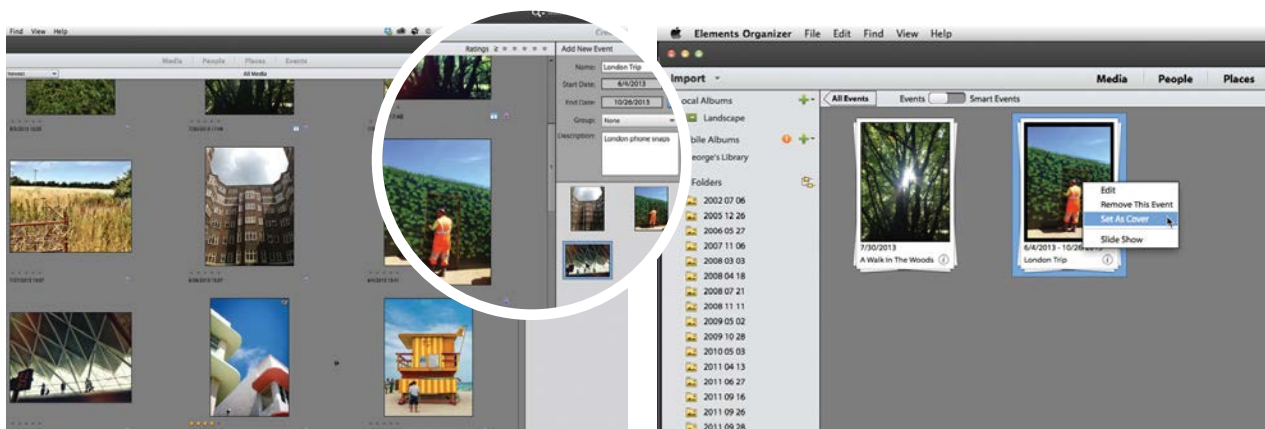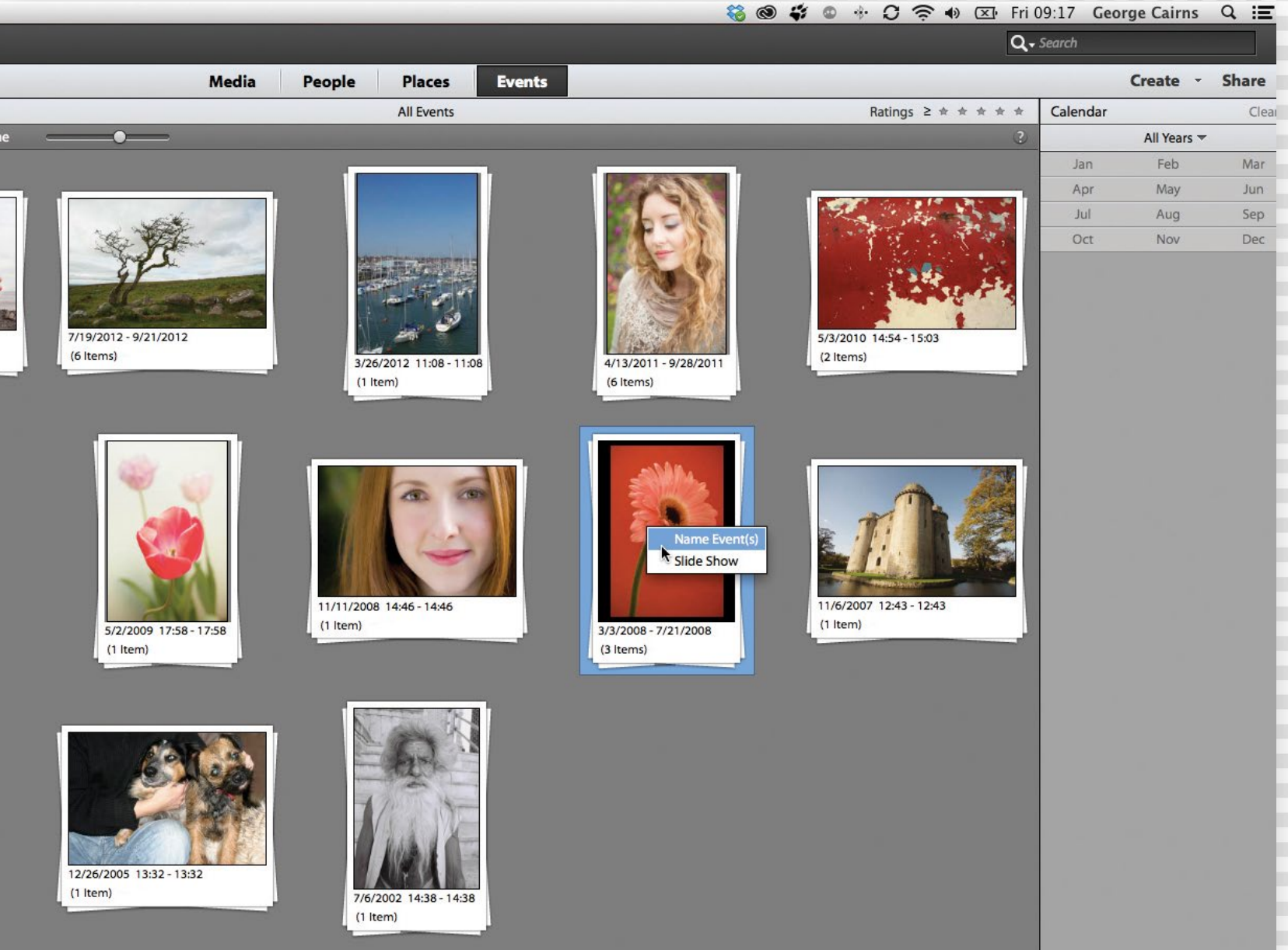
3 Add a new Event

Toggle back to the Events view. Click the 'i' icon to read any descriptions you've assigned to your Events. To create an Event from scratch, click the Add Event icon at the bottom. Name the Event. Set its start and end date by clicking the calendar icon.

4 See a slide show

Right click a thumbnail and choose the Set As Cover option. This enables you to assign a thumbnail to the Event Group. Click the Slide Show option to see an Event's images in a full-screen slide show. Click months in the calendar to see Events. ●
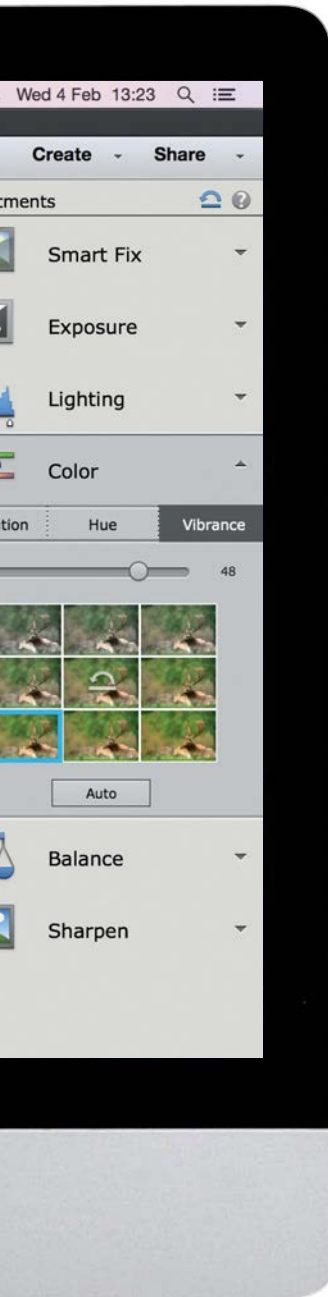
The most important things you'll ever do to a photo

Discover the best ways to fix exposure problems, colour casts, compositional errors and more

Fix exposure errors

Fix over- or under-exposed images by adjusting their levels to create healthier looking histograms

In chapter 2 we showed how Photoshop Elements' automatic enhancement commands enable you to fix exposure problems with a click. Commands such as Auto Levels work their tone-tweaking magic by reading and adjusting a photograph's histogram. A histogram is an undulating graph that shows the spread and strength of the shadows, midtones and highlights in a particular shot (much like a medical chart can tell a doctor about the health of a patient). The histogram of a correctly exposed photo will display a graph that spreads from the far left (where the shadows are represented) to the far right (where the highlights are represented).

The concept of histograms may sound a bit daunting, but they're the key to overcoming exposure-related problems. We explain how to read histograms below, and then move on to adjusting them to fix exposure problems.
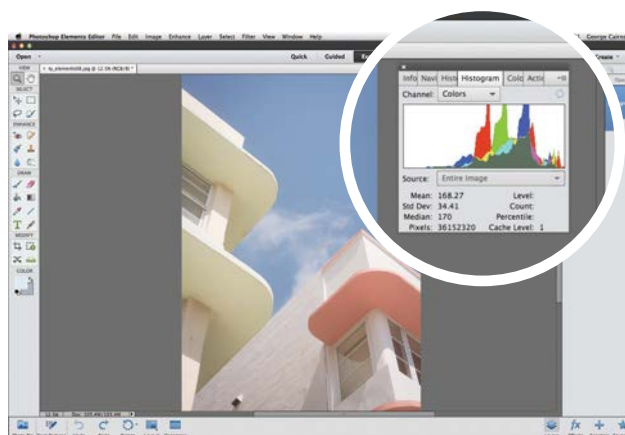
1 Open the histogram
Open ty_elements08.jpg. We can see with the naked eye that the shot is under-exposed. To see the spread of tones in a more mathematical way, go to Window›Histogram. This displays the tones of each colour channel as a separate graph. To simplify it, set the Channel menu to RGB.
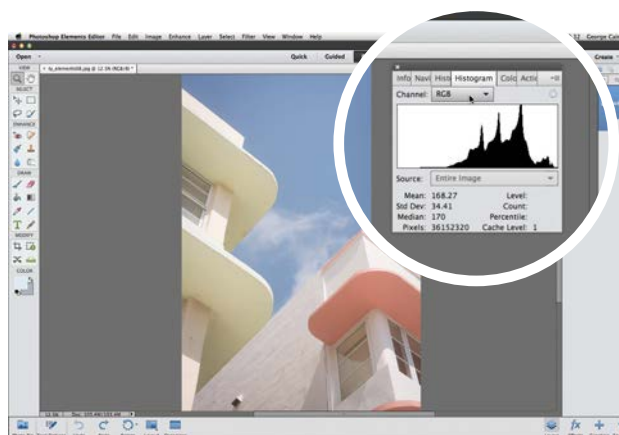
2 Analyse the tones
The histogram describes all the tones in the image. The graph for this over-exposed image is squashed towards the middle and right of the histogram, with no information on the left. This indicates that the photo consists mostly of midtones and highlights, and lacks shadows.
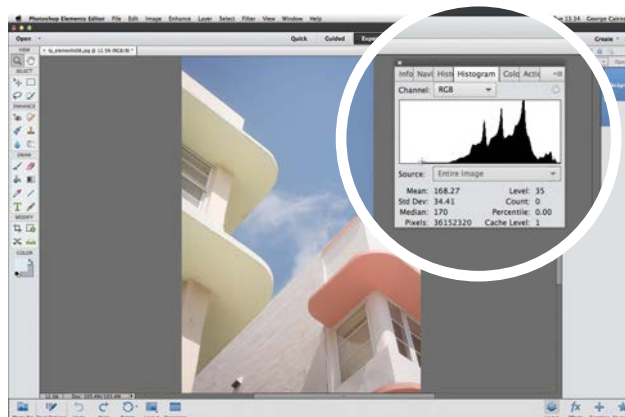
3 Look at the levels
Tones are described by levels. The darkest shadows should have a level of 0. The brightest highlights should have a level of 256. If you place the cursor at the left of the graph, you'll see that this photograph's darkest shadows have a level of 35 or so.
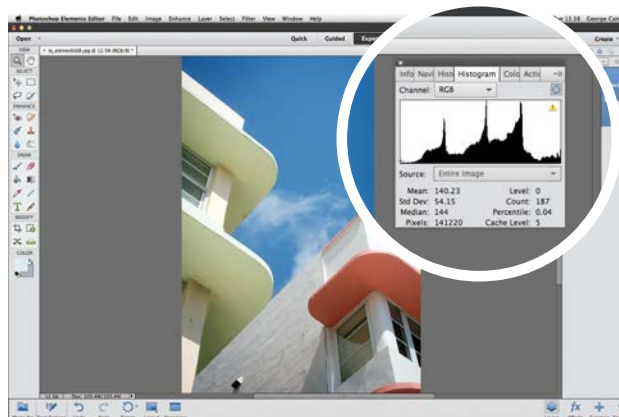
4 Fix automatically
Choose Enhance›Auto Levels and the histogram graph slides towards the left, turning some of the murky midtones into strong dark shadows. This creates a healthier histogram and a correctly exposed shot. On the following pages we'll show you how to manually adjust a histogram. ▶

AFTER
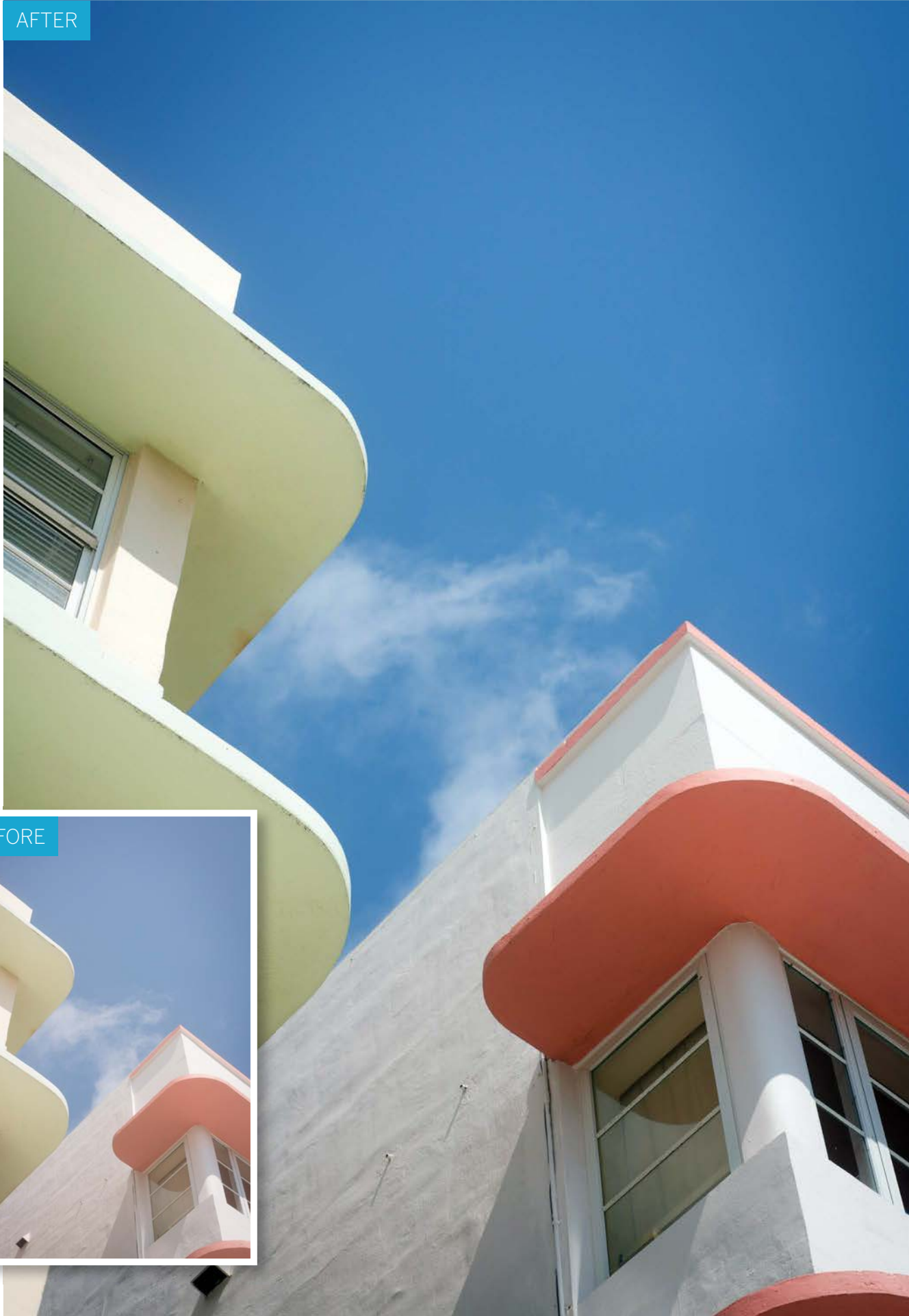
BEFORE
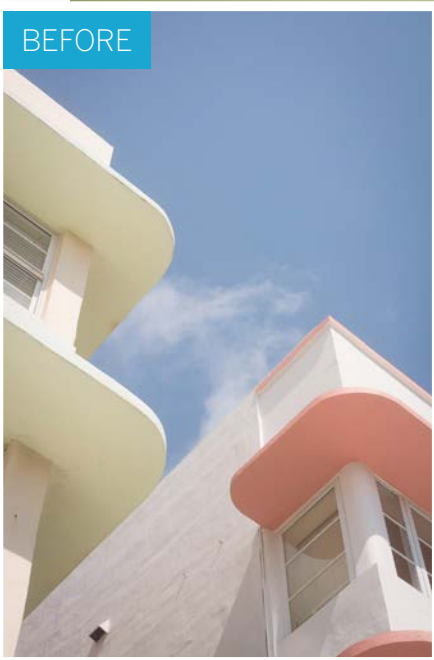
Fix exposure errors with more control

Manually re-map the levels in a photograph to create a healthier spread of tones

On the previous pages we demonstrated how a histogram displays the range of tones (or levels) in an image. We then used the Auto Levels command to remap the washed-out shadows of an over-exposed image to the darkest level of 0. This created a shot with a healthier spread of shadows, midtones and highlights.

Sometimes the Auto Levels command won't produce the desired results. You may want to see more midtone detail or create dramatic black shadows, for example. Here's how to manually make tonal adjustments using the shadow, midtone and highlight controlling sliders in the Levels dialog. You'll then be able to take total control over tones.
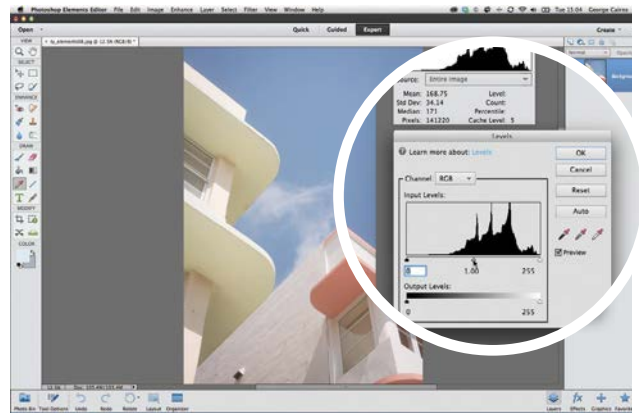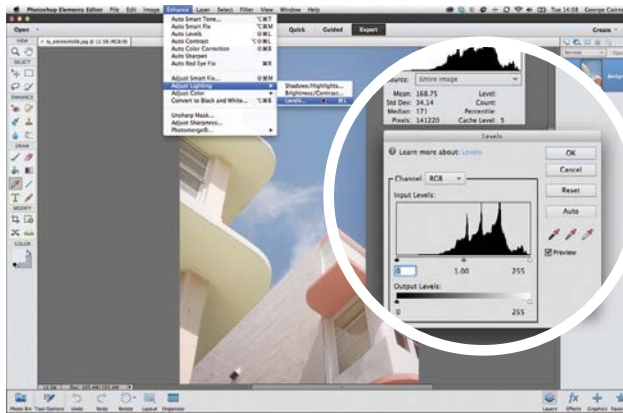
1 Open the Levels command
If you followed the steps on the previous spread, press Cmd/Ctrl+Z to undo the effects of the Auto Levels command. Otherwise, load ty_elements08.jpg. Go to Enhance›Adjust Lighting›Levels. This displays the histogram of our over-exposed shot.

2 Understanding Input Levels
The histogram has three Input Levels sliders below the graph. The black slider enables you to adjust the shadows. The grey slider lightens or darkens the midtones. The white slider enables you to adjust the highlights. As a rule, leave the Output Levels alone.
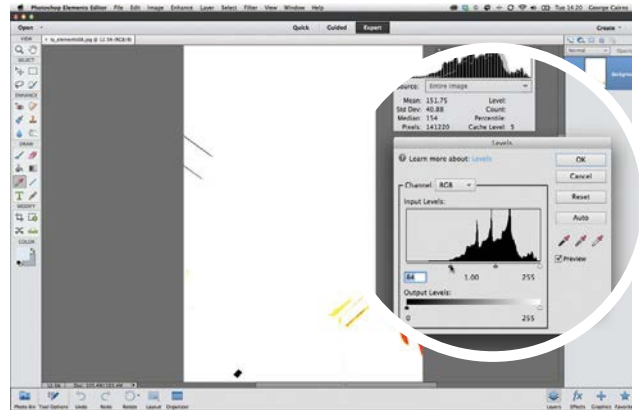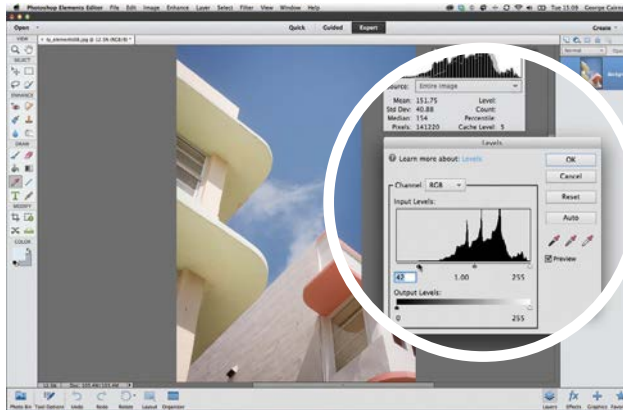
3 Darken the shadows
The three sliders take the original (input level) tones and give them stronger output levels. To darken the shadows, drag the black slider to the right until it touches the graph. Tick and untick the preview box to see a before and after version.

4 Clipping warnings
If you drag the black slider further right you risk creating clipped (under-exposed) shadows that feature no detail. To avoid clipping the shadows, hold down Alt as you drag the slider. If you go too far you'll see clipped areas as patches of colour. Click OK.

Levels in action

Produce a wide range of results by adjusting the Input Levels sliders in the Levels command
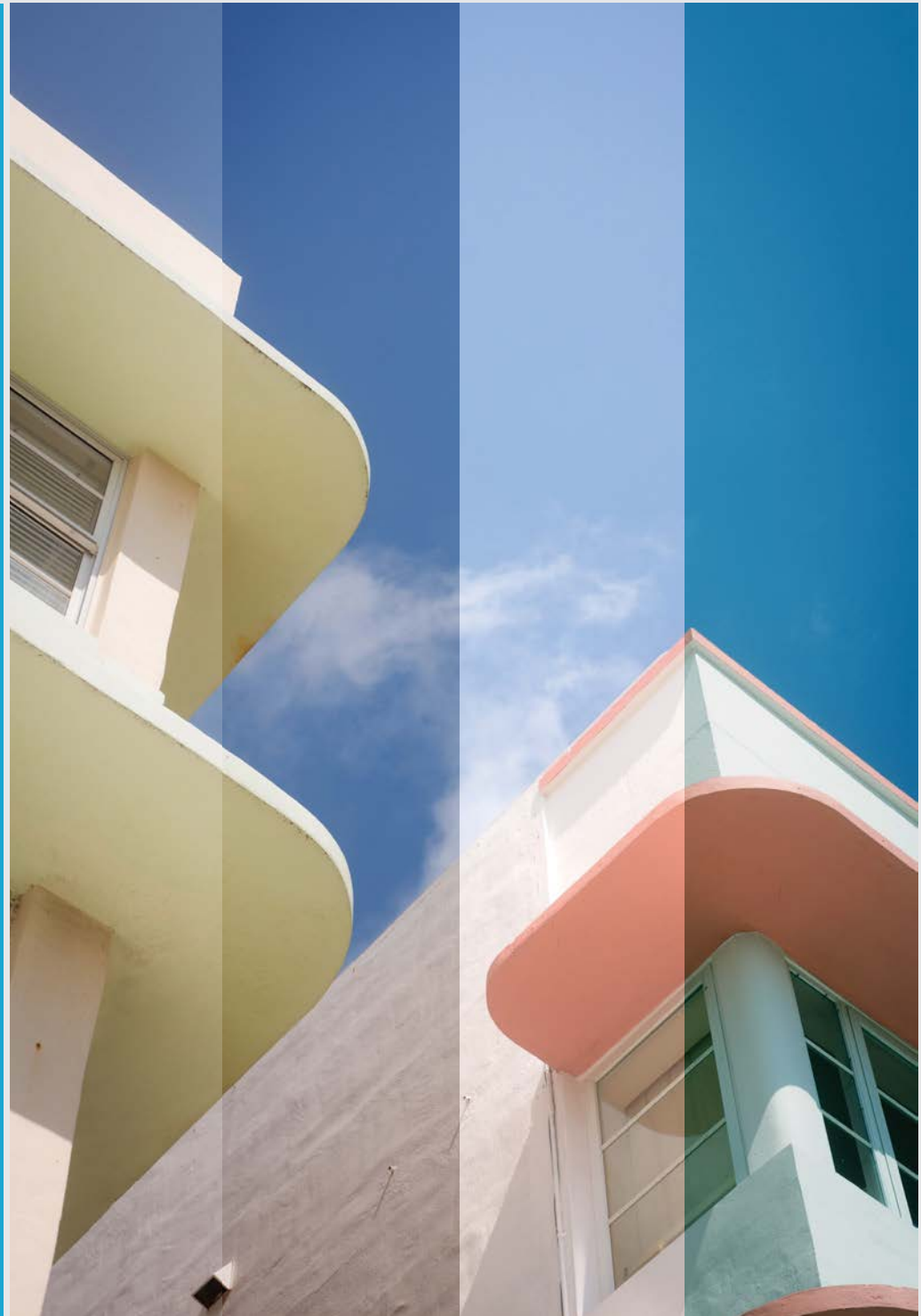
Correct exposure

Here we've dragged the black slider right until it just touches the graph (at the Input Level of 42). This gives the shadows in the original image a slightly darker value, while preserving tonal detail in the shadows.

Darkened for impact

In this example we've dragged the black slider further to the right to an Input Level of 82. This creates much darker and more dramatic-looking shadows, although it loses some detail in the darkest tones.

Original exposure

In this example we've reset the black and grey sliders to their original positions. The over-exposed shot already had strong highlights, so as we dragged the white slider left to 223 it has clipped the highlights.

Creative interpretation

Here we set the black slider to 58 to darken the shadows. We then set the Channel menu to Red and dragged the grey slider to 0.62. By darkening the Red midtones we added a green cast to the shot.

Get perfect colours

Reveal a scene's true colours by removing colour casts caused by an incorrect or ineffective white balance setting

One of the most effective ways to improve images straight out of the camera is to enhance the colour and tones. This might be because the colours recorded by your camera look slightly wrong, or it could be that you want to apply a visual effect.

When we look at a scene with the naked eye, we tend to perceive the correct colours in most lighting conditions. A camera, however, needs help to capture a subject's true colours. This is because different light sources have a different colour temperature. To your camera, daylight has a blue tint, while indoor light sources such as tungsten bulbs

have an orange tint. Cameras try to avoid capturing tints by using Auto White Balance (AWB). But sometimes the AWB function doesn't work effectively, so a little fine-tuning of is necessary. This is easily done with the Elements Adjustments settings. Each offers a handy grid of variations to choose from, plus sliders that allow you to fine-tune your changes.

Once colours are fixed, if you like you can go on to apply a variety of speedy effects using the Effects panel in Quick mode, such as Cross Processing, Vintage, and Split Tone. Each of the 10 effects on offer has five variations, giving you a total of 50 one-click treatments. Here's how it works... ▶

BEFORE

Teach yourself **Photoshop Elements**
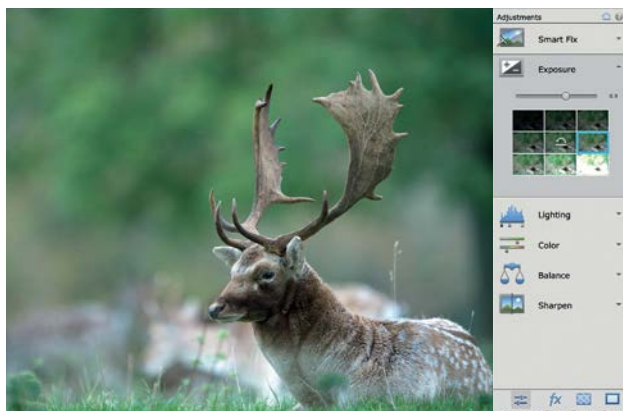
1 Brighten the image

Open the deer image and click Quick mode. Our starting shot has a cold blue cast so it needs warming up. It's also slightly under-exposed. Click the Exposure button and click the variation box to the right of the centre. Once done, use the slider to fine-tune the exposure. Here we've set it to 0.9.

2 Add some warmth

Click the Balance section. There are two sections: Temperature and Tint. Temperature enables you to warm up or cool down the tones. Tint enables you to fix green or purple colour casts. Click Temperature and set the slider to 57, then set the Tint slider to -4.

3 Boost the saturation

Click the Color box. Set Saturation to about +11. Next click Vibrance. This enables you to boost the weaker colours in the scene, so in this instance it enables us to boost the oranges in the deer without affecting the yellows and greens in the trees. Set Vibrance to 48.
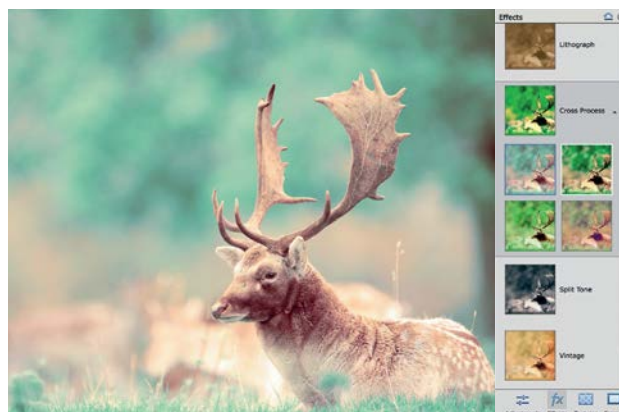
4 Experiment with effects

Once the colours and exposure are fixed, you can experiment with a range of effects. Click the Effects button at the bottom right. There are 10 themes, each with five variations. Click through to try out different treatments, and use the reset image icon at the top right to revert back.
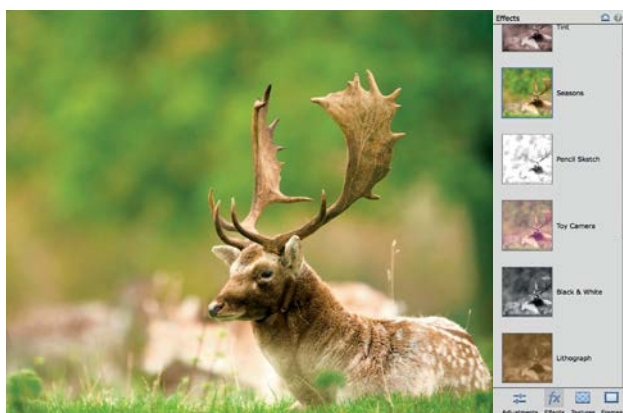
5 Apply the Spring effect

Here we've opted to use the Spring effect, found within the Seasons set of effects. It enhances the colours and gives the image a fresher feel. However, it's slightly overpowering the colours in the trees, but we can tone it down by heading to the Expert mode.
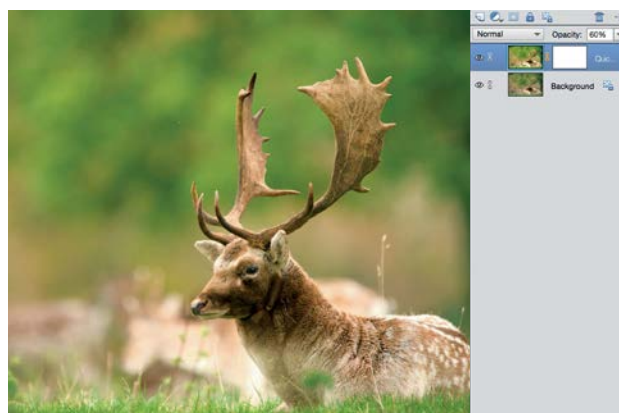
6 Tone it down

Click the Expert mode at the top, then go the Layers panel. Note how there are two layers. The lower layer is the version of the image with the colours and exposure fixed. The upper layer is the Spring effect. We can tone down the effect simply by lowering the opacity of the top layer. ●

Discover the best way to sharpen a photo

Use Photoshop Elements to sharpen soft-looking details while keeping artefacts at bay

There are several reasons a photograph may look a little soft. For starters the camera's Auto Focus (AF) point may not have overlapped the key area of interest, causing it to blur. Or if you shoot with a wide aperture setting then you'll have a much narrower depth of field, so only a shallow area could be in focus. Our starting image was captured using a wide aperture of f/3.2, which creates an attractive blurred background. This blur (or bokeh) helps the model stand out in the image. We wouldn't want to sharpen a deliberately blurred background, but we can make fine details such as the model's eyes stand out more effectively with a little sharpening, courtesy of Photoshop Elements' collection of sharpening tools and commands.

Many photos will benefit from some sharpening. Even if your image looks relatively sharp on your computer display, it can still print out fairly fuzzily on a printer. A touch of post-production sharpening helps to create a print with more punch, especially if you use raw-format files.

Photoshop Elements makes soft objects in a photo look sharper by increasing the contrast around the edges of details in the image. This contrast change gives certain features more impact, making them appear sharper. Sharpening is a balancing act. If you increase the contrast around the edges by too large an amount, you can add sharpening artefacts such as haloes and noise. We'll show you how to recognise and therefore avoid adding artefacts while sharpening your own images. In this walkthrough we'll sharpen JPEGs, but if you want to discover how to sharpen raw files, check out the tutorial in chapter 10. ▶

BEFORE

AFTER

BEFORE

AFTER

Teach yourself **Photoshop Elements**

THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS YOU'LL EVER DO TO A PHOTO
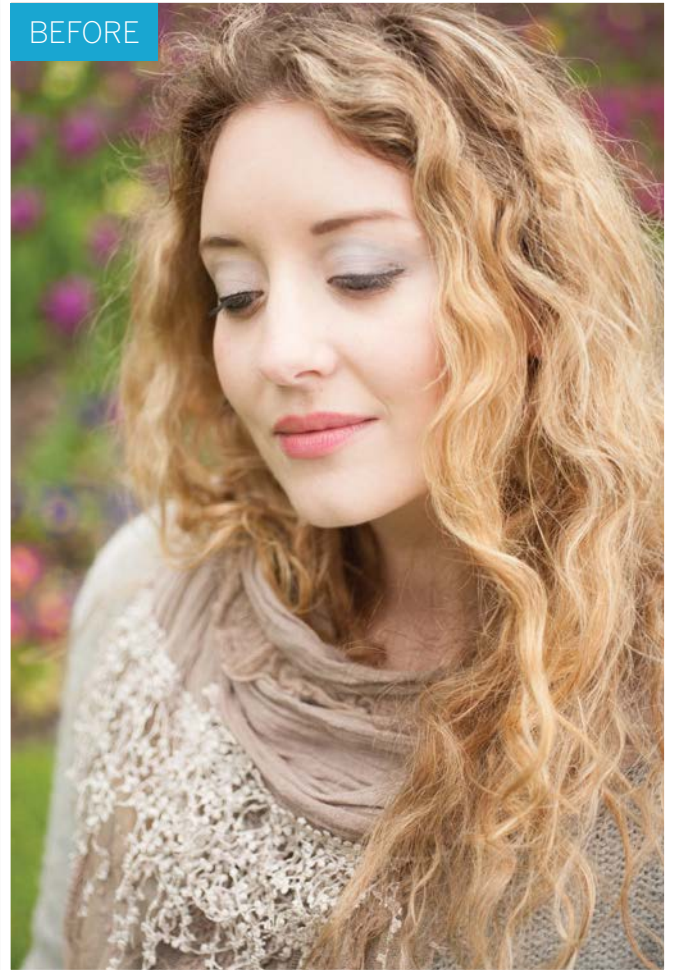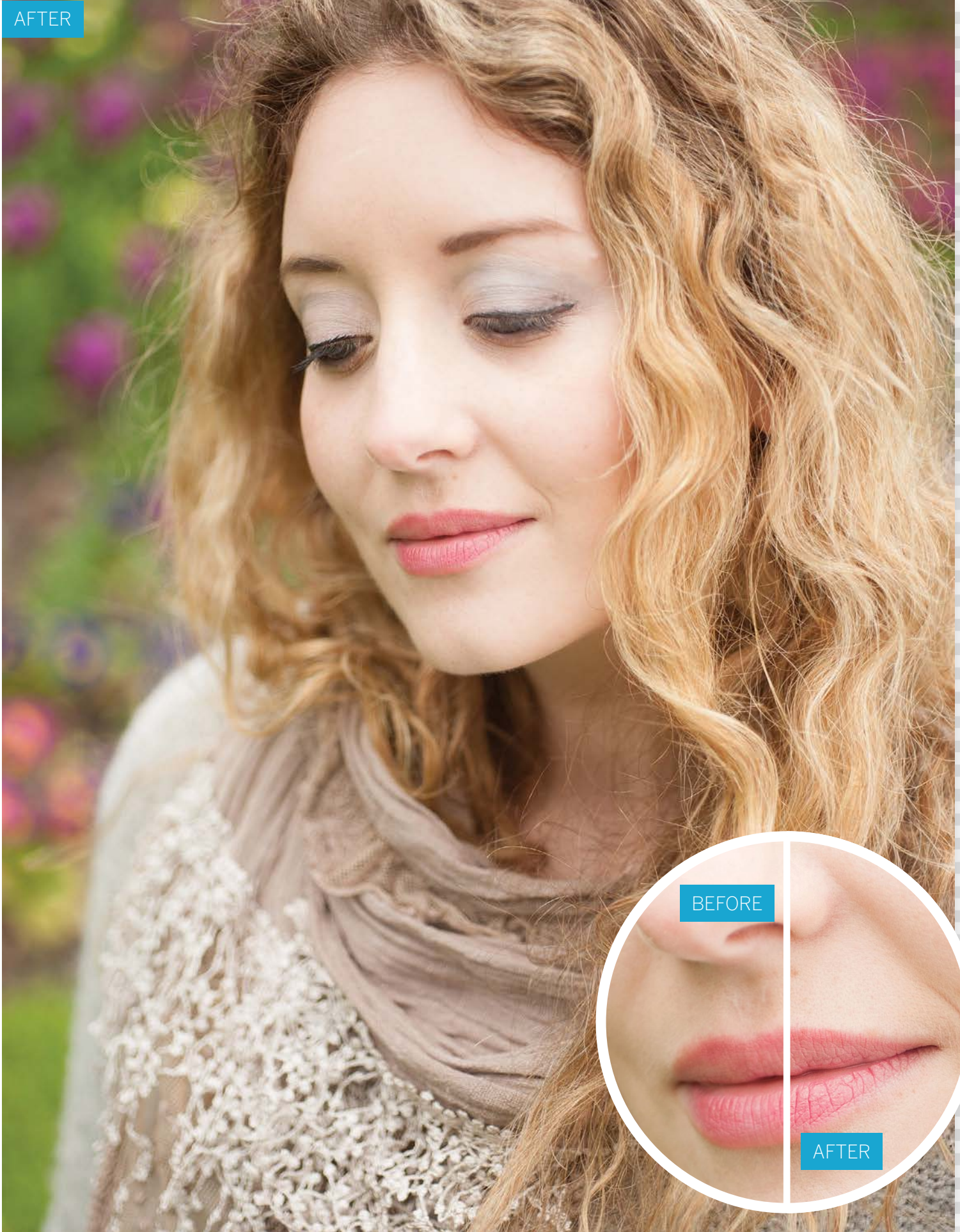
1 Examine the image at 100%

Go to File›Open and browse to our ty_elements11.jpg start image. To accurately assess how sharp a photograph really is, you need to look at the pixels at 100%. Grab the Zoom tool from the Toolbox. Right click and choose Actual Pixels from the context-sensitive pop-up menu. Hold down the space bar to temporarily summon the Hand tool, and drag the image to reveal the model's mouth. The lips lack detail because they suffer from a slightly soft focus.

2 Try Auto Sharpen

Before sharpening a photo, click the Background layer's thumbnail in the Layers panel. Press Cmd/Ctrl+J to make a duplicate layer. You can then sharpen this copy. If you're in a hurry you can go to Enhance›Auto Sharpen. This will sharpen the image and reveal more detail, but you can't change the strength of the operation. Click the top layer's eye icon to compare the two versions of the shot, then click the Undo button.

3 Sharpen incrementally

To sharpen an image quickly while retaining control over the sharpening amount, click the Quick editing tab. Click Adjustments, then click Sharpen. You can either drag the slider right to increase the sharpening, or click the preview thumbnail to increase the sharpening in incremental jumps. If you choose too high a setting you'll exaggerate unwanted details such as the facial hair and image noise in the blurred background.

4 Adjust the sharpness

The Quick adjustment option is fine for a bit of rough-and-ready sharpening, but it can add artefacts as you saw in the previous step. Click the top left thumbnail to reset the shot to its unsharpened state (or drag the slider to 0). Click back to the Expert editing tab to access a sharpening command that offers more editing choices. Go to Enhance and choose Adjust Sharpness. By default this displays the photo at 100% magnification.
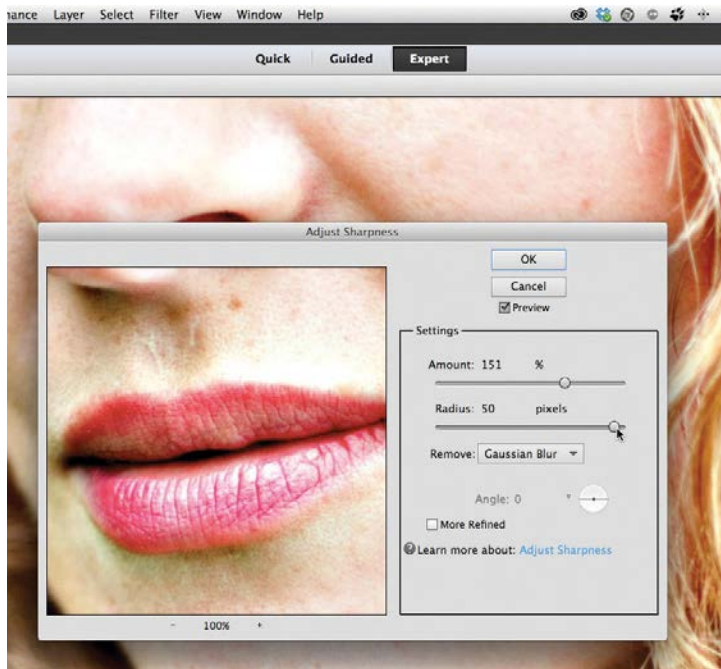
5 Recognise artefacts

To help you learn more about sharpening artefacts, push the Amount slider up to 150% to see a dramatic change in edge contrast. Increase the Radius to 50 pixels to increase the spread of the edge contrast change. This creates ugly artefacts such as blown-out highlights, dark clipped shadows and over-saturated colours. As a rule, don't exceed a Radius value of 2.0 to help avoid creating over-sharpening artefacts.
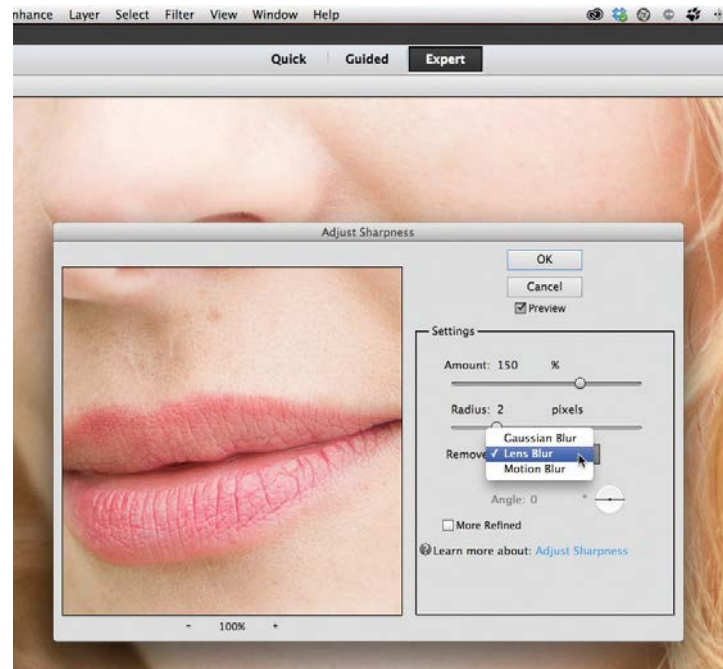
6 Remove lens blur

Drop the Radius slider to 2.0 pixels. Click and hold down the mouse button over the preview window to see the unsharpened version of the photograph, then release the mouse button to see how much the slider settings are sharpening it. For more subtle but effective sharpening, set the Remove drop-down menu to Lens Blur. This helps to reduce artefacts such as haloes (noticeable lines clinging to the edge of contrasting edges).
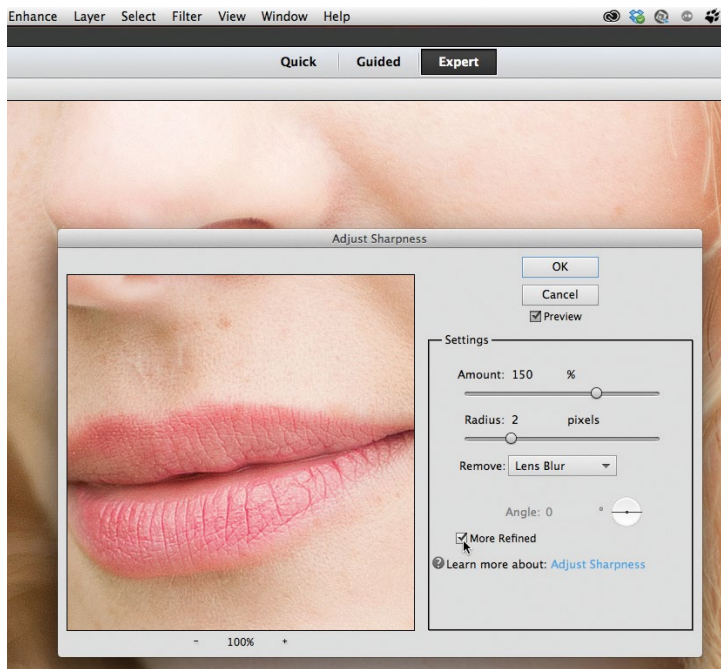
7 Extra options

If your photo suffers from shake-induced blur (due to a slow shutter speed) then you might want to try setting the Remove menu to Motion Blur. You can then drag the Angle wheel to try to counteract the direction of the blur. In practice this doesn't tend to work well. You may be tempted to tick the More Refined box, but this tends to add extra sharpening artefacts such as noise (especially if you've captured the shot using a high ISO setting), so just click OK.
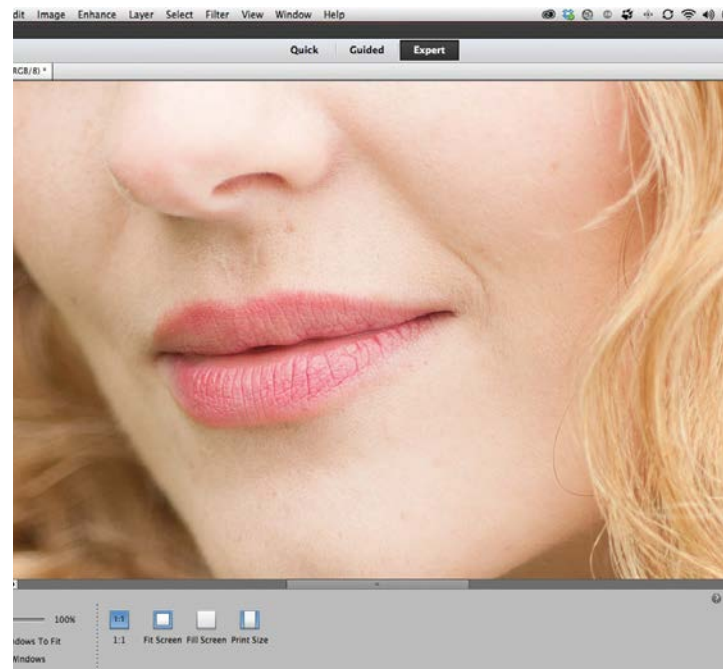
8 Before and after

You now have a sharpened version of the photo that has a balance between revealing texture and details without adding artefacts such as noise to the soft-focused background. Click the top layer's little eye icon to turn it on and off to compare the sharpened details with the softer ones on the layer below. If the top layer is too sharp you could always drop its opacity value to reduce the sharpening amount. ●

Improve the composition of a photo with a crop

Use the Crop tool to improve composition and resize photographs to specific dimensions and ratios

It's best to get your framing right in-camera, but this is not always possible. You might have missed a distracting object on the edge of the frame, or perhaps a stray tourist has walked in to your scene at the decisive moment. And there are times when it's sensible to leave the framing loose in the knowledge that you'll crop in later, such as when your subject is moving too quickly to get the framing perfect, or if you want to add words or other elements to the image in post-production.

Thanks to Photoshop Elements' Crop tool, you can remove distracting objects at the edges of the image or tighten up your framing to improve your composition. Of course, the more you crop into an image, the more you eat away at the image size and resolution. But with current digital cameras producing files with large dimensions, you can afford to lose a few pixels and still produce images that are large enough to print.

As well as cropping to improve the composition, you might want to try out an aspect ratio that differs from your camera's standard width and height, such as a square or a panoramic. Or perhaps you'd like to resize to a specific print size. All this is possible within the Crop tool settings. What's more, the Elements 13 Crop tool comes with handy 'Crop Suggestions', which offer four ways of cropping your image based on classic compositional guides such as the rule of thirds. Elements also offers a tool that can alter the composition of a photo while preserving the shape of the subject. The Recompose tool enables you to make features that are separated by lots of space become closer together without squashing or stretching important parts of the photograph. Here's how it works…

BEFORE

AFTER
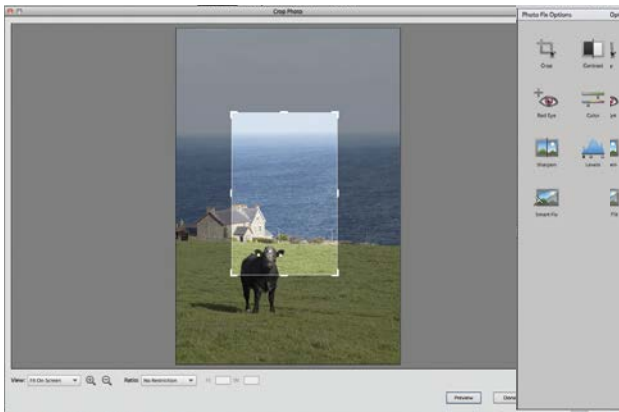
1 Crop in Organizer

Cropping is such a common photo-fixing task that Photoshop Elements enables you to perform it in the Organizer. Double click ty_elements04.jpg to make the shot fill the screen. Click the Instant Fix icon, then click the Crop icon in the Photo Fix Options panel.

2 Preserve the shape

Drag the crop handles to change the shape of the crop. To keep it the same shape as the original photo, click the Ratio drop-down menu and choose Use Photo Ratio. You can now drag the corner handles to crop the shot while automatically preserving the shape of the original image.
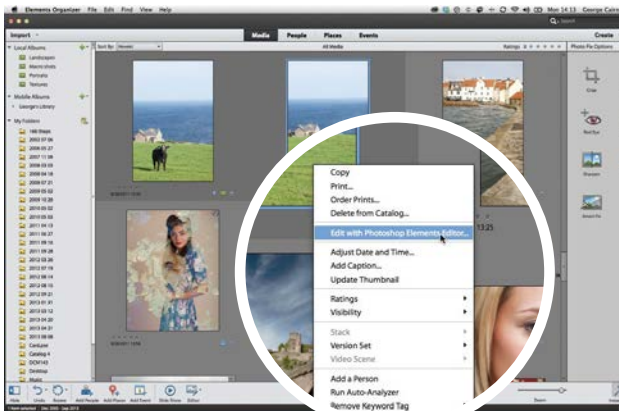
3 Apply the crop

Click Done to apply the crop. The cropped version of the photo will appear alongside the original image in a version set stack, so the original image is intact. You can also crop images in other modes. Click the original thumbnail and go to Edit›Edit with Photoshop Elements Editor.

4 Crop and resize

Click the Crop tool in the Toolbox. In the Tool Options, set the drop-down menu to 8x10 inches. Choose an overlay such as the Rule of Thirds Grid. Click the arrows between W and H to swap width and height. Make the intersecting grid overlap the cow and click the tick.
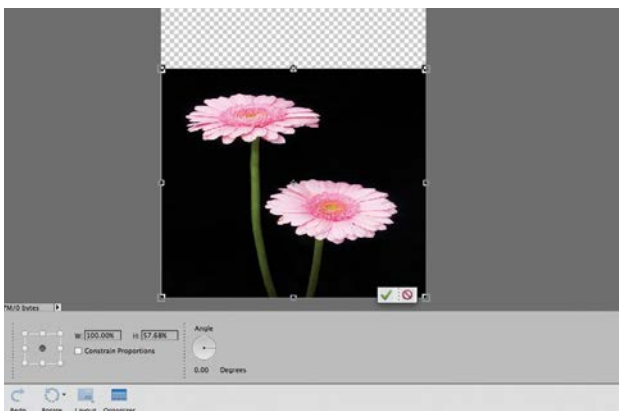
5 Squash it

Go to File›Open and browse to ty_elements06.jpg. You could recompose this shot by choosing Image› Transform›Free Transform. You could then drag the handle down to make the flower heads closer. However, this squashes them. Click Cancel, then select the Recompose tool.
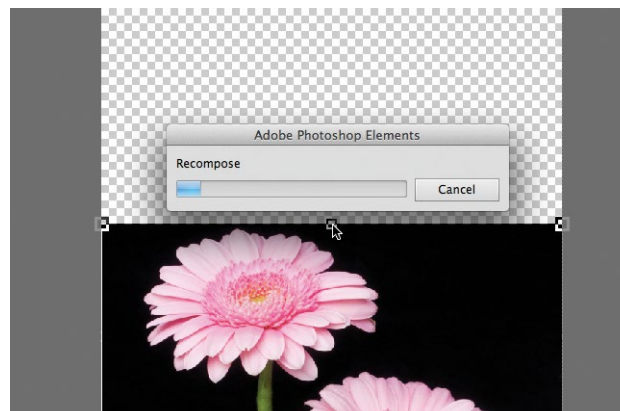
6 Selective squash

In the Tool Options, click the Mark for Protection box, then scribble a rough brush stroke on each flower head. Drag the transform handle downwards to push the heads closer together. This time the flower heads retain their correct proportions, while the background is squashed. ●

GET THE START FILES HERE: http://bit.ly/type-start

Add mood & emotion to your photos

Help your pictures evoke a particular atmosphere through the creative use of colours and filters

Y ou can change the mood of a shot by adjusting its colours and tones in a variety of creative ways. For example, by replacing the original colours of a photo with a wash of sepia, you can mimic vintage printing techniques and give a modern photo a vintage vibe. This is a great way of enhancing wedding snaps. A blue tint and clipped black shadows will add a mysterious and menacing mood to the same shot. Photoshop Elements is packed full of tools and commands that enable you to quickly and easily change the mood of a photo by creatively tweaking its colours and tones, as you'll see in the tutorial below.

BEFORE
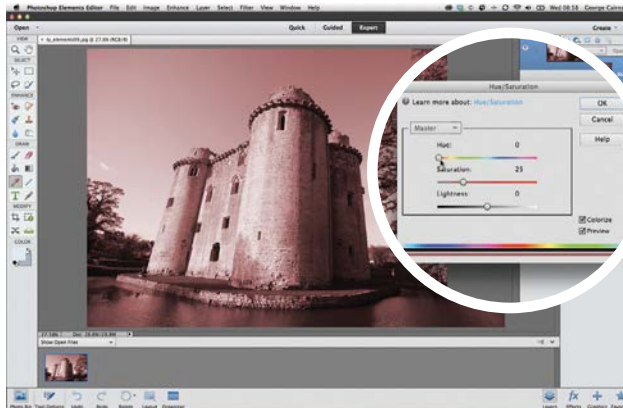
1 Add a tint
Open ty_elements09.jpg. Choose Enhance›Adjust Color›Adjust Hue/Saturation. By ticking the Colorize box in the Hue/Saturation dialog, you can change all the original colours in the image with a single wash of colour. This tint is applied to the midtones, preserving the contrast.
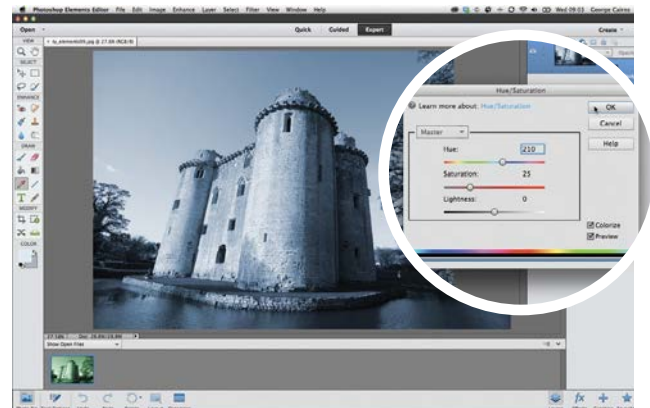
2 Change the tint
By default the tint will be red. You can drag the Hue slider to adjust the tint colour. A Hue of around 44 will add a wash of sepia. A value of 133 will add a ghoulish Halloween green. For a colder, more nocturnal look, drag Hue to 210 to add a moody blue tint. Click OK to apply the tint.

AFTER
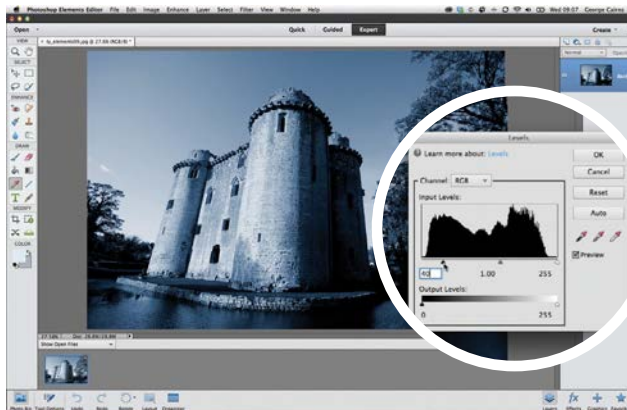
3 Darken the shadows

Go to Enhance›Adjust Lighting›Levels. Drag the black Input Level slider right to plunge the shadows into deeper darkness, creating a more menacing mood. A value of 40 will do the trick. Click OK to apply this dramatic change in tone.
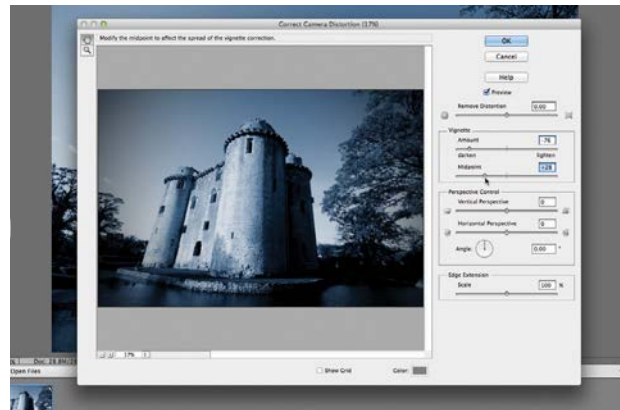
4 Add a vignette

We can make the shadows close in around the subject by going to Filter›Correct Camera Distortion. In the Vignette section, drag Amount to -76 to darken the edges of the frame. To tighten the vignette around the castle, drag the midpoint slider left to 28. Click OK to apply. ▶

Want to know more?
NOW TRY THIS...

Click the Expert editing mode tab, click the fx icon, and go to the Effects panel. Choose Show All from the drop-down menu. Double click a preview thumbnail to apply effects such as Colorful Center **[01]**. This fades the colours to monochrome at the edges. If you go to Filter>Adjustments>Photo Filter you can add a range of tints such as a sunset Deep Red **[02]**. The Quick editing mode has a new fx icon that has a range of one-click creative effects, such as a vintage Lithograph effect **[03]** and the more dramatic Scary Movie **[04]**.

Advanced image editing skills

Learn how to make an image composite by adding or removing elements from a scene without leaving traces

64 Make rough and ready selections

Discover how to select areas quickly by mastering the easy-to-use Elliptical and Rectangular Marquee tools, and the Lasso, Polygonal Lasso and Magnetic Lasso tools

68 Combine images with Photomerge Compose

Develop your selection and edge-refining skills by making a convincing composite photo using Elements' new Photomerge Compose feature

72 Improve your selections with Refine Edge

Find out how to perfect your selection marquees, no matter how complicated the object, using the sophisticated Refine Edge tool to contract, expand, feather, smooth and more

76 How to use intelligent selection tools

Produce quicker and more accurate selections using the Magic Wand tool, the Quick Selection tool and the Selection Brush tool

80 How to make non-destructive edits

Use versatile adjustment layers to selectively target and tweak the colours and tones of an image without affecting the original file

GET THE START FILES HERE: http://bit.ly/type-start

AFTER

Make rough and ready selections

Select areas quickly by mastering the Marquee and Lasso tools

Most of the tools and menu commands in Photoshop Elements change the colours and tones in the entire image, or enable you to copy and paste every pixel, for example. However, you may want to perform more selective adjustments on particular areas, and this calls for the services of the Marquee tools. A marquee is a straight or curved line made up of animated black and white dashes (which are often referred to as 'marching ants'). Think of a marquee as a fence that isolates the pixels within it from the rest of the image. You can copy the selected pixels or change their colour or tone, without altering pixels that fall outside the selection marquee.

The Elliptical and Rectangular Marquee tools share a compartment in the Select section of the Toolbox. You can use these tools to make quick and simple selections, or combine them to select more complex shapes.

The Lasso tools are also in the Select section of the Toolbox. These more versatile marquee-making tools enable you to select shapes that aren't rectangular or elliptical. The basic Lasso tool enables you to draw a quick freehand marquee, which is good for making rough-and-ready selections.

Some selection tasks require a tool with more control, such as the Polygonal Lasso. This variant enables you to make a quick selection by clicking to place anchor points around your subject. A straight marquee line is drawn between each point.

The Magnetic Lasso also creates anchor points while making a selection, but these are placed automatically as you draw around the object that you want to select. We'll put some of these simple selection tools through their paces in the steps overleaf, so you know which one to use for which task... ▶

BEFORE

ADVANCED IMAGE EDITING SKILLS
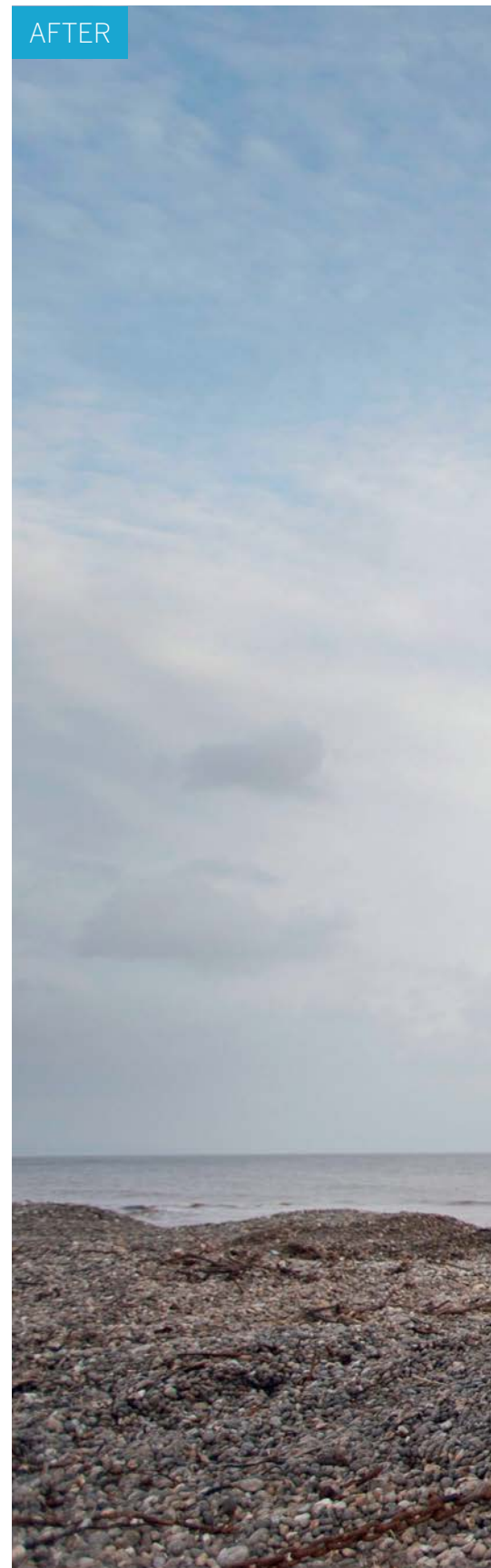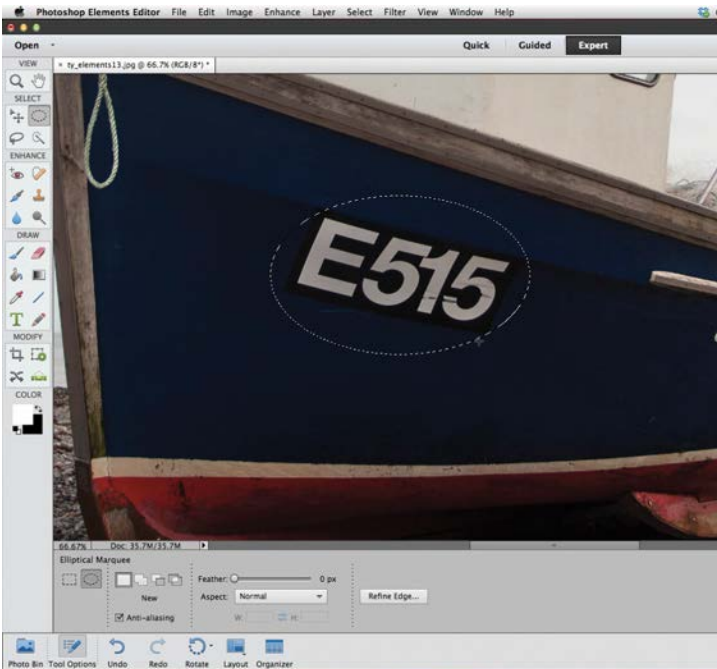
1 Make a selection

To practice making selection marquees, open the ty_elements13.jpg starting image. Grab the Elliptical Marquee tool in the Toolbox. If it's not visible, click its colleague — the Rectangular Marquee. You can then click the Elliptical Marquee icon in the Tool Options. You can also toggle between either version of the Marquee tool by pressing M. Click and drag to draw an elliptical marquee around the hull identification number on the boat.

2 Transform the selection

You can use the cursor keys to nudge the marquee into a new position. To fine-tune the shape of the ellipse, go to Select›Transform. You can squash or stretch the selection marquee by dragging the bounding box handles. This doesn't change the selected pixels, just the marquee's shape. Drag outside the bounding box to rotate the elliptical marquee. When you're happy with the transformed shape, click the green tick.

3 Add and subtract

You can modify your marquee selections with ease. If you click the Add to selection icon in the Tool Options, a plus sign will appear by the cursor. You can then click and drag the cursor to add to the existing marquee. Alternatively, you can click the Subtract from selection marquee icon and a minus icon will appear. You can use this option to trim away sections of the elliptical selection. These options can be applied with other selection tools.

4 Feather the edge

By default every selection marquee tool produces a sharp edge. A softer edge helps to blend edited pixels inside the marquee with their neighbours. You can set the Feather option's slider to a desired value before drawing a marquee. Alternatively, go to Select›Feather and choose a Feather Radius such as 10 pixels. Click OK. Grab the Eyedropper tool and click to sample the boat's hull. Choose Edit›Fill Selection. Select Use Foreground Color and click OK.
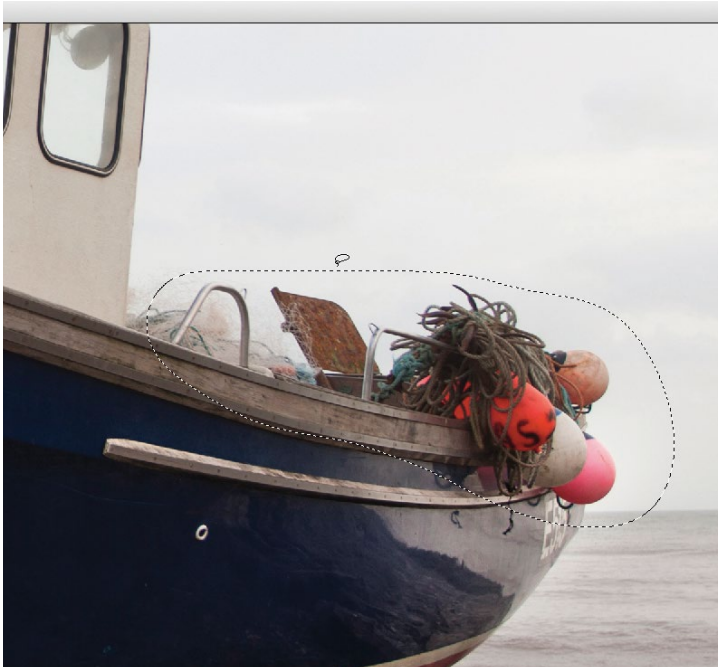
5 Lasso a selection

Press Cmd/Ctrl+D to deselect the marquee once you've finished editing the selected area. The marching ants will vanish. Grab the Freehand Lasso tool from the Toolbox. We'll use this selection tool to isolate and adjust the colours in a particular area. In the Tool Options, set the Feather slider to 35 pixels for a nice soft edge to the selection. Drag the cursor around the coloured flotation buoys at the right to create a rough selection marquee.
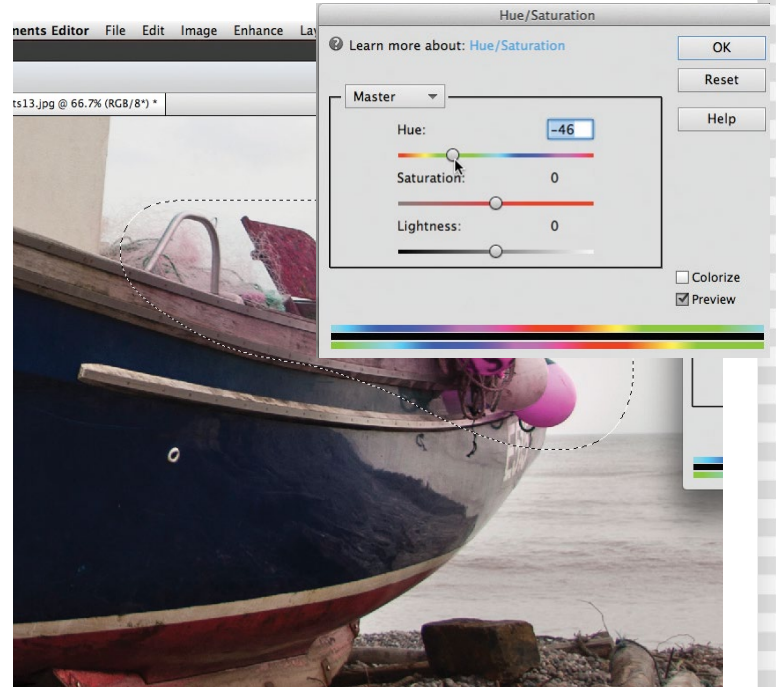
6 Edit the selected area

Go to Enhance›Adjust Color›Hue/Saturation. By dragging the Master Hue slider to -46 you change the colours within the selection marquee without altering other colours in the rest of the shot. Sometimes the selection marquee can be a bit distracting, so press Cmd/Ctrl+H to hide the marching ants without dismissing them. This makes it easier to see how the edited pixels are blending in with the unedited surroundings. Click OK.

7 Magnetic selection

To make more precise selections, click the Magnetic Lasso tool's icon in the Tool Options. Set Width to 10 pixels to help the tool stick close to the area that you draw around. A larger width will allow the tool to stray off course. Set Contrast to 10%. Click the boat's window and draw around it. The Magnetic Lasso will automatically add anchor points to help you draw an accurate selection marquee. Click the last point on the first to complete the selection.

8 Make selective tonal adjustments

Now that you've made a precise window-shaped selection, you can tweak the selected area's washed-out tones to give them more contrast. Go to Enhance›Adjust Lighting›Levels. Drag the grey slider right to 0.52 to darken the midtones inside the selected area so that they match the darker tones in the windows on the left. Click OK to apply the selective tonal tweak. On the following pages we'll look at more intelligent selection tools.

AFTER

BEFORE
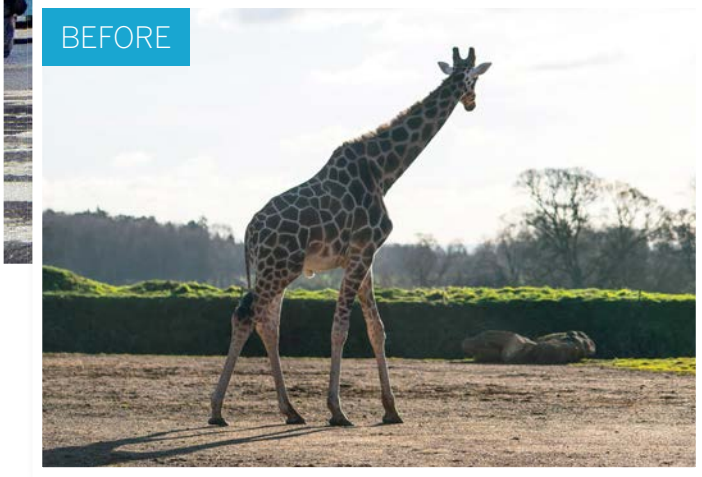
BEFORE
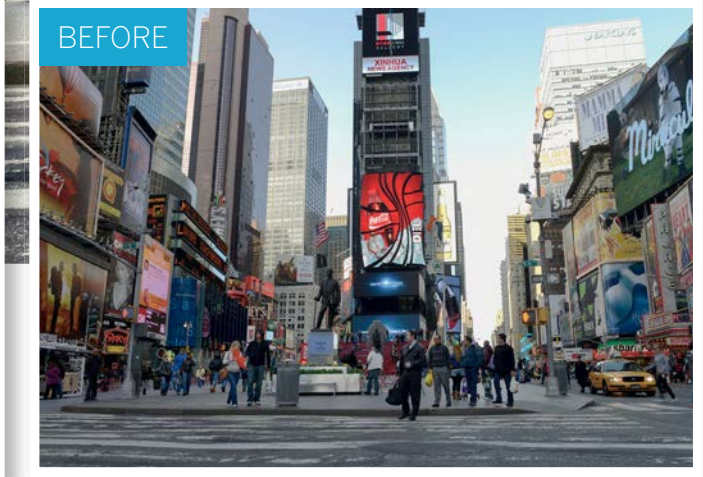
Combine images with Photomerge Compose

Make a convincing composite photo using Elements' new Photomerge Compose feature

E lements 13's Photomerge Compose command provides a guided walkthrough that explains each stage of the photo-merging process. To begin with, we use Quick Selection to isolate the object we want to extract from it's original background. Once the selection is done, the command places the object on another layer, allowing you to position it exactly where you'd like. It also offers a feature to Auto Match the tones, but don't bother using it. Apart from the fact that it doesn't do a very good job of matching tones, it also pixellates your cut-out image and severely lowers the quality. Luckily, colour matching is easily done once Photomerge Compose is complete, and other tools such as Levels offer greater control anyhow. Once the images are combined, it can help to add an effect over everything, so that the different elements look like they belong together. Here we've done this by saving a copy of the image, then taking it into the Camera Raw plugin to create an HDR-like effect.

The success of composites like this relies heavily on the lighting in the two images. If in one image the light is from the side, and in the other, the light is from the front, then it will be hard to combine the two convincingly. In our two starting images here, the lightest part of the scene is in the background, so the angle of light is coming from behind. This makes it much easier to blend the two images into one convincing whole. So when shooting or choosing images for your own composites, look to match the lighting. ▶
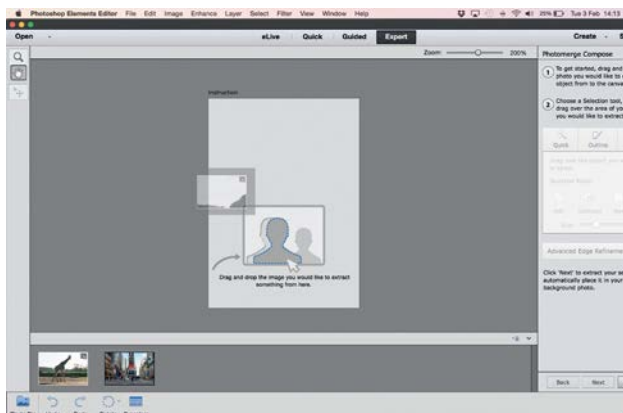
1 Start Photomerge Compose
Open the two images you'd like to combine, then go to Enhance›Photomerge›Photomerge Compose. This opens a step-by-step walkthrough that will guide you through the process. Drag the image with the area you want to extract from the Photo Bin into the window.
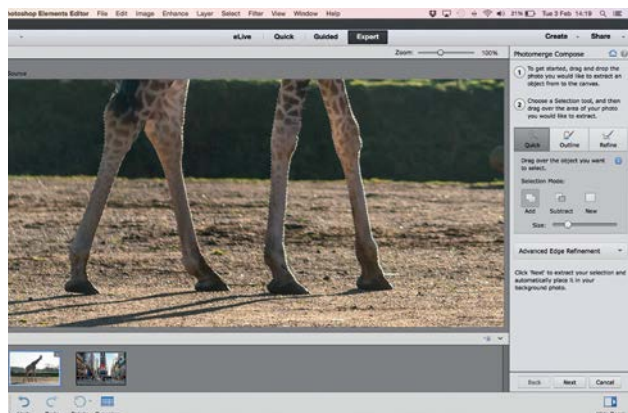
2 Paint a selection
Grab the Quick Selection brush from the options on the right. Paint over the subject with the brush to select the area. If the tool goes wrong, hold Alt and paint to subtract areas from the selection. Zoom in close to check the edges and take the time to make it as perfect as possible.
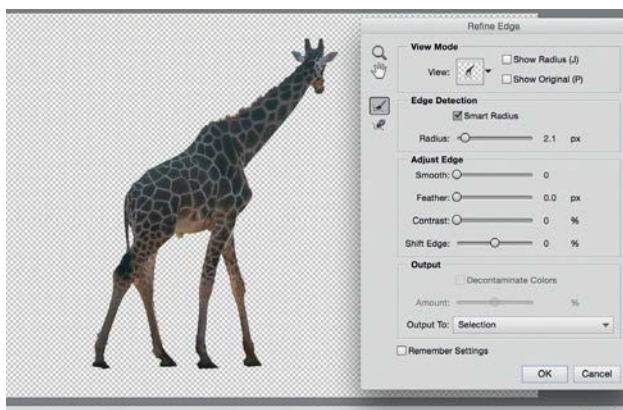
3 Refine the edges
Go the to the Advanced Edge Refinement section and click the Refine Edge button. Refine Edge improves the selection over tricky areas like hair. Hit F to cycle View modes. Use the Radius slider to increase the area of refinement along the edges, and check Smart Radius.
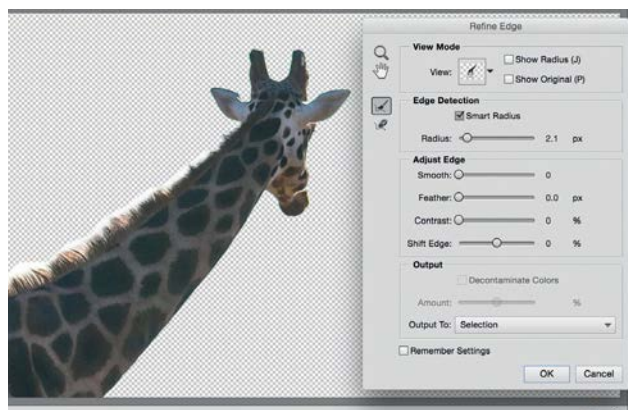
4 Paint over the fur
We can also paint a radius along the edges using the Refine Radius tool, which works just like a paintbrush. Paint over furry edges to improve the selection. Check Show Radius to see where the refinement is occurring, and If you need to, hold Alt to erase parts of the radius.

5 Position the cutout
Set Shift Edge to -6 to squeeze the selection Elwards. When you're happy with the selection, click OK, then Next, to move to the next stage in the walkthrough. The selection will be extracted to the other image. Drag the bounding box into position, and resize and rotate it.

6 Reveal and hide
Zoom in close and check the edges one more time. If parts of the subject are missing, click the Reveal button and paint to bring them back, and if you need to hide areas, click Hide. Use the] and [keys to resize your brush tip as you paint.

7 Skip Auto Match

When you're happy, click Next. The final section offers tools to match the colours, but don't touch them. Due to a bug (present at the time of press), if you make any changes here, it severely degrades the quality of the cut-out image. So instead, skip it and click Done.
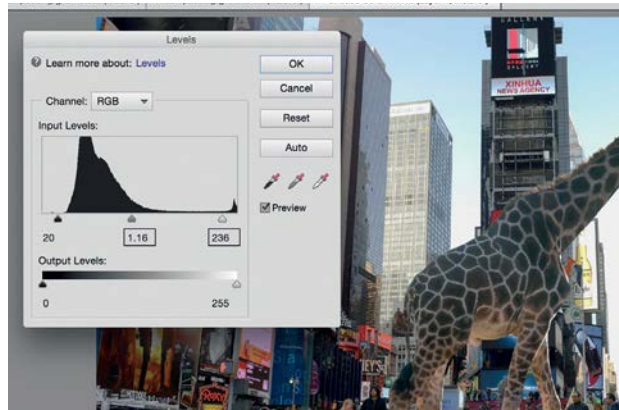
8 Match the tones with Levels

Go to the Layers panel (Window›Layers) and highlight the top layer. Go to Enhance›Adjust Lighting›Levels. Use the three sliders to try to match the brightness and contrast with the background scene. Set black point 20, midpoint 1.16, white point 236.
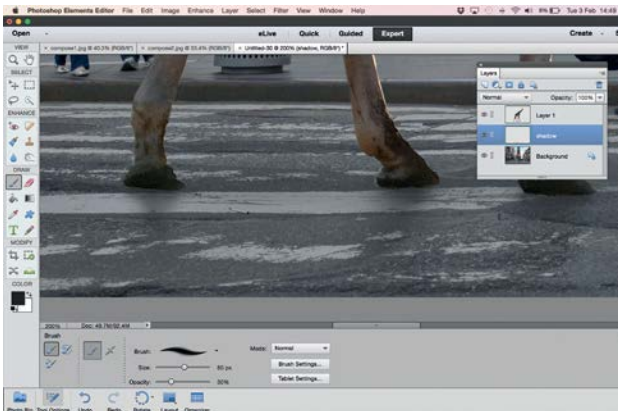
9 Paint soft shadows

Next we'll paint in a shadow for the feet. In Expert mode, go to the Layers panel, highlight the Background layer and click the New Layer icon at the top. Grab the Brush tool. Set the colour to black and press 3 for 30% brush opacity. Paint under the feet to add a soft shadow.
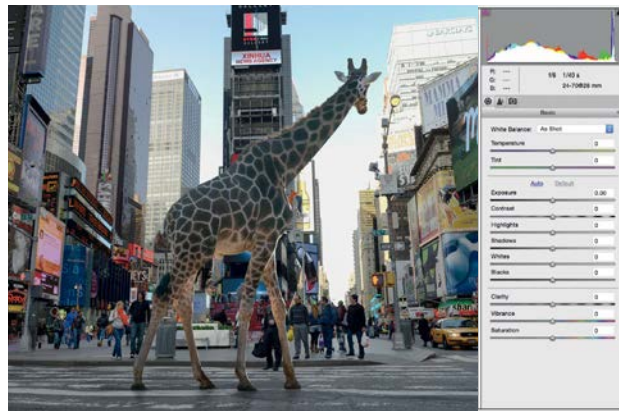
10 Open a copy in Camera Raw

To finish off the composite we'll add a tonal effect. To do so, we need to first save the image, then reopen it in Camera Raw. Go to File›Save and save it as a JPEG, then go to File›Open in Camera Raw to open it in the Camera Raw plugin.
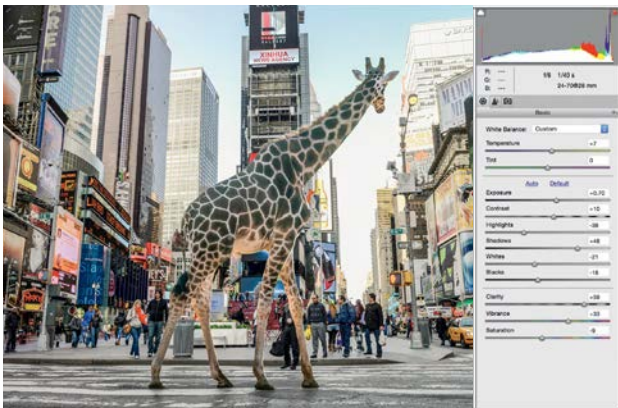
11 Change the tones

Composites look more convincing if you apply tonal and colour effects once the images are merged. We can use Camera Raw to apply a faux HDR effect. Set Exposure +0.70, Contrast +10, Highlights -38, Shadows +48, Whites -21, Blacks -16, Clarity +59, Vibrance +41, Saturation -9.

12 Experiment with effects

Click Open Image. Press Cmd/Ctrl+J to duplicate the Background layer. To finish off, use the Dodge and Burn tools to lighten or darken areas of the image. Finally, go to Quick mode and experiment with the Effects panel. Here the Seasons effect works well. ●

Use Refine Edge to improve selections

Spruce up your selection edges with Refine Edge

Many photo-fixing tasks involve making selections. You may need to select a specific region such as a bland sky so that you can replace it with something more exciting, or simply adjust the sky's over-exposed tones without altering the correctly exposed landscape. Alternatively, you may want to select a person from one shot and composite them into another to produce more creative results.

As you've seen from this chapter, the Toolbox compartments are crammed full of selection tools, from the primitive Lasso to the more intelligent Quick Selection tool. All of these tools produce a selection marquee — a line of animated dashes that defines the shape of the selected area. After making a selection you may find that the marquee doesn't include the entire subject, and it may also be a bit ragged around the edges.

You can modify selection marquees using main menu elemmands. If you go to Select›Modify you can access commands such as Contract. This enables you to tighten the marquee around the edges of your subject to lose any background pixels that are clinging to the outline. You can also use the Smooth command to create less jagged selection edges. These menu selection commands are a bit fiddly to use, so Elements also provides an easier and more effective way to alter selection marquees — the Refine Edge command.

When you make a selection, you'll notice the Refine Edge button in the Tool Options. As a rule, if a tool creates a selection, you'll be able to fine-tune it by clicking the Refine Edge button. The Refine Edge tool can also be summoned via Select›Refine Edge.

Elements Anatomy Refine Edge options

Get to know the Refine Edge command's powerful collection of modifying tools

01 VIEW

After selecting light edges (such as the blonde hairs of this model), choose a contrasting On Black view from this pop-up thumbnail to display any unselected areas as black pixels. This makes it easier to see how your selection is shaping up.

02 SMOOTH

When you select your subject, its edges may include jagged or blocky clumps of unwanted background pixels. Drag this slider to the right to smooth out the marquee's edges and get a cleaner selection. This does a similar job to the Select>Modify>Smooth command.

03 FEATHER

Increase this value to soften the edges of the selection. This will blend the selected pixels more effectively with the new background. Feathered edges stop the selected subject from looking too 'cut-out'. This does the same job as the Select>Feather command.

04 CONTRAST

By adjusting the contrast you can add or subtract a range of pixels from the edge of a selection, depending on their tone. This helps you to remove bits of unwanted background.

05 SHIFT EDGE

This slider enables you to get a balance between revealing edge details while hiding fringes of unwanted background pixels. It does a similar job to the Select>Modify>Contract and Expand commands.

06 DECONTAMINATE

If any bits of unwanted background colour remain around the edges of your selection, click here to try to hide them. You can fine-tune the strength of the effect using the Amount slider.

Understanding...
EDGE DETECTION

Complex subjects such as people have edges that are a mix of hard and soft lines. The Edge Detection section **[01]** of the Refine Edge command enables you to select varying edges more effectively. The Smart Radius option **[02]** automatically increases the spread of the edge refinement where required. Click here **[03]** to summon the Refine Radius tool. This enables you to manually extend the edge refinement function using a brush. If the Refine Radius tool reveals too many background pixels, use this version **[04]** to remove unwanted details. Click here **[05]** to preview how the edited Radius is shaping up. ▶
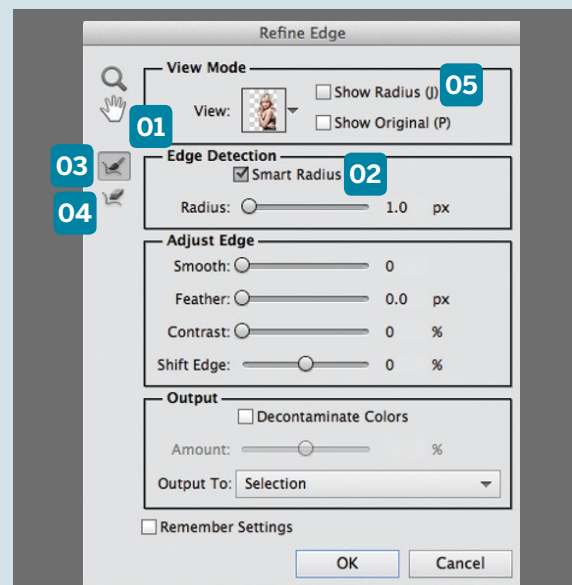
LAYER MASKS

When you're ready to apply the Refine Edge command's adjustments to your selection marquee, click OK to apply them. However, if you want to continue modifying the selection, it's well worth setting the Refine Edge command's Output To drop-down menu to New Layer with Layer Mask. This creates a black-and-white mask created from your selection. The black sections on the mask hide bits of unwanted background. You can paint with a black brush on the mask to hide any remaining background pixels, should it be necessary. Or you can paint with white to reveal some of the missing subject. We'll demonstrate this mask-modification technique later in this chapter.

BEFORE

AFTER

Cut out like a professional

Discover the best way to cut out portraits and transport subjects seamlessly using the Refine Edge tool

One of the great things about digital imaging is the ability it gives you to combine several images. Master a few simple compositing skills and you can transport subjects to distant destinations or build a group photo from several people who've never met. But to make a composite look convincing you need accurate cutouts. When cutting out people, the most problematic part is usually the hair, where the background often shows through the gaps. Luckily, there are a couple of Photoshop

tools that can do much of the work for you. Introduced in Elements 11, Refine Edge is the most powerful tool for making cutouts that Adobe has ever produced. It's not a selection tool, but a command that enables you to improve an existing selection by, as the name suggests, refining its edges. If you're new to Refine Edge, the controls can seem complicated at first, but master a few fundamentals and it quickly becomes the go-to tool when you need to make a precise cutout.
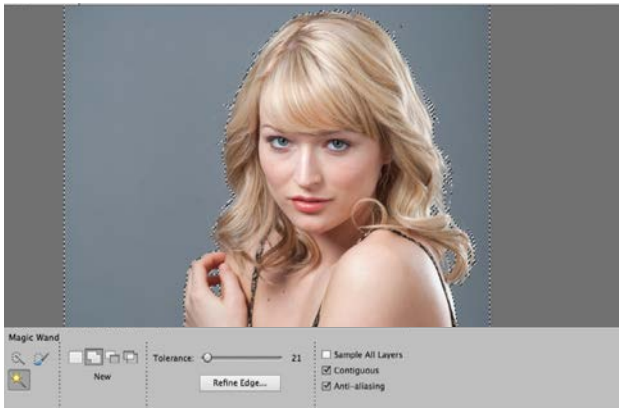
1 Select the background

Open the starting image. Grab the Magic Wand tool, check Contiguous and set Tolerance to about 21 in the Tool Options. Click the grey background to begin a selection. Hold Shift and click around the background to select it all. Include the gaps in the hair and hands.

2 Open Refine Edge

Go to Select›Inverse to select the model instead of the background, then go to Select›Refine Edge. Hit F to toggle different view options within Refine Edge until you find one that gives the best view of the selection edge. Check Smart Radius and increase Radius to 1px.
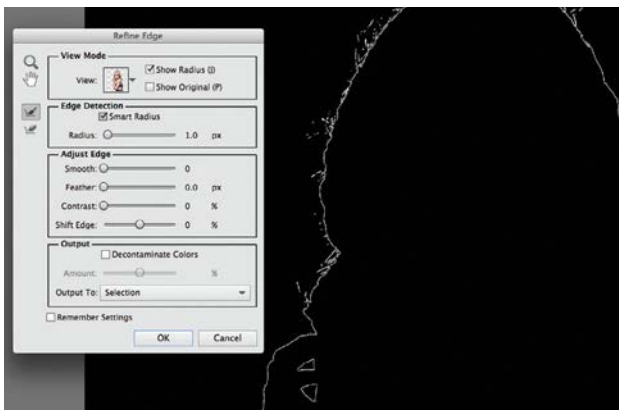
3 Adjust the radius

Check Show Radius, and experiment by dragging the Radius slider up and down, changing the size of the edge. The refinement occurs in this area; anywhere outside it is left untouched. Grab the Refine Radius tool and paint over the edges of the hair to increase the area of refinement.
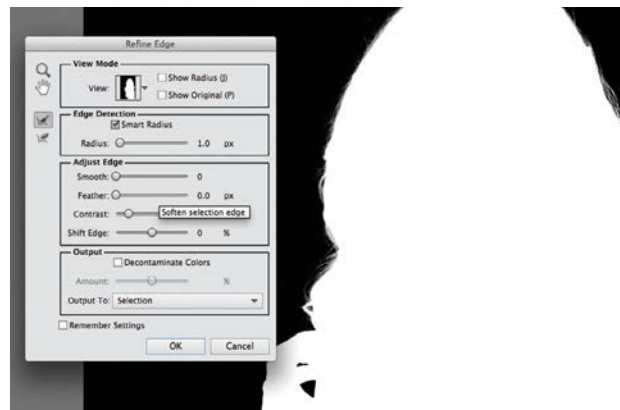
4 Fine-tune the settings

Continue painting around the hair, covering the areas where the grey background shows through. If you need to erase parts, hold Alt and paint. When you're happy, hit F until you see the black on white view. Experiment with the Contrast and Shift Edge sliders to make the edge harder.
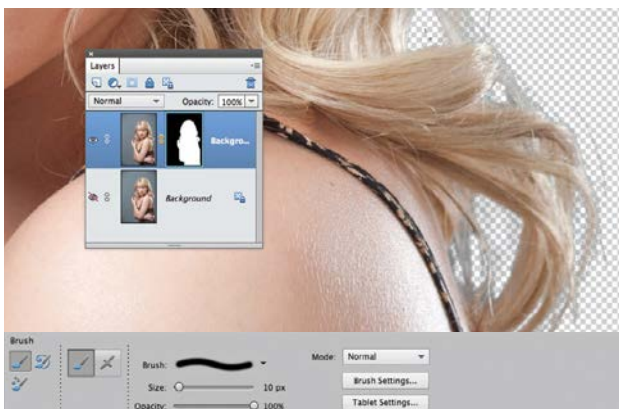
5 Tidy up the mask

Pick Output to: New Layer with Layer Mask and click OK. Go to the Layers panel and highlight the mask thumbnail. The cutout probably won't be perfect so you'll need to tidy it up. Grab the Brush tool, zoom in and paint with black to hide any remaining background areas.

6 Drop in the background

Open the background and add it to the portrait image. Reapply Refine Edge: highlight the mask, go to Select›Refine Edge and repeat the process. Highlight the background layer. Press Cmd/Ctrl+J, go to Filter›Blur›Lens Blur, set Radius 35, and click OK. ●

AFTER

Use intelligent selection tools

Modify the shapes of selections to help the selected and adjusted pixels blend using Elements' selection tools

S elections allow us to isolate parts of our images, making it easier to target, adjust or cut out those areas. When working with photographs, these areas are usually quite complex, so attempting to select them with basic selection tools such as the Lasso would take ages. This is where Element's advanced selection tools — Quick Selection and the Magic Wand — show their worth. They work by making selections based on similarities in colour and tone, so they excel at selecting large areas such as skies in just a few clicks. Here we'll show you how to adjust the Magic Wand so that it will select a sky without selecting similar coloured or toned pixels in other parts of the image. You'll then be able to make a selective tonal adjustment to make the sky look more punchy and dramatic without changing the rest of the image.

The Magic Wand shares its compartment in the toolbox with two other selection tools — the Quick Selection tool and the Selection Brush tool. Like the Magic Wand, the Quick Selection tool recognises changes in colour and tone — but it works like a brush, allowing you to paint over areas while the tool seeks out the edges for you. Once you've made an intelligent selection with the Quick Selection tool, you can manually add to or subtract from it using the less intelligent Selection Brush tool. All these tools make a marching ants selection marquee that defines the shape of the selection. As well as modifying the marquee's shape, we'll show you how to change the softness of the edges to help the selected and adjusted pixels blend more effectively with their unedited neighbours. ▶

BEFORE

Teach yourself **Photoshop Elements**
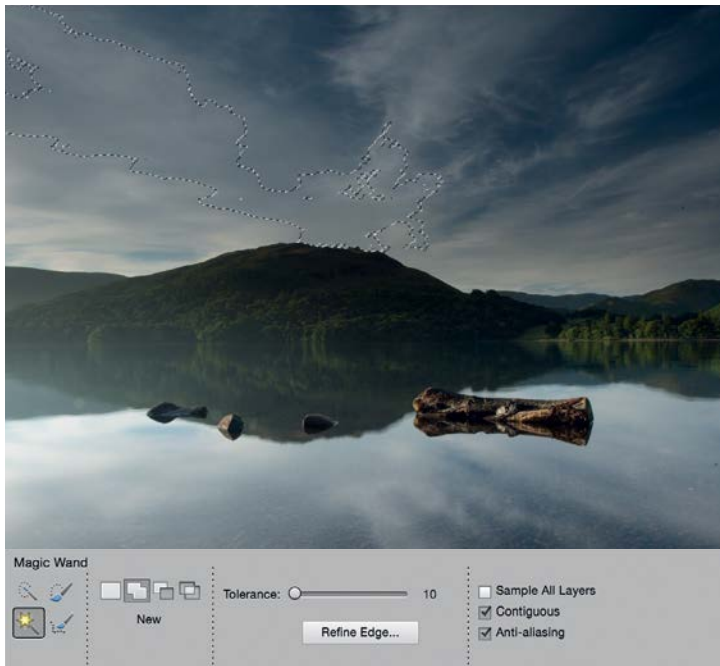
1 Change the Magic Wand settings

Open the image of the lake and go to the Expert mode. Choose the Magic Wand, then go to the Tool Options at the bottom. The Tolerance slider makes the Magic Wand tool more or less sensitive. The correct amount depends on the image. Too low and it won't pick up enough, too high and you'll include unwanted areas. To see how it works, set Tolerance 10 and click the clouds. Now set 50 and click the same area to see the difference.
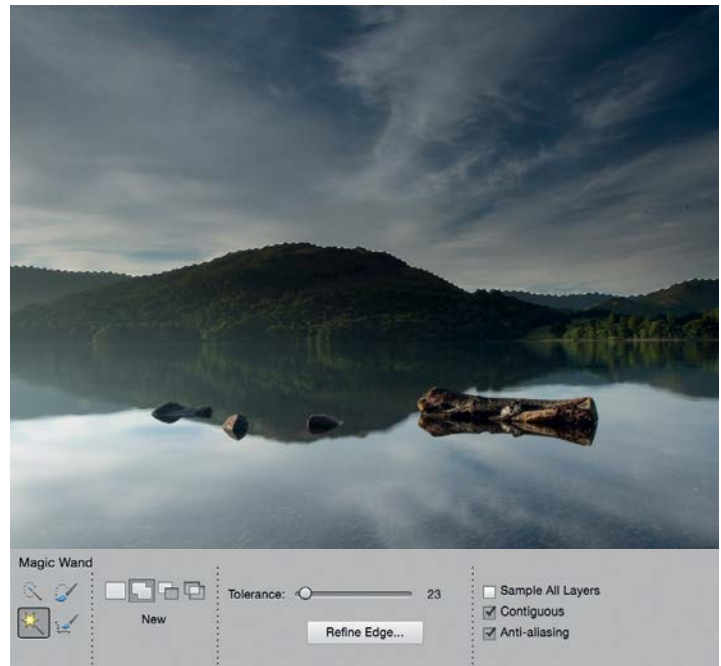
2 Select the sky

Try making a selection first with Contiguous checked, then with it unchecked. Notice how, when checked, the selection is constrained to one area. If unchecked, the tool seeks out similar pixels over the entire image, not just those connected to the point you click. Set Tolerance 23, check Contiguous and click the clouds. Like any selection tool, you can hold Shift to add to the selection. So hold Shift and click until the entire sky is selected.
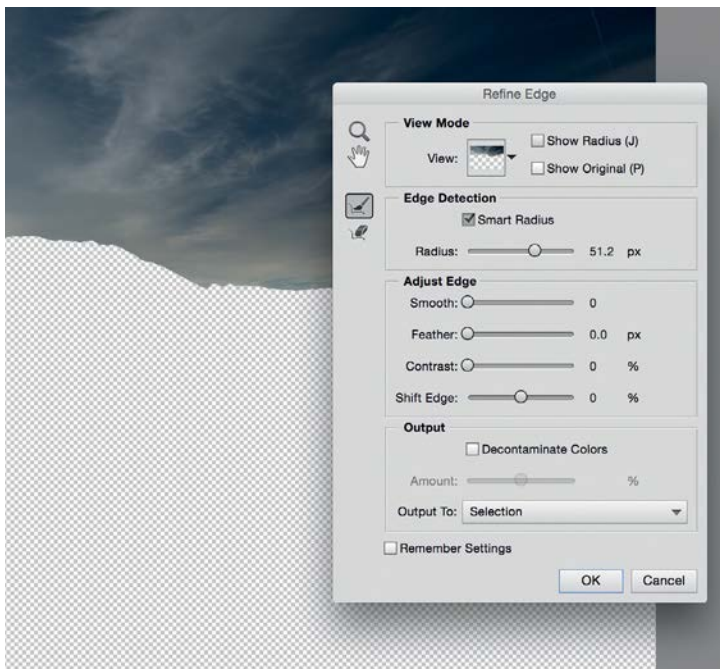
3 Improve the edges

Once the selection is made, the edges will typically be hard, so unless we improve them, any changes we make will look obvious. We can improve the edges with the Refine Edge command. Click the Refine Edge button in the Tool Options. As well as simple adjustments like Feather, which softens the edge, there's also more intelligent commands like Edge Detection. Check Smart Radius and drag the Radius to about 50px, set Output to: Selection and click OK.

4 Adjust the tones

Now we've isolated the sky, we can improve the tones. There are several ways to do this. You could go to Enhance and experiment with the tonal commands, but for greater control, you can turn the selection into an adjustment layer. Go to the Layers panel (Window>Layers), click the Create adjustment layer icon and choose Levels. A Levels layer appears, with the selection now as a layer mask. Adjust Levels to improve the sky. Set black point 20, white point 189.
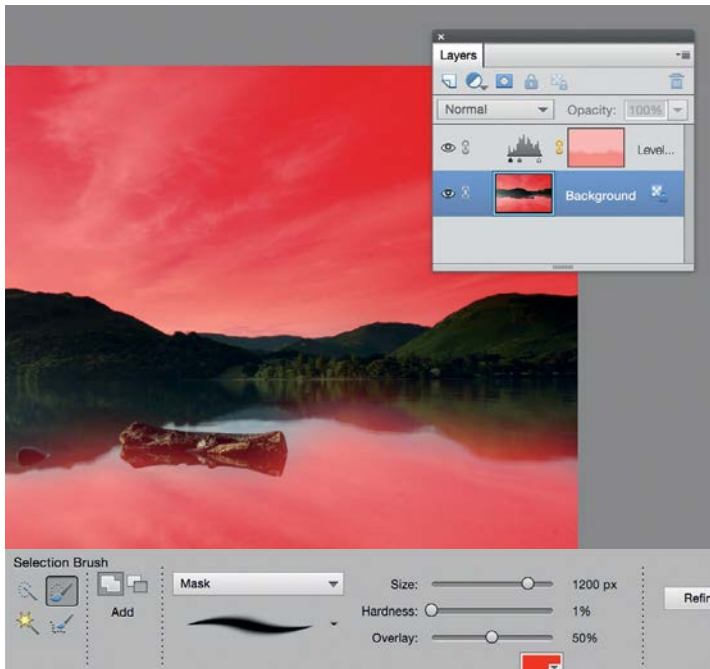
5 Select the land

Highlight the background layer, grab the Quick Selection tool, then paint over the land (and its reflection) to select the area (hold Alt to subtract if it goes wrong). Once done, click Refine Edge again. Set Radius 50, check Smart Radius, and click OK. The lower edge where the reflection meets the water is too hard-edged, so we'll soften it with the Selection Brush. Grab it and choose Mask in the menu, then set a large soft brush and paint over the edge to soften the transition.
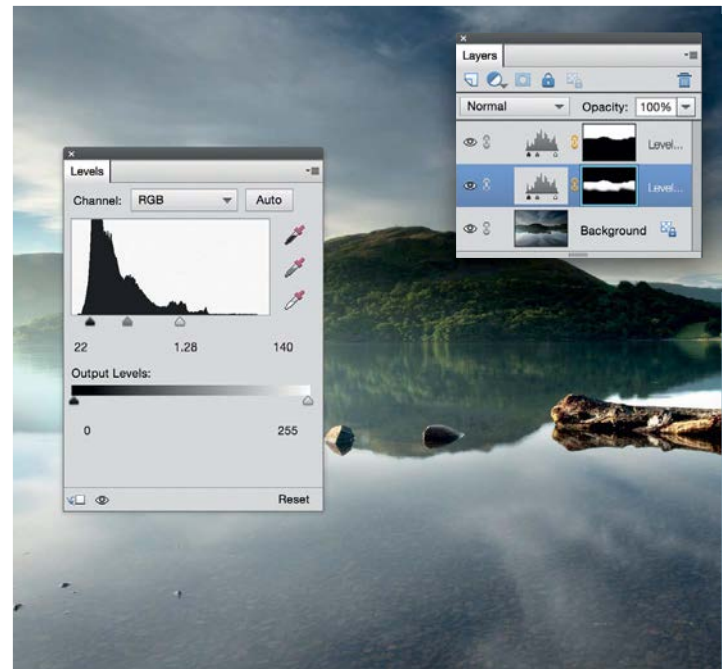
6 Lighten the area

Click the Create adjustment layer icon in the Layers panel and choose Levels. Use the Levels sliders to improve the land. Set black point 22, midpoint 1.28, white point 140. If the transition between the reflection and the water doesn't look right, adjust the layer mask to fine-tune which areas of the adjustment layer are visible. Highlight the mask thumbnail next to the Levels layer, then grab the Brush tool and paint with white to reveal, or black to hide the effect.
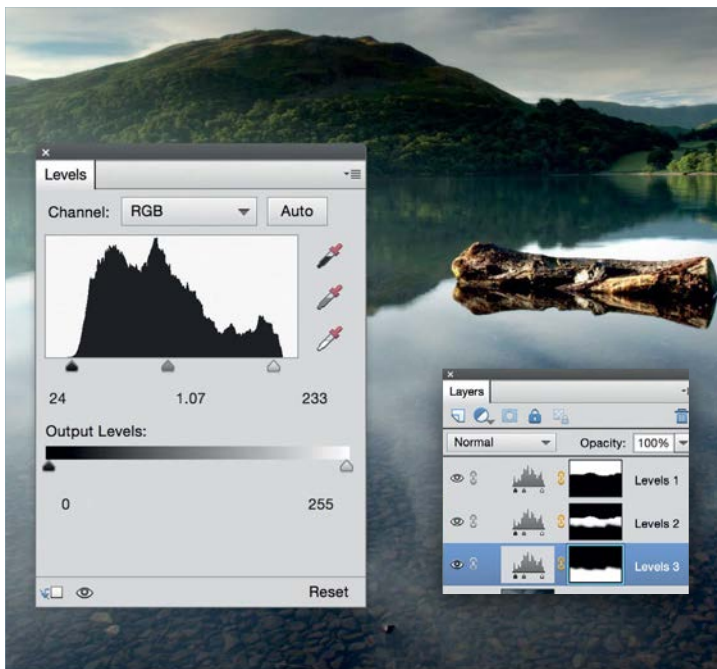
7 Select the foreground

We needn't bother selecting the foreground water. Instead, hold Cmd/Ctrl and click the mask thumbnail of the top Levels layer to load the white parts of the mask as a selection, then hold Cmd/Ctrl+Shift and click the other mask thumbnail to add it to the selection. Now we have everything but the foreground selected, so go to Select›Inverse to invert the selection. Add another Levels layer and set black point 23, midpoint 1.07, white point 233.
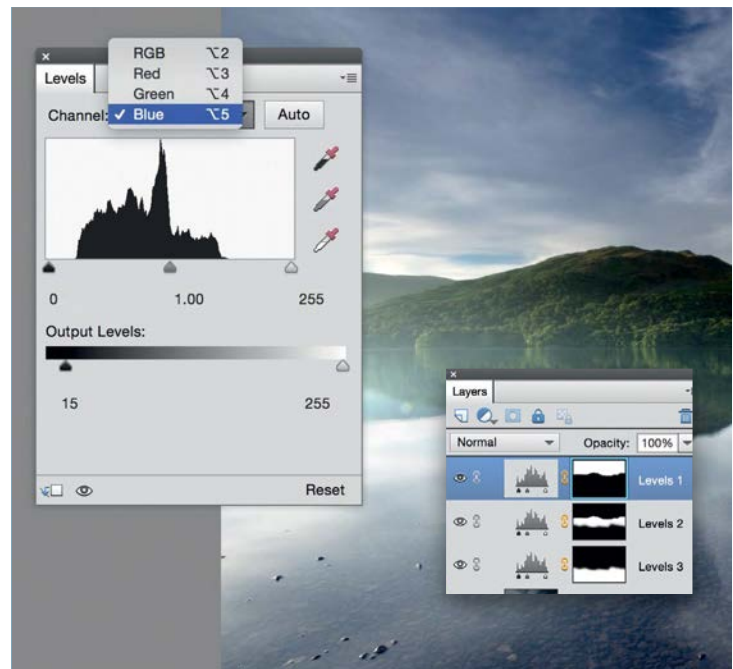
8 Make the sky more blue

Finally, we'll adjust the Levels layers to change the colours in the sky. Highlight the Levels layer that affects the sky, then double click the Levels icon on the layer to bring up the settings. Click the Channel menu at the top and choose Blue. Drag the left side of the Output Slider inwards to about 15 to add a touch of blue to the darkest parts of the sky. You can do the same with the Levels layer that adjusts the water.

AFTER

BEFORE

Non-destructive edits

Use versatile adjustment layers to selectively target and tweak the colours and tones of an image

Photoshop Elements' image-adjusting tools and commands are great for overcoming camera-related problems, which is just as well, because most photos will benefit from a little post-production tweaking to improve colour and tone. Unlike the human eye, the camera isn't adept at dealing with high-contrast scenes. For example, when shooting a landscape, your camera may struggle to get a balanced exposure due to the contrast between the bright sky and the ground. Its auto metering mode may set the aperture and shutter speed to capture detail in the darker ground, but this will cause the highlights in the sky to over-expose and lose detail. If the camera tries to capture bright sky detail, it can turn the

landscape into an under-exposed silhouette. Elements' main menu has a handy Enhance section that gives you access to tone-tweaking tools such as the Levels command. These commands can do a good job of clawing back missing shadow detail. However, once you've changed the colours and tones of an image then you're stuck with the results, especially if you replace the original file with the edited version when you save it.

Fortunately, you can apply many of the main menu commands as adjustment layers. These image-editing layers float above the original photo layer in the Layers panel. Adjustment layers are very versatile. You can turn them on and off to compare the edited shot with the original.
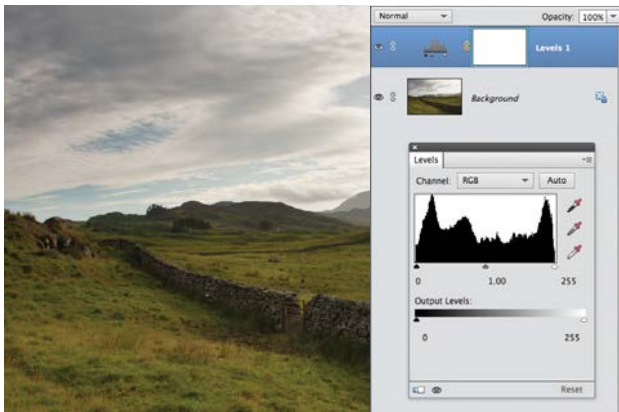
1 Add an adjustment layer

Open the ty_elements18.jpg starting image in the Expert editing mode. The sky is over-exposed and lacks detail. The landscape is slightly under-exposed and suffers from drab colours. Go to Layer›New Adjustment Layer›Levels. Click OK.
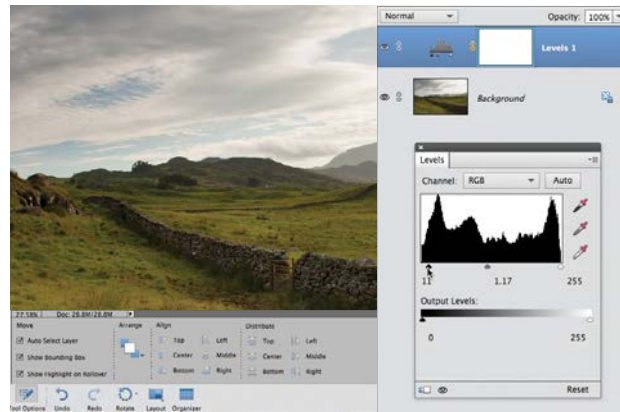
2 Adjust the contrast

To lighten the under-exposed midtones, drag the grey midtone slider to 1.17. We can now see more midtone detail, but the contrast in the landscape looks a little flat. Set the black shadow slider to 11. This creates darker shadows, which helps darker features to contrast with the moor.
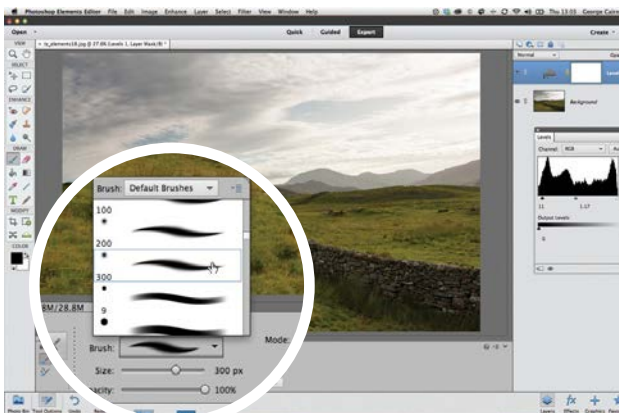
3 Choose a brush tip

You'll notice that the midtone adjustment has caused the over-exposed sky to become even brighter. To stop this section of the image from being adjusted, grab the Brush tool. Click the Brush preset picker in the Tool Options and choose a soft round tip with a Size of 300.
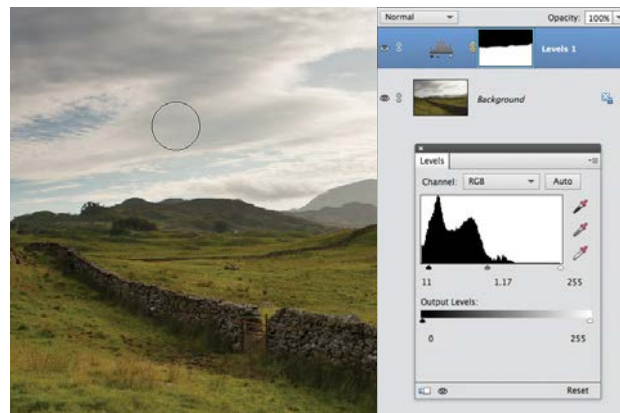
4 Protect the sky

Click the Levels adjustment layer's mask. Set the Foreground colour to black. Paint on the mask to stop the corresponding sections of the adjustment layer from altering the sky's shadows and midtones. The white parts of the mask allow the landscape to be adjusted.
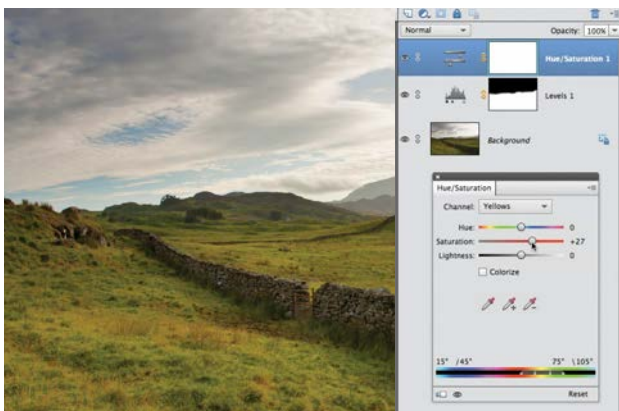
5 Selective colour adjustments

You can have multiple adjustment layers. Choose Layer›New Adjustment Layer›Hue/Saturation. Click OK. Set the Channel menu to Yellows and set Saturation to +27 for more vibrant vegetation. Boost the Cyans Saturation to +34 and Blues to +57.
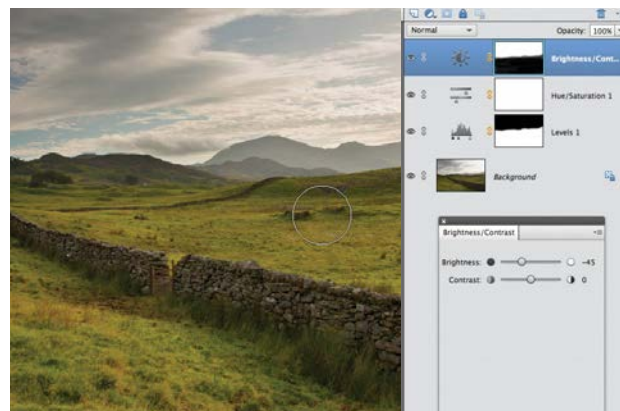
6 Adjust the sky

Create a new Brightness/Contrast adjustment layer. Drag the Brightness slider to -45 to darken the over-exposed sky and reveal more cloud detail. This makes the landscape look too dull, so grab the Brush tool, click the Brightness/Contrast mask and paint over the ground.

Teach yourself **Photoshop Elements**
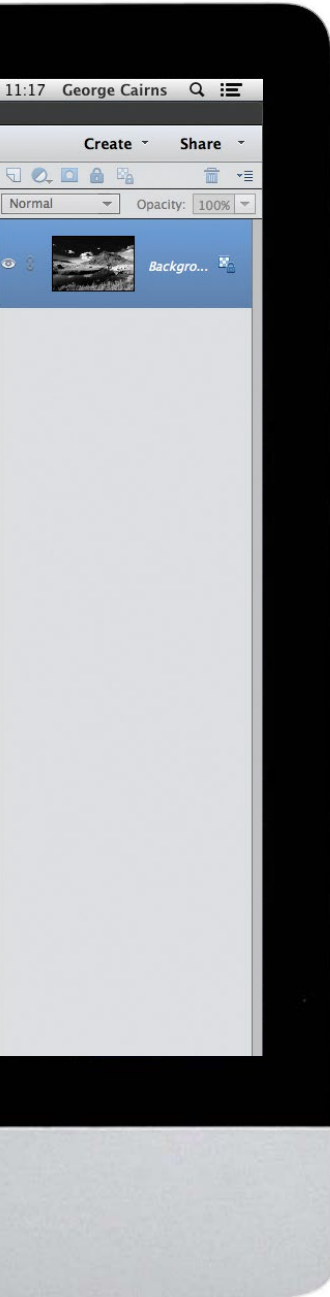
Essential tricks

Enhance your photographs using some of Photoshop Elements' most powerful tools and commands

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Discover how to work fast with a tool that combines intelligent selection features with useful preset image adjustments

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Create a composite image that's free from distractions such as tourists in a city scene using multiple images and the Photomerge Scene Cleaner feature

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Produce dramatic monochrome conversions of your photos using a range of commands and effects in Photoshop Elements

Apply edits quickly using the Smart Brush

Work fast with a tool that combines intelligent selection features with useful preset image adjustments

I n the previous chapter we looked at how selection tools enable you to isolate parts of a picture so you can adjust colours and tones in the selected areas. Some tools (such as the Magic Wand tool) select similar pixels throughout the image. Others, such as the Quick Selection tool, enable you to select a subject as you paint over it. The Quick Selection tool is smart enough to recognise the difference between an object and its background, which makes it more effective for certain selection challenges (such as removing a person from a scene). In the Enhance section of the Toolbox you'll find a tool that can speed up your image retouching by combining the intelligence of the Quick Selection tool with the power of layers and blend modes — the Smart Brush.

1 Pick a preset
Open ty_elements20.jpg. The sky is a little drab and desaturated. To quickly enhance it, choose the Smart Brush from the Enhance section of the Toolbox. Click the preview picker in the Tool Options. Choose the Make dull skies blue preset from the All Purpose collection.
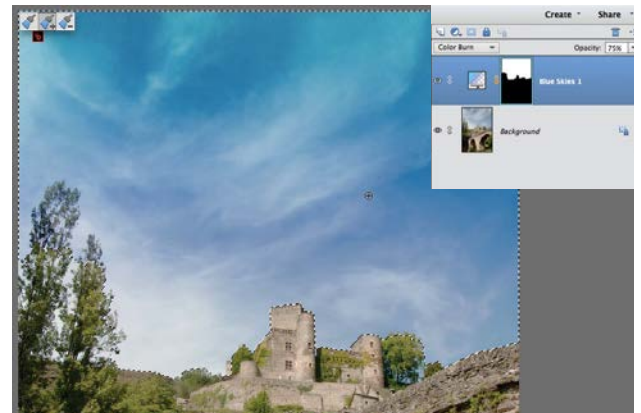
2 Paint the sky
Set the Size option to 40 pixels. Paint the sky. The Smart Brush tool selects the sky pixels and then creates a new layer with a gradient in it. The gradient's layer's blend mode is set to Color Burn so that it enhances the colours, tones and detail of the original sky.
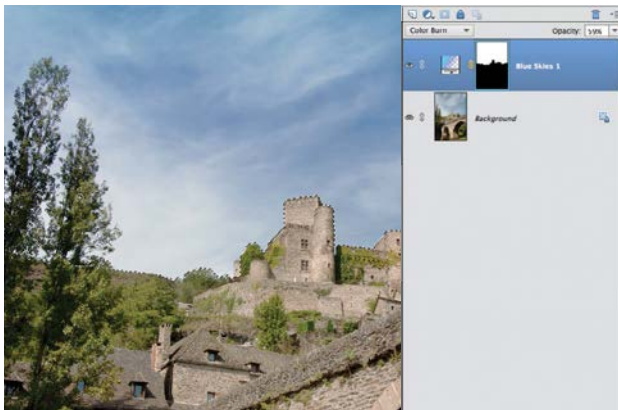
3 Fine-tune the effect
This Smart Brush preset automatically reduces the opacity of the sky layer to 75%. You can fine-tune the enhancement by setting it to 79%. This produces a more subtle result. The Smart Brush may not select the sky behind the tree, so paint to add that to the selected and adjusted area.

4 Whites of the eyes
There are dozens of useful Smart Brush presets. Open ty_elements14.jpg. Click the Smart Brush preset picker. Set the Preset to Portrait. Click Brighten Eyes. Paint on the eye whites to lighten them. Reduce the Opacity to 25% for a more subtle enhancement.

AFTER

BEFORE

GET THE START FILES HERE: http://bit.ly/type-start
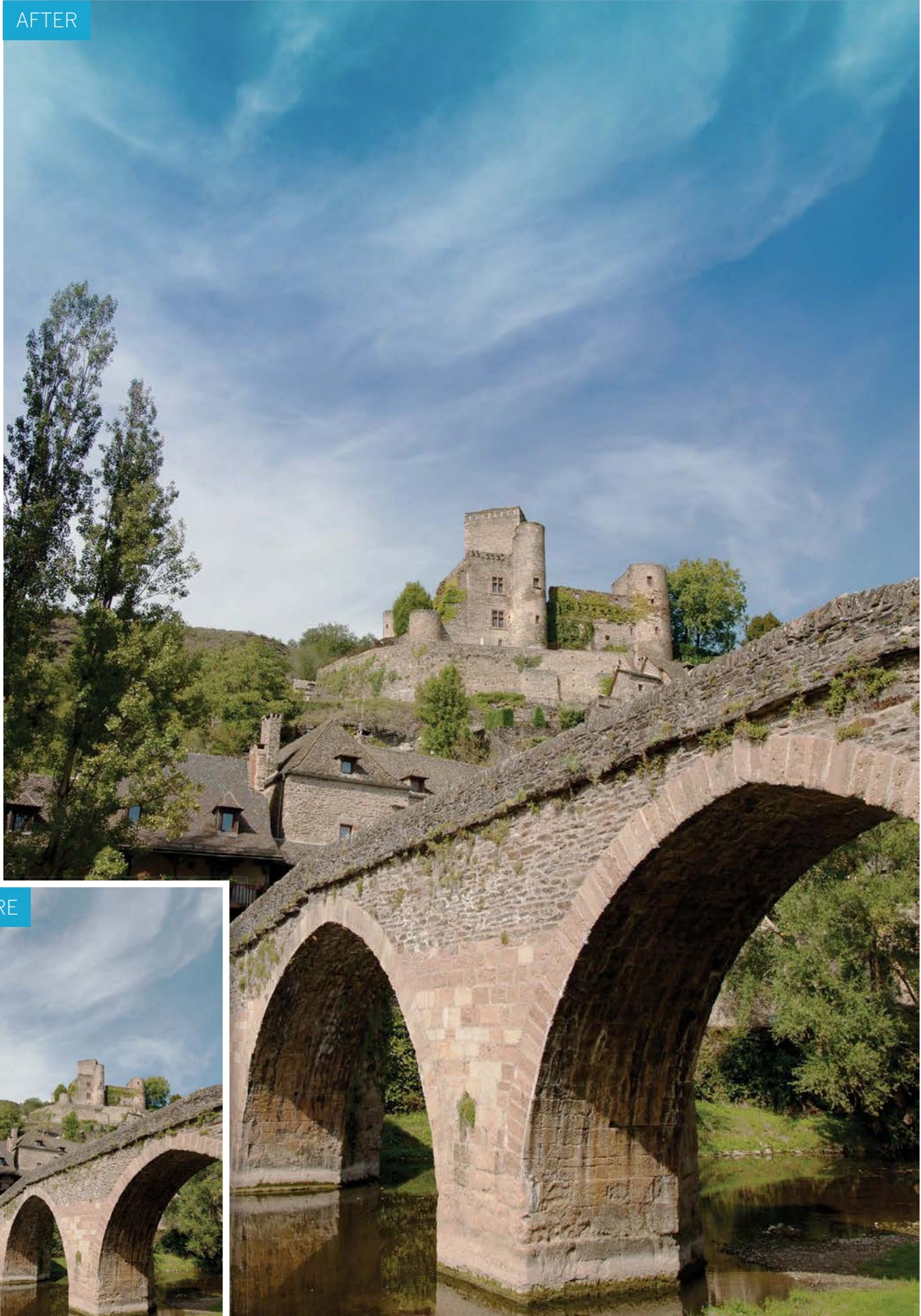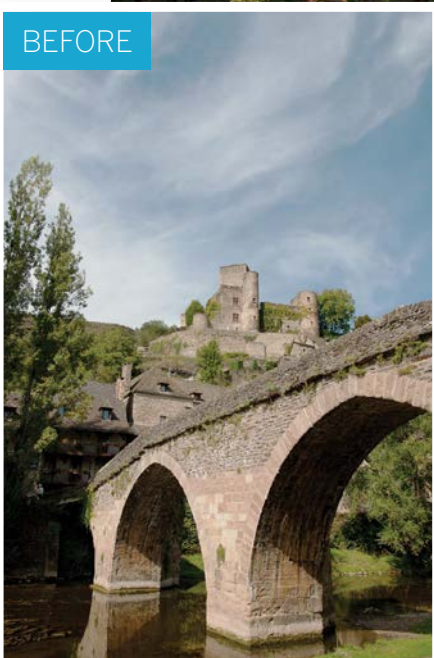
Add text to your photos

Turn photographs into personalised postcards by adding and modifying text

Photoshop Elements' Type tool enables you to enrich your creative projects in a variety of ways, such as providing your posters or book covers with eye-catching typography. In the following walkthrough we'll show you how to put the Type tool through its paces by personalising a picture with seaside postcard-style text that can be emailed to your family.

You'll find the Type tool in the Toolbox. It works in a similar way to those in word-processing programs such as TextEdit. When you move the mouse onto a Photoshop Elements document you'll see a text cursor. Click to place the cursor in a particular place and start typing. A new text layer will appear in the Layers panel. You can then use the Move tool to fine-tune the position in the design.

The Type tool creates vector-based shapes. Vector shapes use mathematics to describe their shape and size, so you can enlarge the text without it becoming fuzzy around the edges. You can also use the Create warped text command in the Tool Options to make words bend and curve, as you'll see in our walkthrough. And because the text is vector-based, you can still edit it after it's been warped (which is handy if you spot a spelling mistake.) After modifying the text you can make it stand out from the scene using Layer Styles. These cool features enable you to add 3D effects to your text, such as drop shadows and bevelled edges. We'll use the Horizontal Type tool in this walkthrough, but feel free to experiment with other variants such as the Vertical Type tool. You can also create text-shaped selection marquees too, courtesy of the Type Mask Tool. ▶

BEFORE

Teach yourself **Photoshop Elements**
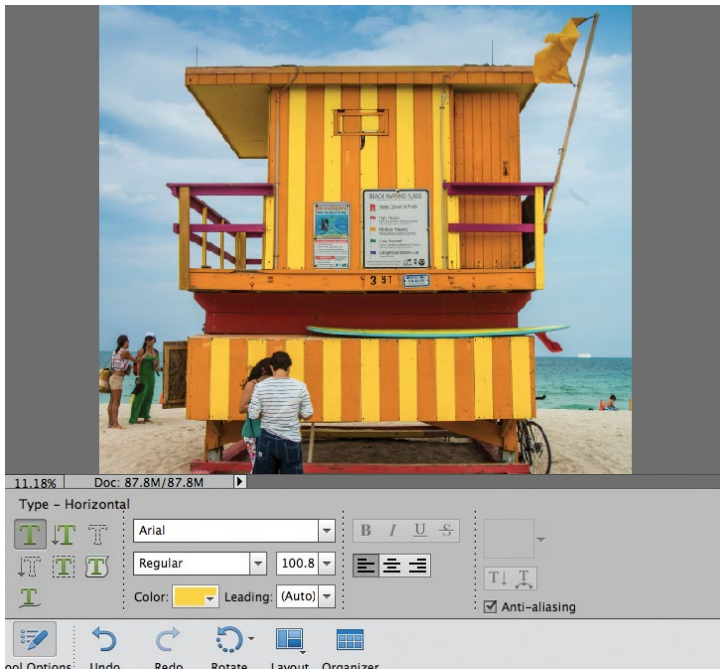
1 Sample a colour

Open ty_elements16.jpg. To make our postcard style text complement the content of the image, grab the Eyedropper tool from the Toolbox. Click the bright yellow paintwork of the beach hut to sample it. The Foreground colour swatch in the Toolbox will turn yellow. Click the Horizontal Type tool (in the compartment below the Eyedropper). Press Cmd/Ctrl++ a couple of times to zoom into the image to get a closer look.

2 Adjust the text options

Click the Select Font Family drop-down menu in the Tool Options and choose a suitably cheesy seaside postcard-style font such as Noteworthy. Set the drop-down menu below to Bold. Type in a Size of 100 pt. Click the Center Text box. Make sure that the Anti-Aliasing box is ticked to give your text nice, smooth edges. You'll notice that the text swatch features the same colour that we sampled earlier.

3 Type some text

Click the sky above the beach hut to place the cursor and type 'WISH YOU WERE'. Then hit Enter to start typing on a new line and type 'HERE!'. Thanks to the Center Text box in the Tool Options, the lower text is aligned in the middle of the upper text line. Place the cursor outside the text and it will turn into the Move tool. Drag the text into position above the beach hut.

4 Resize the text

A text layer will appear in the Layers panel. You'll notice a bounding box appears around the text. Drag the corner and edge handles of the box to make the text become larger and wider so that it matches the width of the beach hut. Drag inside the bounding box to reposition the text. The enlarged text looks as smooth and clean as the original. Click the tick to apply the change.

5 Warp the text

Double click the text layer thumbnail in the Layers panel to select it. Click the Create warped text icon in the Tool Options. Set the Style menu to Arc. Tick the Horizontal box. The default setting is too strong, so reduce the Bend slider to 28% to gently curve the text. You can experiment with a wide range of preset warp styles in future projects. Click OK to warp your text.

6 Add a Layer Style

Click the tick to apply the transformation. Drag inside the text box to bring the warped text closer to the hut. To give your text more impact click the fx icon at the bottom right of the workspace. Click the Styles panel and set the menu to Drop Shadows. If you hover over a drop shadow you'll see a little label. Drag the Low drop shadow onto the text to add the Layer Style.

7 Add a bevel

To give your 2D text a raised 3D look, set the menu to Bevels. Experiment by dragging a preset bevel effect onto the text in your design. We went for the Simple Sharp Inner bevel because this worked well with our drop shadow style. Go back to the Layers panel. The text is vector based so we can still edit it, despite all the Layer Styles and warp effects.
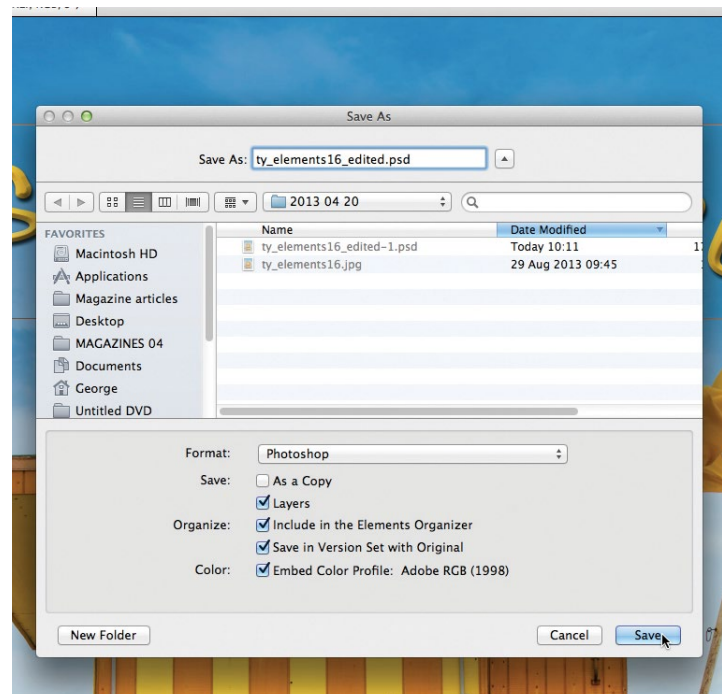
8 Save it

You can save your creative postcard project and preserve its Layer Styles and warp effects. This enables you to fine-tune any of its attributes at a later date (and even change the text). Go to File>Save. Set Format to Photoshop to preserve the layers. Tick layers and Include in the Elements Organizer. Click Save. This will save the layered version alongside the original image in a Version Set.

Make photo colours pop!

Use new guided edits to give your images a fun pop colour effect

Elements 13 has three new guided edits that allow you to make all, or part of your image black and white. They're called 'B&W Colour Pop', 'Black and White Selection' and 'Black and White', and they're found within the Guided mode under the Photo Effects panel. The first option, B&W Colour Pop, enables you to leave part of an image colour while the rest is changed to black and white. It's ideal if you have a block of colour in your image that you want to preserve, such as the little boy's T-shirt here. However, it only lets you preserve a single colour. If you want to 'pop' more than one colour in the image, then the Black and White Selection edit is the better choice. It enables you to paint over the image to change areas to black and white. The clever thing is, the brush snaps to edges in your image as you paint, making it easy to isolate complex areas of the image. The third option, Black and White, offers a simple method for converting your images to mono, and gives you the option to add a dreamy glow.

BEFORE

1 Pop a colour
Open the image of the child. To begin, click the Guided mode at the top of the interface. Open the Photo Effects section to the right and choose B&W Colour Pop. Try clicking each colour box, or alternatively, use the Select Custom Color option and click over the T-shirt.

2 Paint in black and white
The red T-shirt is too close in colour to the face so it's picking up unwanted colour. Hit Cancel and go to the Black and White Selection effect. Click the Selection Brush button. The Add button enables you to paint over areas to add the effect, and Subtract enables you to preserve colour.

AFTER

3 Improve the edges

Click Refine Edge. Hit F to cycle through views to the pink overlay. Check Smart Radius and drag the radius up to about 20px, then paint along rough edges to expand the area of refinement. This works particularly well when trying to isolate soft edges such as with hair or fur.

4 Add the final touches

Click the BW detail brush. Zoom in close, click the Add or Subtract buttons and paint to tidy up any messy edges. Click Done, then go to the Touchups section above Photo Effects. Use Enhance Color to increase the saturation, and Brightness and Contrast to boost contrast. ●

Remove elements from a scene

Use the Scene Cleaner tool to remove distracting people from a busy location

When shooting popular landmarks such as St Paul's Cathedral in London, seen here, you're faced with the challenge of getting a clean photograph that's not partially obscured by passing tourists. You could try getting up early and heading to the location before the crowds start to throng, but that plan isn't always practical — especially if you fancy a lie in.

Thanks to Photoshop Elements' Photomerge Scene Cleaner feature, you can create a people-free landmark shot with a little preparation on location and some post-production retouching. By photographing several versions of the same scene over a short period of time, you should be able to capture a series of images in which sections of the landmark aren't obscured by people. You can then combine the clear sections of each photograph in Photoshop Elements to create a composite landmark scene that's free from distracting tourists.

If you shoot multiple images with the camera mounted on a tripod, then you could combine them in a layered Photoshop document and use the Eraser tool to mix the clear parts of each layer together. If you don't have a tripod and you shoot handheld, then Elements can align the shots automatically using its Photomerge Scene Cleaner. You can then erase people with a quick scribble, as you'll see from our walkthrough below.

BEFORE

BEFORE

1 Open Photomerge
We shot our two starting images — ty_elements27.jpg and ty_elements28.jpg — so that we could capture clean sections of the background landmark while people passed by. Open both of the starting images in the Expert editing mode and go to Enhance›Photomerge›Photomerge Scene Cleaner.
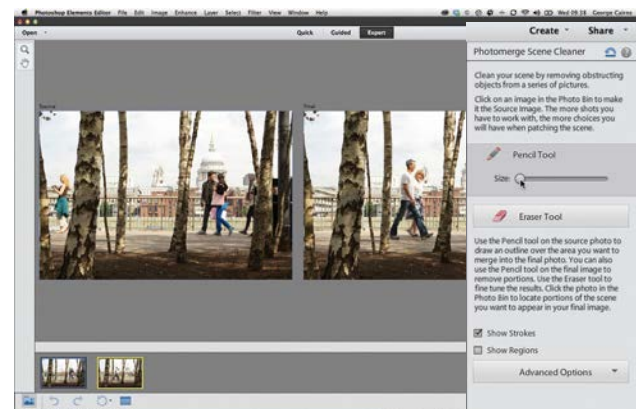
2 Grab the Pencil
Click Open All. Photomerge colour codes the borders of each shot and places the blue shot into the Source window. Drag the yellow shot into the Final window. Now go to the Panel on the right and click the Pencil tool icon. Drag the Size slider right to a value of 50 or so.

AFTER
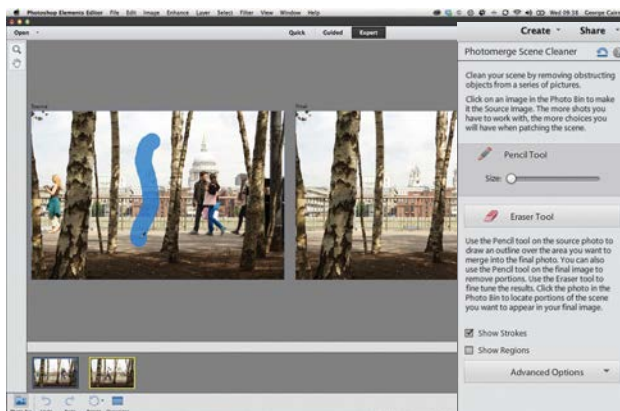
3 Transplant the pixels

Go to the Source window. Scribble the Pencil over the clear section of the shot. A blue stroke will appear. This tells Photomerge that you'd like to take this section of the Source image and transplant it over the Final image. In a second or two the unwanted people will be removed.
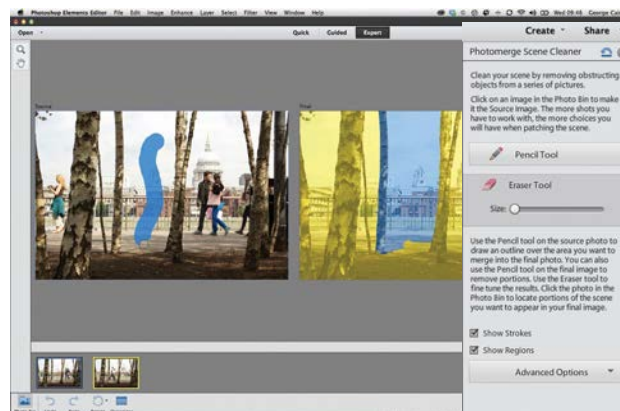
4 Fine-tune the sections

Click the Show Regions box. This enables you to see which sections of the Source image have been merged with the Final image. You can fine-tune the transplanted pixels by clicking the Eraser Tool button and then painting over some of the blue brush strokes in the Source image. ●

Convert to mono

Try our advanced black-and-white conversion technique using adjustment layers in Photoshop Elements

Unlike Photoshop where you can convert your image to black and white using an adjustment layer or the Grayscale tab in Camera Raw, Photoshop Elements doesn't have these options. The biggest benefit of using an adjustment layer is that you can individually tweak the colours in the image, giving you far more control over the final outcome. Adjustment layers are also a useful non-destructive editing technique that you can return to later on, and keep adjusting.

The basic way to convert your image to black and white in Elements is to go to Enhance›Convert to Black and White. This is a good feature, but you're limited in what you can do. For starters the feature only works by applying the effect to a layer (not an adjustment layer), and in the pop-out box there are only three colour channels (red, green, and blue) to adjust. In this tutorial we've come up with a clever workaround technique using a Gradient Map and Hue/Saturation adjustment layers...
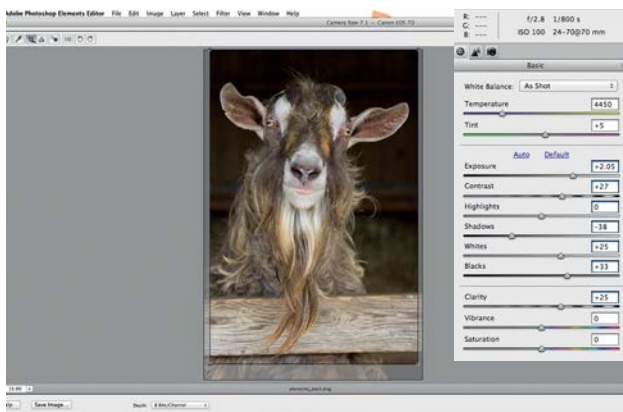
1 Tweak in Camera Raw
Open the starting image in Camera Raw to boost the tones and contrast. In our example we set the Exposure to +2.05 to bring out the detail, the Contrast to +27, the Shadows to -38, Whites to +25, Blacks to +33 and the Clarity to +25 to boost the midtone contrast. Finally, use the Crop tool to tidy up the composition.

2 Add a gradient
In the main editor add a Gradient Map adjustment layer. In the pop-out box click the arrow to give you the menu options and pick the first preset from the list. You'll notice your image changes immediately to black and white. Now click back onto the Background layer in the Layers panel, ready for the next step.
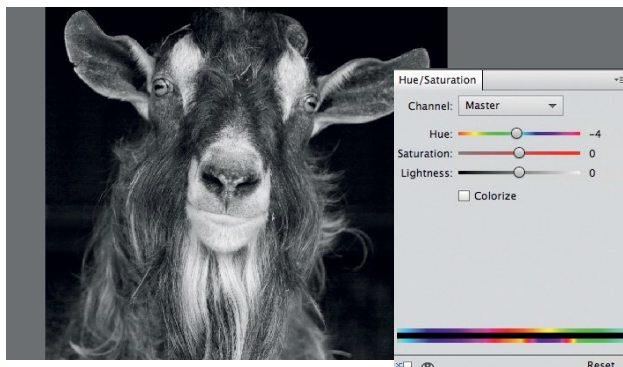
3 Add a Hue/Saturation layer
Next add a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer. We can use the drop-down menu to adjust the colours individually, like you would when converting to mono in Photoshop CS and CC. Start by altering the Master setting. As you'll notice when you push the Hue slider up and down, it brings out different colours in the image.
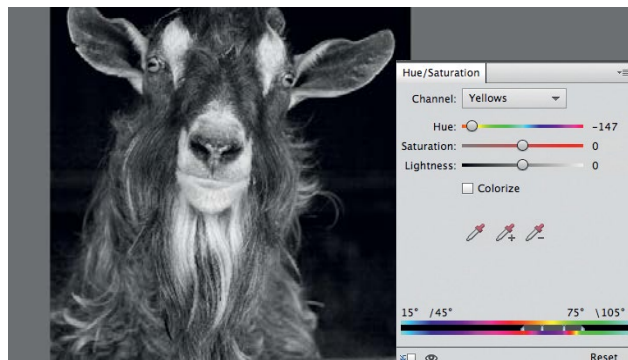
4 Tweak the channels
Click the drop-down menu. From the list we can now tweak the Red, Yellow, Green, Cyan, Blue and Magenta channels individually. In our image the most prominent colours are Red and Yellow, so these are the two we will be using. Adjust the Hue slider in the Red channel to +36, and -147 in the Yellow channel. ■

AFTER

BEFORE

Take control of tones

Create more effective monochrome images using the Convert to Black and White feature

O n the previous pages we demonstrated how to create mono conversions quickly. Here we'll show you a powerful technique that enables you to lighten or darken specific greyscale tones to help particular features stand out more effectively in the black-and-white version of your photo. Traditional black-and-white film photographers could alter tones in a scene by placing coloured filters over the lens. A red filter would darken the greyscale tones of a blue sky and make clouds stand out, for example. We can produce similar selective greyscale tone adjustments using the following techniques…

BEFORE

1 Convert to black and white
Open ty_elements12.jpg. Go to Enhance›Convert to Black and White. You'll see a handy before-and-after preview of your monochrome conversion. By default it uses a Scenic landscape style, which gives blue skies a dramatic dark tone.
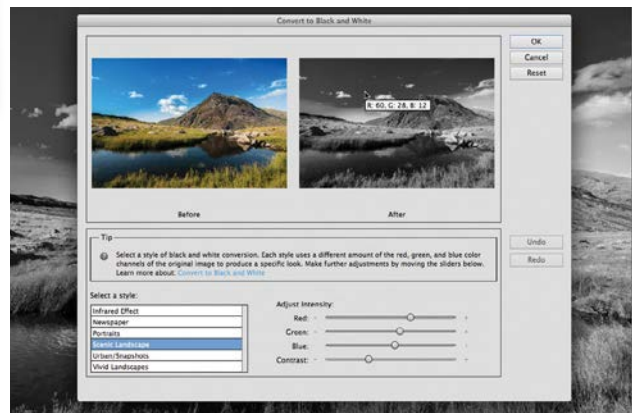
2 Add up the numbers
The preset styles adjust the intensity of the red, green and blue channels to lighten or darken tones. If you move the cursor over the mono preview you'll see the settings that the Scenic Landscape style uses for each channel — R:60, G:28, B:12. These numbers add up to 100.
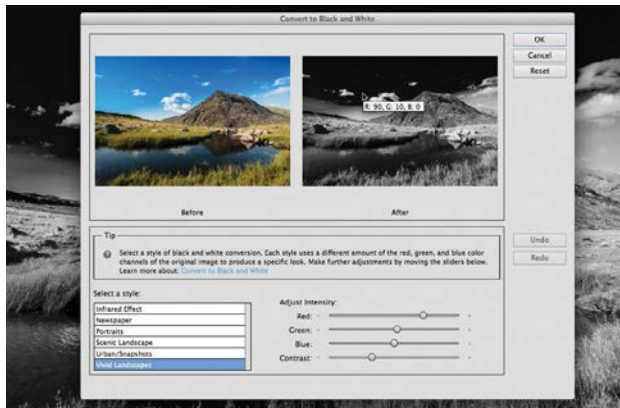
3 Use the Vivid Landscape style
Click the Vivid Landscape style. The Red, Green and Blue sliders change to a value of R:90, G:10 and B:0. The combined value of these channels needs to add up to 100 to avoid blowing out highlights or clipping shadows. The blue sky looks darker, making the lighter landscape stand out.
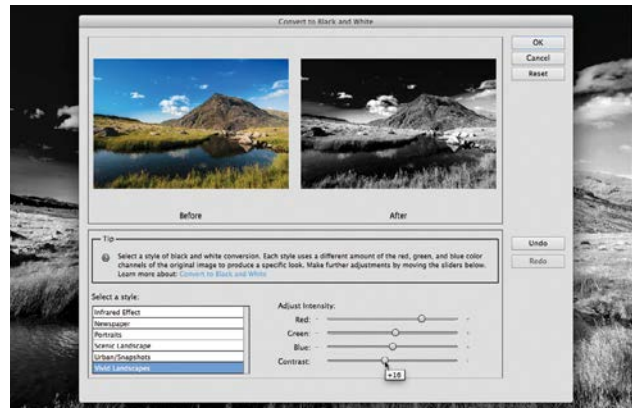
4 Adjust the contrast
You could drag the R, G, and B sliders manually, but you risk over-exposing highlights and under-exposing shadows if the numbers don't add up to 100. You can fine-tune the look by dragging the Contrast slider. Here a value of +16 helps the lighter vegetation stand out more.

Styles in action

Produce a wide range of different results by applying different styles to your monochrome conversions

Portraits style

The Portraits style sets the three colour channels to R:25, G:39 and B:36, producing a detail-preserving total of 100. This preset's mix of channels creates a much lighter sky than the one produced by the default Scenic Landscape style.

Infrared Effect style

By using Infrared film, traditional photographers could make a black-and-white scene's vegetation look a contrasting white, which is a great way to make the grass stand out in an image. The Infrared Effect style sets the channels to R:40, G:140 and B:-80.

Newspaper style

This over-the-top style creates a striking high contrast mono conversion by using a channel mix of R:40, G:34 and B:60. Unlike other styles these numbers total up to 134, which exceeds the 100 limit. As a result we're losing detail in the now over-exposed highlights.

Vivid Landscape style

The Vivid Landscape style works well for this particular image, because the striking dark sky contrasts with the lighter vegetation. Shots that feature a different range of colours will benefit from different black-and-white style presets, so feel free to experiment.

11:20 George Cairns

Create Share

Create a Perfect Portrait

Transform your portrait with these simple steps to get an eye catching, flawless image.

1. Apply Smart Blur

Enhance the texture of the skin by firstly applying a Smart Blur.

2. Reveal Original

Click Reveal Original to bring back the original image, and then use the Blur Brush to brush in the smooth skin just where it's needed.

3. Blur Brush

Use the Blur Brush on the skin to smoothen wherever needed.

4. Increase Contrast

Add clarity to the image by increasing the contrast of the image.

5. Enhance facial features:

Spot Healing Tool

Red Eye Removal

Brighten Eyes

Darken Eyebrows

Whiten Teeth

6. Add Glow

Add Glow to give the portrait a Glamorous

Common photo problems solved

Improve portraits and landscape images with quick and easy-to-apply fixes in Photoshop Elements

100 Improve skin tones in your portraits
Use the handy Perfect Portrait Touchup option in the Guided editing mode to create a more flattering portrait, with smooth, spot-free skin, bright eyes and more

102 Straighten tilted horizons
Make a tilted horizon run parallel with the edge of the frame and have Photoshop Elements fill in the missing edges automatically

104 Enhance dull skies
Mimic the gradated colours and tones produced by lens-mounted filters using layer masks and the Gradient tool

106 Replace dull skies
Select and remove a boring sky using the Magic Wand tool and replace it with something more exciting. We'll show you how to modify the initial selection to remove the ugly fringes

AFTER
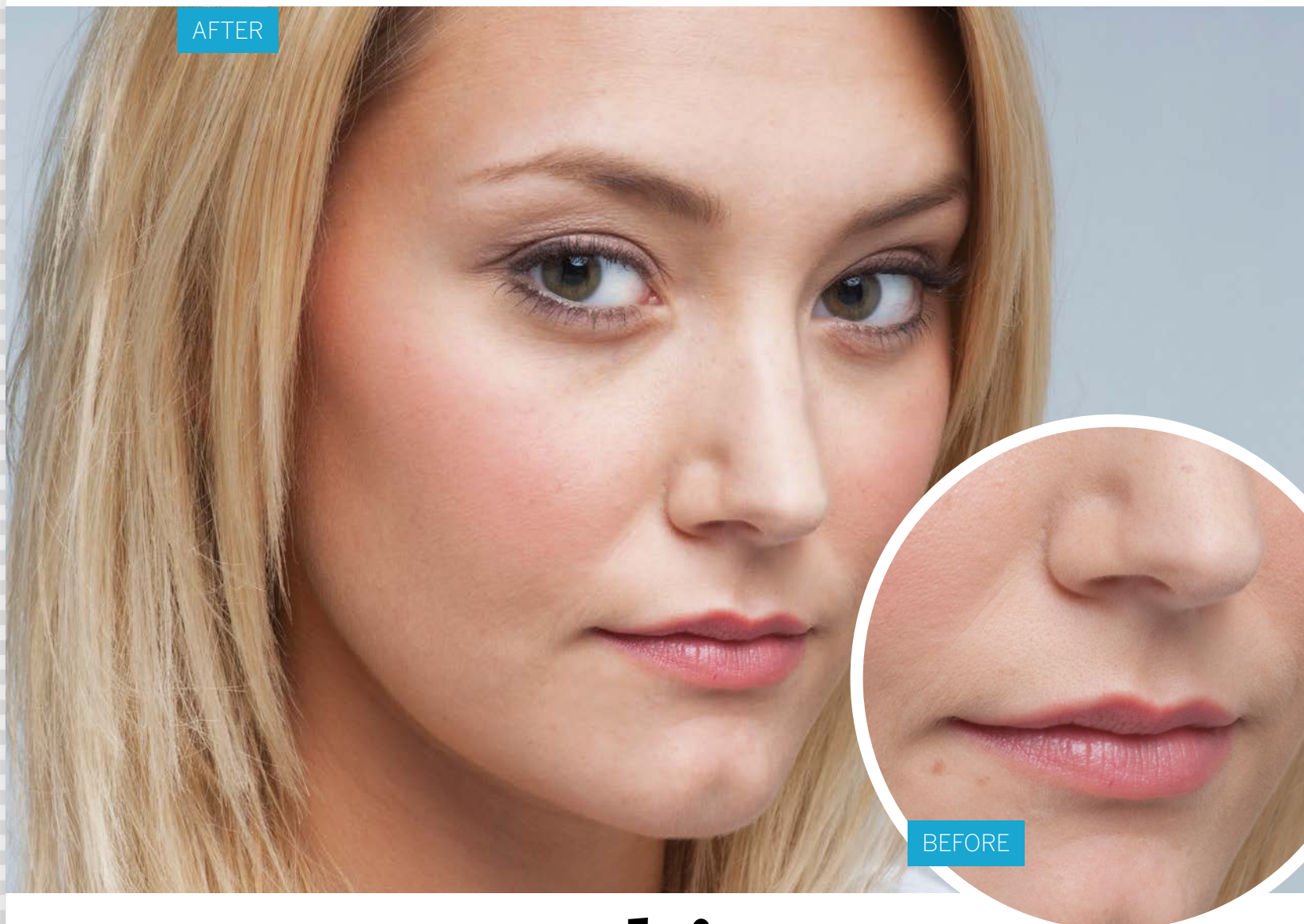
BEFORE

Improve skin tones in your portraits

Touch up your portraits and create perfect skin using Photoshop Elements' Guided editing mode

Before they have a photograph taken, the subject of a portrait shoot will want to look her best. This may involve brushing her hair and applying make-up to create the appearance of healthier looking features. Despite the personal grooming, the end photographic result may be disappointing. Your model could be having a bad skin day and be unable to successfully conceal a spot, for example. A decent lens and flash lighting can reveal every skin pore, which may not be particularly flattering for your subject's complexion. Professional photographers can place filters over the camera's lens to add

a healthy glow to the subject's skin and give it a smoother, more flattering appearance. We can produce similar results using a range of tools and commands in Photoshop Elements.

The Guided editing mode has a handy Perfect Portrait Touchup option that takes you through techniques that will create a more flattering portrait. It gathers the most useful retouching tools together in one place, and enables you to smooth skin, conceal spots and brighten the whites of your subject's eyes. The Guided edit mode also introduces you to useful filters such as Diffuse Glow. This enables you to fake the skin-flattering pro-mist filter technique used by pros.
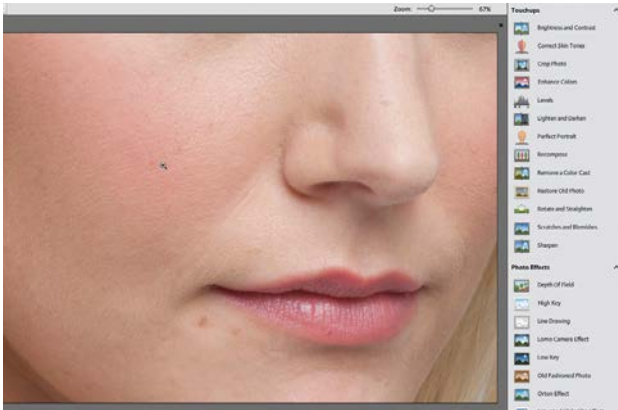
1 Take a close look

Open ty_elements14.jpg. Click the Guided edit mode's tab at the top of the workspace. Grab the Zoom tool and click to take a closer look at the portrait. You can see the pores in the subject's skin, and there's a spot just below her mouth. The whites of her eyes are a little grey.
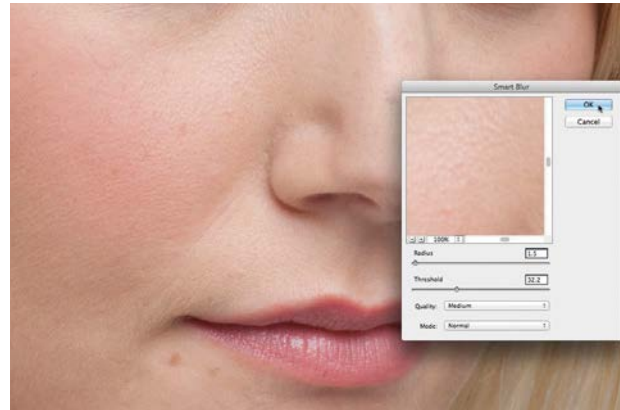
2 Blur the skin

Go to the Touchups section and click Perfect Portrait. To start enhancing the skin, click the Apply Smart Blur button. The default Radius of 1.5 and the Threshold of 32.2 are enough to soften the pores and make them less noticeable. Click OK to apply the blur.
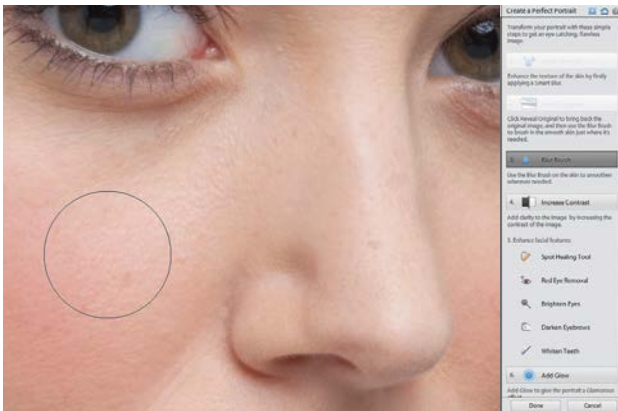
3 Selective skin blur

The image is looking too soft, so click the Reveal Original button. Click the Blur Brush button and press [or] to resize the brush tip. Paint over the skin to selectively reintroduce the effect of the Smart Blur filter. Avoid painting over details such as the eyes and mouth.

4 Reduce the facial hair

When selectively blurring the skin you may find it useful to press Cmd/Ctrl++ to zoom in for a closer look. Hold down the space bar to temporarily activate the Hand tool and drag the image around to discover new patches of skin to smooth. Blur the fine hairs around the mouth.

5 Remove spots

Click the Increase Contrast button to make the facial features stand out more against the skin. Click the Spot Healing tool button, then click unwanted spots with a brush tip just larger than the spot. Don't remove freckles because these give the model character.
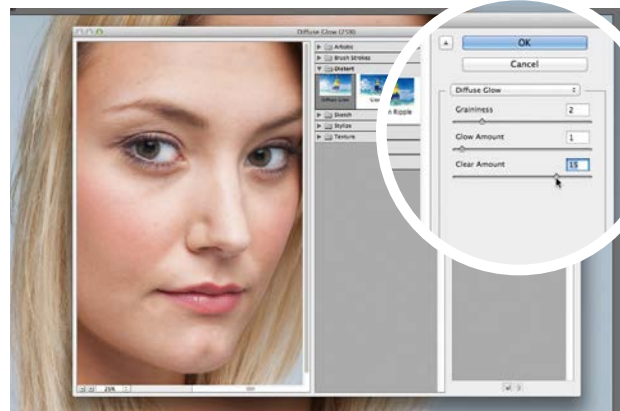
6 Lighten the eyes

Click the Brighten Eyes button. This summons the Dodge tool and sets it to lighten highlights. Tap [to shrink the brush to a suitable size, then paint over the whites of the eyes to lighten them. Click Add Glow, then click OK for a flattering pro-mist filter effect. Click Done to apply.

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Straighten tilted horizons

Make a slanted horizon run parallel with the edge of the frame, and fill in the edges automatically

When we take a photo, we may not realise that the camera was rotated at a slight angle until we look at the image on the computer screen. A rotated camera causes horizons to tilt. As you can see in the starting image, the horizon rises from left to right at a slight angle. Tilted horizons aren't so noticeable if you're shooting a landscape with rolling hills, but in the case of a seascape, any tilt on the horizon will stand out.

You could try capturing straight horizons by mounting the camera on a tripod, but this is time-consuming and still no guarantee that the shot will be tilt free, especially if the tripod is resting on an uneven surface such as a pebble beach. Fortunately, Photoshop Elements enables you to counteract a tilted horizon so that it runs parallel with the frame's horizontal edges, without losing the edges of the image.

You can straighten a photo as you crop it with the Crop tool. After drawing a crop, place the cursor outside the crop window and a rotate icon will appear. Drag to rotate the shot so that its horizon is no longer tilted. Then you press Enter to crop and straighten. If you want to avoid cropping the image, the Crop tool has a cousin that's designed to straighten a shot while keeping the image intact...
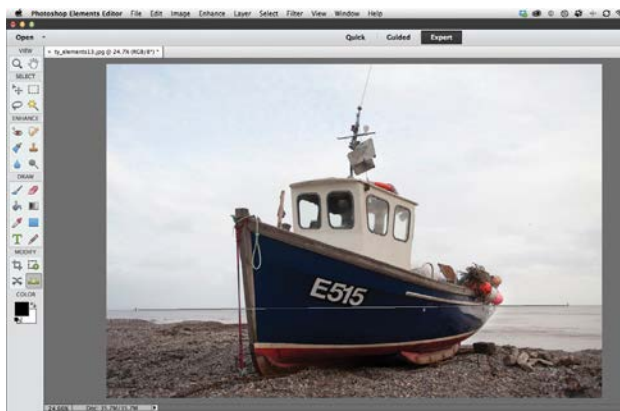
1 Straighten and grow
Open ty_elements13.jpg in the Expert editing mode. Click the Straighten tool in the Toolbox. The process can crop off the edges of a photo, so click the Grow or Shrink box in the Tool Options to protect the composition. Draw a line that follows the tilted horizon.

2 Enlarge to fit
The Straighten tool measures the angle of the tilted horizon and rotates the image to counteract the angle. Thanks to the Grow or Shrink option, the tool will increase the canvas size so that none of the shot is cropped. You'll still need to use the Crop tool to remove the edges, however.
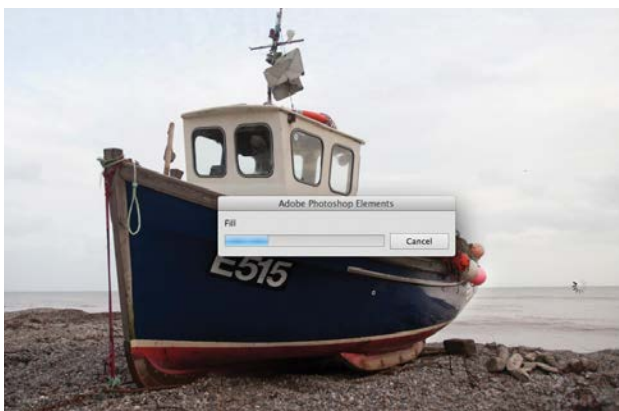
3 Fill in the edges

If you'd prefer not to crop the shot at all then go to Edit›Revert to restore the shot to its original tilted state, then click the Original Size option, and tick the new Autofill edges box. Draw along the tilted horizon, and Content-Aware technology will fill in the edges of the frame.
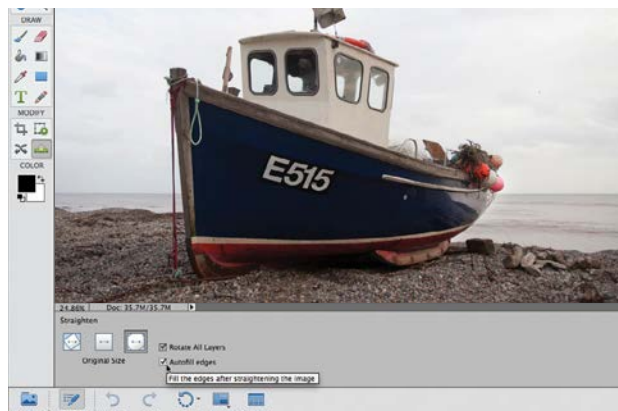
4 Straight and intact

Instead of filling in the edges with white as it did in step 2, the tool creates new pixels based on the rest of the image. It will extend the sky and pebbles to fill in any gaps. You now have a straight horizon without losing any of your carefully composed shot.

Enhance dull skies

Mimic the gradated colours and tones produced by lens-mounted filters using layer masks and the Gradient tool

For more exciting skies in landscape images, you can fit a graduated neutral density (ND) filter over the camera's lens. This makes a dull sky look more dramatic as it becomes gradually darker towards the top of the frame. These camera-mounted filters can be effective, but you're stuck with the look that they produce. If the filter-produced gradient is in the wrong place then there's not much you can do to alter it. By replicating the graduated ND effect in Photoshop Elements, you can darken the sky's tones with complete control.

We'll show you how to edit the mask of a Levels adjustment layer with the Gradient tool so that the darker tones get lighter towards the horizon. By editing a mask you can alter the strength and location of the gradated tonal adjustment with ease. We'll also show you how to use adjustment layers to selectively boost the colours.
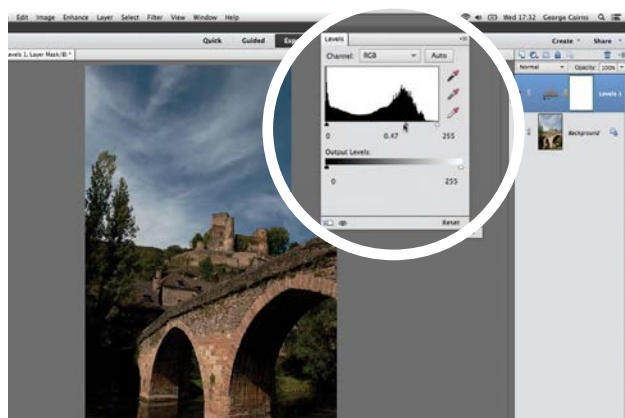
1 Add a Levels adjustment layer
Open ty_elements20.jpg. Go to Layer›New Adjustment Layer›Levels. Click OK. The sky consists mostly of midtones, so drag the grey slider right to a value of 0.47 to darken the sky and create more intense and dramatic colours. Next we need to restrict which areas are being altered.
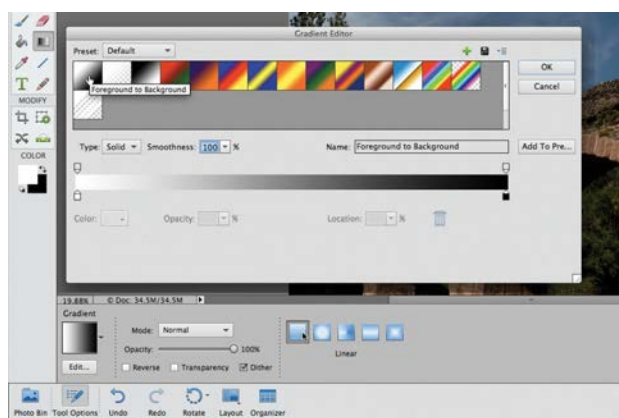
2 Set up the Gradient tool
Choose the Gradient tool from the Toolbox. Press D, go to the Tool Options, and click the Gradient Editor. In the Gradient Editor dialog, click the Foreground to Background preset. Click OK. Click the Linear Gradient option so the tool will draw a gradated white-to-black gradient.
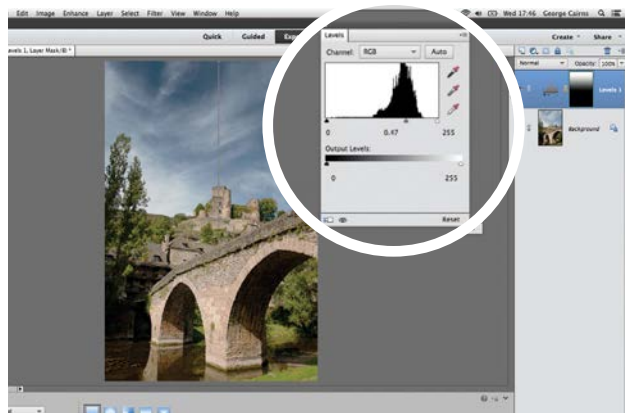
3 Draw a gradient
Click the adjustment layer's mask, click at the top of the image and draw a line down to the horizon. Hold down Shift as you draw to make sure the gradient is straight. This draws a white-to-black linear gradient on the mask. The sky now darkens towards the top of the frame.
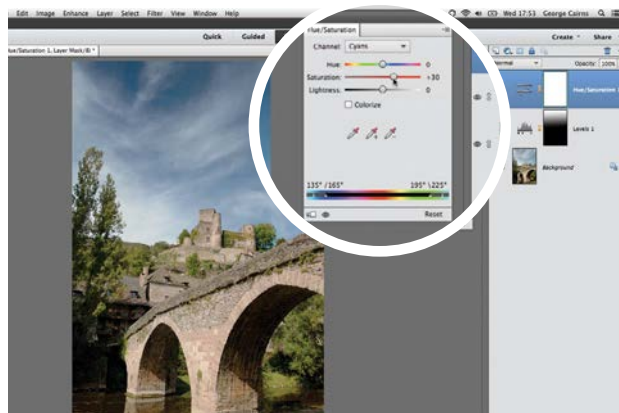
4 Fine-tune the look
You can re-draw the gradient on the mask until you're happy with the result. As a finishing touch choose Image›Adjustment›Hue/Saturation. Set the Channel drop-down menu to Cyans. Boost the Saturation to +30 for more vibrant colours at the top of the frame.

AFTER

BEFORE

Teach yourself **Photoshop Elements**

GET THE START FILES HERE: http://bit.ly/type-start
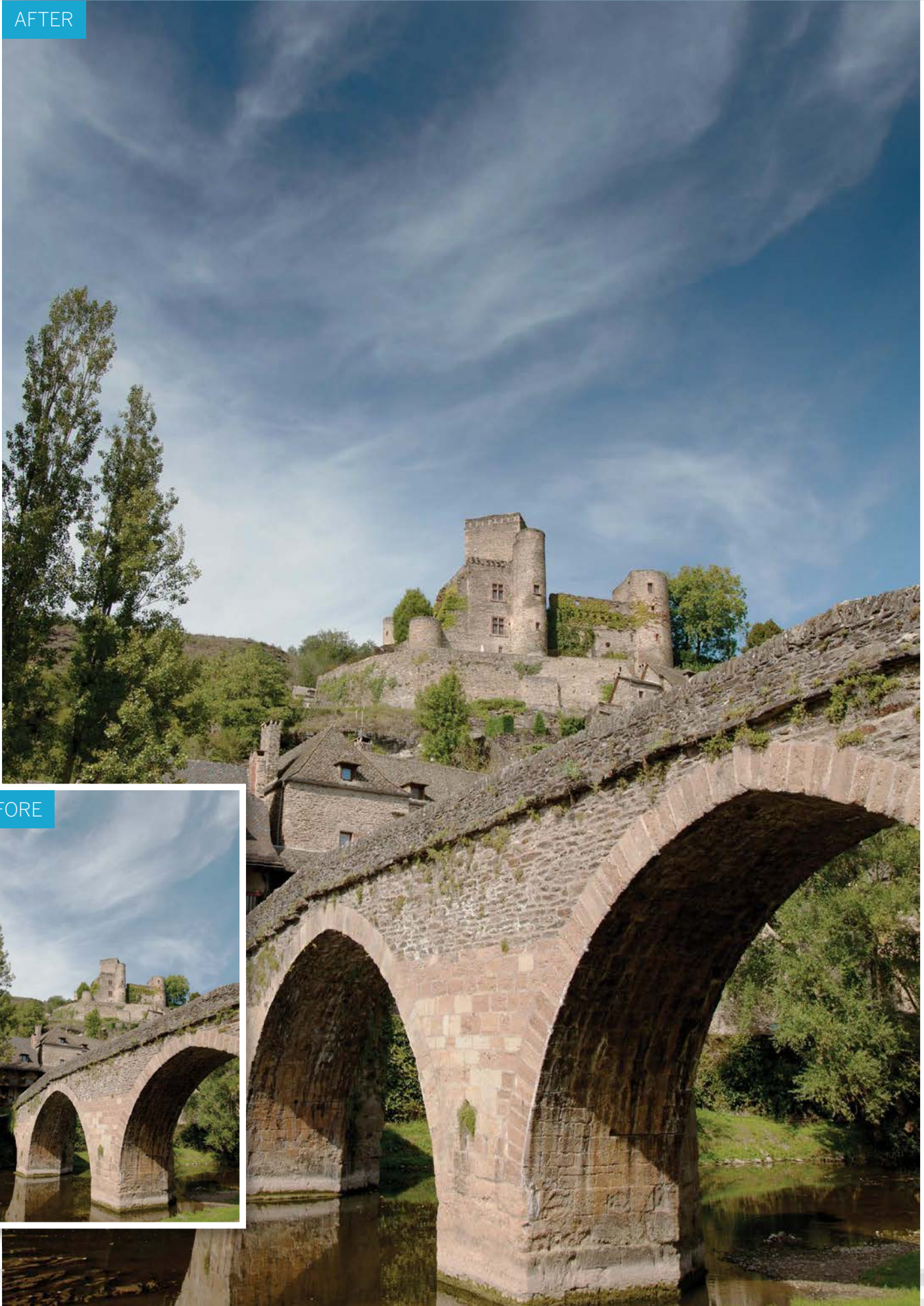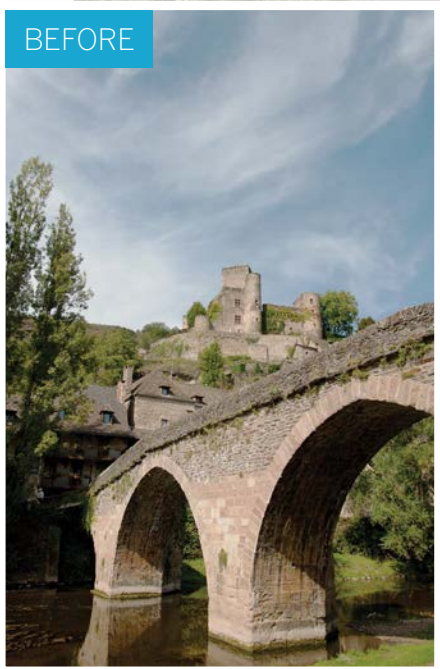
AFTER

BEFORE

BEFORE

Replace dull skies

Select and remove a boring sky and replace it with something more exciting!

O n the previous pages we demonstrated how to enhance a sky by gradually darkening the tones and saturating the colours towards the top of the frame. That technique works well if there are lots of colours and tones to work with, but if the sky of your photograph is simply a mass of overcast clouds then it will be too bland and featureless to enhance using a gradated adjustment layer. If an object such as a tall tree overlaps the sky in the top of the frame then the gradient layer will darken this also, which would spoil the image.

A cloudy sky can add mood and drama to a photo if it has enough variety and texture. However, when shooting landscapes, you may end up with blown-out skies that lack detail. If you shoot in the raw format then you may be able to claw back missing highlight detail, but with JPEGs you'll be stuck with an over-exposed cloudy sky. Fortunately, you can use Photoshop Elements' selection and masking tools to replace a bland or over-exposed sky with something more textured and colourful.

Our starting image has bits of sky trapped among its busy branches. This means we have the challenge of selecting and removing lots of fiddly sky sections. We'll show you how to set up the Magic Wand tool to hunt out all sky pixels in a few clicks. When removing sky from a finely textured area such as these tree branches, you risk leaving fringes of the original sky clinging to the edge of twigs. We'll show you how to modify the initial selection to remove these ugly fringes and then perform a complete sky transplant. ▶

Teach yourself **Photoshop Elements**
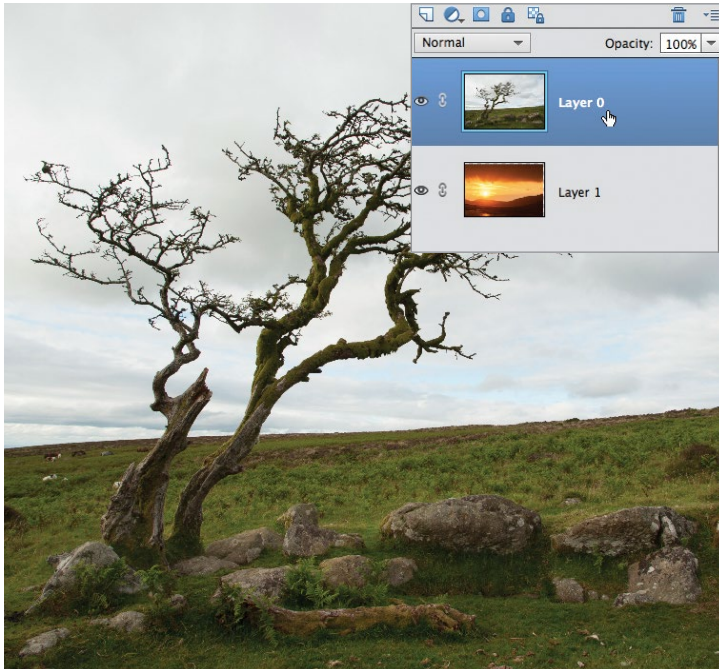
1 Paste the images together

Open our two starting images – ty_elements22.jpg and ty_elements02.jpg. Click the tab on the sunset image to bring this image into focus, then go to Select›All. Then choose Edit›Copy. Click the tab on the landscape photo and choose Edit›Paste. The sunset will appear as a separate layer called Layer 0. Double click the Background layer to unlock it. Click OK. Drag Layer 0 above Layer 1 in the Layers panel.

2 Select the sky

Grab the Magic Wand tool from the Select section of the Toolbox (or press A to cycle to it). In the Tool Options, increase Tolerance to 46 to make it more sensitive to changes in contrast and colour. Untick the Contiguous box so that the tool will select unconnected parts of sky hiding in the branches. Click to select the sky. Hold down Shift and click to add any missing clouds to the selection.
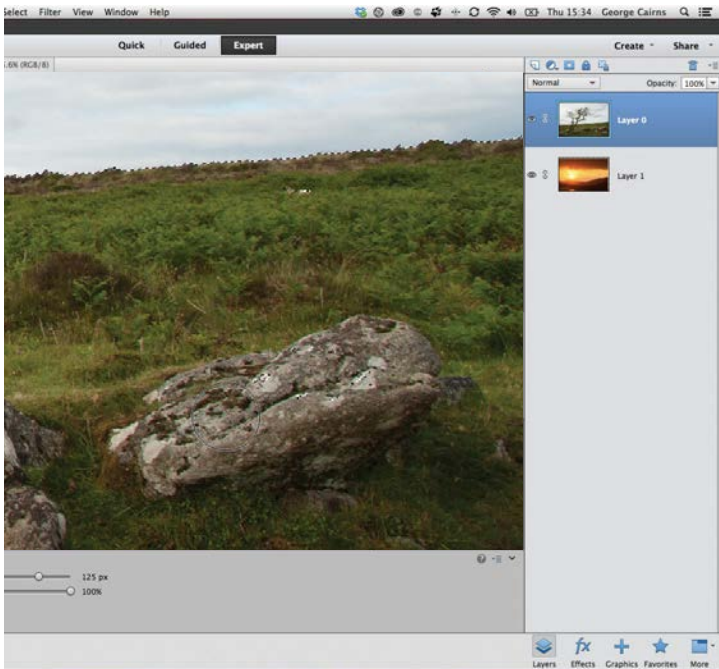
3 Tidy up the selection

Along with the sky, the Magic Wand will have selected a few similarly coloured specks of grey on the foreground rocks. To remove them from the selection, choose the Selection Brush from the Tool Options. Click the Subtract from selection icon. Set the brush tip's Size to 125 pixels. Set Hardness to 100%. Paint over any traces of the 'marching ants' marquee on the rocks to remove them from the sky selection.
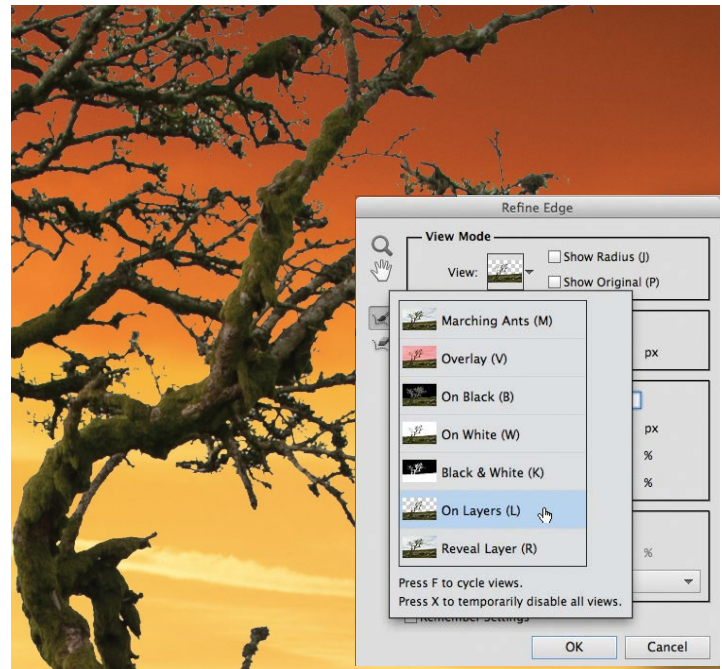
4 Zoom in close

Go to Select›Inverse to invert the selection so that the landscape is selected instead of the sky. To fine-tune the selection, choose Select›Refine Edge. To see how the selection is shaping up, click the View preview and double click the On Layers option. This enables you to see the tree on the top layer and the new background sunset image on the layer below. Press Cmd/Ctrl++ to zoom in for a closer look at the branches.
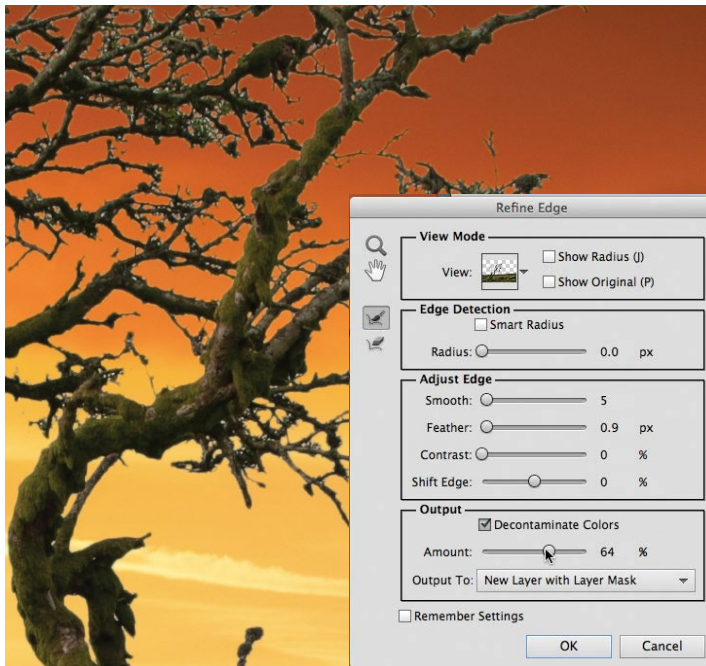
5 Refine the edges

The edges of the branches look a little too jagged and cut-out, so push the Smooth slider to 5 to soften them a little. Move Feather up to 0.9 too. We can still see some of the top layer's original white sky pixels clinging to the edge of the branches. To reduce their appearance, tick the Decontaminate Colors box. Push Amount up to 64%. Tick and untick the Show Original box to see how the selection has been improved.

6 Crop the border

Set the Output option to New Layer with Layer mask and click OK. The refined selection is converted into a layer mask. The black parts of the mask hide the unwanted sky on the top layer to reveal the sunset from the layer below. Grab the Zoom tool and right click. Choose Fit On Screen. You'll notice that the sunset image is slightly smaller than the landscape, so there are visible transparent edges. Grab the Crop tool and crop off the edges. Click the tick.

7 Modify the mask

Zoom in to the distant hill on the left. It has a hint of the original sky's overcast colour. Grab the Brush tool. Choose a hard round tip from the Brush Preset picker in the Tool Options. Set Size to 35 pixels. Click the mask on the top layer and set the Foreground colour to black by pressing D. Paint over the hill to hide the vestigial sky. If you need to restore any missing landscape press X to toggle to a white tip and spray on the mask.

8 Match the lighting

The light in the background is quite warm, while the light in the foreground is cool. To make the landscape look like it's part of the sunset scene, choose layer›New Adjustment Layer›Photo Filter. Click OK. Set the drop-down menu to Warming Filter (LBA) and push the Density up to 31%. This helps the lighting in both layers look more similar in colour, which creates a more convincing composite.
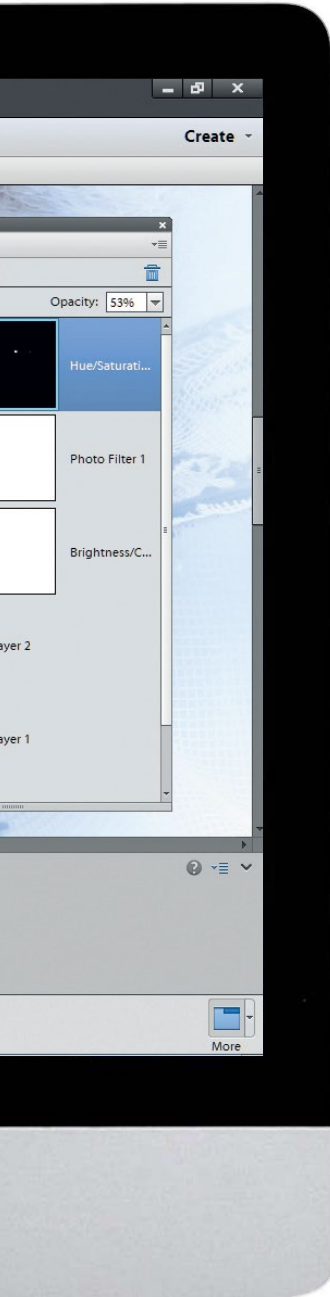
Creative effects

Make artworks from your photographs using filters and effects in Photoshop Elements

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AFTER

BEFORE

Create retro effects

Age your digital photos with retro borders,
light leaks, colour shifts and soft corners

R etro effects are very much in vogue at the moment. It seems that, with modern cameras offering us crystal-clear picture quality, the appeal of analogue imperfections have gone through the roof. Those little errors can make pictures seem so much more individual. There are lots of ways to give your images an aged look in Photoshop Elements, and while it takes a little longer than it does with instant smartphone apps, the results are far more unique. In this tutorial we'll show you how to rough up a brand new image by adding a grubby border and

dirty texture. We'll also mimic the effects of a light leak by adding orange colouring, giving the impression that light has seeped through the gaps in a cheap camera body to fog the edges of the film. Along the way we'll reveal how to use fundamental Photoshop features, skills and techniques such as blending modes, selections, filters and masks.

Each stage in the workflow remains editable at any point, and once you've done it once, you can try the effect out on any image simply by duplicating the layers and dropping the new image in. Here's how it's done...

1 Blend in the border
Open the three retro JPEGs supplied. Go to the frame, then right click the layer in the Layers panel (Window › Layers) and choose Duplicate Layer. Set Destination Document: ty_elements34 and click OK. Go to ty_elements34, click the blending mode menu at the top of the Layers panel and choose Screen to blend in the border.
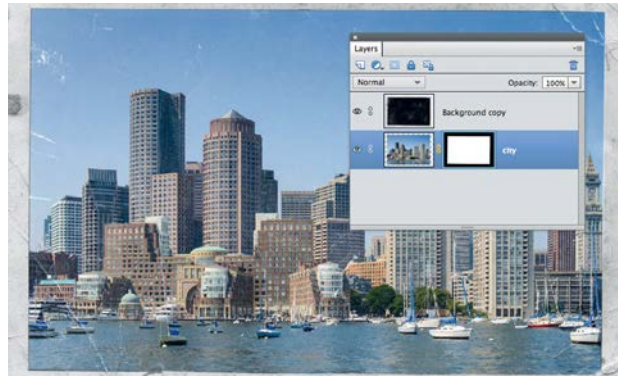
2 Tidy up the edges
Double click the lower layer. Rename it and click OK. Press Cmd/Ctrl+T, then drag the bounding box to resize the image so it fits the frame. Press Enter to apply. Grab the Polygonal Lasso tool and set Feather 2px in the options. Click around the edges of the frame to select it, then click the Add layer mask icon in the Layers panel.
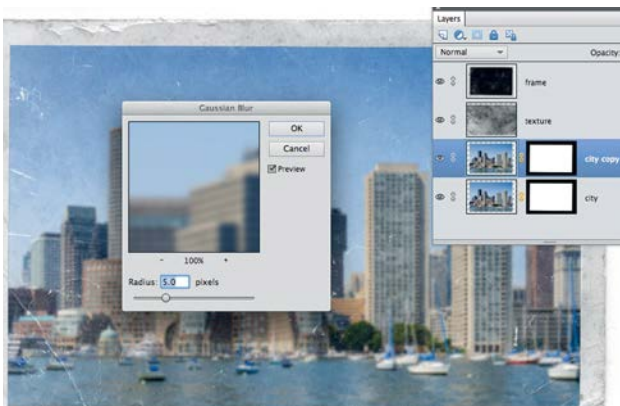
3 Paint white edges
Set the brush opacity to 30%, then paint with a large soft-edged brush around the edges to fade it out to white. In the Layers panel, create a new Brightness Contrast adjustment layer and set Brightness 24, Contrast 21. Then add a Photo Filter adjustment layer — Cooling Filter (82).

4 Soften the corners
Grab the Elliptical Marquee tool. Hold Alt+Shift and drag from the centre to the edge of the frame. Right click and pick Feather, then set 250px and click OK. Highlight the layer mask thumbnail on the Blur layer, go to Edit › Fill Selection, choose Use: Black and click OK.

5 Shift the colour channels
Click the Create adjustment layer icon in the Layers panel. Choose Levels. On Channel: Red, drag the lower left Output Level slider to 220, on Channel: Green, drag it to 50 and on Channel: Blue, drag the lower right Output slider to 180. Press Cmd/Ctrl+I to invert the layer mask.
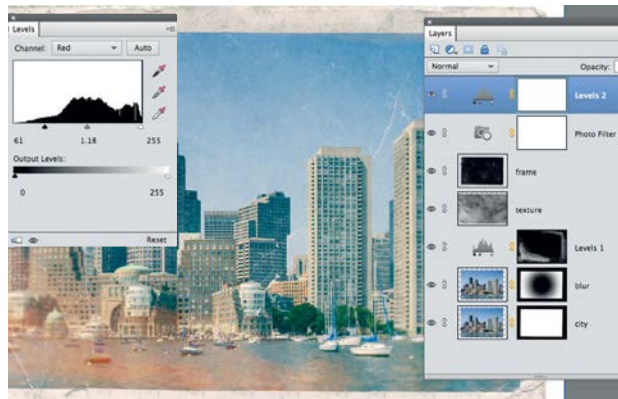
6 Mask the colours
Grab the Brush tool, set the colour to white and the opacity to 30%. Paint around the edges. Select the top layer, then add a Photo Filter layer. Pick Warming Filter (LBA). Add a Levels layer. Set the midpoint slider to 1.23. Choose Channel: Red. Set black point 61, midpoint 1.18. ●

Use filters to add creative effects

Learn how to apply different artistic filters to your photographs, and modify and combine them to produce unique looks

For the majority of this book we've looked at how to use Photoshop Elements to enhance the colours and tones of photos, enabling you to produce natural colours and a healthy range of tones that feature detail in the shadows, midtones and highlights. Our earlier chapters focused on overcoming common problems such as colour casts, incorrect exposure

settings and poor composition. In this chapter we'll have a bit more fun by applying a host of creative effects to our photos. Thanks to Photoshop Elements' filters you can stylise the colours and tones of a photograph to produce a wide range of creative looks, from pencil sketches to oil paintings. To help you find suitable creative effects, the Filter menu groups filters in folders such as Artistic and

Brush Strokes. When choosing any filter you'll launch the Filter Gallery window. This gives you handy previews of how the filtered image will look, as well as a host of editable attributes that will change the results produced by the chosen filter. Here we'll introduce you to the key features of the Filter Gallery, as well as show you other ways to apply filters.

How to apply Filter effects

Apply filters in a couple of clicks using the Expert editor's Effects panel

04 APPLY MULTIPLE FILTERS

Double click a preview thumbnail to apply a particular filter to the image. In this example we applied the Watercolor filter to start with. We then double clicked Cutout to stylise the image even more.

05 MAKING PROGRESS

Some filters take longer to apply than others because they have more work to do. Occasionally, you'll see a progress bar appear while a more complex filter works its magic.

06 SCROLL

Drag the scroll bar on the right to explore all the filter thumbnails in this collection. These fabulous creative filters are also accessible in the Filter Gallery, which we examine in detail on the following page.

01 EFFECTS

If you want to quickly apply preset filters to an image without tinkering with the Filter Gallery settings, click the fx icon in the Expert editing mode, then click the Filters tab at the top to see preview thumbnails.

02 SHOW ALL

Filters in Photoshop Elements are grouped in categories such as Stylize and Texture. You can display every filter by choosing Show All. They are then listed alphabetically, kicking off with Accented Edges at the top left.

03 IDENTIFY FILTERS

Each thumbnail gives you a preview of the effect produced by each filter. Move the cursor over a thumbnail to read the filter's name. Turn on Tool Tips in the Preferences menu if the labels don't appear.

Photoshop Anatomy The Filter Gallery

Familiarise yourself with the Filter Gallery's key features

01 FILTER MENU

This menu command gathers filters into themed folders such as Artistic, Stylize and so on. Once you select a filter it will launch the Filter Gallery window. The Filter Gallery remembers the last filters and settings you used.

02 FOLDERS

You can browse for different types of filter by toggling opened themed folders such as Brush Strokes. Here you'll see thumbnails that preview the type of look produced by a particular filter.

03 FILTER LIST

You can replace a currently selected filter with something new by clicking this drop-down menu. You'll then see filters listed alphabetically, from Angled Strokes to Watercolor.

04 EDITABLE ATTRIBUTES

Once you select a filter by clicking its thumbnail, any editable properties such as the Stroke Length of a brush will appear in this section. This is the key to producing more convincing and unique art effects.

05 FILTER LAYERS

You can recreate artistic looks by combining multiple filters. Drag a filter up or down in the layer stack to change the art effect. Click the eye icon to turn it on or off.

06 ZOOM

It can be difficult to see the filter effect when looking at the entire picture. Click here to zoom in for a closer and clearer look at the filtered pixels. You can then adjust each filter's sliders more effectively. ▶

Make a movie poster

Design a striking film poster with larger-than-life characters using these simple techniques in Photoshop Elements

If you're ever in need of inspiration for a Photoshop project, do a quick search for the latest film posters. They are often at the cutting edge of Photoshop design, merging photography with type, graphics and special effects. In this tutorial we'll show you how to get started with your own posters. As well as learning

how to position images and words for a striking design, we'll also show you how to turn people into larger-than-life CGI-like characters with the Liquify filter.

What's more, you'll learn how to use Layer Styles to give your type impact, and we'll even show you how to make a quick digital snowstorm. With these techniques you could

make your own spoof posters with friends and family in the leading roles, complete with your own comedy film titles and taglines. You could even make posters to go with a home movie you've shot on your camera.

These skills aren't just useful for posters; they come in handy for any design work that involves combining photography and type.
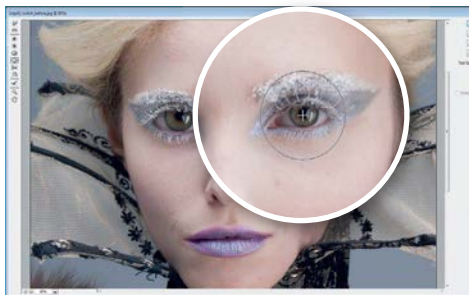
1 Enlarge the eyes
Open the starting image and press Cmd/Ctrl+J. Go to Filter›Distort›Liquify. Click the Bloat tool, then resize the brush until it's larger than the eyeball. Click each eye a few times to enlarge them, then switch to the Pucker tool and shrink the pupils.
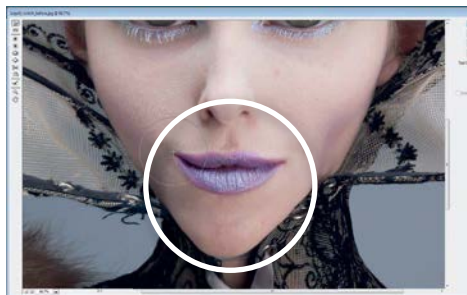
2 Thin the chin
Use the Warp tool to push in the nose and chin so that they're small and pointy, and make the neck thinner. Push the mouth around to give it a slight smile. Click OK. Next, click the New Layer icon in the Layers panel and click the Brush tool.
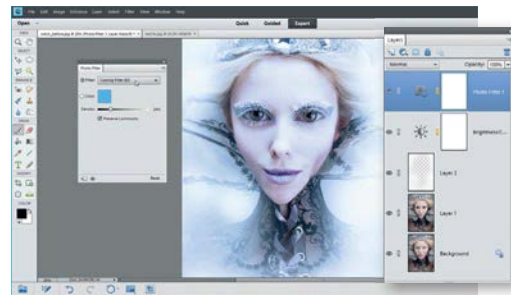
3 Paint white edges
Set brush opacity to 30%, then paint with a large soft-edged brush around the edges to fade it. Create a new Brightness Contrast adjustment layer and set Contrast 21, Brightness 24. Add a Photo Filter adjustment layer — Cooling Filter (82).

4 Add green eyes
Add a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer. Check Colorize and set Hue 120, Saturation 60. Press Cmd/Ctrl+I. Paint white over the irises. Next click the Type tool. Choose the 'Trajan Pro' font in black, then click the image and type a title.
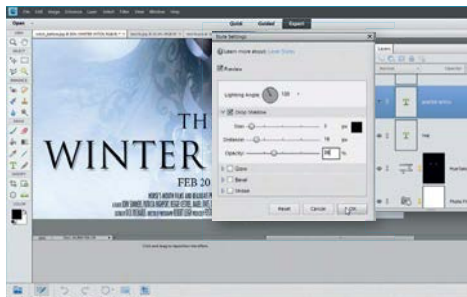
5 Type the words
Grab the Move tool and check Show Bounding Box, then click the box to transform and resize the title. Go to Layer› Layer Style›Style Settings and check Drop Shadow. Set Angle 120, Size 5, Distance 16, Opacity 36. Add more words with new fonts.
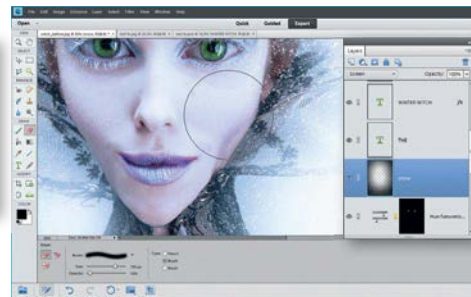
6 Make the snow
Fill a new layer below the type with black, then go to Filter›Noise›Add Noise. Choose Amount 400, Type: Gaussian, Monochromatic. Then Filter›Artistic›Dry Brush›OK, then Filter›Blur›Gaussian Blur. Set 1px. Set the blending mode to Screen.

BEFORE

There's a storm coming...

THE
WINTER WITCH

FEB 2014

HORSE'S MOUTH FILMS AND BEAJULAIS PRODUCTIONS PRESENT
A FILM BY JOHN SUMMERS, PATRICIA HIGHPORT, REGGIE KESTREL, MABEL JONES, DESIYAH,, ERIC GREY, SADIE BLACK, DESIREE DONALDSON
CASTING BY DICK RICHARDS DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY ROBERT LEIGH PRODUCED BY FOSTER KENNEDY AND DANDY SMITHSON DIRECTED BY JED NORRIS

AFTER

BEFORE
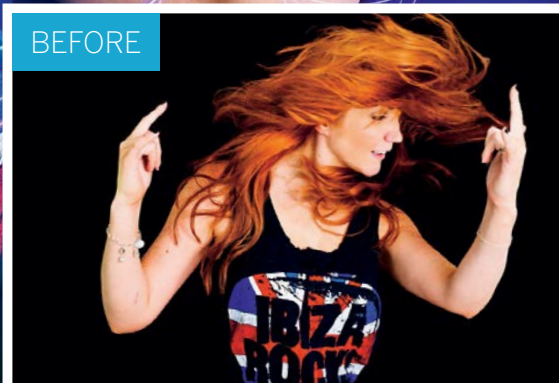
Create a neon effect

Give your portraits a shot of electricity by creating glowing neon-like lines in Photoshop Elements

Some Photoshop 'special effects' can look a little generic, particularly if, like filters, they're simply slapped on top of an image. One way to make effects stand out from the crowd is to have them interact with the figures or objects in your image, like these fantastic glowing lines.

Curved lines aren't the easiest of shapes to make. Unfortunately, Photoshop Elements lacks the Pen tool found in its bigger brother Photoshop CC, so to get the curling,

tapered line we'll need to use a combination of tools and filters, then to make the line glow we'll add a Layer Style effect. For simplicity, we'll make the lines against a plain background. Once we have a couple of different lines, we can begin adding them to the portrait. We won't need to make every line from scratch, because we can build up the effect by copying the same line again and again, then use Transform controls to skew them into a variety of shapes that wrap around the dancing figure.
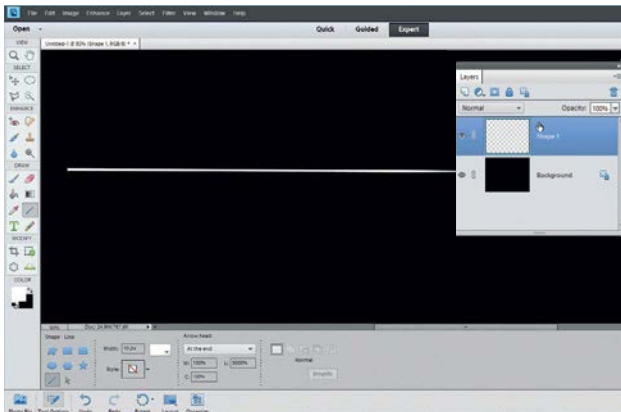
1 Make a tapered line

Open the black starting image (or simply make a plain black image). Grab the Line tool from the Toolbox, then go to the Tool Options and set the colour to white, Width 10px, Arrow Head: At the End, W 100% L 5000%. Drag a line from left to right, then go to Layer›Simplify Layer.
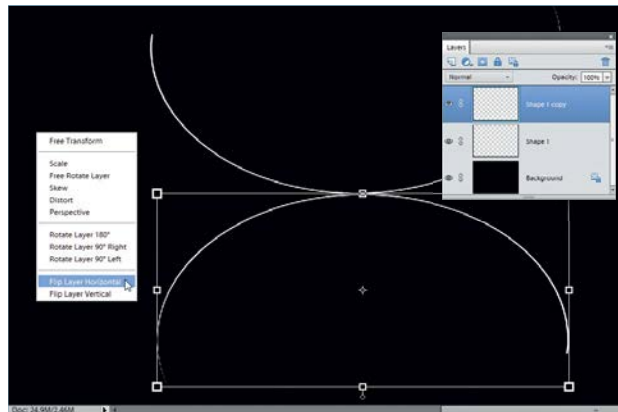
2 Curl and copy

Go to Filter›Distort›Polar Coordinates, set Rectangular to Polar and click OK. Press Cmd/Ctrl+J, grab the Move tool and check Show Bounding Box. Click the box, right click and pick Flip Layer Vertical, then Flip Layer Horizontal. Drag it down so the two lines meet.

3 Add a glow

Use the Eraser tool to erase the half of the line you don't need. Highlight the layer below and do the same. Highlight the top layer and press Cmd/Ctrl+E to merge. Go to Layer›Layer Style›Style Settings. Check Glow, then Outer Glow. Pick a blue and set Size 13, Opacity 100. Click OK.
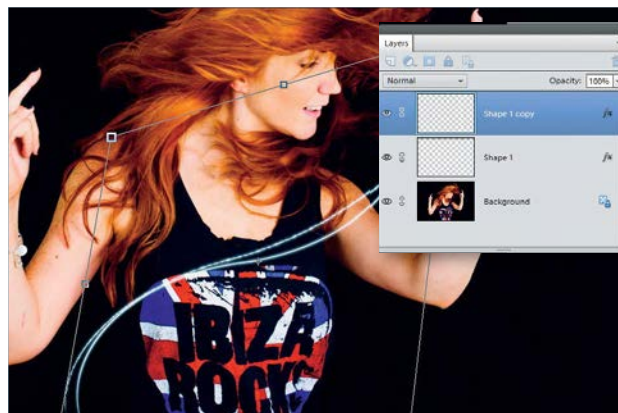
4 Copy and skew

Make two more lines, then open the portrait. Use the Move tool to drag the lines on to the portrait. Position the first line. Press Cmd/Ctrl+J to duplicate it. Rotate and resize the second line so it looks different. Drag the corner points while holding Cmd/Ctrl to skew the shape.

5 Build it up

Continue building up the effect by duplicating the lines and transforming them in different ways, making the lines wrap around the dancer's arms and body. To make a glow more intense, duplicate the layer, then go to the Layers panel and change the blending mode to Linear Light.

6 Wrap around the arm

Once you have a series of lines that appear to wrap around the arm, highlight them and press Cmd/Ctrl+E to merge them. To make this wrap around the arm, simply switch to the Eraser and remove part of it. To vary the colours of the lines, press Cmd/Ctrl+U and adjust the Hue slider. ●

CREATIVE EFFECTS

AFTER

BEFORE

Transform your photos into paintings

Love paintings but can't paint? We reveal
how to turn your photos into watercolours

We may think of watercolour painting as strictly for hobbyists and landscape enthusiasts with bags of hand-to-eye coordination, but before photography came along, watercolours were used for all kinds of practical tasks. The portability and relative speed of the painting made it useful for recording eyewitness likenesses, new specimens and even battle scenes.

Watercolours are created with water-soluble pigment paints. These run into one another to create a mix of colours

and shapes. The effect is fairly easy to recreate in Photoshop Elements using Camera Raw, filters and some simple brushwork. We'll start with a novel use for Camera Raw's noise reduction controls to give our starting image a smooth, smudgy finish. Then we can use the Glowing Edges filter to add a faint pencil sketch effect. To give it a hand-made feel we'll get stuck in with the Brush tool and experiment with different Wet Media brushes, then add a textured paper finish to complete the effect.
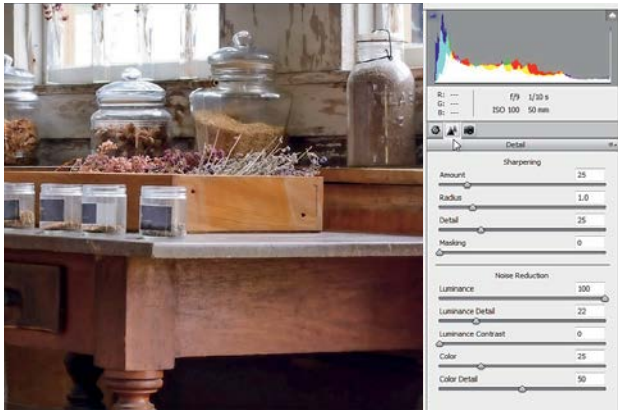
1 Edit the raw file

Open the starting image in the Elements Editor. In Camera Raw, set Exposure +0.45, Contrast +33, Shadows +58, Whites –50, Blacks +9, Clarity +20, Vibrance +25, Saturation +10. Next click the Detail Panel and set Luminance 100, Luminance Detail 22. Click Open Image.
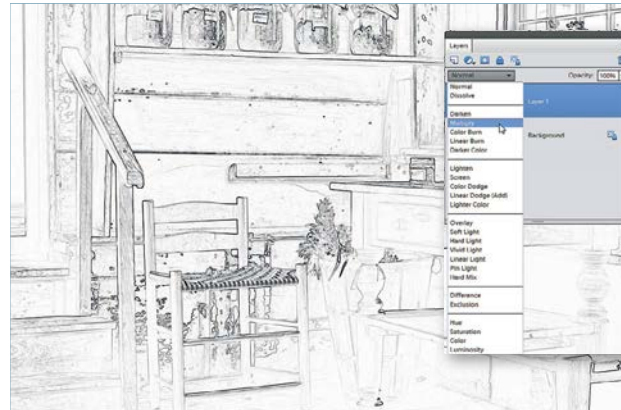
2 Make a pencil sketch

Press Cmd/Ctrl+J to copy the background, then go to Filter›Stylise›Glowing Edges. Set Edge Width 4, Edge Brightness 6, Smoothness 8 and click OK. Next press Cmd/Ctrl+I, then go to Enhance›Adjust Color›Remove Color. Change the blending mode to Multiply in the Layers panel.
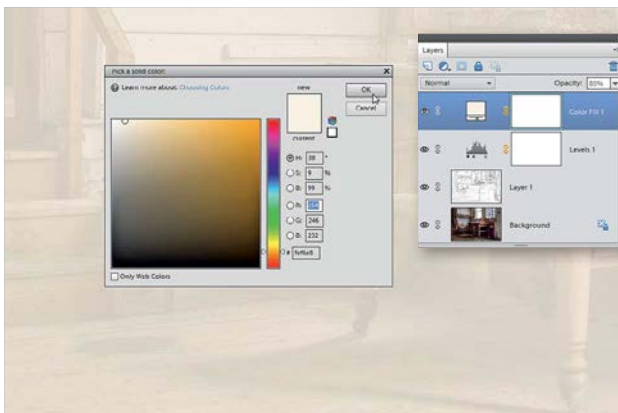
3 Choose a paper colour

Click the Create adjustment layer icon in the Layers panel and choose Levels. Drag the middle slider to 1.56 to lighten the midtones. Click the adjustment layer icon again and choose Solid Color. Choose an off-white colour, then change the opacity of the layer to about 85%.
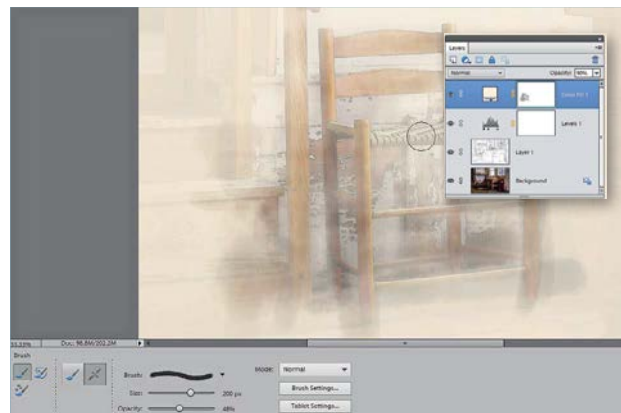
4 Load the Wet Media brushes

Grab the Brush tool and press D then X to set the colour to black. Go to the Brush options and set the opacity to about 30%. Click the Brush Picker and select the Wet Media brushes. Choose the Watercolor Heavy Medium tip, and begin painting over the chair to reveal it.

5 Paint in the detail

Continue painting and experimenting with different brushes, opacity settings and brush sizes as you paint. Leave messy borders and aim to follow the lines in the image, but be careful not to block in too much detail. If you go too far, press X and paint white to bring back the paper colour.
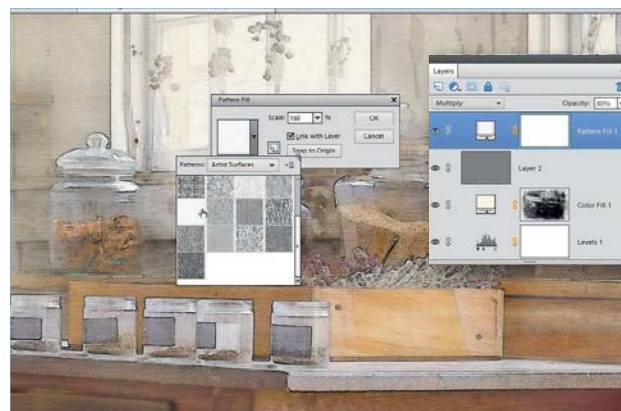
6 Add the paper texture

Hold down Alt and click the New layer icon. Set Mode: Overlay and check the Fill with... option. Go to Filter›Texture›Texturizer. Set Texture: Canvas, Scaling 200%, Relief 4. Add a Pattern adjustment layer. Choose Watercolor Light, Scaling 150%. Blend it with Multiply. ●

Merge photos with graphics

Create fantastic effects by merging your photos with graphics using blending modes

This surreal effect may look intricate and complicated, but merely by making use of the graphics and backgrounds that come with Elements, it's something that anybody can do, and on any portrait they like. We're using a simple graphic called Brass Leaves, which you'll find within the hundreds of graphics, frames and effects that come with Elements, in this tutorial. However, if you prefer, you could always use one of the other graphics.

By duplicating and reshaping the leaves in different ways you can build up an entire bush. Once that's been done, all you have to do is duplicate the cut-out face we've provided and 'clip' it to each layer, before applying a Drop Shadow Layer Style and changing the colours. To round things off, drop in a suitably green leafy background, also taken from the Elements graphics library.

Along the way we'll repeatedly use one of Photoshop's most useful and underused shortcuts — the humble Alt key. Let loose on the Layers panel, it enables you to make speedy copies of layers, styles, masks and adjustments. It also enables you to 'clip' a layer to the shape of the layer beneath. Here's how it works... ▶

BEFORE
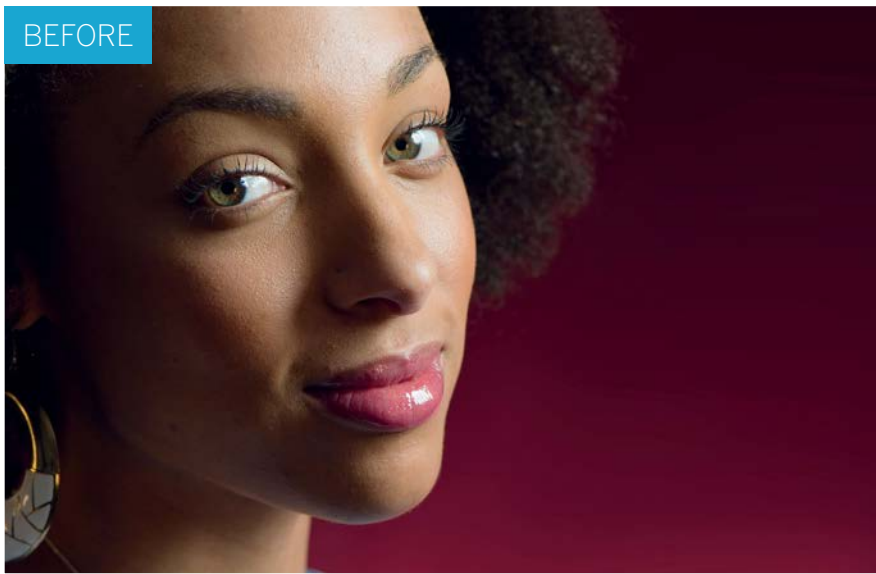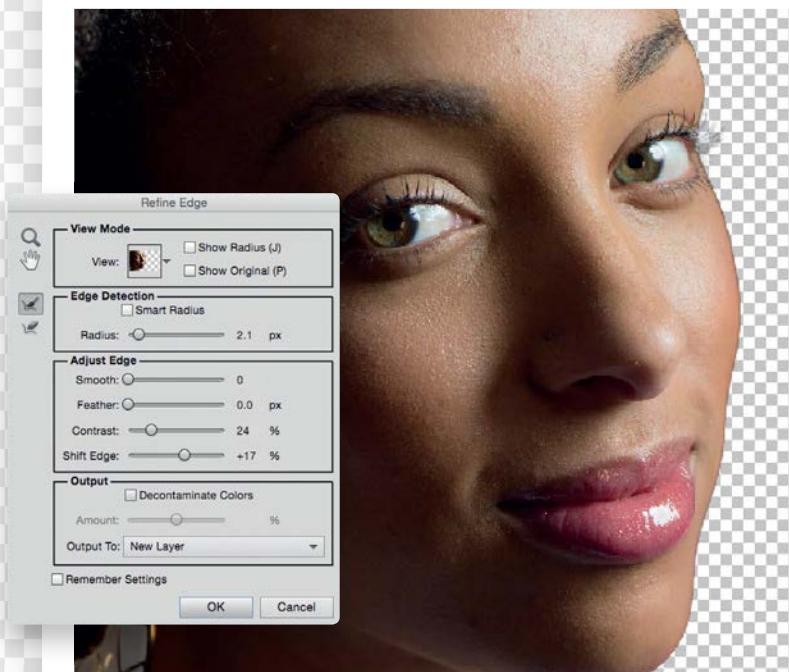
1 Cut out the portrait

Open the starting image. The first step is to cut out the portrait from it's background. Grab the Quick Selection tool and paint to select the face and neck. If the tool goes wrong and picks up any areas you don't want, hold Alt and paint to subtract areas from the selection. When you're happy, go to Select›Refine Edge to improve the edges of the selection. Set Radius 2.1, Contrast 25%, Shift Edge +17. Set Output to: New Layer and click OK.

2 Add the brass leaves

Go to Window›Graphics to access the Graphic panel. Here you'll find all manner of different graphics and templates. You can search through the hundreds of items using the menu at the top. Set to filter 'By Word' and type 'Brass Leaves' in the search bar. Once you've found it, drag the leaves graphic into the image. The graphic is a Smart Object, which means it can be resized up or down without any loss in quality.
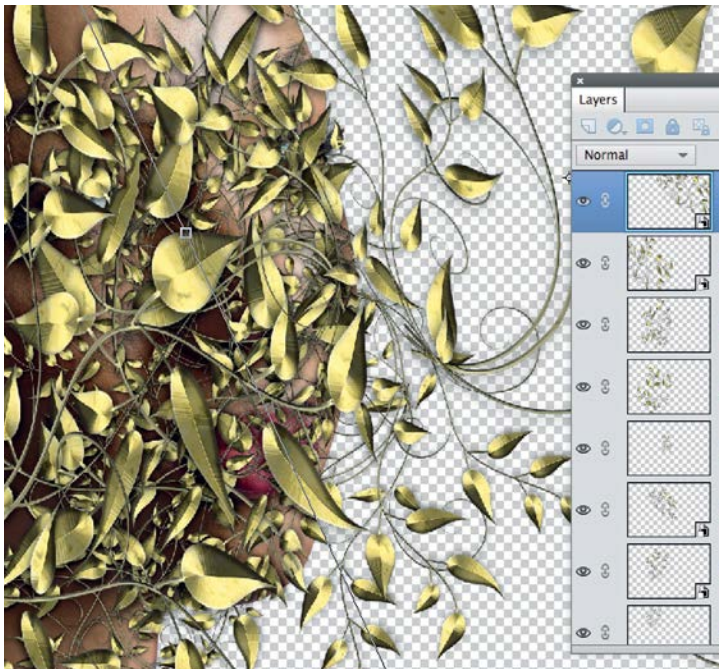
3 Build up the leaves

Grab the Move tool and check Show Bounding Box in the Tool Options. Click the bounding box to transform the shape of the leaves. Drag the corners to resize and position the leaves over the face. Next hit Cmd/Ctrl+J to copy the layer. Transform again, but in a different way so that it doesn't look too similar to the first copy (you can right click while transforming for more options, like Distort). Continue making more copies until the face is mostly covered.
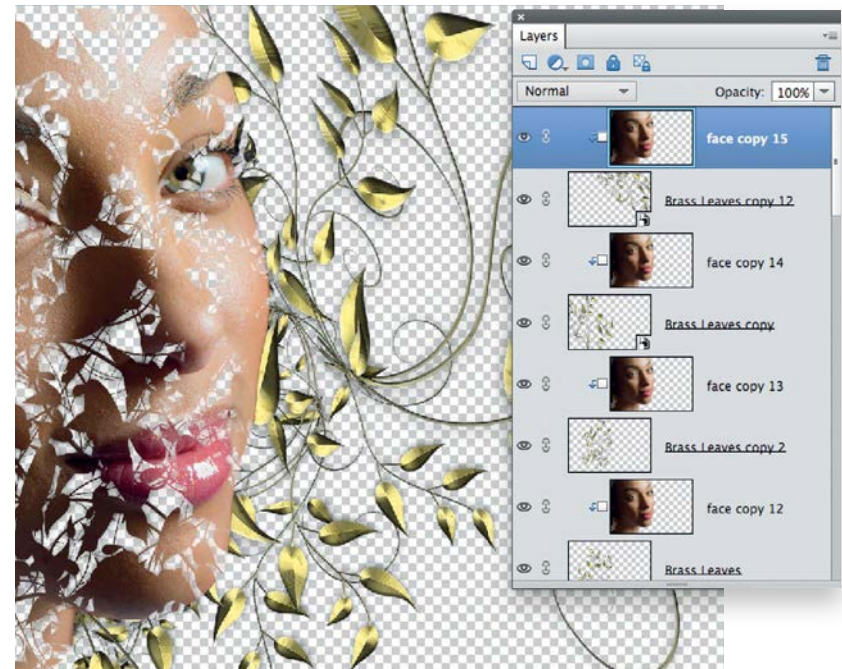
4 Copy and clip to the face

Rename the background copy layer (the one with the cut-out face) 'face', then drag it above the lowermost leaves layer. Hold down Alt and click the line between the two layers to clip the face to the leaves. Now hold down Alt and drag the face layer above the next leaves layer to make a copy, and Alt+click the line again. Repeat to make a copy of the cut-out face above every leaf layer, each clipped to the underlying leaves.
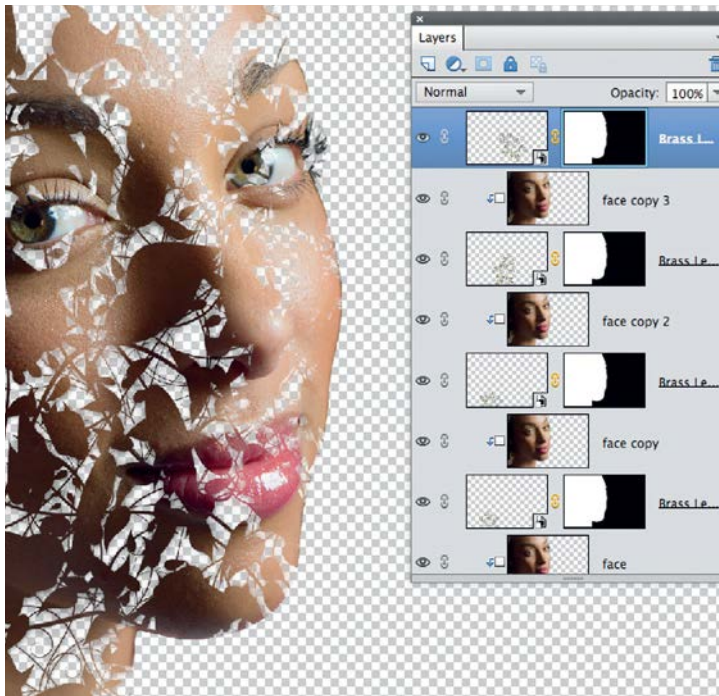
5 Mask the leaves

Hold down Cmd/Ctrl and click the image thumbnail on the uppermost face layer to load a selection of its shape. Highlight the leaves layer below, then click the Add layer mask icon to convert the selection to a mask. Next, hold Alt and drag the mask thumbnail to each of the other leaves layers to copy it over, so that every leaf layer has a mask attached to it that is the shape of the face.
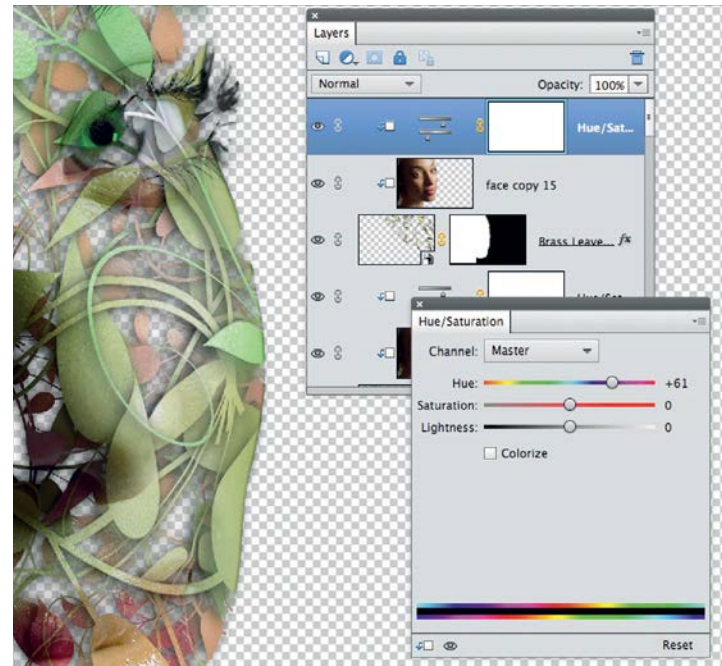
6 Add the drop shadows

Highlight any leaves layer and go to Layer›Layer Style›Style Settings. We can add depth to the effect with drop shadows. Check Drop Shadow and set Angle 40, Size 18, Distance 6, Opacity 90. Click OK. When you add any Layer Style effect such as a drop shadow, a little FX icon will appear on the highlighted layer in the Layers panel. Hold down Alt and drag the FX icon to another leaves layer to copy it, then copy it to every other leaves layer in the same way.
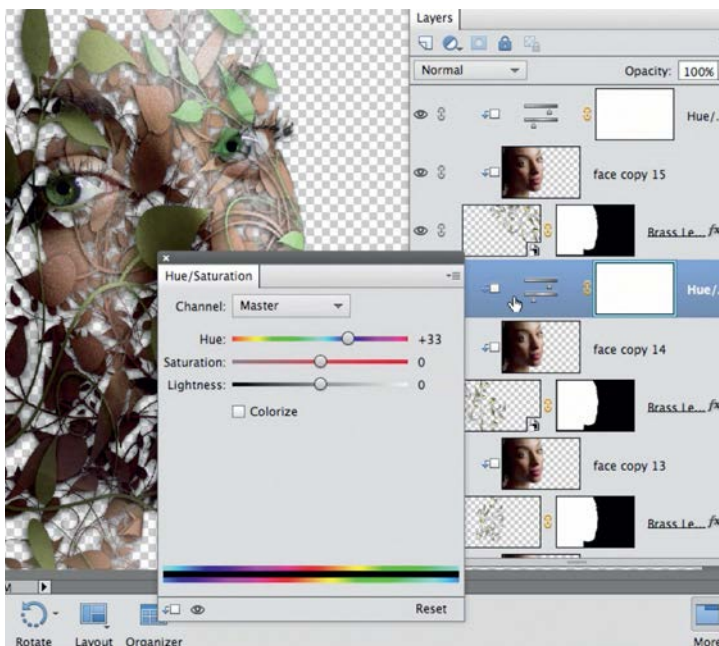
7 Colour the effect

Next we can add colour to the effect by turning each leaf layer a shade of green. First highlight the top face layer, then click the Create adjustment layer icon in the Layers panel. Set Hue +61, then hold Alt and click the line between the Hue/Saturation layer and the face layer below to clip the layer to the face. Hold down Alt and drag the Hue/Saturation layer above the next face layer to make a copy, then clip it again. Double click the layer thumbnail to change the Hue setting slightly for some subtle variation to the colours.
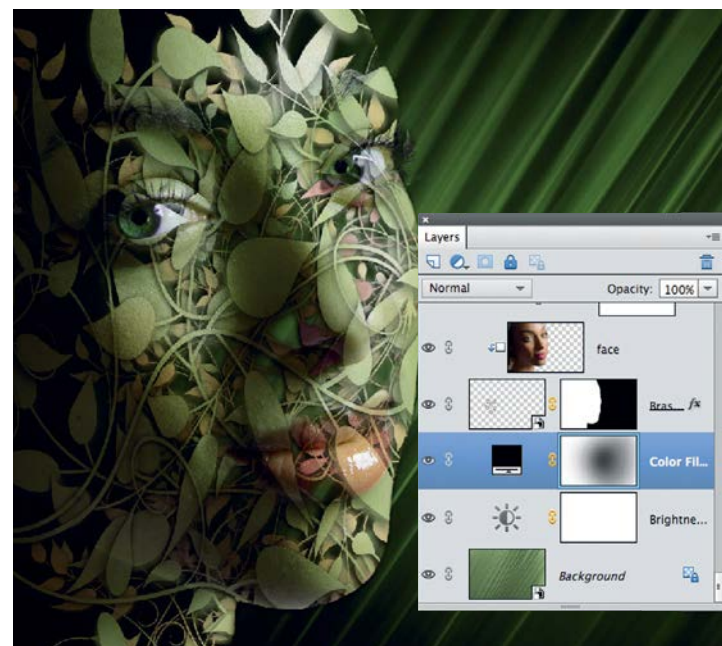
8 Drop in the background

Finally we'll drop in another graphic as a background for the effect. Go to the Graphics panel, search for 'leaves 02' and bring it in. Hit Cmd/Ctrl+T, right click and pick Flip Horizontal. Add a Brightness/Contrast layer set to 10, 100. Finally, darken the corners of the background. Add a Solid Color adjustment layer filled with black. Grab the Brush tool, set the colour to black and 30% opacity, then paint on the layer's mask to hide the black and reveal the green underneath. ∎

CREATIVE EFFECTS

AFTER
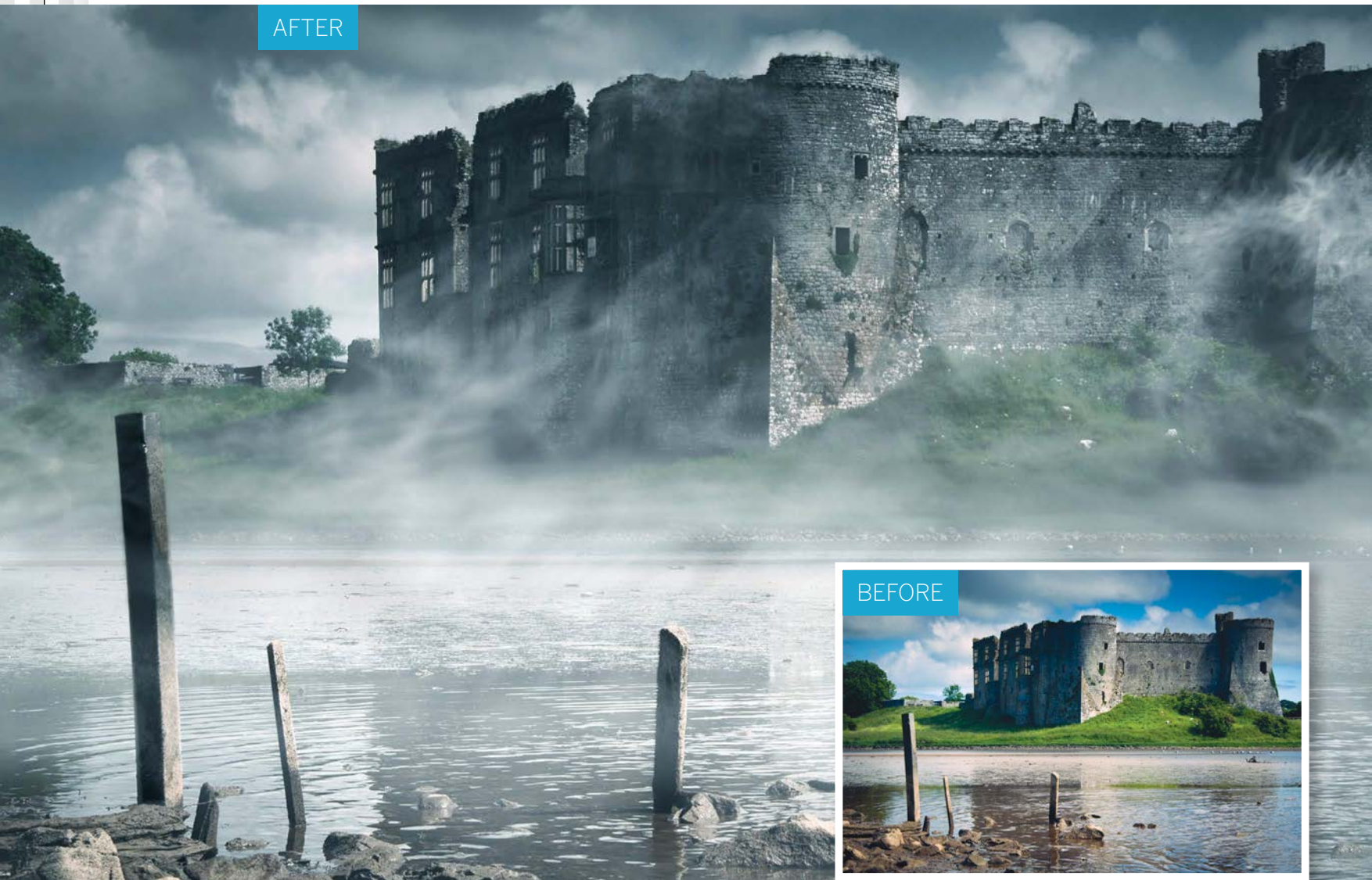
BEFORE

Add atmosphere to your pictures

Change the feel of a scene completely by adding moody mist in Photoshop Elements

Sometimes the weather can be a photographer's perfect ally, creating beautiful light or dramatic skies. However, at other times you can arrive at a scene only to find the atmosphere isn't quite what you wanted. There's no substitute for capturing real-life weather in all its glory, but if you haven't got the time to wait for the perfect combination of light and clouds, it's possible to change the atmosphere of a scene using Photoshop Elements. In the starting image, the bright sunny day doesn't really suit the mood of the stark Welsh castle and barren foreground, so we've blown in a few misty swirls of cloud and cooled down the colours. This is easier than it looks. Using a combination of the Clouds filter and the Smudge and Brush tools, you can create dappled mist-like tones, then shape them into interesting patterns. The technique also covers key Photoshop skills such as layer masking and the Transform command. So read on to discover how to create atmospheric, mist-shrouded scenes.
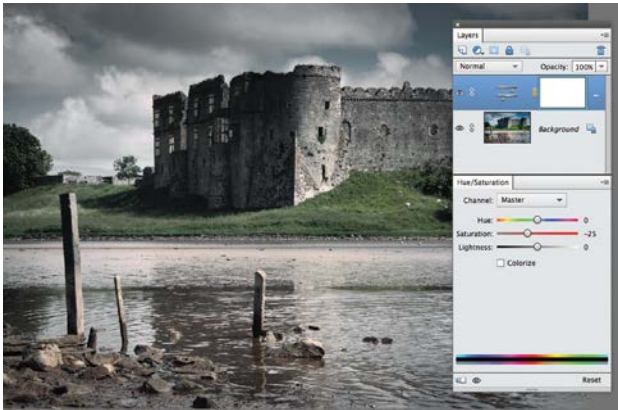
1 Tone the colours

Open the starting image. Go to the Layers panel (Window›Layers). Click the Create adjustment layer icon and choose Hue/Saturation. Set Saturation -25, then set Channel: Blue, Saturation -80, Cyan -80, Greens -40, Yellows -60. Click the Create new layer icon in the Layers panel.

2 Create the clouds

Press D to reset the colours to black and white, then Cmd/Ctrl+Backspace to fill the layer. Go to Filter›Render›Clouds, then Filter›Blur›Gaussian Blur. Set Radius 100px. In the Layers panel, change the blending mode to Screen, then lower the layer opacity to about 30%.
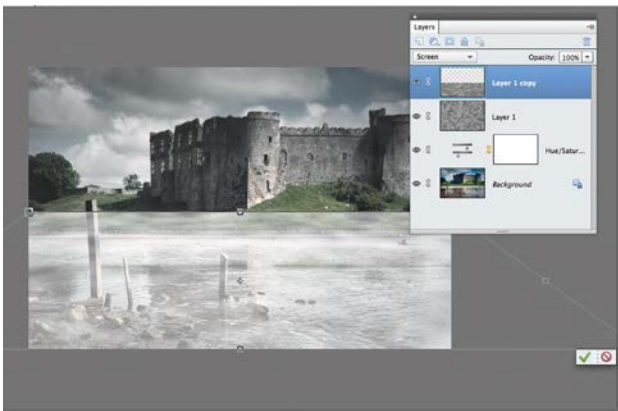
3 Copy and transform

Press Cmd/Ctrl+J to copy the layer. Set the layer opacity to 100% then press Cmd/Ctrl+T to transform. Drag the top-middle point of the bounding box down to just above the water, then hold Cmd/Ctrl and drag the bottom left and right points outwards to add perspective to the mist.
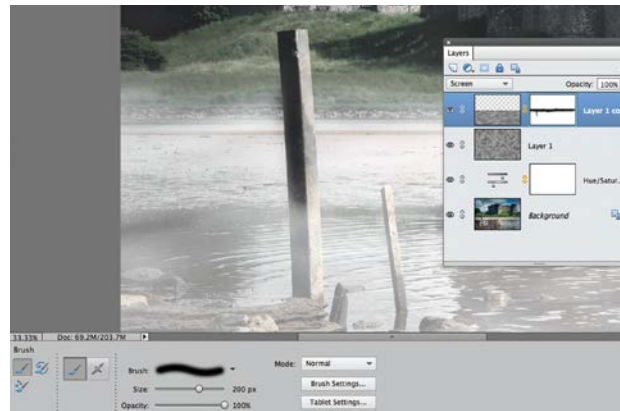
4 Mask and repeat

Click the Add layer mask icon. Grab the Brush tool. Pick a soft-edged tip and set the colour to black. Paint to hide the hard edges and add mist. Press Cmd/Ctrl+J, then Cmd/Ctrl+T. Squeeze the layer to make it thinner so that the mist looks thicker in the distance, then mask it again.
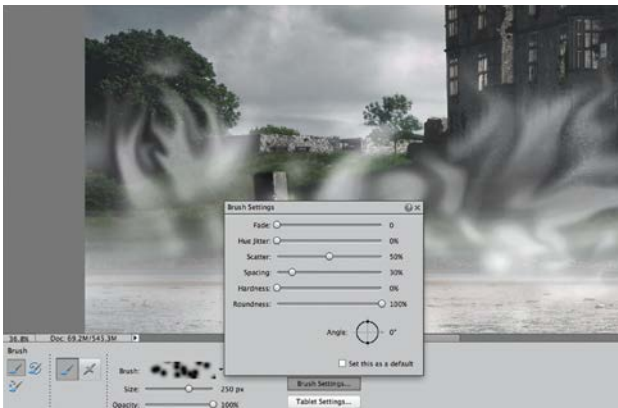
5 Use Smudge for swirls

Make a new layer, then grab the Brush tool. Set the colour to white and click Brush Settings in the Tool Options. Set Scatter 50%, Hardness 0%. Paint along the water's edge to make scattered dots. Grab the Smudge tool. Drag over the dots to smudge them into swirling trails.
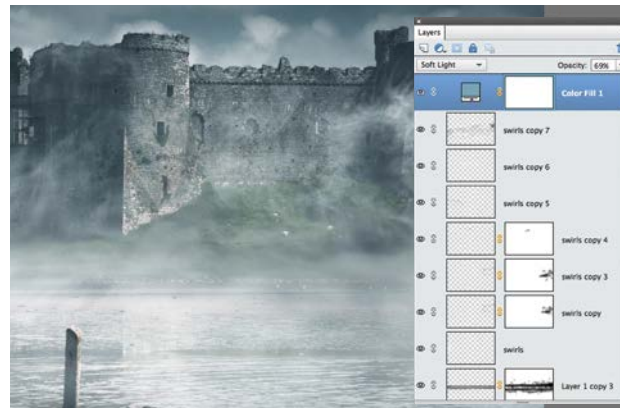
6 Build it up

Build up the swirls by duplicating the layer. Use layer masks to hide unwanted parts and lower the layer opacity to blend them. Duplicate the background layer and use the Burn tool to darken areas. Add a Solid Color layer, pick pale blue, then set the blending mode to Soft Light.

Enhance your photos by adding textures

Explore the Textures panel in the Quick editing mode

In this chapter we've looked at ways to produce more creative images by applying filters to photographs. This enables us to produce a wide range of looks, from sketches and paintings to in-camera effects such as zoom bursts. You can also change the mood and look of a photo by mixing it with a texture.

This combination of photo and texture can create a grungy poster look, or a stylised album cover effect. You can combine photographs of textures (such as peeling paint) with your shots in a host of creative ways, courtesy of a layer blending mode. We'll look at these in more detail overleaf, but we'll kick off by showing you quick ways to add creative textures.

1 Go to the Quick editing mode
Open ty_elements15.jpg. The bland studio backdrop will benefit from some added texture, to enhance our retro model and change the mood of the shot. Click the Quick editing mode tab to jump to that workspace. Click the Textures icon at the bottom right.

2 Apply a texture
You'll see a collection of texture thumbnails in the Textures window on the right. Move the cursor over a thumbnail to see a descriptive label. To apply a texture, simply double click the preview. The Blue Grid texture complements the model without being too distracting.

3 Try different looks
You can experiment with different textured looks by double clicking the previews. The Blue Wash texture blends with the original image and distresses it, creating a pealing poster effect. Double click the Cracked Paint texture. At this stage it overlaps the background and her face.

4 Mask out the subject
Click the Expert editing mode tab. The texture has been applied as a Quick Edit Texture layer. Grab the Brush tool. Choose a soft tip sized 300. Set the Foreground colour to black. Click the white mask and paint over the model to stop the texture from overlapping her. ▶

AFTER

BEFORE
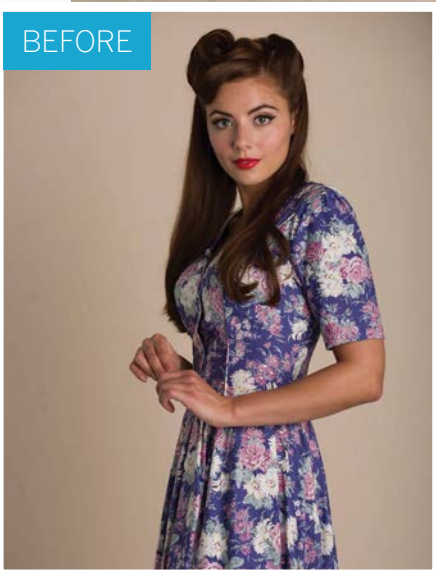
Use advanced texture blending techniques

Combine your photographs with textures more creatively using layer masks and blending modes

On the previous pages we explored the Quick editing mode's Textures panel. This creative new tool provides us with a quick way to mix photos and textures together, but it only has a few textures to play with. As a result these preset textures are likely to pop up in lots of people's work. To make your textured images look more unique, capture your own textured surfaces such as pealing paintwork or crumbling brickwork. You can then use Photoshop Elements' Layers panel and its wide collection of blending modes to creatively combine your 'found' textures with photographs of people or places to enhance them artistically.
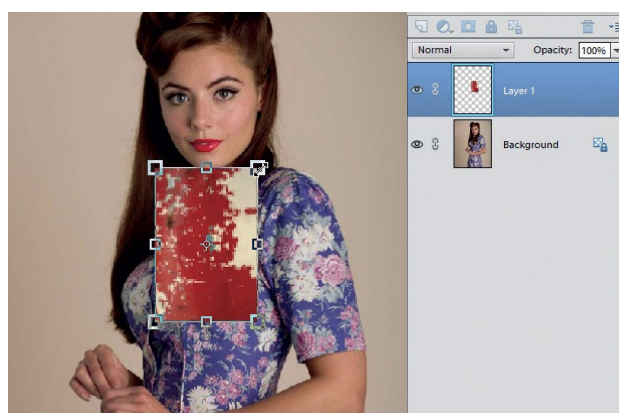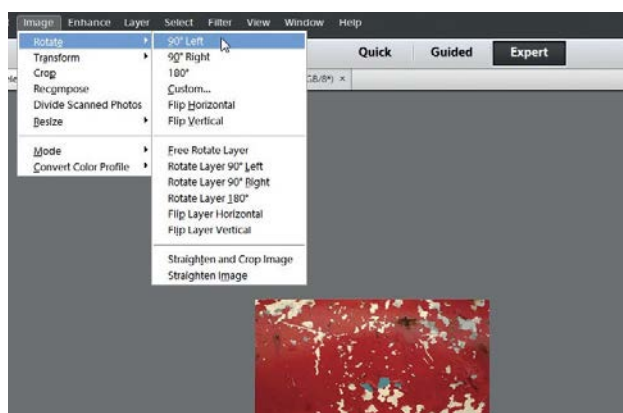
1 Open the source images
Open ty_elements15.jpg and ty_elements30.jpg. The shot of pealing paint has a lower resolution than our high-quality studio shot, so we'll need to enlarge it later. Click the Rotate icon to make the texture file match the studio shot's portrait orientation.

2 Enlarge the texture
When viewing the texture file, choose Select>All and then Edit>Copy. Go to the portrait and choose Edit>Paste. This adds the texture to a new layer. Click the Move tool, tick the Show Bounding Box option, and drag the texture's control handles to increase its size. Click the tick.
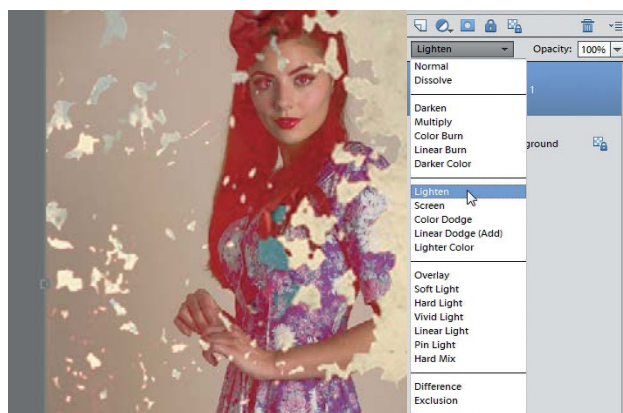
3 Blend the layers
You can mix the colours and tones of both layers in a variety of ways using blending modes. Set the texture layer's blending mode to Darken to make lighter colours on the top layer transparent, revealing detail from the layer below. Lighten makes the texture blend with the dark colours.
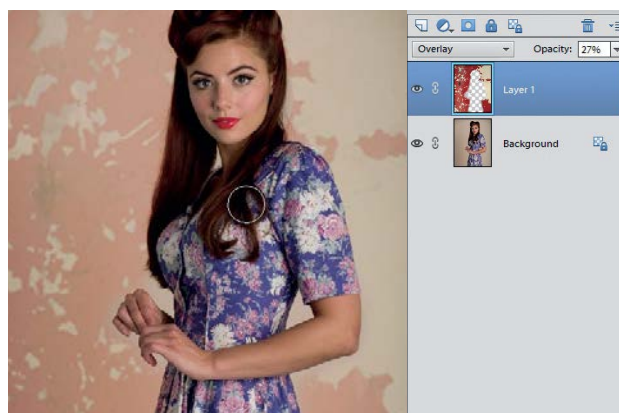
4 Fine-tune the blend
The Overlay blending mode mixes colours and tones from both layers to give the portrait a distressed look. You can make the blended effect look more subtle by reducing the texture layer's opacity to 27%. Grab the Eraser and paint over any parts of the texture layer that you want to remove.

Blending modes in action

Produce a wide range of results by applying blending modes to texture layers

Lighten
To create the looks above we replaced the red pealing paint texture with a blue one (ty_elements31jpg). By setting the blending mode to Lighten you erode the surface, creating a vintage effect.

Hard light
By changing the blue pealing paint layer's blending mode to Hard Light, you combine the colours and tones in both layers to create a much grungier look. We dropped the texture layer's Opacity to 73%.

Color Dodge
Here we've mixed both the red and blue pealing paint texture layers with the shot using the Color Dodge blending mode to create vivid colours and over-exposed random areas to mimic a vintage light-leak effect.

Difference
This effect was created by double clicking to unlock the model's Background layer and then placing it at the top of the stack. We set the model's blending mode to Difference above the blue paint texture.

Do more with your photos

Finish off your images with decorative borders or fun effects, then share them online or print them

Add artistic borders

Add frames to your photos using quick effects, and learn how to create your own brush-based border from scratch

One way to make your photographs stand out from the crowd is to add a decorative border to them. This makes a shot look special. If you click the fx icon at the bottom of the Expert editing mode workspace, you can then click the Effects panel. This panel's drop-down menu gives you the option to choose Frame effects. This enables you to apply one of three frame effects to your shot by dragging and dropping.

Photoshop Elements also has a Frames panel in the Quick editing mode workspace. Here you can scroll through artistic borders and decorative frames and then apply them to your picture with a few clicks.

We'll show you how to access the new Frames in Photoshop Elements, and then describe how to paint your own more unique-looking artistic borders using preset brush tips and layer masks.
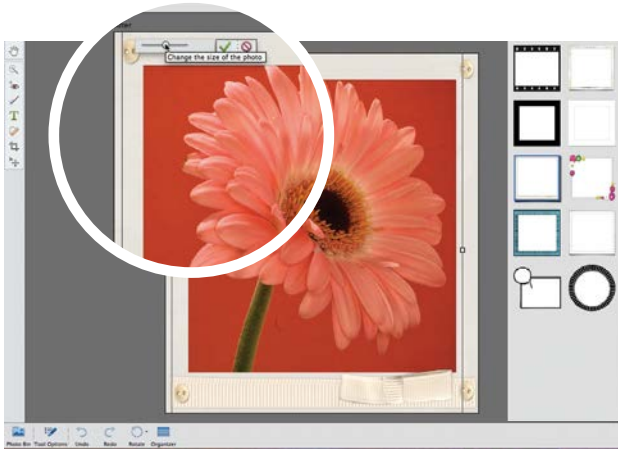
1 Apply a quick frame effect
Open ty_elements05.jpg. Click the Quick editing mode tab, then click the Frames icon. Click a frame thumbnail to add it to your shot. Click the photo's control handle and drag the slider to shrink or enlarge it within the frame. Drag the photo to reposition it, then click the tick to apply.
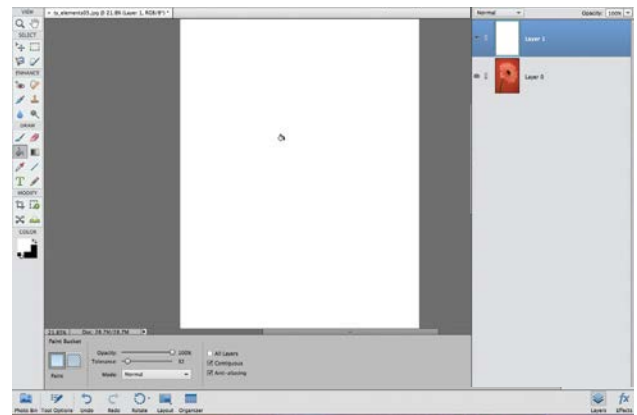
2 Fill a new layer with white
Click Undo to remove the frame effect and then click the Expert editing mode tab. In the Layers panel, double click the Background layer and click OK. Choose Layer›New›Layer. Click OK. Grab the Paint Bucket, press X, then click to fill the layer with white.
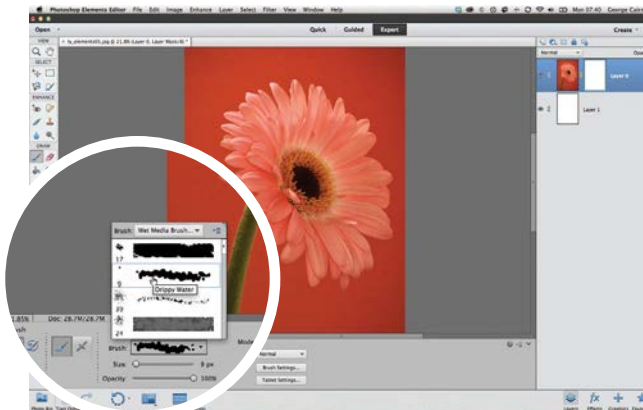
3 Choose a brush tip
Drag the white layer below the photo in the Layers panel. Click the photo layer and choose Layer›Layer Mask›Reveal All. Grab the brush tool. Click the Brush Preset picker. Set the Brush drop-down menu to Wet Media Brushes, and select the Drippy Water preset tip.
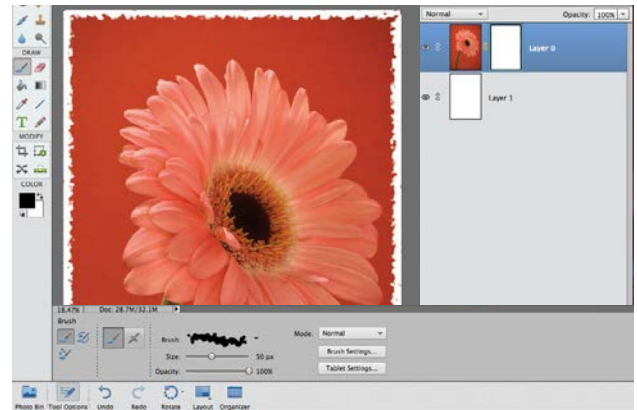
4 Draw the border
Click the layer mask, press X, and set Size to 50. Click the image at the top left corner, hold down Shift, then click at the top right. This will draw a straight line that creates an artistic border. Still holding down Shift, click each corner to continue drawing the border around the shot. ●

AFTER

BEFORE

Make greetings cards from your photos

Produce perfect prints and turn your images into creative assets such as greetings cards

In the days of film, you'd snap a series of shots and then send the roll off to be developed and printed. These days you can develop your shots at home using Photoshop Elements as your digital darkroom. You can then use Elements to share your photos as a variety of hard-copy products, such as traditional prints or creative personalised greetings cards.

Tweaking the colours and tones of an image in Photoshop Elements, then ending up with a print that looks nothing like the on-screen version of the photo can be frustrating. There are several reasons this problem might occur. Computer monitors produce millions of colours by mixing reds, greens and blues together, while printers combine cyan, magenta, black and yellow to create a narrower range of colours. Your monitor is also brightly lit, leading to vibrant colours that can look comparatively drab on paper.

If you're printing at home then make sure your printer is performing properly. Use your printer's utility software to check the cartridge's ink level. Do a test print to make sure that the print head is aligned. Clogged nozzles will ruin any print, so do a nozzle check too. Using the ink that the manufacturer recommends will prolong your printer's life and produce the best results.

Choose a heavyweight photo gloss inkjet paper that's designed for high-resolution prints. Cheap paper tends to absorb and spread the ink, leading to muddy-looking prints with washed-out colours and poor definition. We'll talk you through different ways to set up Elements to get your printed shots looking their best, as well as producing a range of printed products. ▶

BEFORE

BEFORE

BEFORE
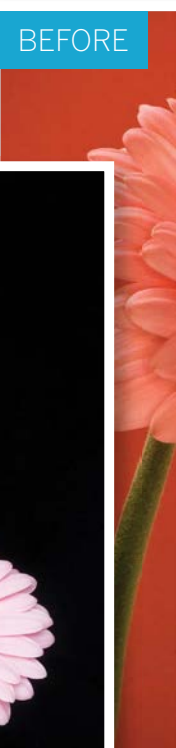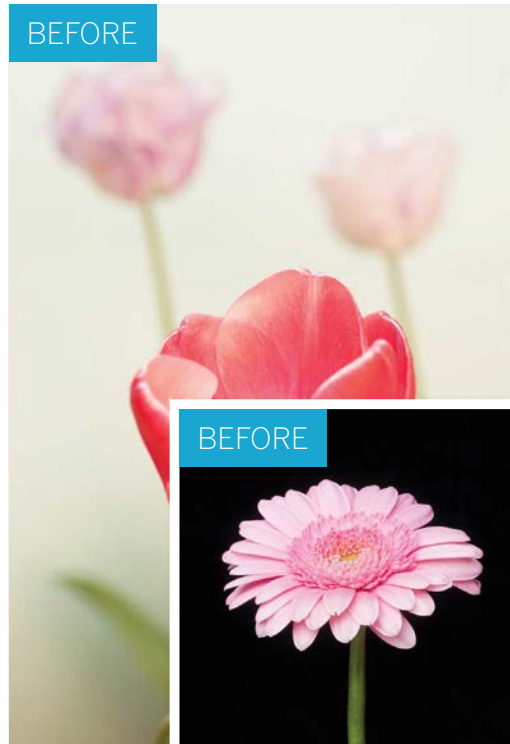
AFTER

HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY

FROM
George and Claire
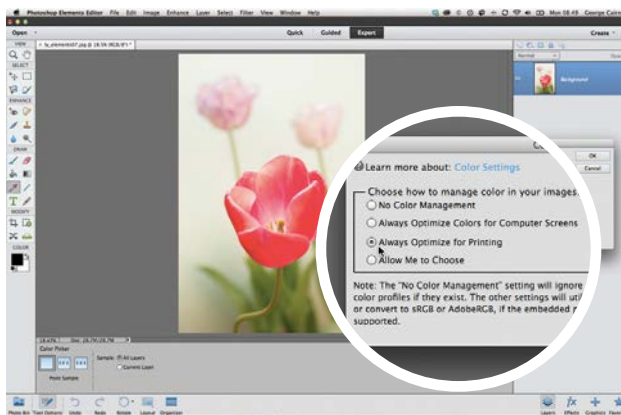
1 Set up the colour space

Open ty_elements07.jpg. Go to Edit›Color Settings. If you plan to share your images online, tick Always Optimize Colors for Computer Screens. If you plan to print your images, choose Always Optimize for Printing. This helps to ensure that the colours of your images are printable.

2 Choose your output

Enter the Expert editing mode and click the Create tab. In the Photo Prints panel, you can print a group of opened photos as a contact sheet. If you don't possess a printer, you can click the Order Prints button to get a third-party company to print your photos and post them to you.
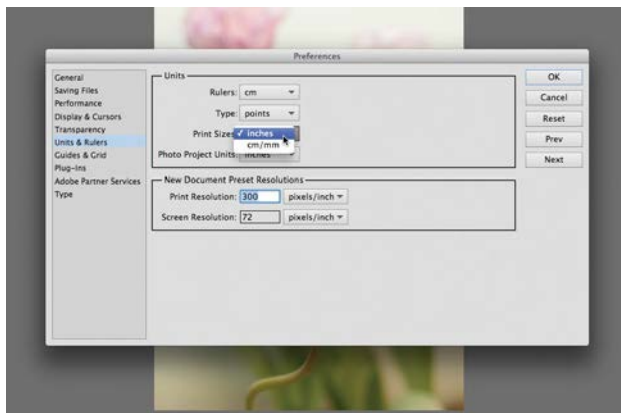
3 Set measurement preferences

Photoshop Elements offers print sizes in centimetres and millimetres. If you prefer to measure your print sizes in inches, go to Preferences›Units & Rulers and set the Print Sizes menu to Inches. This enables you to set your printer to resize a shot to typical print sizes such as 4"x6".
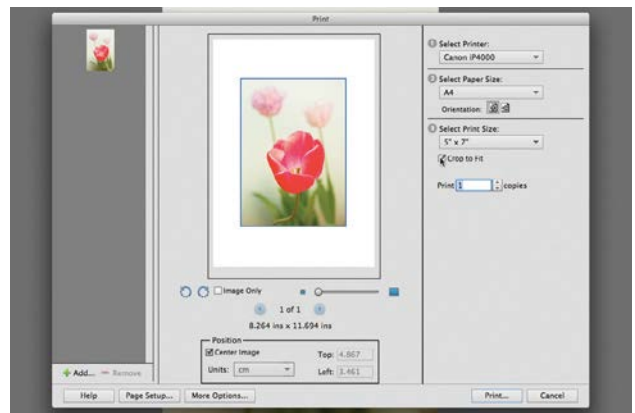
4 Choose a size

To print directly from your computer to a printer, click the Local printer option on the Photo Prints tab. A Print dialog will appear. Choose your printer from the Select Printer menu, set the Select Paper menu to A4, set the print size you want to use, and tick the Crop to Fit box.
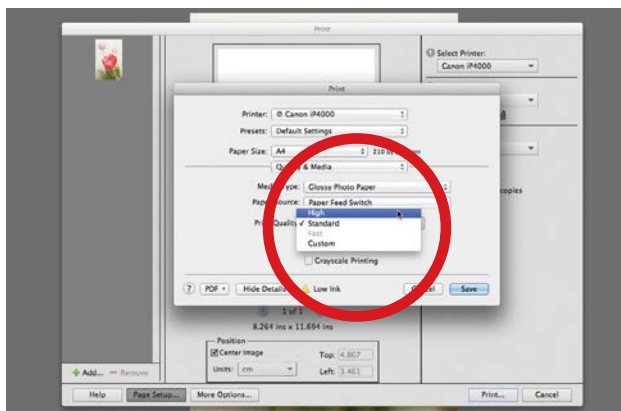
5 Set up your printer

Click the Page Set Up button, choose the Quality & Media option, and set Media Type to suit the paper you're using (such as Glossy Photo Paper). Set the Print Quality to High. These settings will make the printer take longer to print the image, but the results will be worth it.
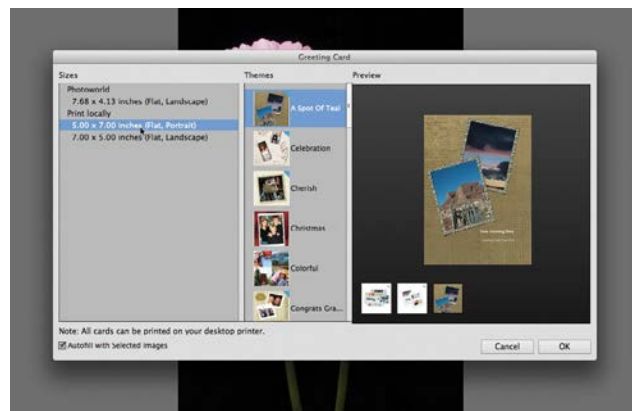
6 Make a greetings card

You can combine shots together in more creative ways to produce personalised printed calendars or greetings cards. Close ty_elements07.jpg and open our other flower images — ty_elements05.jpg and ty_elements06.jpg. Go to the Create tab and choose Greeting Card.
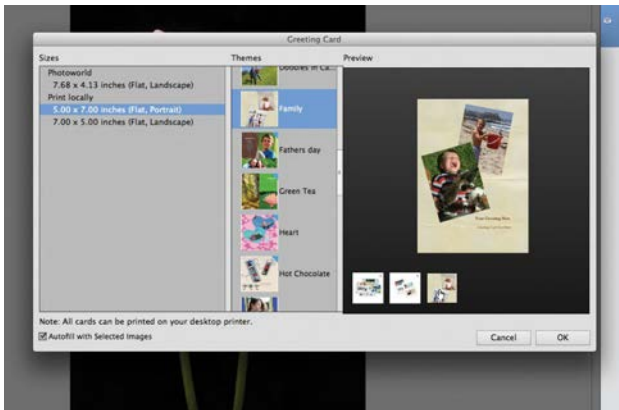
7 Choose a theme

Go to the Themes section and scroll down to choose a theme for your design. There's a range to suit occasions such as Father's Day or Christmas. Here we've gone for the Family theme. Click the third icon in the Preview window and tick the Auto Fill with Selected Images box. Click OK.
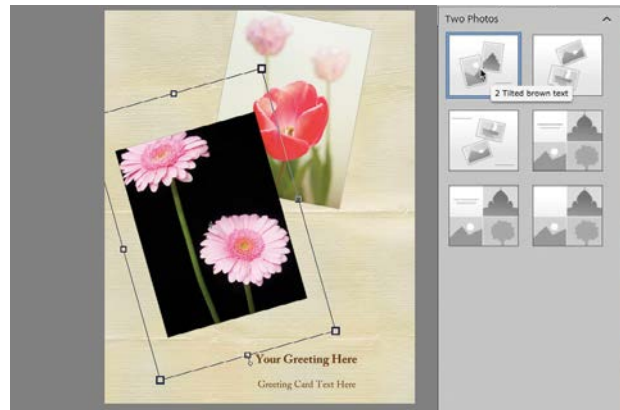
8 Choose a layout

Photoshop Elements will import your images into a new document, rotate and scale them, then add other assets such as a background texture and text fields. If you click the Layouts icon at the bottom right you can experiment with different photo and text arrangements.

9 Recompose the images

The scaled and rotated photos may not be displayed correctly, which will spoil their original composition. Double click a photo and a slider will appear at the top. Drag this slider to the left to scale down the image so that you can see more of its content. Click the tick when you're satisfied.
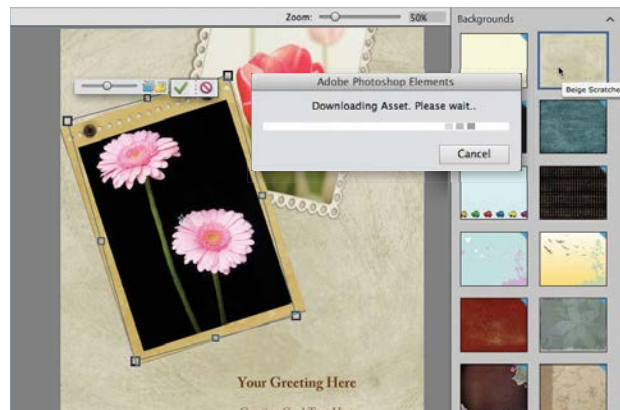
10 Customise the design

Click the Graphics icon at the bottom right. Here you can add extra assets such as frames and backgrounds. Click a photo and then choose a frame such as Scalloped Frame. We've also added the Old Frame to our foreground photo and added the Beige Scratched background.

11 Personalise the text

To add a message to your card, grab the Type tool, double click a text field and type your message. Click the tick to apply the change. You can reposition an edited text field by dragging its bounding box, or you can resize it by dragging one of the box handles.
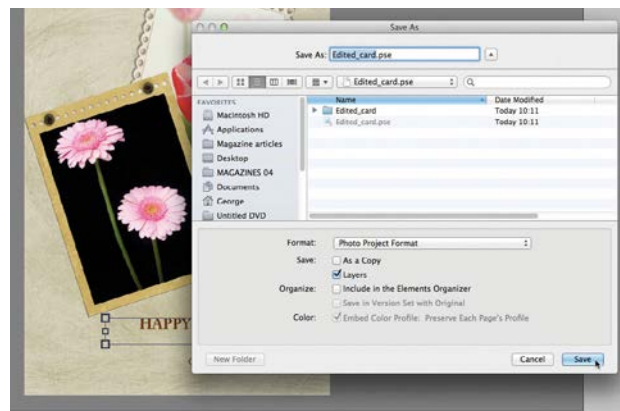
12 Save the design

When you've finished customising your card, click Save. This will save the file as a Photo Project Format document. You can open a Photo Project Format (.pse) file and continue modifying the text, layout, frames and background. This makes it easy to reuse good designs. ●

Upload to Facebook and Twitter

Link Photoshop Elements' Organizer to popular social networking providers so you can share your photos

Back in the days of film cameras, we'd need to send our negatives off to be developed and then wait a while for them to be processed, printed and then posted back for us to enjoy. We'd then be able to share our holiday adventures with family and friends by passing the physical prints around.

Thanks to digital cameras and camera phones we're shooting thousands more images than we did back in the days of analogue film. As a result we're less likely to share our photos as physical prints. Fortunately, Photoshop Elements provides a one-stop shop when it comes to organising, editing and sharing your images. The Share tab reflects the fact that in these digital days we're much more likely to share our photos electronically, via social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter.

In the following tutorial we'll demonstrate how to get Photoshop Elements to link with popular social networking sites such as Facebook, so you can export your images directly from the Organizer to online galleries. This improved sharing feature enables you to enjoy instant feedback on your photography skills from your friends, family, and even your Twitter followers.

BEFORE
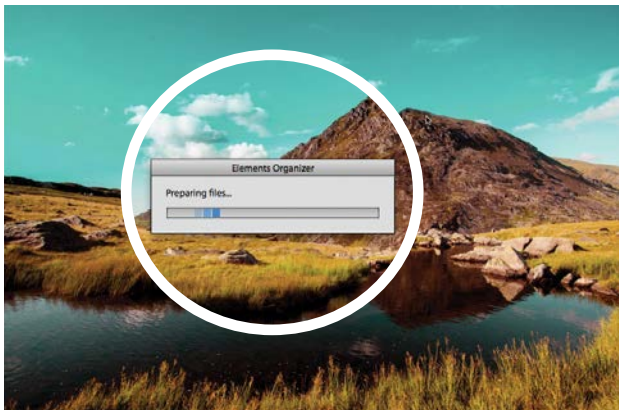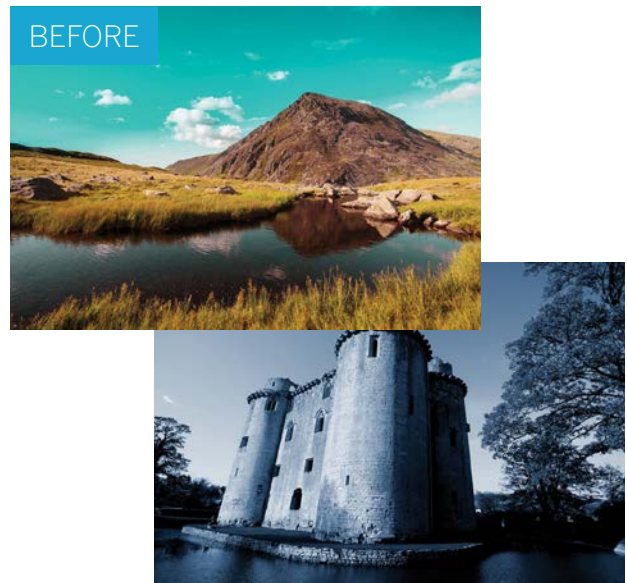
1 Authorise Elements
Open the Organizer and click the thumbnail of an image you want to share. Go to Share and click the Facebook icon. You'll be asked to authorise Organizer to upload images to your Facebook account. Photoshop Elements will then resize your image so that it's suitable for a Facebook gallery.
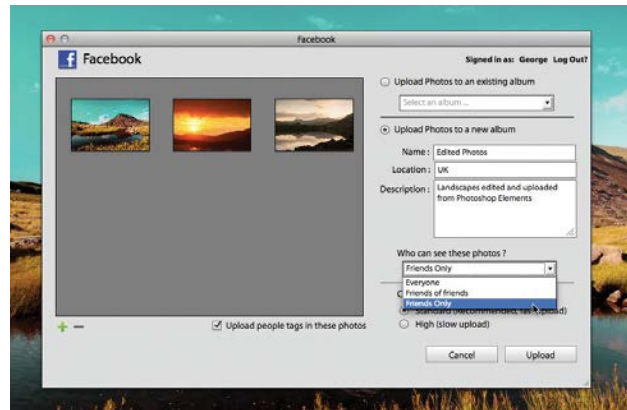
2 Create an album
Click the green + icon to add more images. In the Add Media window, browse to a new image and click Add Selected Media. Click Done. Tick the Upload Photos to new album button. You can also choose whether to make the images viewable by Friends Only or Everyone. Click Upload.
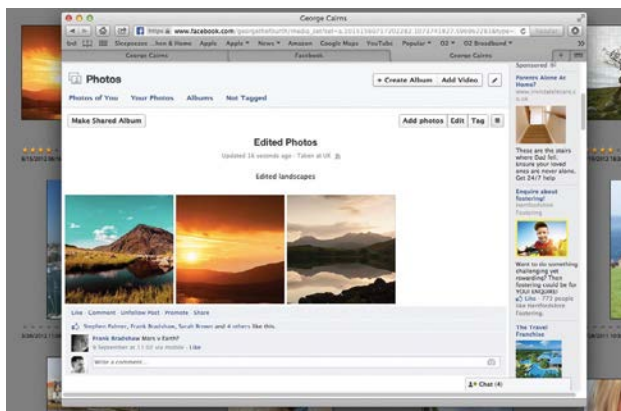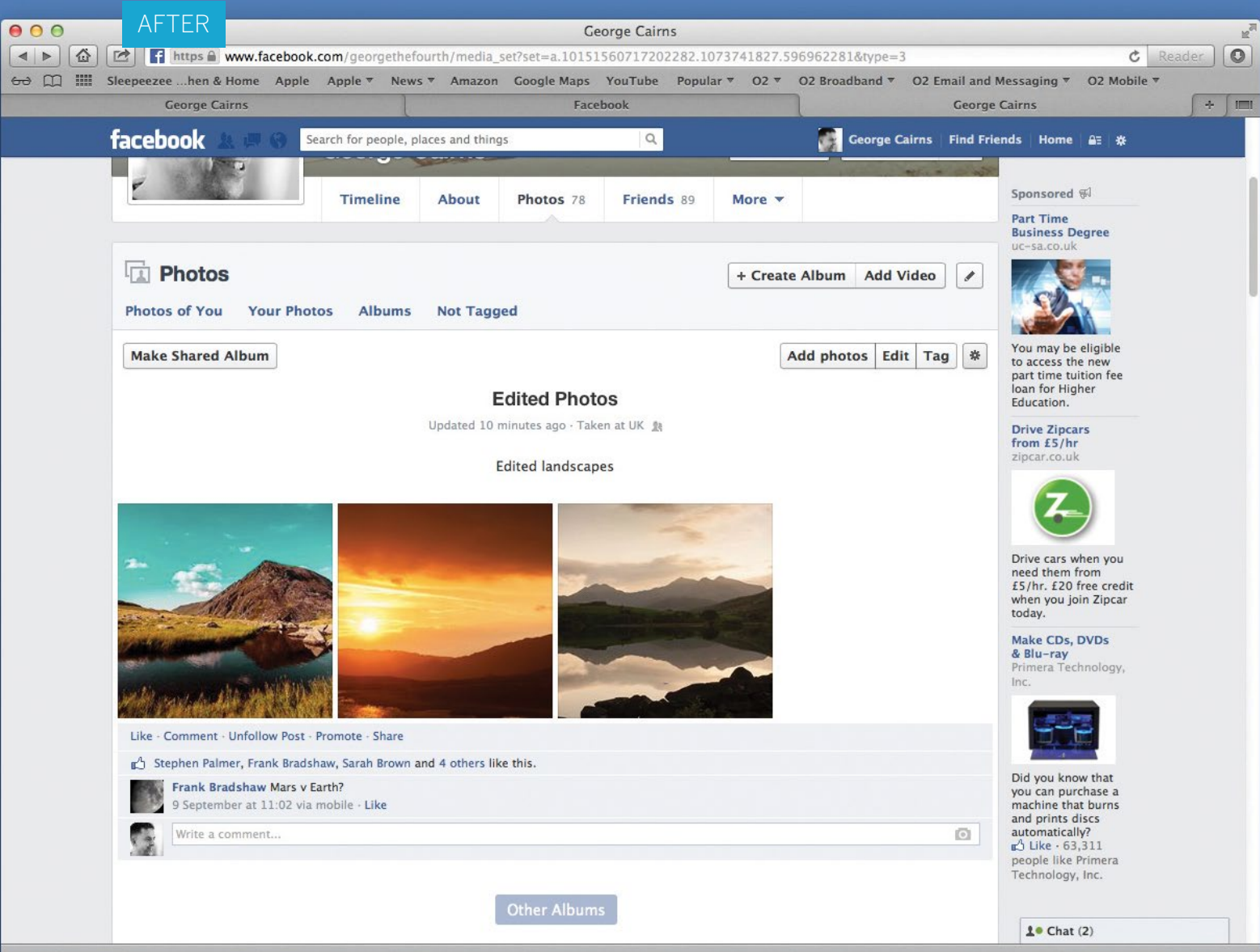
3 Upload to Facebook

Once the images have been uploaded you'll get a message saying Upload Complete. You can either click Done or Visit Facebook. This will launch your browser and take you to the Facebook gallery you created in the previous step. The procedure for sharing to Flickr is very similar.
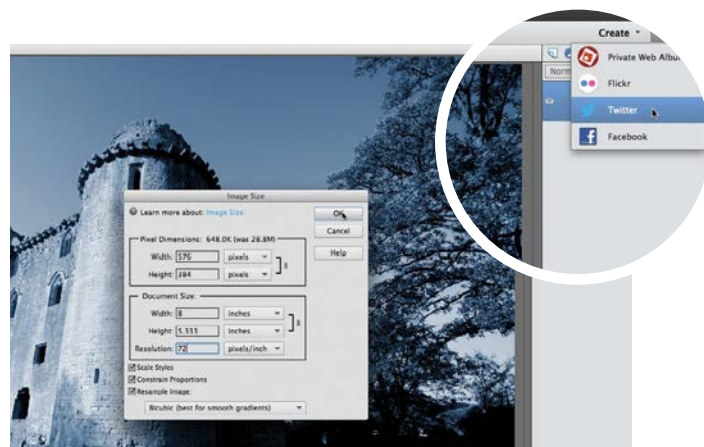
4 Resize for Twitter

To share an image via Twitter, it needs to be under 3MB. Open an image and choose Image>Resize>Image Size. Tick the Resample Image box. Set Resolution to 72. Set the Document Size menu to measure in Inches and set Width to 8. Click OK. Click Share and export the image to Twitter. ●

Create Facebook covers in seconds

Use the new themes to make your own cover pictures for your Facebook page

E lements 13 offers a new tool that makes it very easy to create Facebook cover layouts, simplifying the process of resizing images and fitting them into specific layouts. These can then be uploaded to your Facebook page with a couple of clicks. There are a range of themes to choose from, with options to add more or fewer images as well as graphics and type.

Here we'll show you how to create your own custom cover. If you want to make a layout like the one shown here then you'll need two images. Other themes will require more or fewer. We'll start by adding our images to the 'Clean' theme, then go on to add words to the design. And just for fun, we'll create a simple clipping mask by selecting and copying the sky to a new layer, so that we can constrain the word to the sky and thereby make it look as if it's tucked behind the mountains.

1 Choose a theme
Choose some suitable images that will fit within the layout. Open the images you intend to use, then click Create at the top right and choose Facebook Cover. We've chosen 'Clean' from the list of themes here. Uncheck the Auto-Fill box and click OK.

2 Position the images
Drag your images into the layout from the Photo Bin, then move it up or down to fine-tune the positioning. If you need to, adjust the bounding box to resize the image within the window. You can also add words with the Type tool. Grab it from the panel on the left and choose a font.

BEFORE

BEFORE

AFTER

HIMALAYAS

3 Add the words

Type your word and use the Move tool to position it. Just for fun we'll tuck the words behind the mountain. Click the Advanced Mode button, then click Layers at the bottom right. Highlight the main image layer. Grab the Quick Selection tool and paint over the sky, then press Cmd/Ctrl+J.

4 Upload to Facebook

Drag the new sky layer below the type layer, then Alt-click the line between the two layers to clip the words to the sky. Grab the Move tool and drag the word down behind the mountains. Click Upload. If it's the first time you've accessed Facebook in Elements, you'll need to log in.
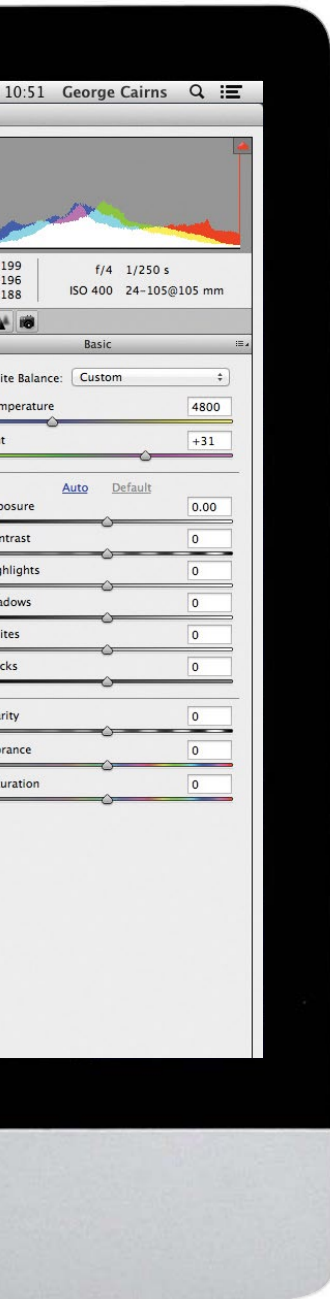
Working with raw files

Raw files are the format of choice for pro photographers. Discover how to edit them using Photoshop Elements

Introducing Adobe Camera Raw

Learn how to use Photoshop Elements' pro-level image-processing digital darkroom, Camera Raw

Photoshop Elements' Quick, Guided and Expert editing modes are designed to help you edit JPEG images. JPEGs are files that have been processed in a camera to change their colour and tones according to various preset shooting modes (such as Landscape).

By saving a photo as a JPEG your camera creates a small file that won't take up too much space on your memory card (or PC's hard drive). However, the downside of the JPEG format is that it's compressed. Much of the information about the colour and tone in a photo is lost. All that remains is a shorthand description of the scene. If you want to restore missing highlight or colour detail to a JPEG you may end up revealing compression artefacts. A clear summer sky in a JPEG may consist of jagged bands of colour instead of a smooth gradient, for example.

By shooting in a raw format (such as .CR2 or .NEF) you can capture much more information about the colours and tones in a scene. This gives Photoshop Elements more to work with. Here's how to use the Camera Raw editor's suite of tools to reveal more colour and tonal detail without adding artefacts...

Overview The Raw editor's tool bar

Discover which tools to use to improve a raw file's composition and colour

04 CROP TOOL

This tool enables you to improve composition by removing frame edges. The raw editor's Crop tool is non-destructive, so you can restore missing edge details at any time in the future. Hold down the mouse button to modify the way the tool behaves.

05 STRAIGHTEN TOOL

The Straighten tool enables you to counteract tilted horizons quickly and effectively (such as the one in this beach photo) to make them run parallel with the edge of the frame. It can also correct slanting vertical lines.

06 RED EYE REMOVAL

Elements has Red Eye Removal tools in most editing modes, and the raw editor is no exception. Click this tool on any flash-induced glowing red pupils to turn them a healthy black.

01 RAW FILE

Our ty_elements32.dng file has been saved as a digital negative. The raw format of the file means that the image will automatically open in the Photoshop Elements' Camera Raw editor. We can then apply a suite of tools to process the image.

02 ZOOM TOOL

When processing a raw file to sharpen it you need to see the image's actual pixels. Right click with the Zoom tool and choose 100% from the pop-up menu. The adjacent Hand tool enables you to drag a zoomed shot around to examine different areas.

03 WHITE BALANCE

This tool enables you to fix a white balance problem by sampling something that should be white. If the sampled pixels are too warm, the tool will cool down the colours, removing any colour cast in the entire shot (as we'll demonstrate later in this chapter).

Overview The Camera Raw editor

Familiarise yourself with the raw editor's key features
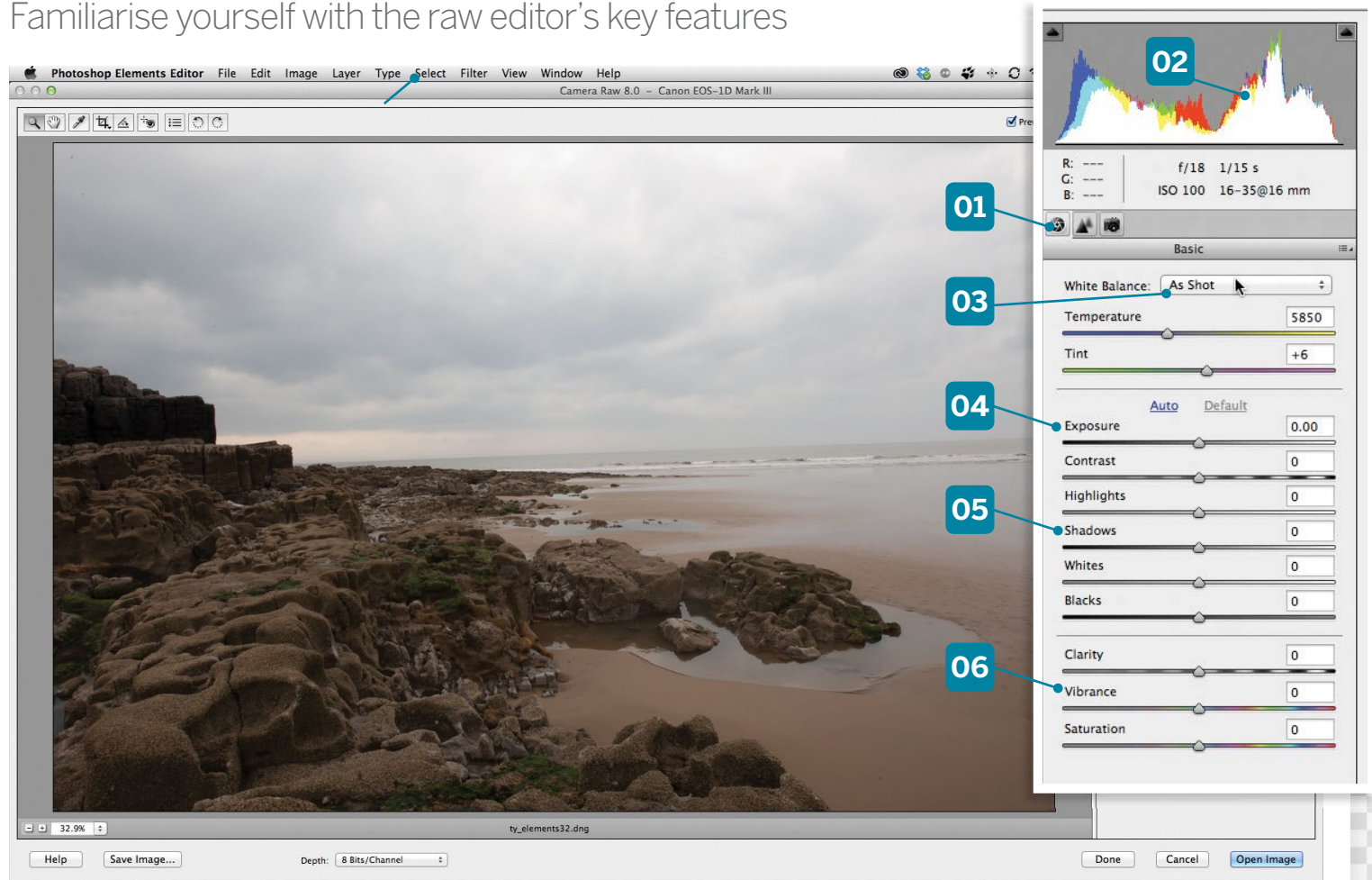
01 THE BASIC TAB

This tab contains most of Camera Raw's colour and tone correcting tools. The adjacent Detail tab enables you to sharpen your raw shots to create a print with more punch. It will also enable you to reduce picture noise.

02 THE HISTOGRAM

This graph shows you the spread and strength of tones in the image, with the shadows on the left, midtones in the middle and highlights on the right. This photo has a fairly healthy spread of tones, although it lacks detail and contrast in the midtones.

03 WHITE BALANCE

If your camera chooses the wrong Auto White Balance setting, click this drop-down menu to experiment with white balance presets such as Daylight or Tungsten. Drag the Temperature slider to manually warm or cool colours.

04 EXPOSURE

This collection of sliders enables you to target and tweak particular tones. The Exposure slider enables you to fix over- or under-exposed shots. Drag the Highlights slider left to restore missing highlight detail without altering the shadows.

05 SHADOWS

To create strong dark shadows without messing with the midtones or highlights, drag this slider to the left. Reveal missing shadow and midtone detail by sliding it to the right.

06 VIBRANCE

If you drag the Saturation slider right, it applies equal colour boosting adjustments to all the colours in the image. The Vibrance slider makes selective adjustments, boosting weaker colours more strongly than healthier ones. ▶

Typical workflow in Adobe Camera Raw

Discover how to process your digital negatives

Now that you've been introduced to many of the key components in the Camera Raw editor, you can begin to explore some of these tools and sliders in more detail. There are many good reasons to shoot and process raw files instead of JPEGS. For starters you can capture much more information about the colours and tones in a scene by shooting in raw, so this enables you to recover detail in blown-out highlights or under-exposed shadows. The raw editor also boasts the amazing Clarity slider, which can increase midtone contrast much more effectively than the standard editor's Levels command. This enables you to reveal delicate midtone details (and enhance what appear to be boring overcast clouds), as you'll see in this tutorial.

When you shoot and save in JPEG format, the camera will apply colour and tonal tweaks to the shot according to the Scene mode that it's set to. This can produce photos with garish colours, or dark under-exposed shadows. You can edit these colours and tones in the Expert editor, but you risk revealing compression artefacts. By shooting in raw you have much more colour and tonal information to plunder, enabling you to produce photos that feature more detail and have less unwanted artefacts. You may feel that to shoot and process raw files is an advanced skill, but this isn't the case. The raw editor provides all the colour, composition and tone-tweaking tools close to hand, which removes the need to search around in menus and sub-menus. Best of all, the raw editor is non-destructive. You can't permanently change any of the original file's information, so it's easy to revert back to the original file if you make a mistake.

BEFORE
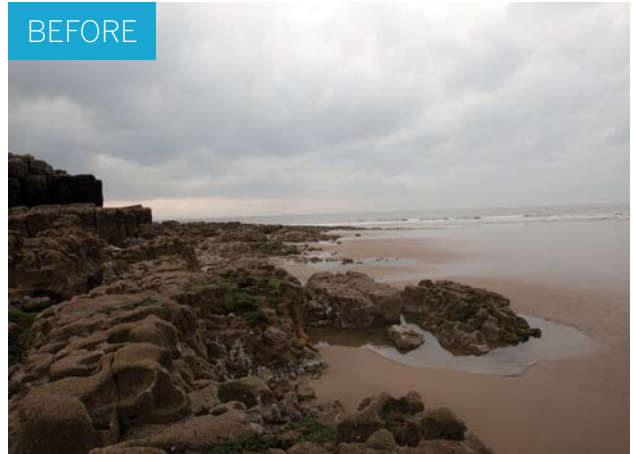
AFTER
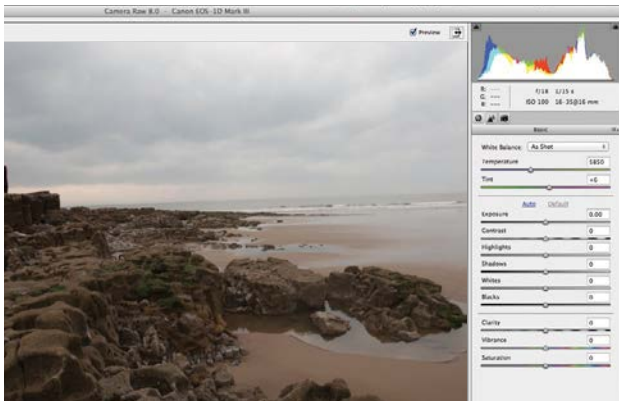
1 Open the image

Go to File›Open and browse to the ty_elements32.dng starting image. The file is a .dng (digital negative), so it will open in the Camera Raw editor. There's no universal raw format, which is why Adobe invented .dng. Different camera manufacturers produce their own unique raw format files.

2 Crop the shot

The horizon is tilted. Grab the Crop tool and draw a crop box that's slightly smaller than the image. If you place the cursor outside the crop overlay, a rotate icon will appear. Drag this to rotate the crop box so that its top edge runs parallel with the tilted horizon. Click the Zoom tool.
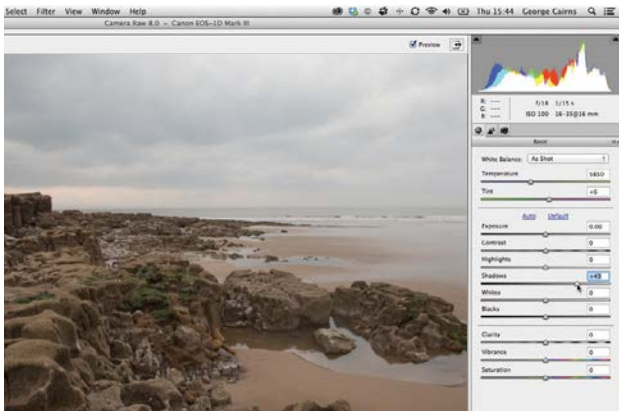
3 Lighten the midtones

The shot lacks detail in the midtones, but it has plenty of shadow and highlight information. If we increased the Exposure value we'd brighten it up, but this would blow out detail in the highlights. To selectively lighten the midtones, drag the Shadows slider to +49.

4 Increase midtone contrast

The clouds consist of fairly flat-lit midtones. Drag the Clarity slider to +41 to increase the contrast of the midtones. This teases out texture detail in the clouds. It also reveals more texture and detail in the sand and the rocks, which helps give the shot more impact.
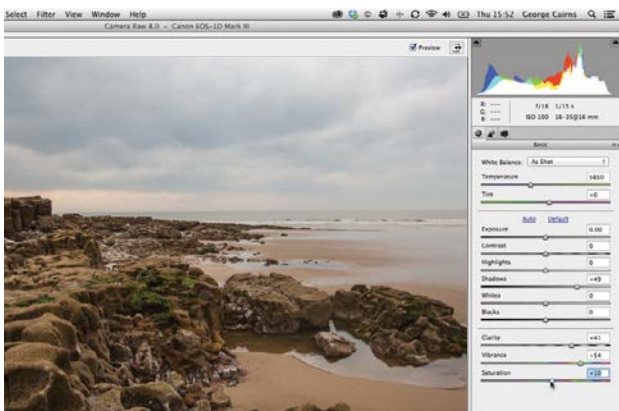
5 Boost the colours

Boost the Vibrance to +54 to reveal the green vegetation on the rocks. The clouds look a little bluer too, which adds variety to the scene. Set Saturation to +10 for a gentle overall colour boost. Our digital negative is looking much better now that we've developed it in Camera Raw.
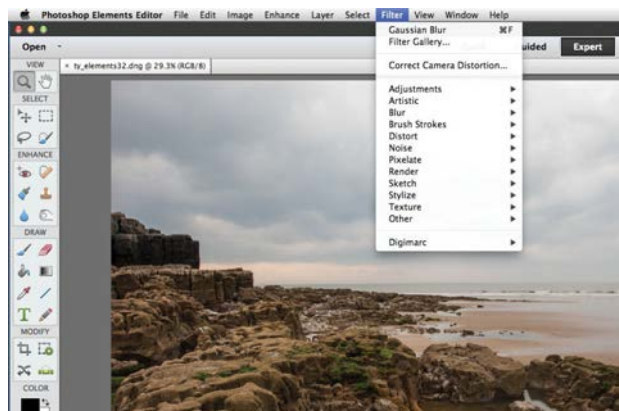
6 Close the file

After processing a raw file you can click Done. This will store all the settings and cropping information alongside the raw file, so that you can continue fine-tuning the image at a later date. If you click Open Image you take the processed shot into the main Photoshop Elements Editor.

Remove colour casts

Counteract a colour cast in a raw file using White
Balance presets or the one-click White Balance tool

To a camera, daylight is blue and indoor light is orange. When shooting in various lighting conditions a camera's Auto White balance (AWB) setting attempts to get white details in the scene looking white. If the camera balances the whites correctly then the resulting photograph will be tint-free and display the true colours of the scene. However, sometimes a photo will still look too cold or too warm (as is the case in the starting file for this tutorial).

In chapter 4 we demonstrated how to correct colour casts in compressed JPEG files. This can involve using an eyedropper to sample areas that should be a neutral white. If the sampled white is tinted blue then the eyedropper will warm it up to make the white look white. This will correct the colours in the rest of the shot at the same time. You can perform the same colour-correction trick in the Camera Raw editor. The raw editor also enables you to step back in time and experiment with different in-camera white balance settings (such as Daylight) to produce more natural-looking

and tint-free colours. This enables you to overcome easy-to-make mistakes such as using the wrong white balance preset while on location, as you'll see in the steps below.

BEFORE
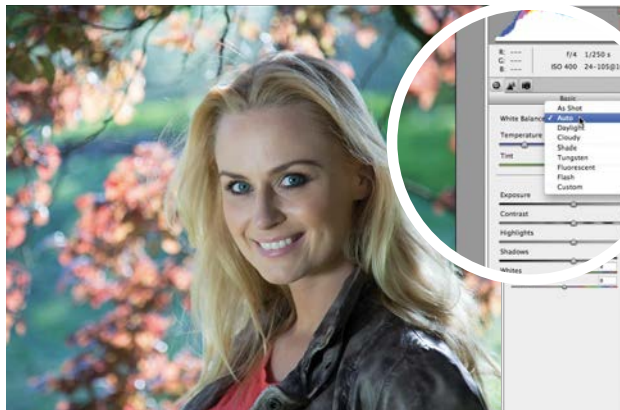
1 Auto White Balance
Open ty_elements29.dng. The raw file will open in the Camera Raw editor. The model's skin tones appear a bit too orange, so we'll need to cool down the colour a little for better skin tones. A good place to start is the White balance Presets menu. Set it to Auto. This removes the warm tint.
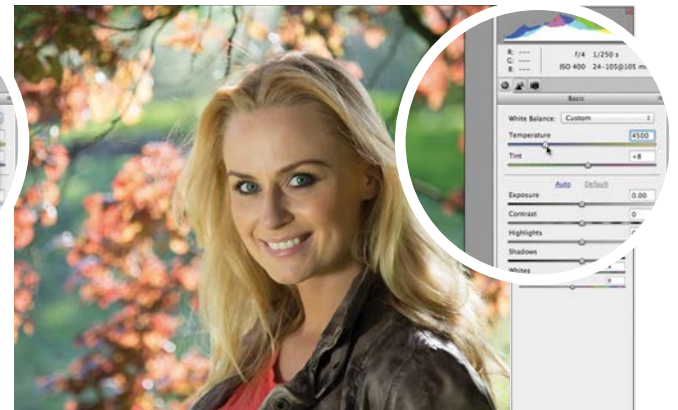
2 Fine-tune the temperature
The Auto preset drops the colour temperature from 5200 to a cooler 3650 degrees Kelvin. The skin tones look more natural, but are now a little too cold. We can fine-tune the colour by manually increasing the Temperature slider to a slightly warmer 4500.

AFTER
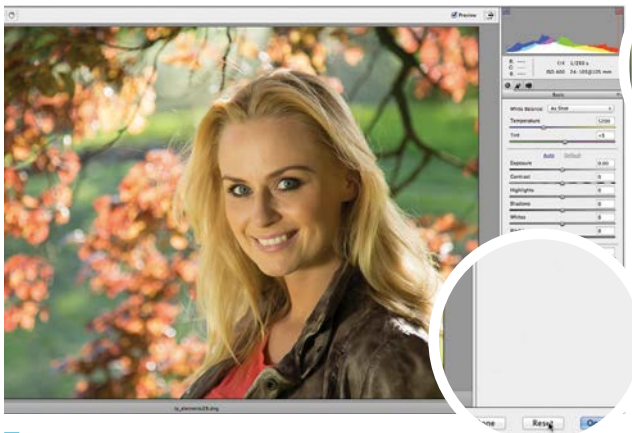
3 Reset the colours

The White Balance presets are unique to the raw editor, but if they don't produce the desired results you can fix colours with a click. Hold down Alt and click Reset. This will restore the raw file to its original settings. Click the White Balance tool in the tool bar.
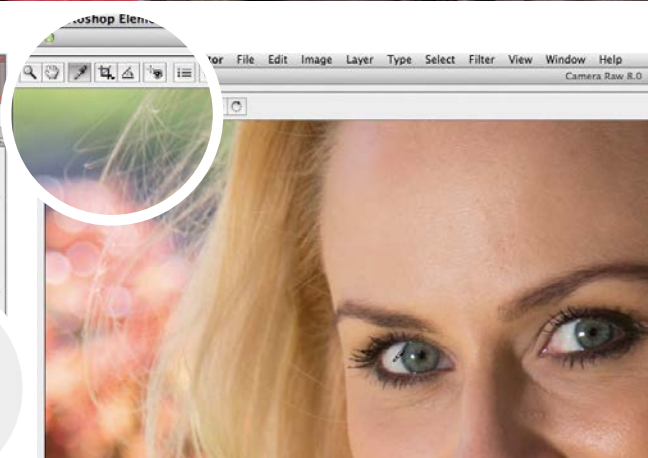
4 One-click fix

Click the eyedropper on the whites of the eyes. The tool will adjust the colour to make the eye whites look white, which removes the tint from the other colours in the image at the same time. You can drop the Temperature slider to 4450 to cool the shot a little. Click Done to finish.

Get perfect exposures

Boost the shadows, midtones and highlights of a photo to reveal more detail and improve the contrast

On the previous pages we demonstrated how to remove a warm colour cast from our raw starting image (ty_elements29.dng) to create more natural-looking skin tones. It's worth working through that lesson first because it feeds directly into this one. When you adjust the colour balance of an image using tools such as the White Balance tool, you can alter its exposure, which is why it makes sense to remove colour casts before overcoming any exposure-related problems that the shot already suffers from.

It can be a challenge to capture a shot with detail in the shadows, midtones and highlights, especially when shooting a high-contrast scene. You may end up with over-exposed (or clipped) areas that feature no texture or detail (such as the sun-lit leaves in this image). We'll show you how to activate the raw editor's clipping warnings, so you can see problematic areas such as over-exposed highlights. After tweaking the overall exposure of an image, you'll then discover how to use sliders to target and tweak specific tones to reveal more highlight detail, without altering more correctly exposed tones in the rest of the image.

The great thing about shooting in the raw format is that you have much more tonal information to work with than you'd get from a compressed JPEG. For example, a white sky in a raw file may look totally bland and overcast, but by adjusting the Highlights slider you should be able to reveal hidden cloud texture and detail. You can also lighten under-exposed shadows without clipping highlights, and even give midtones a contrast boost to give subtle details more impact. ▶

BEFORE

Teach yourself **Photoshop Elements**
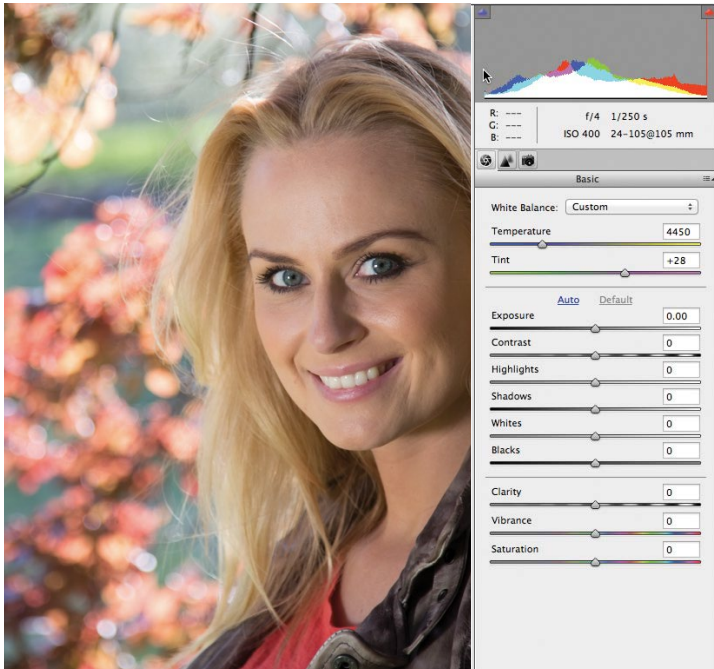
1 Read the histogram

Open ty_elements29.dng. By looking at the raw file's histogram graph (at the top right of the Camera Raw workspace) we can see that it has tones in the shadows, midtones and highlights. However, the blue shadows on the far left don't peak very high, so they could be a little darker to give the shot more contrast. The red highlights on the right are shooting up to the top, indicating some over-exposed areas in the leaves.
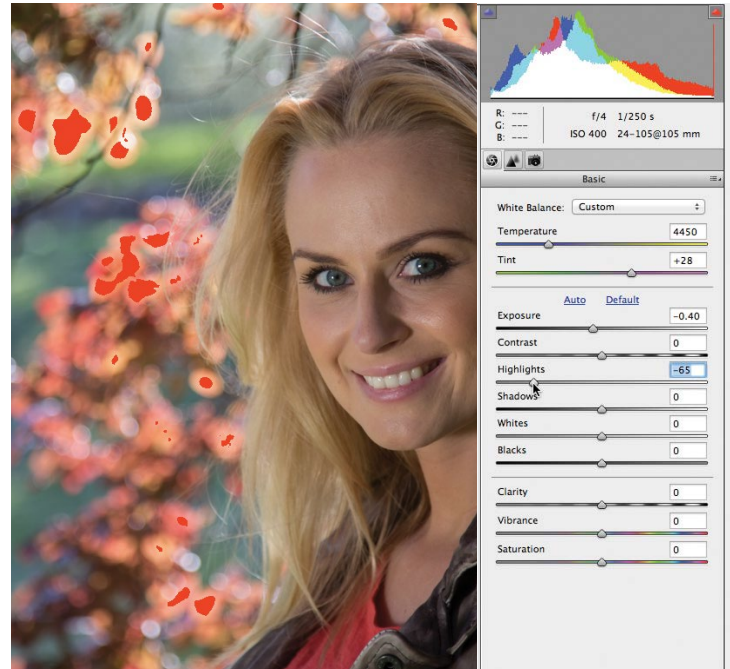
2 Turn on clipping warnings

To see which areas are over-exposed, click the red highlight clipping warning triangle at the top right of the histogram (or press O for over-exposed). The blown-out areas appear as patches of red in the main image. By sliding Exposure to -0.40 you can diminish the red clipped patches a little. Drag the Highlights slider to -65 to restore more clipped highlight detail without under-exposing the highlights in the subject's face.
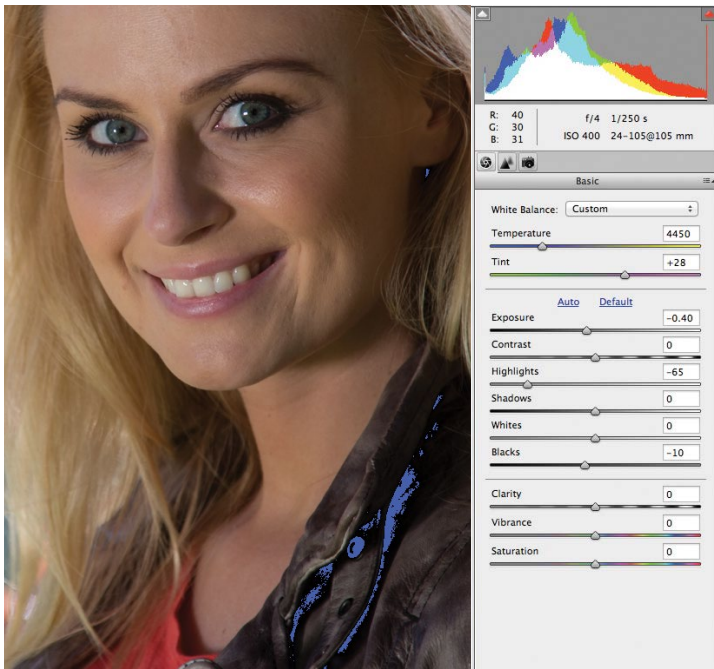
3 Boost the contrast

It's fine if a few clipped highlight patches remain in the background, because there's no crucial texture detail in these blurred areas. Press O to turn off the highlight clipping warning. A photo should have some bright highlights and dark shadows to create good contrast. Press U to activate the Shadow clipping warning. Drag the Blacks slider left to -10. Some blue shadow clipping patches will appear on the coat, but there's no crucial detail to be lost here.
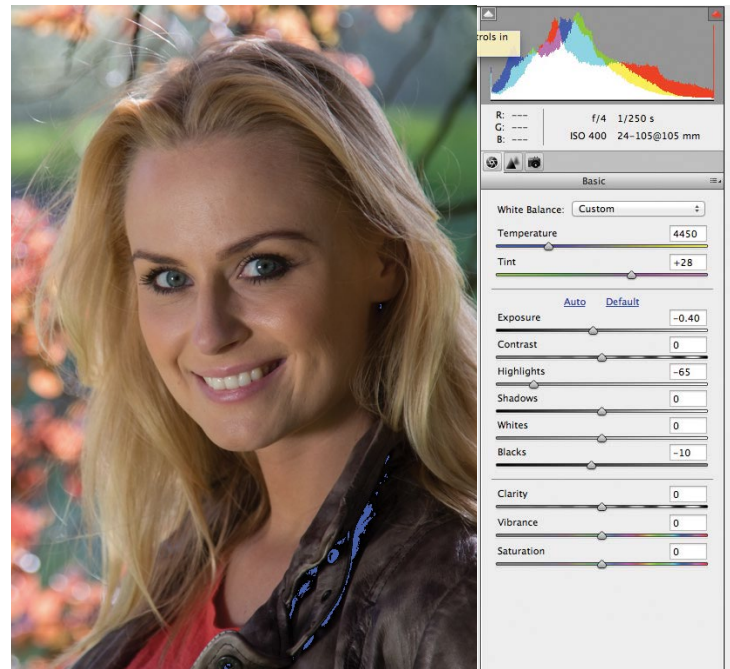
4 Before and after

Press U to remove the blue shadow clipping warning patches. The histogram now has more shadow information peaking at the far left, and the highlight information isn't peaking quite so high at the right. Toggle the Preview button to see a before and after version of the edited shot. The histogram will also toggle between the original and edited version. After enhancing the brightest highlights and the darkest shadows we can now reveal more midtone detail.
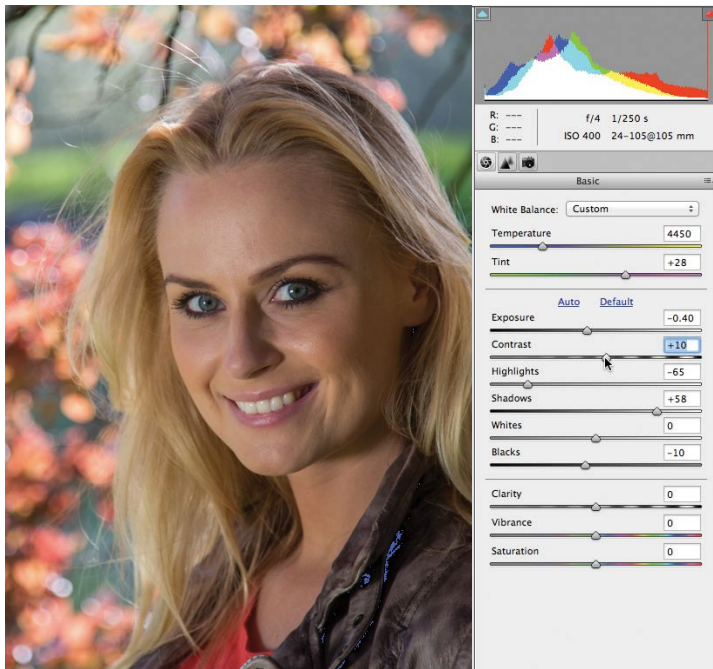
5 Boost the shadows

If you need to reveal shadow and midtone detail, you can drag the Shadows slider to the right. A value of +58 will gently lighten some of the midtone detail in her face. The shadow clipping warning patches will shrink a little, revealing more shadow detail. Another way to make sure that you have some strong black shadows and bright white highlights is to drag the Contrast slider to the right, but keep it to a low value such as +15 to minimise clipping.
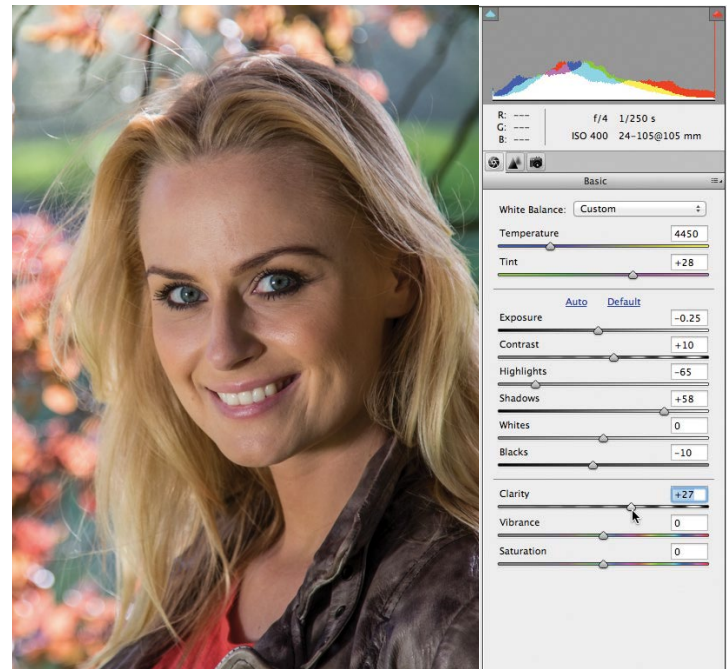
6 Enhance midtone contrast

The histogram is now looking healthier, with information spreading throughout the tonal range. However, we can boost the midtone contrast to make subtle textures and details stand out. Drag the Clarity slider to +27. This gives the subject's facial features more impact. Don't go too far with Clarity because this can exaggerate unwanted details such as skin pores and wrinkles. Tweak the Exposure to -0.25 to lift the overall brightness.
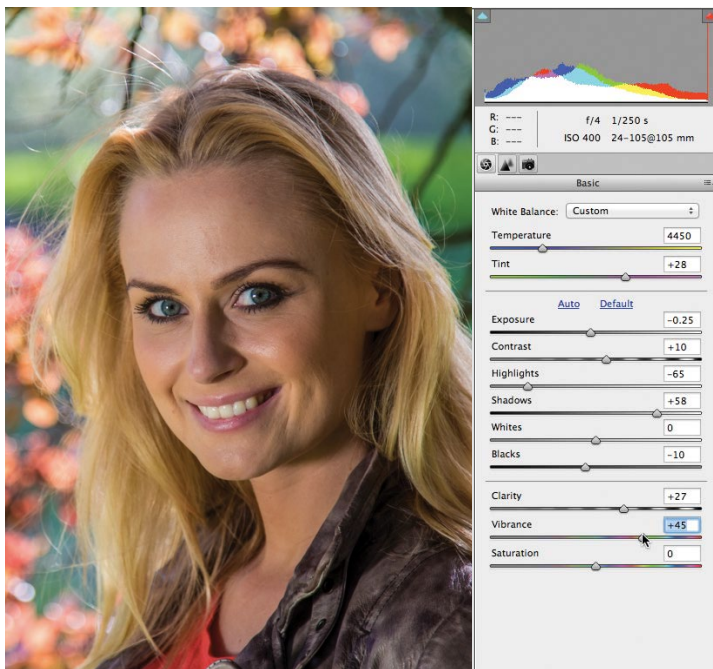
7 Boost the saturation

If you boost the Saturation in a raw file it will increase the strength of the colours equally. This can produce colours that are unprintable. It can also make skin tones look too orange and fake. Push Vibrance up to +45. This boosts the strength of weaker colours (such as the green field) without over-saturating stronger colours. It leaves the subject's skin tone saturation relatively unaltered, too. We now have healthier colours and tones.
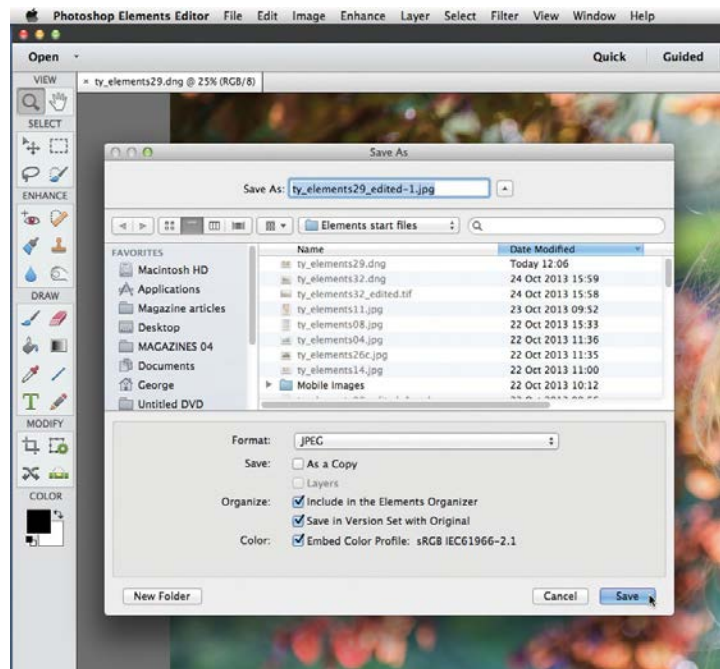
8 Non-destructive editing

Feel free to experiment with different slider settings, because you can't permanently change the look of the original file. By clicking Default you can reset the sliders to 0. The Vibrance and Clarity sliders need to be manually reset. When you're happy with the look of your processed raw file, click Open Image to open it in the main Photoshop Elements editor. You can then save it as a JPEG and share it with family and friends. ●

Reduce image noise in your raw files

Use the Noise Reduction sliders to reduce grain while preserving detail throughout your picture

When shooting with a traditional analogue camera, you could use film with different ISO speeds to help you capture more detail in low-light conditions. The faster (higher) the film's ISO speed, the more sensitive it would be to available light. A fast film enabled you to avoid using slow shutter speeds in low light, so you could capture detail without the need for a tripod. However, fast ISO speed film would add grain to your negatives. The higher the ISO speed, the grainer the shots would be.

Digital cameras recreate the traditional ISO film speed effect to enable you to capture more detail in low light. As with film, high ISO settings (such as 1600) are more sensitive to light, but they will add more picture noise to your digital raw files. Digital noise is a bit like film grain, but it's sharper, uglier and more distracting. As well as luminance (greyscale) noise, your high ISO setting photos can suffer from rainbow speckles of colour noise.

In the previous pages we demonstrated how to reveal more detail in images without adding artefacts. When reducing image noise we have to be careful not to add blur to important details. Fortunately, the raw editor has a few tricks and techniques to help you get a balance between removing noise and preserving detail.

BEFORE
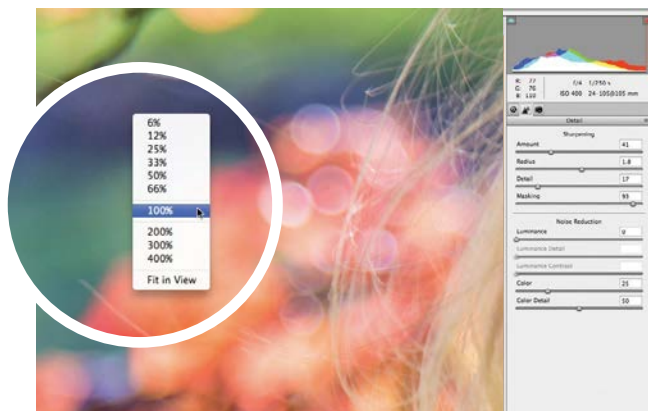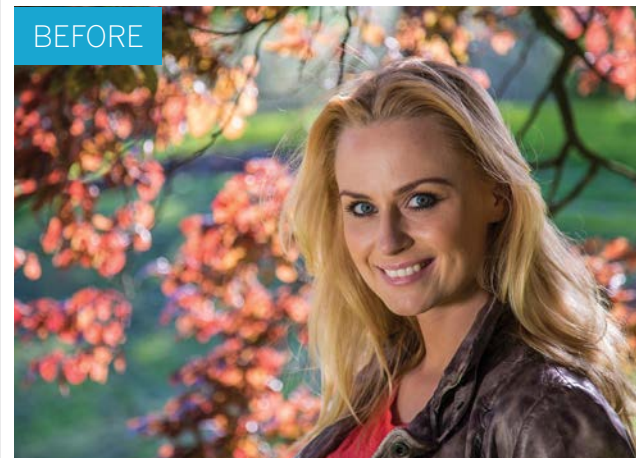
1 View at 100%
This image was captured using an ISO of 400, so it shouldn't suffer from too much noise. Noise is more noticeable in smooth areas such as in the blurred background. To analyse these areas grab the Zoom tool, right click and choose 100%. Grab the Hand tool and drag around the image.
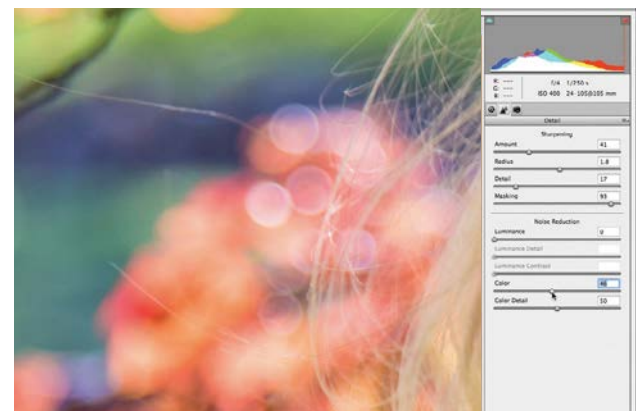
2 Reduce the colour noise
Some noise reduction is automatically applied to your photos. Drag the Color and Color Detail sliders to 0 to see the original patches of colour noise. Push Color to 46 to remove the rainbow speckles. Color Detail is designed to remove colour noise while preserving details on edges.

AFTER
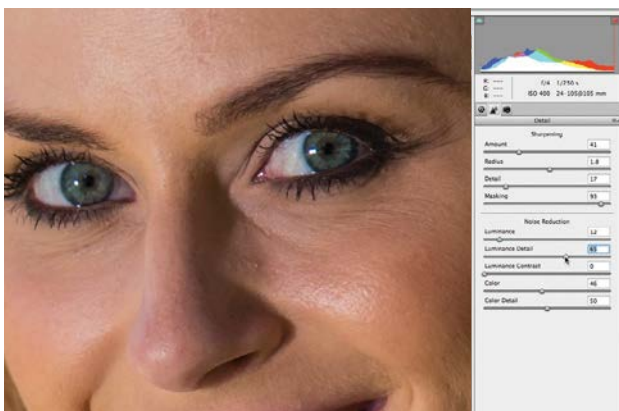
3 Reduce the luminance noise

Drag with the Hand tool to see a more detailed area such as the face. If you set a high Luminance value it will blur detail. You can restore some of the blurred detail by dragging the Luminance Detail slider to the right. Set Luminance to 12 and Luminance Detail to 65.
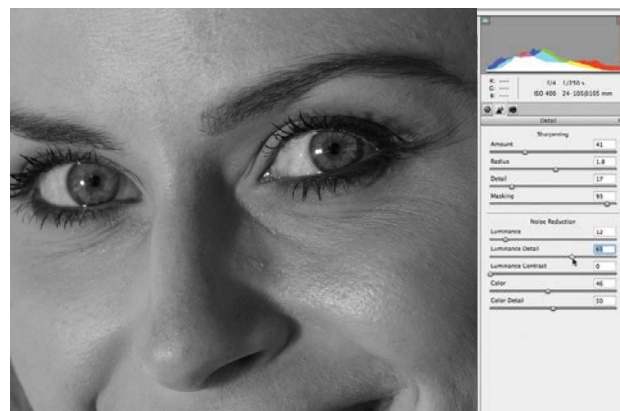
4 Use the greyscale preview

If you hold down Alt as you move the Luminance Detail slider you see the image as a greyscale preview. This hides the distracting colour information and enables you to see any luminance noise more clearly. You can then smooth it out more effectively. Click Done to finish.

BEFORE

AFTER

Sharpen a raw file

Enhance texture and detail by sharpening a raw
file while keeping unwanted artefacts to a minimum

Once you've followed the steps on the previous pages to correct the colours of a raw file and improve its contrast, you can move on to sharpening. It can be a challenge to get your raw shots looking sharp for a variety of reasons. For starters, many digital cameras have a built-in filter that gently blurs the image to avoid producing moiré patterns in busy textures. This low-pass filter can also soften important details such as facial features and create a photo that lacks impact. If you shoot with a wide aperture such as f/2.8 then key details may blur due to the resulting shallow depth of field, especially if your subject is close-up. What looks nice and sharp on the camera's small LCD screen may turn out to look disappointingly soft when looked at on your PC's big screen, or in print. Fortunately, Photoshop Elements has a range of

sharpening tools that are designed to tease out fine details in a soft-looking shot. These sharpening techniques work by increasing the contrast around the edges of details in the image, which gives them more impact. However, when you sharpen an image using Photoshop Elements you risk exaggerating picture noise and skin pores in smooth areas such as skin. You may also introduce unwanted artefacts such as blown-out highlights, clipped shadows and ugly haloes to the sharpened areas.

In this tutorial we'll examine ways to sharpen a raw file while keeping all these unwanted artefacts at bay. We'll demonstrate how the Camera Raw editor's sophisticated Detail panel enables you to restrict the sharpening to key areas, while protecting other sections from being sharpened (and therefore minimising artefacts).
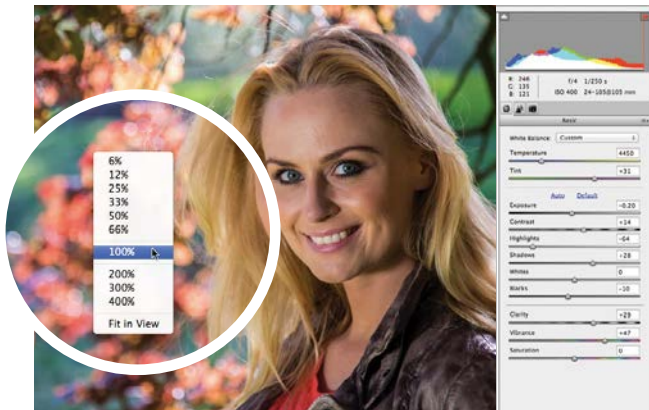
1 Zoom in
Open ty_elements29.dng. If you've followed the previous pages to tweak our raw portrait's colour and tone then the adjustment settings will still be applied to the relevant sliders. If you haven't followed those steps, don't worry — you can still sharpen the unedited image.
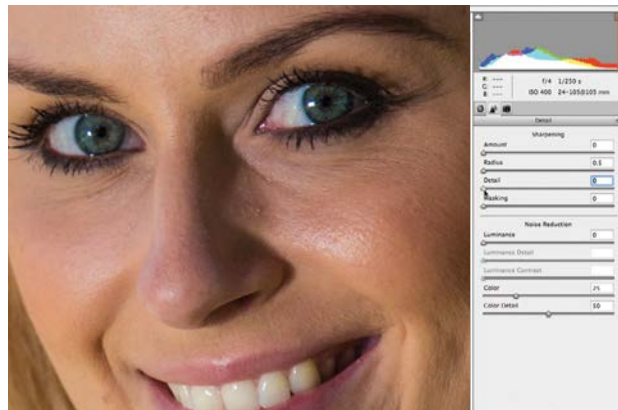
2 Zero the sliders
Grab the Zoom tool and right click to see the image at 100%. Hold down the space bar and drag the image to the eyes. Click the Detail tab and drag the four sharpening sliders to the left so you can see how soft the photo really is.

3 Recognise artefacts
To understand how the sliders work, set Amount to 150. This increases the strength of the contrast change around edges and makes them stand out more. Set Radius to 3. This increases the spread of the contrast change around the edges. These extreme settings make her skin pores stand out.
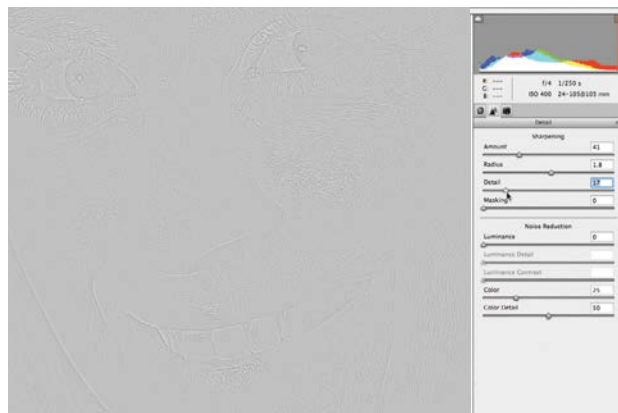
4 Reveal key details
Reduce Amount to 41 and Radius to 1.8. Tick the Preview box to toggle between a sharpened and unsharpened version of the image. Hold down Alt as you drag the Detail slider. The greyscale preview shows you which details are being sharpened. A value of 17 works well.
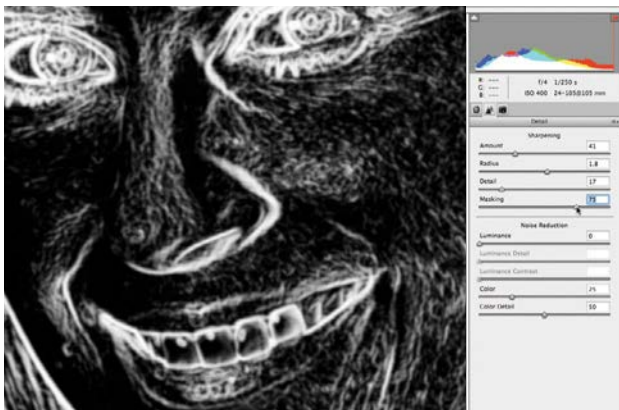
5 Mask it
The Masking slider also helps you to protect clear areas such as the skin from the sharpening. Hold down Alt and drag the Masking slider to the right to see a monochrome preview. The white areas show you which details are being sharpened. Set the Masking slider to 75.
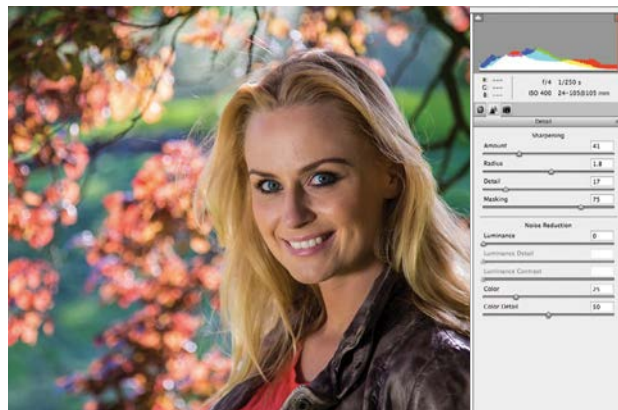
6 Finish editing
Click Done and the changes you've made to the sliders will be stored with the file automatically. You can then open it in the future and continue fine-tuning the settings. Sharpening can create noise, which is why there's also a Noise reduction section in the Detail tab.

Straighten and crop in Camera Raw

Counteract tilted horizons and improve the composition of your photos using overlays

When you're shooting a landscape with a handheld camera, it can be a challenge to get the horizon looking perfectly straight. This can result in a slightly tilted horizon (which can be as annoying as seeing a skewed picture frame hanging on a wall). If you're shooting with a tripod, but on a soft surface such as a sandy beach, then you may not notice the tilted horizon until you look at the image in the Camera Raw editor.

In this walkthrough we'll show you how to straighten an image to counteract tilted horizons and crop it to improve composition. Cropping and straightening are part of the same operation, because you'll need to crop off edges created when rotating an image to lose its tilt.

When you use the Crop tool to crop the shot then you can drag outside the crop window to rotate it. This enables you to counteract any tilt. We'll show you an easier and faster way to straighten the image by using the dedicated Straighten tool. We'll also demonstrate how to set the Crop tool to improve composition and resize an image to common print dimensions at the same time.

By editing in the raw format you can freely experiment with your crops, safe in the knowledge that you can reset the shot to its original size and shape at any time.

BEFORE
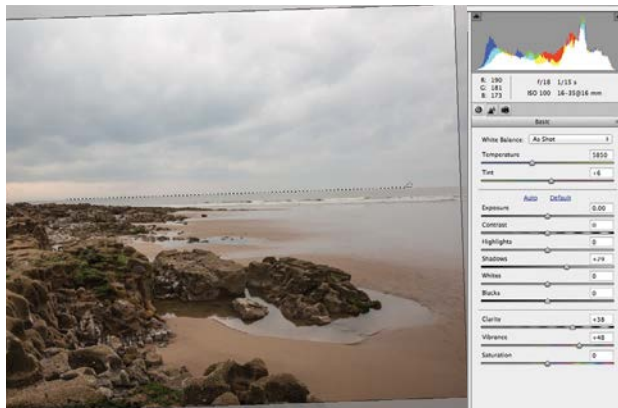
1 Straighten the horizon

Open ty_elements32.dng. The file will open in Camera Raw. Select the Straighten tool from the toolbar. Click and draw a line that follows the tilted horizon. A rotated crop window will automatically appear, counteracting the tilt. Edges that will be removed by the process will become faded.

2 Fine-tune the angle

To see how effective the straightening procedure was, click the Zoom tool. The horizon will now appear straight. You can click the Crop tool icon at any time and fine-tune the rotation of the crop window to ensure the horizon is straight.

AFTER
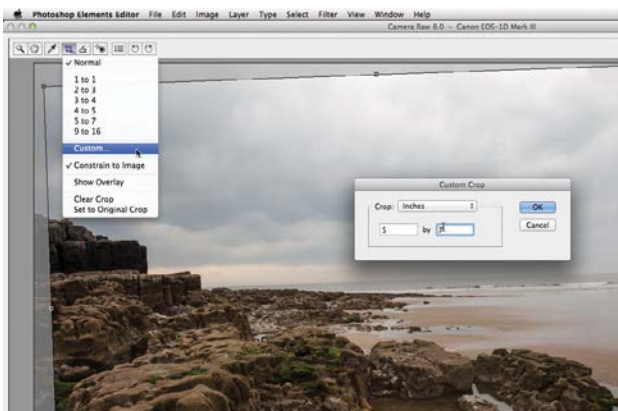
3 Crop and resize

Click the Crop tool and hold down the mouse button to activate crop-ratio options, such as 1 to 1 (a square crop). To resize an image to specific print dimensions click Custom. In the Custom Crop window, set the Crop menu to Inches and choose a size.

4 Change the composition

Click the Crop tool icon and choose Overlay. A Rule of Thirds grid will help you with your composition. Drag a corner handle to crop, or drag inside the crop window to reposition the composition. You could place the sky in the top row, with the landscape in the bottom two rows.
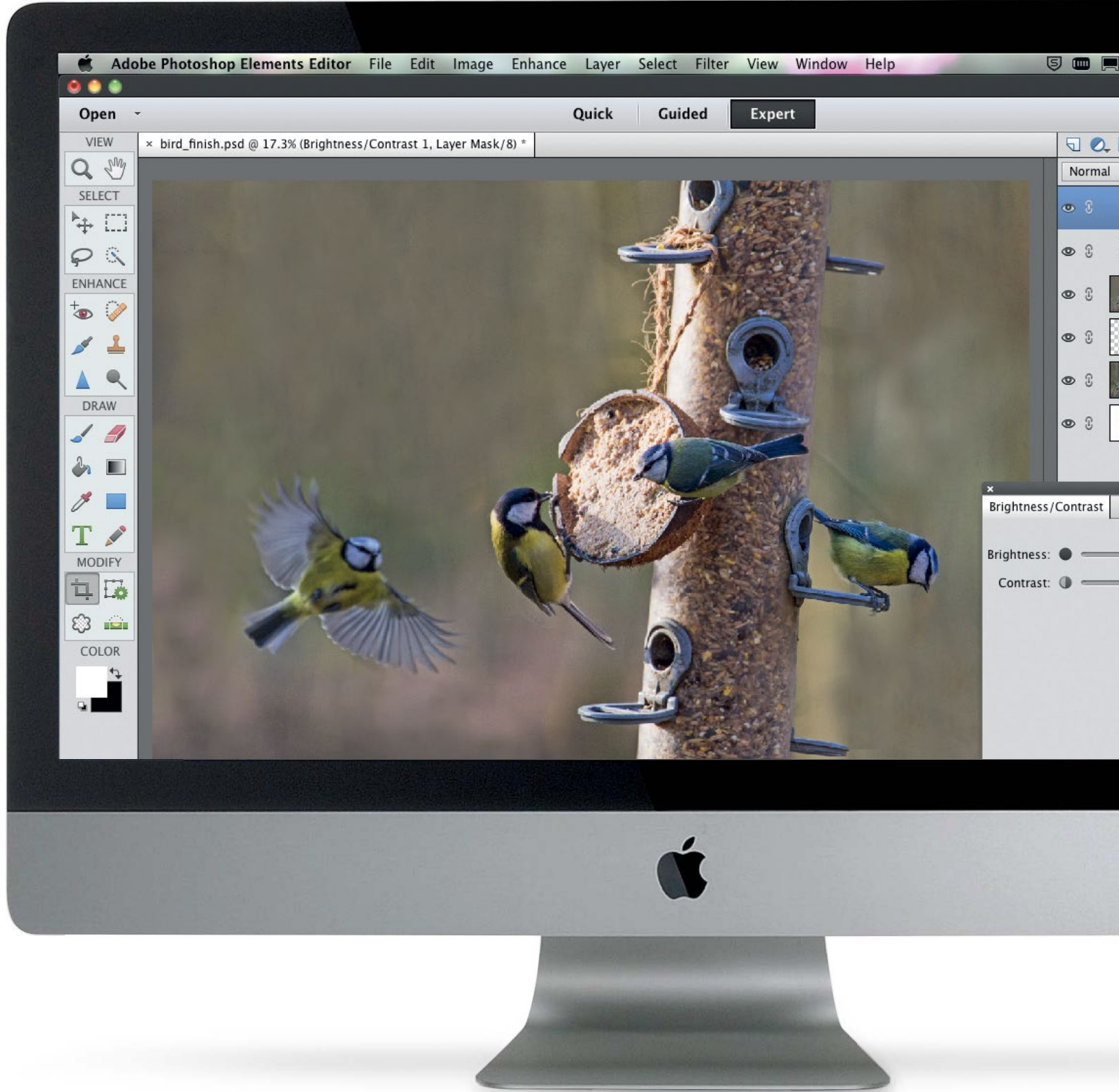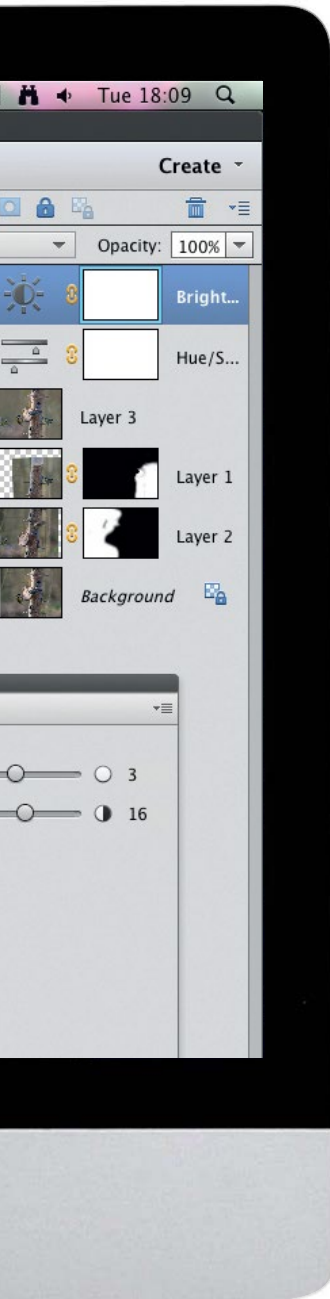
Creative projects

Take your editing skills further by shooting an image and manipulating it in Elements

Create stunning mono HDR images

Discover how to shoot and process high dynamic range images to pack some punch into your pictures

Those photographers who dislike high dynamic range (HDR) imaging complain of gaudy colours, haloed edges and overcooked tones. But by using HDR for black-and-white photography, you don't need to worry about unnatural colours, so you can concentrate on processing your images to take advantage of the increased dynamic range. The ability to tease out detail, enhance texture, and control the play of light and shade are all things that can lead to more punchy black-and-white

images. If you're new to HDR and wondering how it works, it's very easy. You simply take several frames of the same scene while varying the exposure to record extra detail in the highlights and shadows. It's particularly useful for high-contrast scenes like the iconic Orbit sculpture in London's Olympic Park, where we shot our example images. We'll show you how to shoot your own HDR sequence, then go on to process the images using the Photomerge Exposure feature in Photoshop Elements. ▶

1 Use a tripod

HDR images require several aligned frames, so use a tripod. As well as helping to keep the camera position consistent between exposures, a tripod is also essential if a longer shutter speed is required, which is often the case when shooting the over-exposed frames in your HDR sequence.
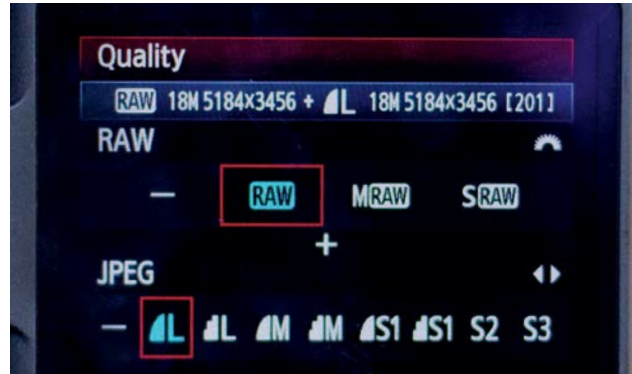
2 Shoot in the raw format

The idea of a high dynamic range image is to capture more light data that the camera is capable of in a single frame, so for best results shoot in raw because the JPEG compression throws away a lot of image data. Set a low ISO of 50 or 100 to reduce noise, too, because it's really amplified by the HDR process.
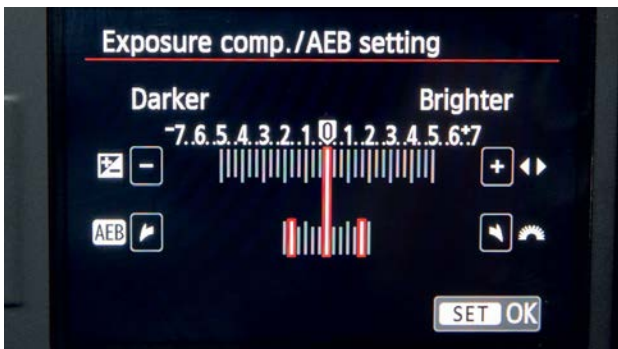
3 Bracket the exposures

The easiest way to record a range of frames at different exposures is to set Auto Exposure Bracket (AEB) at -2 to +2. Your camera will take three shots in succession at three different exposures. If you want more, dial in -1 stop exposure compensation and fire off three bracketed frames, then over-expose by +2 stops and fire off a couple more to record five frames.

4 Aperture-priority mode

To capture under- and over-exposed images, we could adjust either the aperture or the shutter speed. However, you'll need to set aperture-priority mode. This will maintain the same depth of field throughout your sequence, while the camera will set the appropriate shutter speeds.

5 Mirror lockup

If your exposure requires a long shutter speed (anything below 1/100 sec) then set mirror lockup to avoid capturing signs of camera shake from the mirror movement. This is done through the Custom Functions Mirror Lockup menu. Enable this, then set the timer to two seconds (or use a cable release).
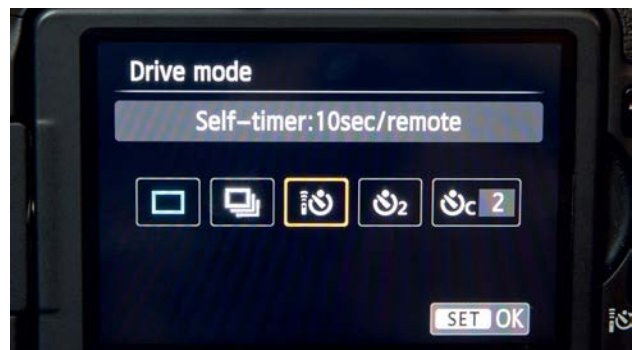
6 Handheld HDR

If you don't have a tripod, it's possible to hold your camera. Set up bracketing and use the Continuous shooting drive mode, then brace yourself and hold the shutter button down to fire off the frames in quick succession. Increase the ISO to ensure the shutter speed doesn't drop below the handheld limit, which as a rule of thumb is 1/focal length.
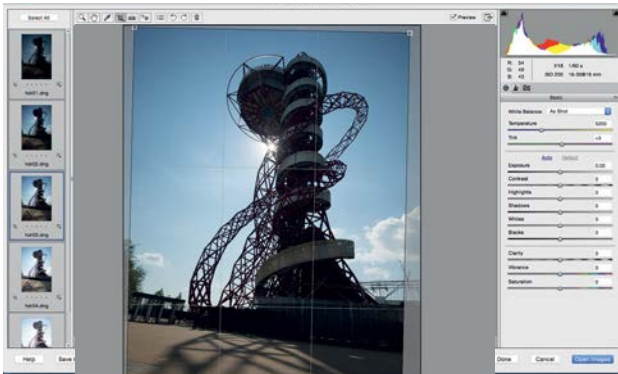
7 Crop the images

Select all the exposures you want to use, then drag them into the Photoshop Elements workspace. If they're raw files, they'll open in Camera Raw first. Click Select All at the top left so that any changes you make will apply to all the images. We've used the Crop tool to crop in tighter. When you're happy, click Open Images.

8 Merge the exposures

Go to Enhance›Photomerge›Photomerge Exposure. Select Open All. Once the images are combined, go through the controls on the right and choose Automatic. Check Smart Blending and use the Highlights and Shadows sliders to reveal detail in parts of the tonal range. When you're happy, click Done.
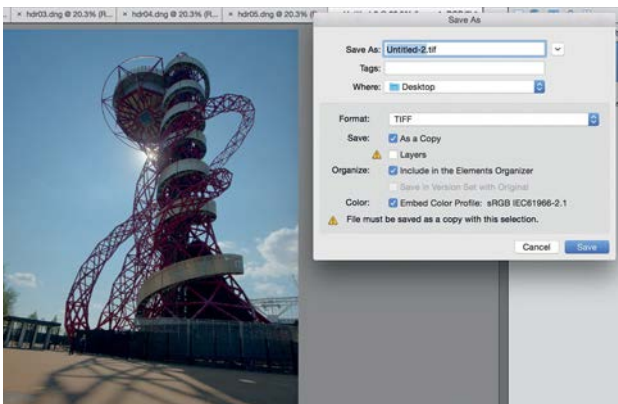
9 Save a copy

Once the merged image is complete, we can use the controls in Camera Raw to improve the look. First we need to save a copy, so go to File›Save As, choose Format: Tiff and save the file, then go to File›Open in Camera Raw to open the TIFF into the Camera Raw plugin.
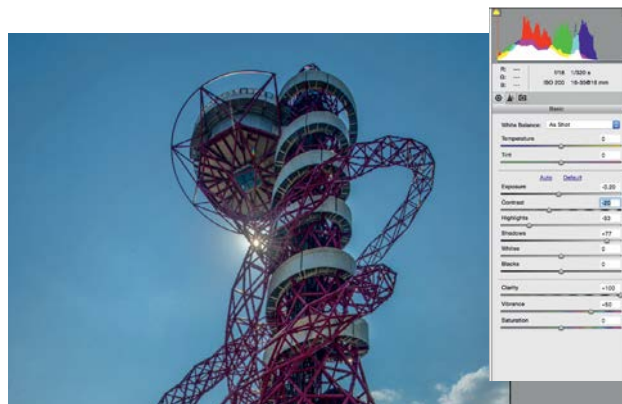
10 Adjust in Camera Raw

Use the controls in the Camera Raw Basic panel to reveal more detail in the highlights and shadows. Here we've set Exposure -0.20, Contrast -20, Highlights -53, Shadows +77, Clarity +100, Vibrance +50. When you're happy, hit Open Image to open in Elements again.
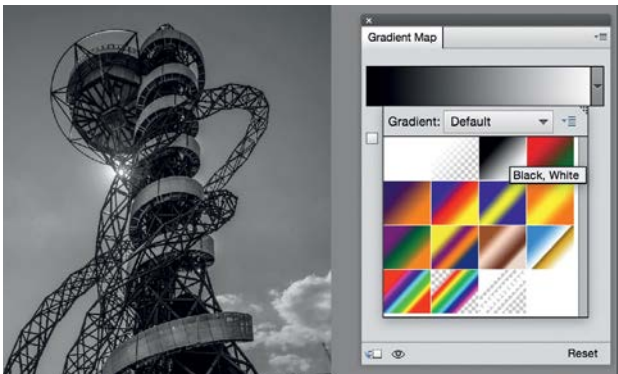
11 Convert to monochrome

Use adjustment layers to tone the image any way you like. Here we've gone for a punchy black-and-white treatment. Click the Create adjustment layer icon and choose Gradient Map. In the settings, click the drop-down menu and choose the Black, White preset for a quick black-and-white conversion.

12 Apply the final tweaks

Click the Create adjustment layer icon again and choose Levels. Use the levels controls to add contrast by dragging in the black and white points. Finally, press Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+Alt+E to merge a copy of all the layers, then use the Dodge and Burn tools to selectively lighten or darken areas of the image.

BEFORE
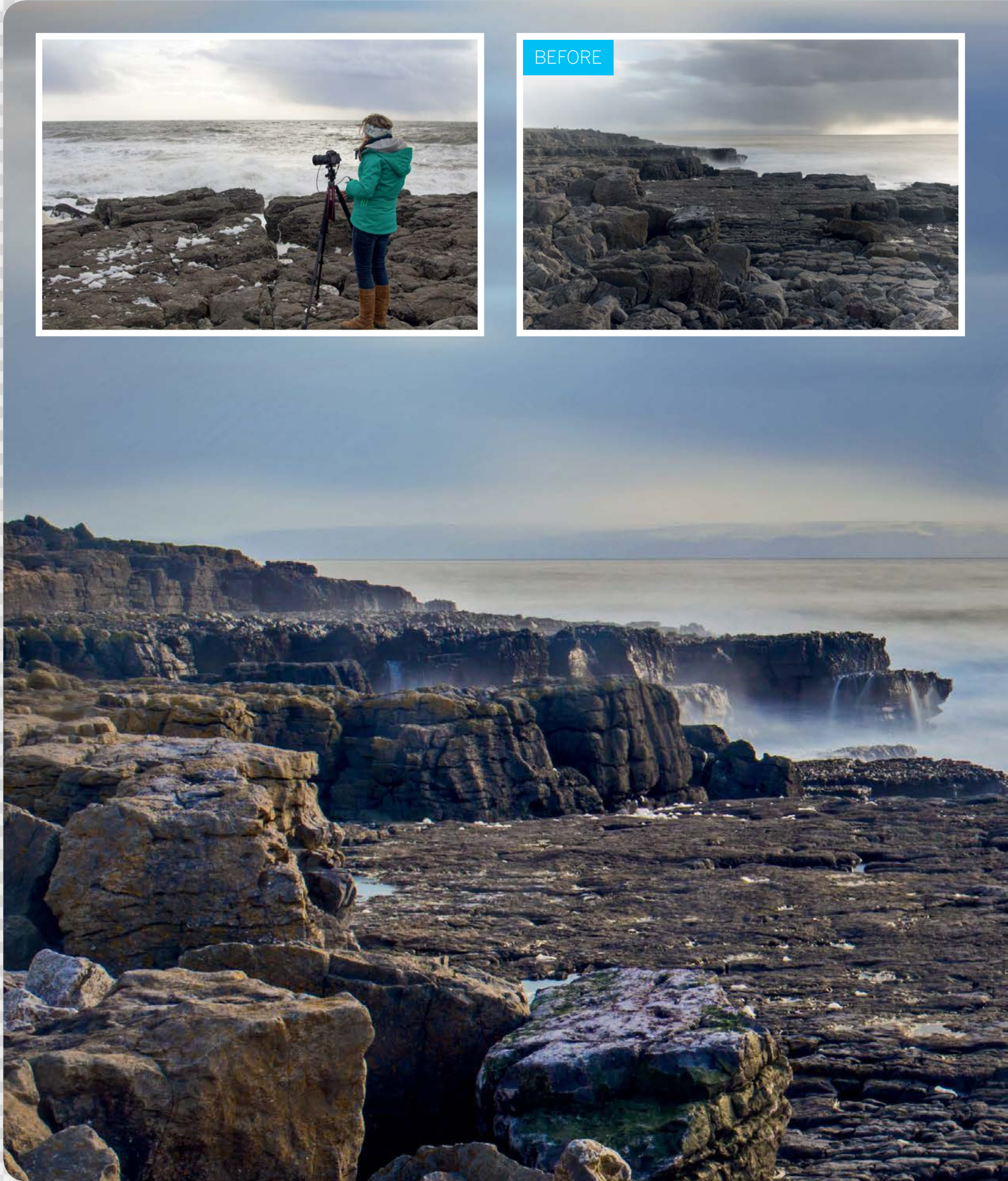
Smooth stormy seas with an ND filter

Capture dreamy, atmospheric seascapes by using a neutral density filter to obtain a long exposure that blurs moving water

In the first part of a series on lens filters we're going to show you how to capture long exposures with the aid of a neutral density filter. An ND filter is simply a semi-opaque piece of glass or other material that reduces the amount of light reaching your sensor, enabling you to obtain slow shutter speeds that turn moving water and clouds into a silky blur.

There are a variety of ND filters on the market. Circular threaded screw-in filters are the simplest to use, but these can be limiting in terms of the shutter speeds you can obtain unless you use the variable kind, as we have for this project. The other option is slot-in filters; these can be fiddly to set up, because they require you to first attach a filter holder to

your lens via an adaptor, and then slot square or rectangular filters into the holder, but the advantage is that, once you've done this, it's easy to swap filters, stack ND filters to get the required density, or add different kinds of filter (for example a graduated ND filter) to the mix.

Both types of filter come in varying densities, and reduce the light by between one stop and ten stops. Confusingly, different manufacturers calibrate the density differently, but you can find tables online that enable you to compare these ratings, to help you decide what density you need; this will of course depend on the lighting you're shooting in. We headed to Porthcawl on the South Wales coast to use an ND filter to capture dramatic slo-mo seascapes… ▶

Teach yourself **Photoshop Elements**

1 Location and weather

ND filters are widely used in seascape photography because they enable you to use a slower shutter speed to blur the movement of water and clouds. Find a suitably rugged and dramatic-looking stretch of coastline, and for the best results shoot on a day when there are clouds in the sky, ideally with enough wind to create some movement.

2 Tripod and remote

When you're shooting long exposures it's crucial that the camera remains still for the duration to avoid camera shake, so you'll need to mount it on a tripod. It's also a good idea to use a remote release to fire the shutter, because even the act of pressing the shutter can be enough to disturb the camera and cause blurred shots; if you don't have a remote, use the two-second self-timer setting.

3 Compose and focus

Use Live View to compose your shot, because you'll be able to see more clearly on the rear LCD. Use the rule of thirds to position the horizon, and include some foreground interest, such as rocks, to lead the eye into the scene. Live View also makes it easier to focus, because your camera's autofocus is likely to struggle once the ND filter is fitted. Switch your lens to manual, zoom in and adjust the focus ring so that key detail is sharp.

4 Camera settings

Set your camera to manual mode, and dial in a narrow aperture of f/16-22; this will keep the scene sharp from front to back, and will also help to stop down the light. Set the ISO to 100. The shutter speed required for a good exposure will depend on the ambient light conditions and the density of the filter. To work out the shutter speed, take a test shot without the filter, note the shutter speed, then calculate the speed with the filter fitted.

5 Attach the filter

Fit the ND filter to your lens. For our shoot we used a variable ND, which enabled us to adjust the density of the filter from approximately one stop up to eight stops by rotating the outer ring; don't ever use a variable ND at its densest setting, however, because you'll get an uneven darkening effect across the frame.

6 Set the shutter speed

Use your calculated shutter speed as a starting point, half-press the shutter button to meter the scene and turn the dial to adjust the shutter speed if required, until the exposure level indicator is in the middle of the range. If you're shooting in low light or using a very dense filter, and need an exposure longer than 30 seconds, use Bulb mode.
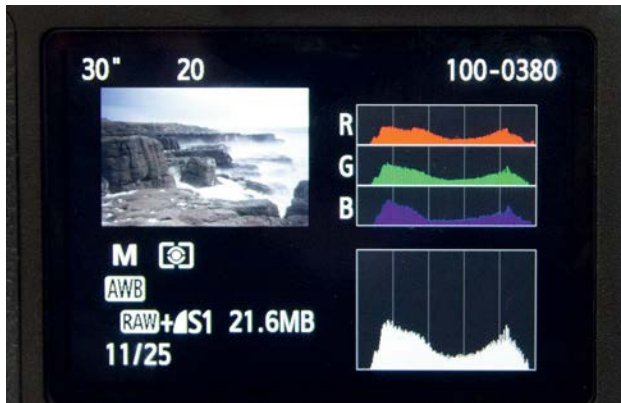
7 Take a test shot
Take a test shot, and check the histogram to ensure you haven't clipped highlights or shadows; if highlights are clipped the histogram will be cut off at the right end, and if shadows are clipped it'll be cut off at the left end. Adjust the shutter speed, if required, to capture a balanced exposure.

8 Start shooting
Try out a variety of shooting angles and compositions. If you're surrounded by cliffs or high rocks get down low for added drama, or if you're high up on rocks, as we were, angle the camera down to get some of the rocks in the foreground. Look out for rocks or groynes in the sea that you can use as leading lines, and focal points such as a lighthouse or jetty.

9 ACR adjustments
Open the starting image in ACR in Elements. Set Shadows to +53 and Blacks to -21 to lighten the shadows, then set Contrast to +21, and Clarity to +33 to increase the local contrast. Set Vibrance to +68 and Saturation to +22 to boost colours, and set Highlights to -13 to recover the slightly clipped highlights. Click Open Image to open the shot in Elements' Expert/Full Edit workspace.

10 Draw a gradient
Create a new layer, set the foreground colour to black and select the Gradient tool. In the Options panel click the Linear and Transparency buttons, then click the Edit button and select the Foreground to Transparent preset. Draw a diagonal gradient from the top-left of the image to the horizon.
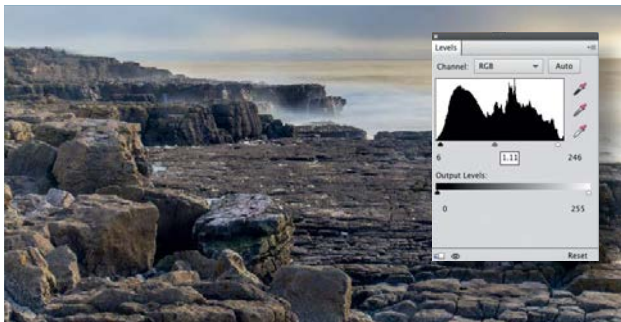
11 Blur the sky
Set the layer's blending mode to Overlay; this darkens the midtones and dark tones in the sky, and evens out the exposure. Target the Background layer, take the Quick Selection tool and select the sky. To blur the clouds a bit more go to Filter›Blur›Motion Blur, set Angle to 0 and Distance to 251 and click OK. Press Cmd/Ctrl+D to deselect. Add a Levels adjustment layer and set Shadows to 6, Midtones to 1.11 and Highlights to 246 to boost the contrast.

12 Add a vignette
Click Layer 1 and press Cmd/Ctrl+Alt+Shift+E to create a merged layer. Go to Enhance›Adjust Lighting›Shadows/Highlights and set Lighten Shadows to 6%, Darken Highlights to 13% and Midtone Contrast to +28%. Add a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer and set Saturation to +18. Create another merged layer and go to Filter›Correct Camera Distortion. Set Vignette Amount to -36 and Midpoint to +44, and click OK.

Boost washed-out skies with an ND grad

Use a graduated neutral density filter on your lens to improve detail and colour in skies

In the second part of our series on using lens filters we're going to show you how you can boost washed-out skies with the aid of a graduated neutral density filter, or ND grad for short. When you shoot landscapes, scenes will often have a greater contrast range than the camera can record. Typically, if you meter for the foreground, a bright sky will be over-exposed, while if you meter for the sky, the darker foreground will be under-exposed, and this is where a graduated neutral density filter comes in handy. These filters gradate from transparent neutral grey to clear, and by positioning the dark part of the filter over the brightest part of the scene — usually the sky — you can reduce the amount of light reaching the top of the frame to capture a balanced exposure.

There are couple of things to consider when choosing a filter. First, there are two types — the square slot-in filters and the circular screw-on variety. If you're using square filters you'll need a filter holder, which attaches to your lens via an adaptor ring; these are available in different sizes. Second, filters come in a range of densities, typically offering one, two, three and sometimes four stops of reduction in light, in 'hard' or 'soft' transitions. In this project we'll show you how to fit a graduated neutral density filter, and how to work out which density of filter is required to get the perfect landscape shot. ▶

BEFORE

BEFORE
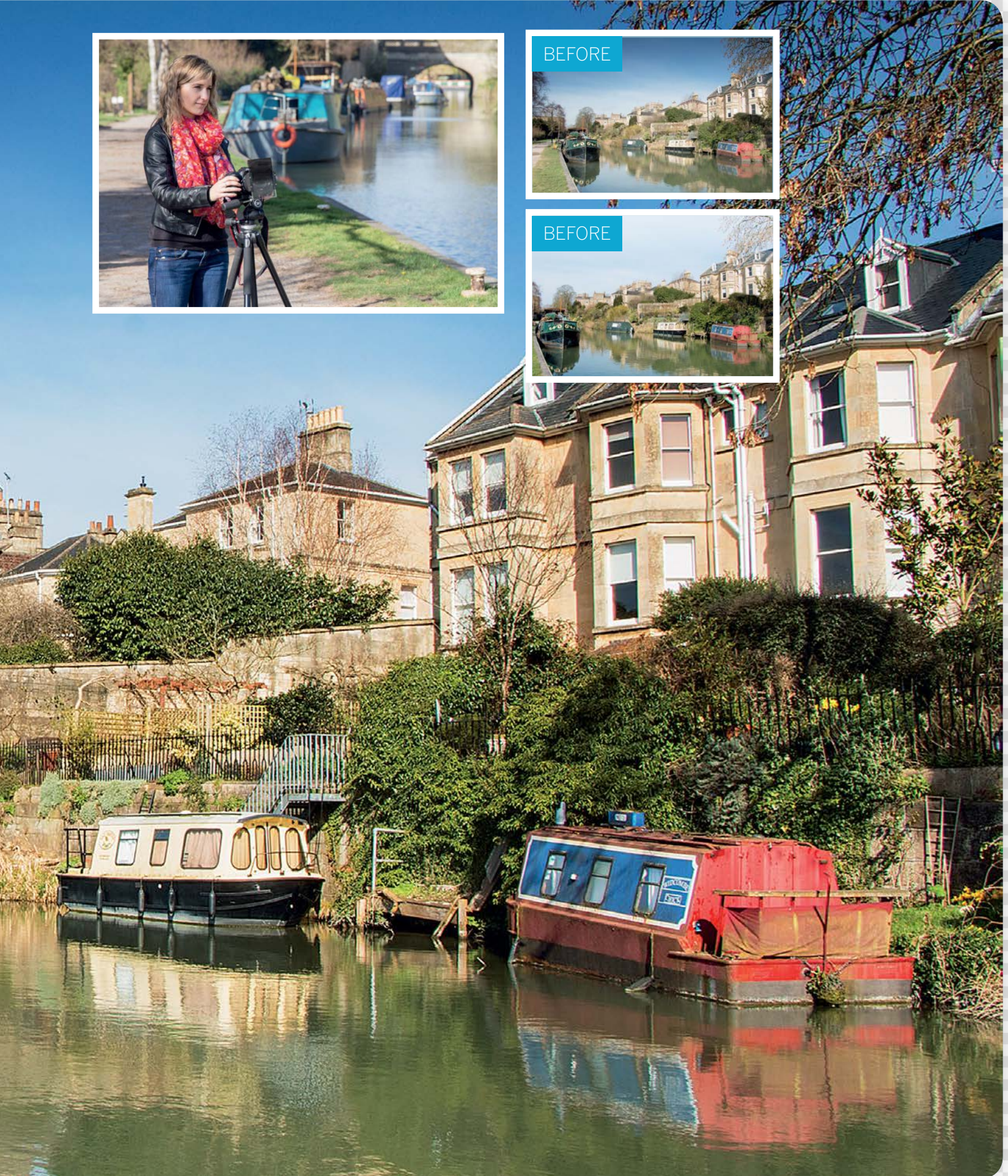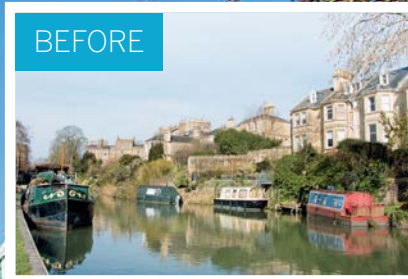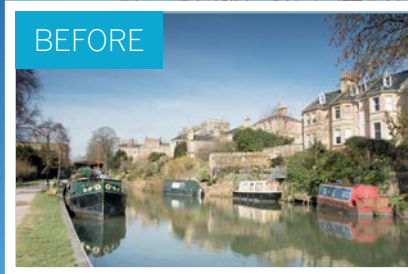
1 When to use an ND grad

ND grads are generally used to hold back the brightness of the sky so that you can capture a balanced exposure when shooting high-contrast scenes; they're a great addition to your kit bag because you can use them in a range of situations. We took a walk along the Kennet and Avon canal in Bath to capture some scenic shots on a sunny day.

2 Get set up

The shutter speed will vary depending on the light conditions, so a tripod is essential for capturing pin-sharp shots. Screw the adaptor ring on to your lens and slot the filter holder on to it. For full control over the exposure set your D-SLR to manual mode, and enable Live View mode to help compose the shot, and also so that you can see the effect of the filter clearly.

3 Compose and focus

Compose your shot using the rule of thirds, keeping plenty of sky in the frame. You'll need to focus before fitting the filter, so zoom in using the 10x magnification view, switch your lens to manual and focus manually. Be careful not to knock the focus ring when you're attaching the filter.

4 Camera settings

Before you attach the filter you need to know your exposure settings. Set a narrow aperture of f/16 for a broad depth of field, and a low ISO for maximum quality. To determine what shutter speed you require, meter from a midtone in the foreground; the filter will prevent the sky from being over-exposed with the resulting shutter speed.

5 Filter density

Now meter from a midtone in the sky — the difference in exposure between the sky and foreground readings determines the strength of filter required. For example, if the suggested reading is 1/60 sec at f/16 for the foreground, and 1/250 sec at f/16 for the sky, that's a difference of two stops, so a two-stop ND grad should be just right.

6 Fit the filter

If you're using slot-in filters, slot your required filter into the holder. There will be more than one slot, so start with the one nearest to the lens; the other slots enable you to stack filters. You can twist the holder to align the filter with the horizon, and use Live View to help you position the filter so that the gradient is on the desired area.
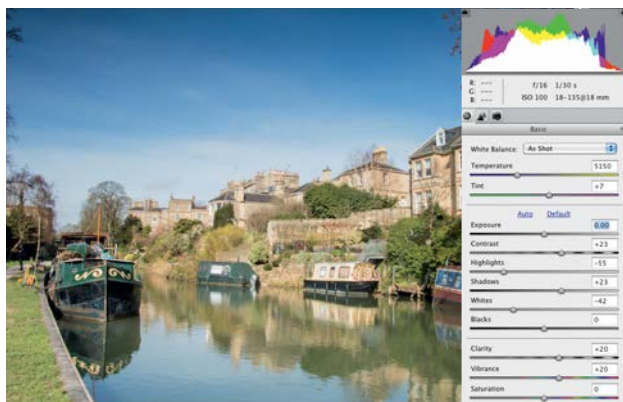
7 ACR adjustments

Open the starting image in Adobe Camera Raw in Elements. To enhance the colour and contrast set the Contrast slider to +23, and Clarity and Vibrance to +20. To reduce the clipped highlights set Highlights to -55 and Whites to -42, and set Shadows to +23 to add some fill light to the shadows. Click Open Image to open the image in Elements' Expert/Full Edit mode.

8 Crop and tidy up

Take the Crop tool and select Use Photo Ratio from the Crop Preset menu in the Options. Crop in on the image to exclude some of the towpath, and some of the water at the bottom of the frame. Press Cmd/Ctrl+J to duplicate the Background layer, then use the Clone Stamp tool to remove distractions such as the hose pipe and the person on the path, Alt-clicking to sample nearby areas of clean pixels.

9 Adjust the levels

The buildings look a bit washed out, so we'll selectively darken those areas. Add a Levels adjustment layer, and set the Midtones slider to 0.85 to darken the midtones. Target the attached layer mask by clicking its thumbnail, and paint with a black brush over the areas where you want to hide the adjustment, such as the sky and darker foreground objects.
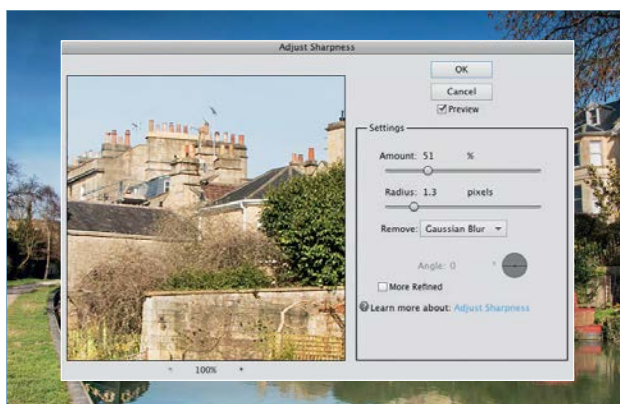
10 Boost the colour and contrast

To boost the colours in the scene, add a Hue/ Saturation adjustment layer and set the Master Saturation to +6. Next, add a Brightness/Contrast adjustment layer, and set Brightness to 6 and Contrast to 12. Click the top layer, and press Cmd/Ctrl+Alt+Shift+E to create a merged layer. Go to Enhance›Adjust Sharpness and set Amount to 50% and Radius to 1.3 pixels. ●

How ND grad filters are classified

STRENGTH (F-STOPS)	MANUFACTURER'S TERMINOLOGY	
	HOYA, B+W & COKIN	LEE, TIFFEN
1	ND2, ND2X	0.3 ND
2	ND4, ND4X	0.6 ND
3	ND8, ND8X	0.9 ND

BEFORE

BEFORE

Get true-blue skies with a polariser

Use a polarising filter to cut through glare, and boost the colour and contrast of skies in your landscape shots

Filters alter the way your lens captures light, which can help give better results in difficult lighting conditions. In this final part of our series we'll show you how to use the trusty circular polarising filter. Made of two polarised layers, the outermost of which can be rotated to filter the direction of light allowed to pass through, these cut haze and eliminate glare, saturate and deepen blue skies, and boost contrast. Polarisers are particularly useful for shooting architecture on sunny days, because not only do they boost the blues, they also increase edge contrast to make your subject stand out. A polariser can also be used to reduce reflections from shiny surfaces, including water if you want to reveal detail below the surface, and to tame harsh highlights for more balanced exposures. ▶

1 The right sky

Polarisers are ideal for when you're shooting architecture in scenic surroundings and under blue skies — you'll get the best results with blue skies that have some light cloud to create interest. We headed off to Wells in Somerset to photograph the city's famous cathedral on a sunny day.

2 Camera setup

For this shoot you'll need to set your camera on a tripod. We'll be shooting with a narrow aperture to keep everything sharp so your shutter speed will be fairly slow to compensate for the reduced light entering the camera, and polarisers also reduce the amount of light reaching your sensor, which will further slow your shutter speed.

3 Shooting settings

Set your camera to manual mode for full control over the aperture and shutter. Set a narrow aperture of f/11 and keep your ISO low, ideally at 100, for top-quality images. Half-press the shutter to meter the scene, then turn the dial to adjust the shutter speed until the exposure indicator is in the middle to obtain a balanced exposure — you may need to adjust the shutter speed once the polariser is fitted.

4 Fit the polariser

For this shoot we used a circular polariser that screws on to the end of the lens. There are many brands available, and SRB Photographic has a full range, with prices starting at £16 for Canon/Nikon kit lenses. Make sure the filter is the correct size to fit your lens. You can adjust the intensity of the polarising effect by rotating the outer ring of the filter.

5 Compose and focus

For the best results your subject needs to be at 90 degrees to the sun. To help you compose your shot, and so that you can see the effect of the polariser as you adjust the outer ring, switch to Live View mode; this will also help with focusing. Switch your lens to manual focus, zoom the Live View image and scroll to an area of detail, then adjust the focus using the manual focusing ring until the detail appears sharp.

6 Shadows and highlights

With the polariser fitted you may need to tweak the shutter speed to obtain a balanced exposure. If your subject is in shadow you may also want to bracket-expose two or three shots to ensure that you capture the full range of shadow and highlight detail in the scene, and then combine the images in post-production if need be. Refer to your camera's manual for how to set up AEB (Auto Exposure Bracketing).
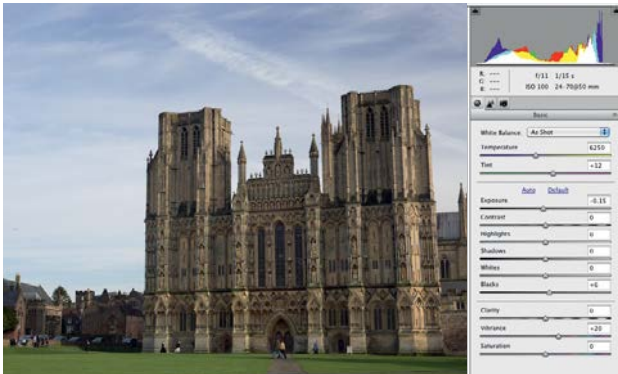
7 ACR adjustments

Open the two starting images in Camera Raw in Elements. Select the image with the bluer sky by clicking its thumbnail in the film strip; we're combining two images, so we only need to get the sky looking right in this shot. Set Exposure to -0.15 and Blacks to +6 to darken the sky a little, and set Vibrance to +20 to boost the blues.
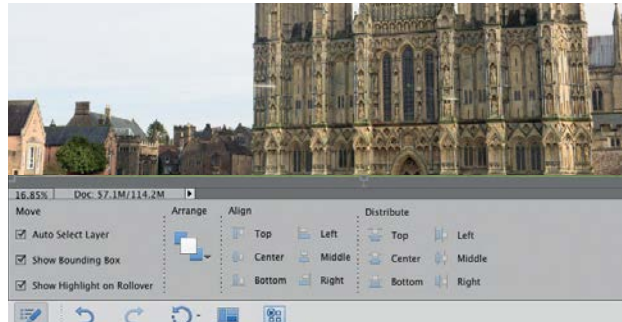
8 Combine the images

Open the other image. For this shot we're focusing on the cathedral and the foreground. Set Contrast to +15, Shadows to +8 and Vibrance to 20. Click Select All, and click Open Images to open both shots in Elements' Expert/Full Edit mode. Add the second image to the first as a new layer, then take the Magic Wand tool, set Tolerance to 55 and tick Contiguous, and click a mid-blue in the sky to select the entire sky. Go to Select›Feather, enter 3 pixels and click OK.
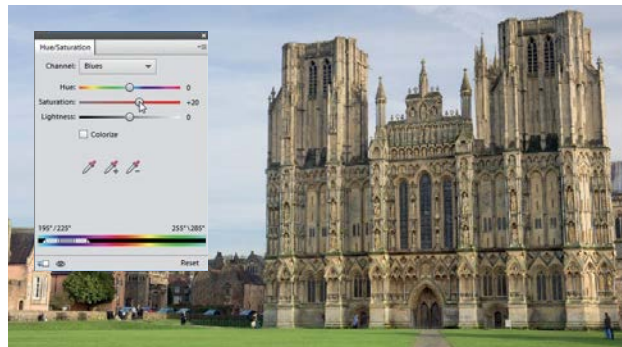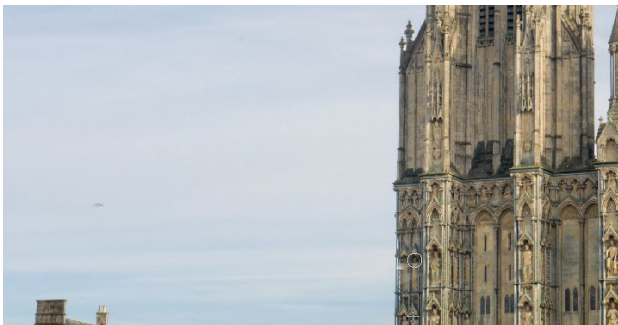
9 Reveal the polarised sky

The mask will be based on the selection, so the sky will be revealed and the rest of the image hidden. We want to reveal the filtered sky on the layer below, so press Cmd/Ctrl+I to invert the mask. Next click the top layer, and press Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+Alt+E to create a merged layer. Take the Clone Stamp tool, and clone out the two blurred birds in front of the cathedral, on the left and in the centre. Alt-click to sample suitable areas, and clone these pixels over the birds.

10 Contrast and colour

Clone out the people in front of the cathedral as well if you want. Next add a Levels adjustment layer and set the Shadows slider to 20, the Midtones slider to 1.07 and the Highlights slider to 237 to boost the contrast. Finally, to give the blue sky a bit more of a boost, add a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer, select Blues from the menu and set Saturation to +20.

Polarising filter pros and cons

Although a polarising filter is great for darkening blue skies, you need to be aware of how wide you're shooting. If you're shooting with a wide-angle lens the filter can affect some areas of the sky more than others, so it's advisable not to shoot too wide because the uneven effect will produce unnatural-looking results. For the best results set your camera on a tripod and activate Live View mode so that you can preview the polarising effect; if you're shooting fairly wide you may need to rotate the filter to avoid an uneven effect.

WIde-angle effect

Without polariser

With polariser
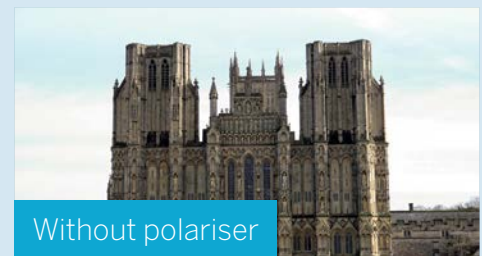
BEFORE

Create dynamic mono landscapes with motion blur

Shoot great scenics – without a tripod – then convert to monochrome and blur the skies for a slow-shutter effect

C apturing successful landscapes with a great tonal range can be challenging. In tricky lighting conditions your camera simply can't record all the shadow and highlight detail the naked eye can see in a single exposure. A popular solution is to take several exposures using a tripod, then combine them at the processing stage to create an HDR (high dynamic range) image. However, this technique can be time-consuming and HDR software has a tendency to 'overcook' images — and we've all been guilty of leaving our tripods at home! So we're going to show you a simpler technique to make the whole process quicker. The secret is to process the same image twice to create two exposures that we can then combine in Photoshop using a combination of layers and layer masks to create natural-looking results. We're also going to convert the shot to black and white, and add some motion blur to the sky to help bring our dull landscape shot to life! ▶

1 Shoot in the raw format
It goes without saying that you need to shoot raw files to capture good-quality images; for this technique it's vital, because we'll be processing the image twice to ensure we've got a great range of highlight and shadow detail, which we'll then combine for the finished result. A JPEG won't cope with being over- or under-exposed to the same extent, and the image quality will suffer.

2 Don't shoot too slow
There are often situations when you don't have time to set up a tripod, or you may not even have one with you. But don't worry; you can shoot handheld as long as you shoot with a relatively fast shutter speed in order to avoid camera shake. When using a wide-angle lens, such as the EF 16-35mm f/2.8L II USM, a shutter speed of 1/50 sec will be sufficient to prevent shake.

3 Camera settings
Set your camera to manual mode and use a narrow f/11 aperture for a great depth of field to ensure everything in the scene is sharp from front to back. To capture a balanced exposure, half-press the shutter to meter the scene and scroll through the shutter speeds until the exposure level indicator is in the middle. If your shutter speed is too slow, increase the ISO.

4 Evaluate your exposure
It's not always easy to see if you've captured a balanced exposure from looking at the image on the LCD screen, so get into the habit of checking your histogram. Although you'll be processing your shot twice, you'll still need a consistent tonal range; any high peaks that go off either end of the graph means you'll have lost detail in the shadows or highlights.

5 Stay focused
It's important to focus accurately when shooting scenics to ensure your image is sharp from front to back. If you focus on the horizon, you may find that your foreground is out of focus. Ensure the lens is switched to AF, focus on something about a third of the way into the scene by half-pressing the shutter, then recompose before fully pressing the shutter to take the shot.

6 Keep composed
The great thing about shooting handheld is the freedom to be more experimental with your compositions. You can scout out your location quickly to see what viewpoints will be more successful, and shoot from angles that would prove tricky with a tripod. And with this technique, you don't need to worry about taking several exposures from the exact same position.
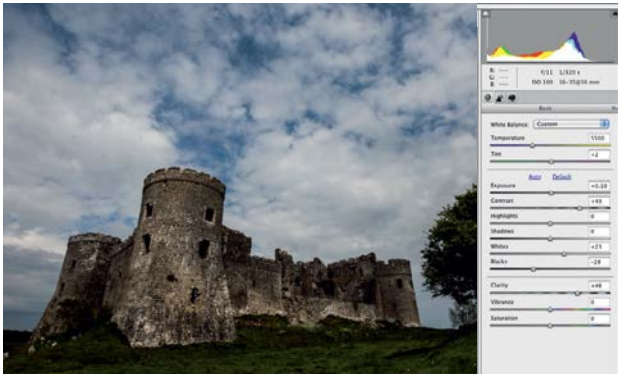
7 ACR adjustments

Open the starting image in ACR. We'll start by working on the sky. Set Exposure to +0.10, Contrast to +49, Whites to +23, Blacks to -28 and Clarity to +46. Click Save Image, and save it as castle_start_1. Click the icon in the right-hand corner, next to where it says Basic, and select Camera Raw Defaults to reset these adjustments.
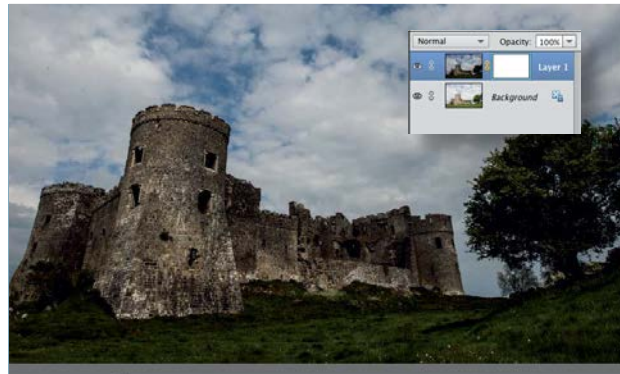
8 Combine the layers

Set Exposure to +1.30, Contrast to +40, Shadows to +30, Blacks to +20 and Clarity to +20. Click Open Image. Open the starting DNG as well. Add the two images to the same document so that they are on different layers. Add a layer mask and grab the Gradient tool, and select the Foreground to Transparent Linear option.

9 Reveal the background

Drag from the bottom to the top of the frame to reveal the lighter background layer. Grab a black brush at 100% opacity and paint over the castle to lighten it. Press Cmd/Ctrl+Alt+Shift+E to create a merged layer. Grab the Quick Selection tool and drag over the sky to select it. Click Refine Edge and set the Output To option to New Layer with Layer Mask, and click OK.
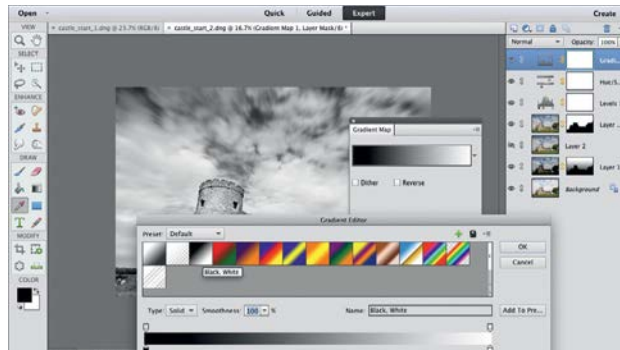
10 Blur the clouds

Go to Filter›Blur›Radial Blur. Select Zoom, set Amount to 13. Click OK. Highlight the mask, grab a black brush at 100% opacity and paint the edges of the selection. Add a Levels adjustment layer. Set Shadows to 5, Midtones to 1.10 and Highlights to 241. Add a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer and a Gradient Map adjustment layer with a Black, White gradient.
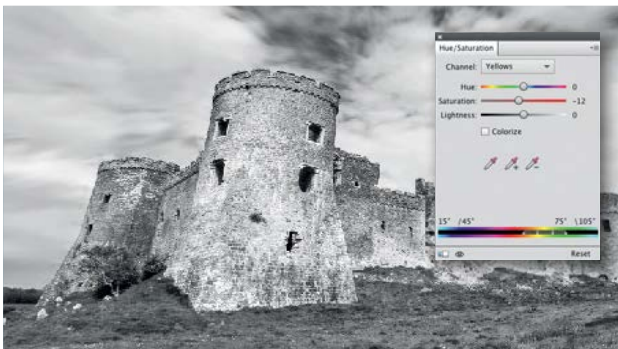
11 Convert to Black and White

Double click the Hue/Saturation layer. In the Masters channel set Hue to +13 and Saturation to +39. In the Blue channel set Hue to +18 and Saturation to +16. In the Yellow channel set Hue to -12. In the Layers panel highlight the top layer. Create a merged layer. Grab the Dodge tool. Select a soft brush of 400px and set Range to Midtones and Exposure to 30%.

12 Dodge and burn

Paint the shadowed areas of the castle and tree to brighten them and increase the contrast. Grab the Burn tool. Increase the brush size to 900px and paint along the edges to create a vignette, gradually building up the effect. Add a Brightness/Contrast adjustment layer and set the Contrast to 18 to give it a final boost. Go to Layer›Flatten Image to flatten the layers before saving. ●

BEFORE

Marvellous flower macros

After a downpour, capture creative close-ups of flowers covered in gleaming raindrops

Water drops are an excellent subject to shoot with a macro setup, and they look particularly attractive on flowers. For this photo shoot we visited the National Botanic Garden of Wales. It was a dry day, so in order to create the 'raindrops' we supplied our own water, using a fine mist spray bottle. This is a handy piece of kit to have for a macro shoot, because water droplets add a touch of sparkle to just about any subject, from insects and spiders' webs to abstract still-life subjects.

The secret to capturing successful shots like this is to find the right flower. The yellow-orange stamens against the blue petals of our subject created a striking effect. It also helps to shoot on a calm day with no breeze, to ensure that the petals are in sharp focus. For our shoot we used a 105mm macro lens that was capable of shooting at 1:1 reproduction ratio — this means that we can get in really close to the subject. If you don't have a macro lens you can use an extension tube with a regular lens. ▶

1 Choose a subject

Choose a flower that has a variety of colours, and some interesting detail, and ideally one that's positioned in partial shade to diffuse the sunlight; if your subject is in direct sunlight you can use the diffuser typically included in a five-in-one reflector kit to soften the light. Set your camera on a tripod.

2 Camera settings

Set your camera to aperture priority mode, and set a narrow Aperture of f/11 to capture a good depth of field, so that most of the flower and water drops are in sharp focus. Set a low ISO of 100 to retain optimum image quality. Even though your camera is on a tripod, if it's a windy day you may need to increase the ISO to enable a fast enough shutter speed to compensate for any wind movement.

3 Add the water

Spray your flower with a fine mist of water. You want to have water on all the parts of the flower that will be in shot, but don't add too much, otherwise it will start to run off, or the flower may become weighed down and droopy.

4 Manual focus

Switch your lens to manual so that you can focus your shot precisely. Enable Live View mode, and zoom in to 10x magnification. Scroll to the centre of the flower, and then adjust the focus until this area is sharp. Zoom out again and start shooting, using the two-second self-timer option or a remote release to avoid camera shake; the slightest vibration can completely ruin a macro shot.

5 Crop for composition

Open the starting image in Adobe Camera Raw. Click and hold the Crop tool icon to display the crop options, and select the 2 to 3 ratio. Crop into the image to remove some of the empty space on the left-hand side, and to reposition the flower so that its centre sits in the middle of the frame.

6 Exposure tweaks

Set the Exposure slider to +0.95 to brighten the image, and set Contrast to +23. To reduce the slightly over-exposed highlights set Highlights to -55 and Whites to -48. Set Shadows to +23 to add some fill light, and set Blacks to +10. Finally, push the Clarity slider up to +23 to enhance the fine detail. Click Open Image.
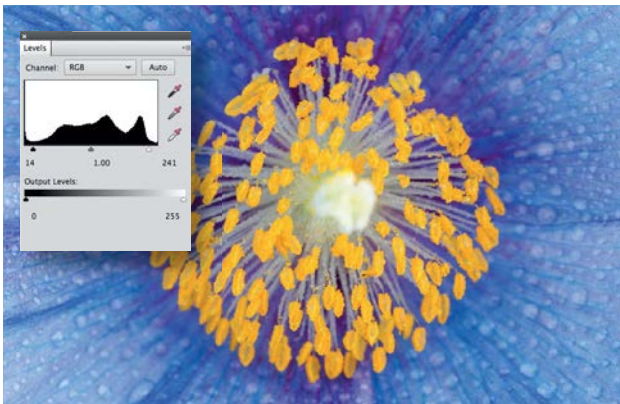
7 Boost the contrast

In Elements, add a Levels adjustment layer, and set the Shadows slider to 14 and the Highlights slider to 241 to fine-tune the contrast. Next, make sure the top layer is selected and press Cmd/Ctrl+Alt+Shift+E to create a merged layer at the top of the stack.
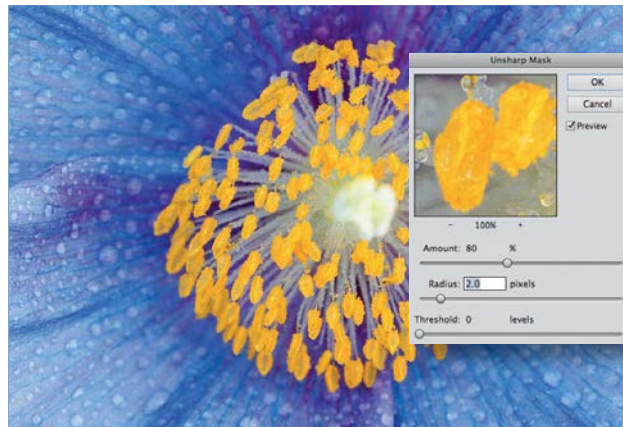
8 Sharpen the image

To sharpen the image go to Enhance›Unsharp Mask. Set Amount to 80%, Radius to 2 pixels and Threshold to 0. Click OK to apply. Finally, go to Layer›Flatten Image and save the image as a JPEG.

More ideas for drop shots
You can combine flowers and water drops in lots of ways to create an array of effects

DANDELION SEED

This dandelion seed head was photographed indoors, with an LED ring flash as the main light source. Spraying a fine misting of water over the delicate seeds helps to create an ethereal and abstract image.

RAIN EFFECT

You can create spectacular effects with falling water. Here we backlit the drops with off-camera flash – you'll need to sync your camera's shutter speed to around 1/250 sec. A dark backdrop helps the illuminated drops stand out.

PRETTY IN PINK

To get a close-up of this tiny flower we used a 68mm extension tube to boost the magnification of our macro lens. We used an LED ring flash to boost the colours, and in Elements we cloned out the most noticeable reflections in the drops.

Capture beautiful bird images

Get great bird shots at home or on location using a telephoto lens and high-speed shooting techniques

You don't have to go far to bag brilliant bird photos; you'll find plenty of subjects on your doorstep, whether it's in your garden, in a park or at a local wildlife centre. Capturing sharp shots of garden birds can be challenging, because they're small and skittish; however, equipped with the right kit, a few simple techniques and a little patience, anyone can capture great bird shots, and we're going to show you how.

You'll need to prepare for your shoot carefully. After choosing a bird-friendly location you'll need to find a good hiding place, and it's also a good idea to study your subjects' behaviour for a while, to help you get shots that capture something of their character.

For the best results shoot first thing in the morning when it's quiet, so the birds won't be disturbed, and on a day with little wind; an overcast sky is ideal, because the softer light will enable you to capture balanced exposures. To get richly detailed close-ups while keeping your distance you'll need a telephoto lens. The focal length you'll need will depend on how far you are from your subjects, but ideally it should be at least 300mm.

If you're photographing several birds it can be hard to get them all in the frame at the same time, let alone in good poses. So we'll show you how to combine birds from several shots in Elements, so that you can get a whole family of perfectly posed subjects in a single image. ▶

1 Find a location

Your own garden is a great place to photograph birds, because you can study their behaviour and learn their favourite hangouts over time and from a distance. Put up a bird table or a feeder and you'll have regular visitors in no time. There are also plenty of wildlife centres that you can visit — for our shoot we went to St Fagans National History Museum in Cardiff.

2 Get set up

Birds are camera shy, and you'll need to stay hidden to avoid spooking them. Set up camp in a garden shed, or at a window, from where you can shoot discreetly. Many wildlife centres have permanent hides like the one we used at St Fagans, and if you're serious about wildlife photography you can invest in a portable pop-up hide like the one shown above.

3 Telephoto lens

You'll need a fast telephoto lens so that you can shoot from a distance without scaring your subjects away — the longer the focal length the better, because you'll be able to capture more detail from a given distance. Big telephoto lenses can get heavy, because you'll often be sitting around waiting for a good shot, so use a tripod or a monopod to take the weight off your arms.

4 Camera settings

You won't have time to adjust settings between shots, so select aperture priority mode so you can set a constant aperture; the camera will set the shutter speed. To make the birds stand out from their surroundings set a wide aperture to capture a shallow depth of field — ideally between f/4 and f/8, because this will create blur while keeping your subjects fully sharp.

5 Shutter speed

You'll need a fast shutter speed to freeze the birds' movement. Your camera will select an appropriate shutter speed based on the ambient light, but you'll need to keep an eye on this — ideally, it should be between 1/500 sec and 1/1000 sec. If you need a faster shutter speed and you're getting under-exposed shots you can increase your ISO — we set ours to 800.

6 Compose and focus

Don't worry about capturing the perfect composition. You can crop in at the editing stage, so frame loosely and focus on capturing sharp shots — the centre autofocus point is the most reliable, or you can set the AF mode to AI Servo so that the AF system tracks your subjects. If you want to fire off bursts of shots, set the Drive mode to High-speed Continuous.
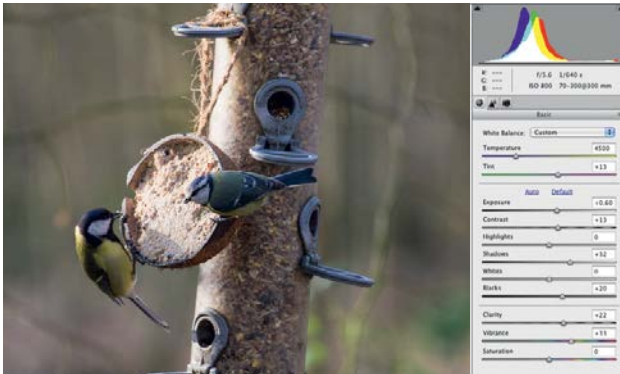
7 ACR adjustments

Open the three starting images in ACR. Click Select All, and set Temperature to 4800 to ensure the white balance is the same for all the shots. Set Exposure to +0.60 to brighten the images, and set Shadows to +32 and Blacks to +20 to add some fill light. Set Contrast to +13, Clarity to +22 and Vibrance to +33, then click Open Images.

8 Combine the images

Target the image with the single bird, make a rough selection around the bird, then copy it, target the image with the birds on the feeder and paste the bird into it as a new layer. Reduce this layer's opacity to 30%, and position the bird so that it sits on the perch on the right of the feeder. Return the opacity to 100%, Alt-click the Layer mask button to add a black mask that hides the bird, then take the Brush tool and paint in the bird with a white brush.
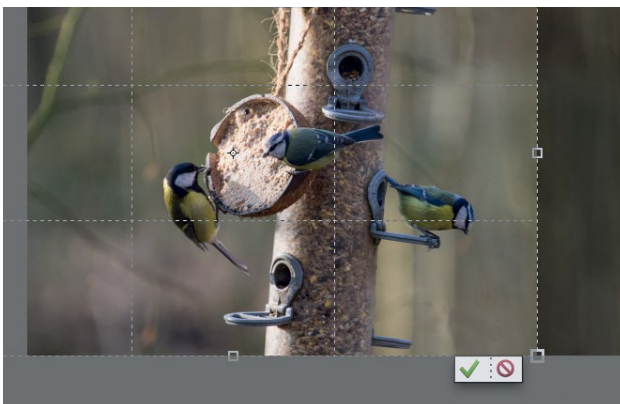
9 Combine again and crop

Take the Crop tool, crop in on the right of the image, then drag out the left-hand box handle and press Enter to extend the canvas on the left of the image. Next, add the bird from the final image in the same way as you added the bird in step 8.
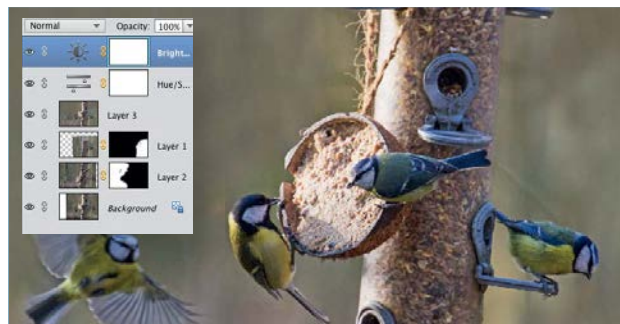
10 Boost the colour and contrast

Press Cmd/Ctrl+Alt+Shift+E to create a merged layer. Take the Clone Stamp tool, and clone background pixels into the area of blank canvas on the left. Add a Levels adjustment layer, and set the Shadows slider to 14, Midtones to 1.09 and Highlights to 245. Add a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer and set Saturation to +15. Add a Brightness/Contrast adjustment layer, and set Brightness to 3 and Contrast to 16.

Get the right gear
If you're serious about bird shoots, invest in some specialist kit

1 Camouflaged hide

There are lots of camouflaged hides on the market, but you'll need one that's portable, and quick to put up and take down, so that you can easily move between locations.

2 Beanbag

If you don't want to lug a heavy tripod around, a beanbag is a great alternative for supporting your camera and lens. They're cheap, and can be placed almost anywhere.

3 Camouflaged clothing

Camouflaged clothing is handy for any wildlife shoot. You can get patterns for different environments, and if you want to go the whole hog you could get a ghillie suit!

Capture a candid close-up portrait

Get up close with your macro lens to capture portraits that really draw out the character of your subjects

Composition can often be the most challenging aspect of taking a photograph, and in portrait photography we need to think hard about where to position the subject, how much 'breathing space' we should leave around her, what should be in focus and so on. However, there's more potential for pushing the boundaries of how we frame portraits than with other subjects. The most striking images are often those that break the rules, so in this project we're going to be looking at how you can capture a more abstract style of portrait that goes

against some of the conventions of composition, by coming in really close for maximum impact.

You'll need a friend or family member who can model for you. Look for distinguishing features that you can accentuate, such as the eyes, mouth and bone structure, and try to coax expressions that convey something of her character; our model had striking eyes and long hair, so we worked with those features in particular. You can either concentrate on capturing one portrait, or shoot a series of images that can be presented together, as we've done.

1 Let there be light!

For close-ups you need soft natural light for the best results, so if you're shooting outside, avoid bright sunshine. If the weather is miserable you can shoot indoors like we did, positioning your model by a window. Whether you're indoors or outdoors, use a reflector to bounce light back on to your model's face and fill in unflattering shadows.

2 Use a macro lens

The Canon EF 100mm f/2.8L IS USM Macro is ideal, because you can get up close without being restricted to the minimum focusing distance, as you would with a non-macro lens. The 100mm focal length enables you to get nice close-ups without distorting facial features, and the lens has a four-stop stabiliser, which is great for shooting handheld in low light. ▶

3 Camera settings

Set your camera to manual mode for full control. To shoot handheld you'll need to set a wide aperture to let in plenty of light; depending on the speed of your lens this will be somewhere between f/2.8 and f/5.6. This will ensure that you have a fast enough shutter speed to avoid camera shake, and will also create a nice shallow depth of field, so your model's facial features stay sharp while peripheral detail and the backdrop are thrown out of focus.

4 Shutter speed

Once you've set your aperture, half-press the shutter button to meter the scene, and turn the dial to adjust the shutter speed until the exposure indicator is in the middle to obtain a balanced exposure. Keep the ISO low for maximum image quality. However, to ensure you have a fast enough shutter speed to capture pin-sharp shots, you may need to increase the ISO to 400 or even 800, depending on the ambient lighting.

5 Composition

When it comes to composition, try to think outside the box and capture something a bit different. Most portraits are taken face-on with the camera around eye level, so try changing the angle and viewpoint. Get up high and shoot down on your subject, and get low and angle the camera up for an abstract feel. Try shots from the side too, with your subject looking both at you and away from you.

6 Focus on features

Make the most of features such as the eyes, mouth and hair, but don't feel that you have to include every feature in a single frame. Try shooting half of your model's face, or her profile, and come in tight to emphasise details such as the eyes for added impact. For precise focusing, manually select the autofocus point that's closest to the detail you want to capture — you'll need to change the active focus point as you compose different shots.

7 ACR adjustments

Open the five starting images in Camera Raw. They are DNG files so they'll open in ACR by default. Click the ty_elements61.dng thumbnail, and set Exposure to +0.60 and Shadows +20. Select ty_elements62.dng and set Exposure to +0.65, Shadows to +38 and Blacks to +23. Select ty_elements63.dng and set Exposure to +0.35, Highlights to -27 and Shadows to +43.

8 Open in Elements

Select ty_elements64.dng and set Exposure to -0.75, Highlights to -45 and Shadows to +30, then select ty_elements65.dng and set Exposure to +1.05, Highlights to -25, Shadows to +55 and Blacks to +42. Click Select All at the top-left, and set Clarity to +10, then click Open Images to open all five images in Elements' Expert/Full Edit mode.
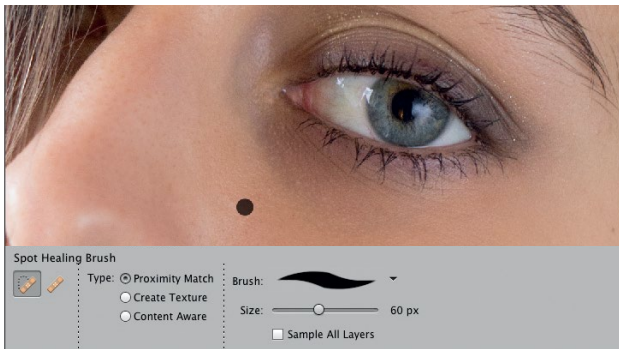
9 Retouch the skin

Press Cmd/Ctrl+J to duplicate the Background layer, and use the Spot Healing Brush tool to remove minor blemishes and stray hairs by clicking them. Use the Brush tool to even out areas of uneven skin tone by Alt-clicking to sample lighter or darker skin tones and painting over areas at 20% opacity. Take the Dodge tool, set Range to Midtones and Exposure to 20%, and brush over the eyes to brighten them.
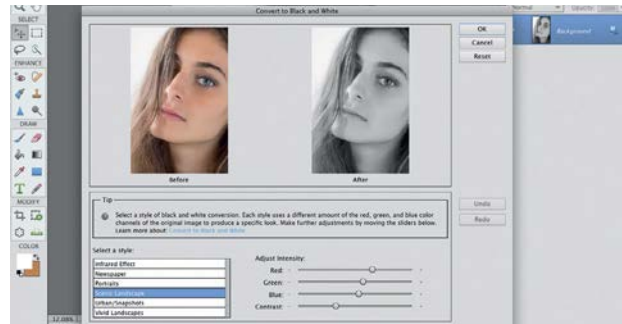
10 Convert to monochrome

Take the Burn tool, set Range set to Midtones and Exposure to 20%, and paint over the lips and eyebrows to enhance them. Next go to Enhance>Convert to Black and White, select Scenic Landscapes and click OK. Add a Levels adjustment layer, and move the Shadows and Highlights sliders in until they're below the outer edges of the histogram, to set the black and white endpoints and boost the contrast.

11 Merge and sharpen

Move the Midtones slider left to brighten the image, then change the layer's blending mode to Soft Light to subtly boost contrast throughout the tonal range — you may need to tweak the Levels settings after doing this. Press Cmd/Ctrl+Alt+Shift+E to create a merged layer, then go to Enhance>Unsharp Mask and set Amount to 70% and Radius to 2 pixels.

12 Make a montage

Go to Layer>Flatten Image, then repeat steps 9-11 for each image. Select ty_elements61, take the Crop tool, select Use Photo Ratio, click the arrows below to swap the height and width values and draw a landscape crop. Crop the next three to square format by changing the height setting to match the width setting; leave ty_elements65 as portrait format. Create a new document, copy and paste all the images into it, and resize and position them to create a montage as shown.

How to create a reflective mood...

A reflector is simply a large sheet of reflective material that's used to direct light on to a subject. When you're shooting portraits in natural light you can use a lightweight, collapsible reflector; they're a cheap, portable and easy-to-use option for controlling the light without having to use flash. Reflectors are available in a range of sizes and colours, and many have multiple surfaces so that you can create different effects – white is great for lifting shadows and balancing the light, gold adds a warm glow to skin, and silver creates a cooler feel and can also create nice highlights.
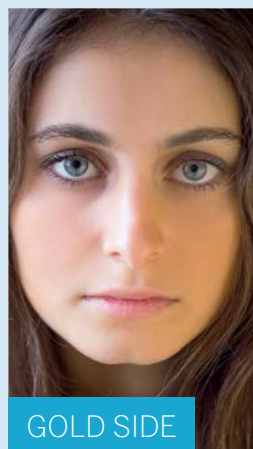
GOLD SIDE

SILVER SIDE

WHITE SIDE

NO REFLECTOR

Shoot a moody low-key portrait

Shut out the ambient light to plunge the backdrop in deep shadows, and use a flashgun to light your subject for an atmospheric portrait

Low-key portraits make the most of dark tones and shadows to create drama and atmosphere. Unlike high-key photography, which requires plenty of natural or artificial light, a low-key shoot requires very little. The backdrop needs to be mostly hidden in the shadows, while particular features on the subject are illuminated to make them stand out.

This means that when you're shooting low-key portraits you don't need much in the way of lighting kit — a single flashgun mounted off-camera will be adequate. Some D-SLRs, such as the 60D, 600D and 7D, have an Integrated Speedlite Transmitter, which enables you to fire a compatible external flash via the camera's pop-up flash. If your camera doesn't have this feature you'll need a wireless flash trigger, which is mounted on your camera's hotshoe.

For this technique the ambient lighting needs to be as low as possible, so shooting indoors is ideal. You want to eliminate as much of the ambient light as possible, which you can do by narrowing your aperture; a fast shutter speed would achieve the same effect, but on some cameras the top flash sync speed is either 1/200 or 1/250 sec. When you expose for the ambient light you don't need to worry about under-exposing your subject, because the flash will illuminate them — you can simply adjust the flash power as required to expose them correctly. ▶

BEFORE

1 Choose a location

A large and spacious room is ideal for this shoot. It doesn't need to have good natural light — the darker the better, in fact — and you don't need to worry about cluttered backdrops, because only your subject should be visible when you exclude the ambient light.

2 Get set up

For this shoot a standard zoom lens will give you plenty of versatility. You don't need a 'fast' portrait lens with a wide maximum aperture, because we'll be using flash to light the model rather than relying on natural light. As we'll be shooting with an external flashgun, you'll need a light stand or tripod to place it on, using the mount supplied with the flashgun.

3 Camera settings

We want to eliminate as much of the ambient light as possible, so forget about exposing for your subject for the time being. Set a low ISO of 100 to retain maximum quality for smooth, noise-free shadows, and set your shutter speed to the maximum flash sync speed, which is 1/200 sec (1/250 sec on higher-end cameras). Start with a wide aperture value, such as f/5.6, and take a test shot.

4 Narrow the aperture

If the scene is still fairly light, dial in a narrower aperture and take another test shot, and repeat until you've eliminated all the ambient light and the whole scene appears dark. You can use the histogram to help you; ideally there should be just a few lines of pixels clipped at the left-hand edge of the graph to indicate a heavily under-exposed scene.

5 Flash settings

Now we need to set the camera's pop-up flash to trigger the external flashgun. Select the first shooting menu, scroll down to 'Flash control' and press 'Set'. Next scroll down to 'Built-in flash func', press 'Set' and then scroll down to 'Wireless func' and press 'Set'. You want to select the third option here, to fire just the external flashgun.

6 Test the flash

Set the flashgun to Slave mode (refer to your manual for how to do this), and make sure your camera and flashgun are set to the same channel so they can communicate; the default channel on your camera is 1. Set your flashgun to manual, and place it in front of your model to one side. Set the power to one-quarter to start with, take a test shot, and increase the flash power if your model appears under-exposed.

7 Flash adjustments

If some of the background is illuminated and your subject is still under-exposed, increase the flash power and move the flashgun more to the side of your subject, so that less light is falling on the backdrop. Alternatively, you can move the flash closer to your model and reduce the power; the closer it is, the less power will be required, and this will also reduce the amount of light hitting the backdrop.

8 Start shooting

If you want to soften the effect of the flash you can direct the light into a light modifier, such as an umbrella, to create a more diffuse light; you can achieve a similar effect by using a reflector to bounce the light back on to your model. When you're happy with your exposure and flash settings, switch your lens to AF and start shooting.

9 Raw adjustments

Open the starting image in ACR. Set Exposure to +0.85, then set Shadows to -15 and Blacks to -23 to darken down the shadows. Set Clarity to -20 to soften the skin; positive Clarity settings are used to enhance detail, but negative settings enable you to subtly blur fine detail such as skin blemishes. Click Open Image to open the image in Elements' Expert/Full Edit mode, and press Cmd/Ctrl+J to duplicate the background. Rename the new layer Skin.
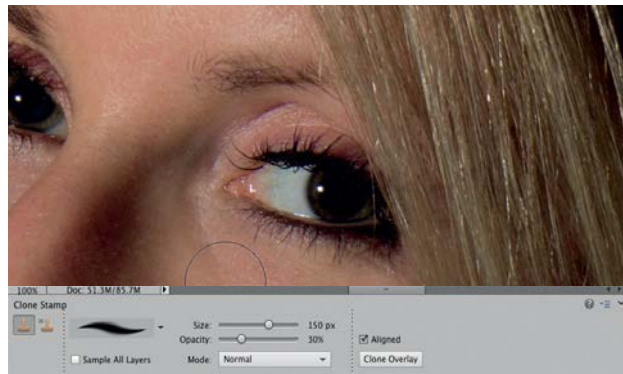
10 Retouch the skin

Use the Spot Healing Brush to tidy up stray hairs and spots, and the Clone Stamp tool for larger blemishes; set its opacity to 25%, Alt-click to sample clean areas and clone these over the marks. Duplicate the Skin layer and rename the new layer Blur. Go to Filter›Blur›Gaussian Blur and set Radius to 2 pixels.
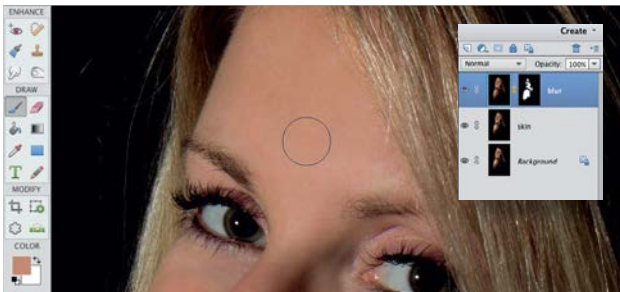
11 Blur the skin

Alt-click the Layer mask icon to add a black mask and hide the blur effect, then paint over the skin with a white brush to reveal the blur. Click the layer's image thumbnail, then use the Brush tool to even out areas of uneven skin tone by Alt-clicking to sample lighter or darker tones and painting over areas at 15% opacity. Click the top layer, and press Cmd/Ctrl+Alt+Shift+E to create a merged layer. Go to Enhance›Convert to Black and White, and select the Newspaper style.

12 Contrast and sharpening

Add a Levels adjustment layer, and set Shadows to 29 and Midtones to 1.22 to lighten the subject's midtones and darken the shadows further. Set the layer blending mode to Overlay, and reduce its opacity to 60%. Target Layer 1, select the Dodge tool, set Range to Midtones and Exposure to 25%, and brush over the eyes and hair to lighten them. Create another merged layer, go to Enhance› Unsharp Mask and set Amount to 60% and Radius to 2.8 pixels. Add a black mask as before, and paint the sharpening back into the eyes and mouth with a white brush.

Photo clinic

Get professional feedback on enthusiasts' photos, with simple solutions you can use in Photoshop Elements

Teach yourself **Photoshop Elements**

Storm Clouds

BY DAVE JEFFRIES

Canon EOS 7D
Canon EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS II USM
Aperture **f/20**
Shutter speed **1/50 secs**

Dave says "After the recent record dry spell in California we received some welcome rain in February, and I ventured out with my nine-year-old on a Sunday afternoon. The storm had just moved on, and these hills south of San Francisco looked like they were breathing a sigh of relief. I stopped the car and took this shot quickly with my Canon 7D and 70-200mm zoom lens at 70mm; I didn't use any filters. After doing a little processing in Lightroom (I pulled back the highlights and boosted the shadows to bring out the 'anger' in the clouds), the area of grass bank in the lower-left third popped out — it's illuminated by the sun coming through a gap in the clouds. In hindsight I should probably have gone for greater depth of field, as not everything is as crisp as I'd like. I would love your expert view on any framing and post-processing that could have developed this into a hang-able living room picture."

We say "This is a pretty good effort, Dave! Shooting at a narrow aperture of f/20 has actually given you sufficient depth of field, so the shot is sharp across the frame. And I like the 'wide' composition, with lots of really moody cloudy sky and forest, and not much lake, while the light on the edge of the lake provides a nice focal point. But it could certainly be improved. If you shoot in the raw mode it's easy to lift detail and colour in Adobe Camera Raw. However, you can also edit hi-res JPEGs very effectively in ACR, and I've taken the liberty of making a few edits. I've warmed up the image, boosted the exposure and contrast, reduced the highlights, and boosted shadows and whites, as well as clarity and saturation to lift the colours. As I'm using Photoshop CS6, with ACR 8.3, I was also able to add an ND grad effect to the brighter top part of the sky. Then, in Photoshop, I cloned out the distracting tree tops in the foreground, and sharpened the shot. More details in the step-by-step on the facing page!"

PHOTO CRITIQUE
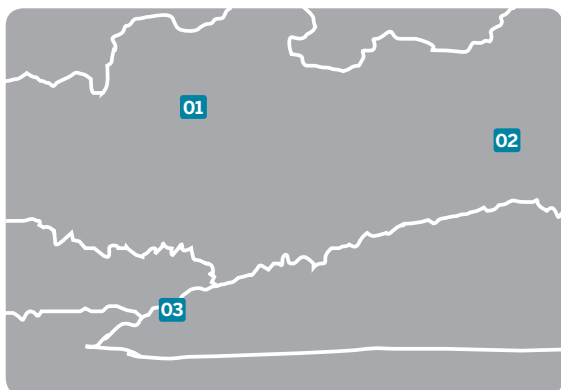
01 Well exposed to retain detail in the bright clouds and forest; the f/20 aperture captures a broad depth of field

02 Thoughtful composition, with a 'wide' view at 70mm rather than a more tightly cropped image at 200mm

03 The image feels too cool, and the shadow and highlight detail could be improved to enhance the illuminated area

Now try this...

How Dave can enhance his landscape image in Photoshop
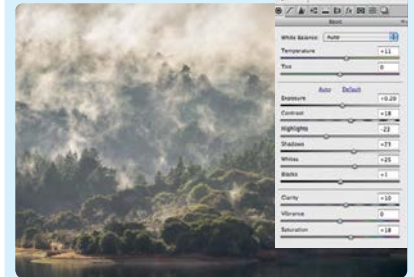
Boost the image

I opened the JPEG in ACR (right click in Bridge and choose Open in Camera Raw), where I've warmed up the Temperature (+11), then boosted Exposure (+0.20) and Contrast (+18), dropped Highlights (-23), and boosted Shadows (+23) and Whites (+25). I also nudged up Clarity (+10) and Saturation (+18).
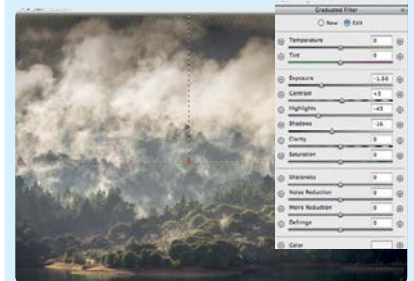
Control the sky

Dave didn't use an ND grad for this shot, but as I'm using ACR I can quickly add a grad effect with the Graduated Filter tool to pull back the bright sky. I've drawn a gradient from the top of the sky to half-way down the image, then set Exposure to -1.50, Contrast to +3, Highlights to -43 and Shadows to -16.
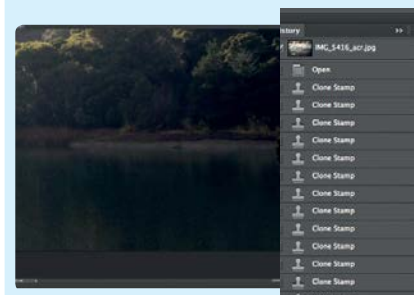
Cloning to clean up

Clicking Open brings the tweaked image into the main Photoshop editor. Here I've used the Clone Stamp tool to remove the clumps of distracting undergrowth at the bottom of the frame, before sharpening the image with the Unsharp Mask filter. ●

Helsinki Busker

BY ANDY HOLLINGSBEE

Canon EOS 5D Mk II
Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8L USM
Aperture **f/2.8**
Shutter speed **1/640 sec**

Andy says "I took this shot in Helsinki in November. Photography in that part of the world late in the year can be quite challenging, as it starts to get dark by early afternoon, but one cloudy and miserable Sunday I decided to try my hand at some street photography. This accordion-playing busker caught my attention, because he was so cheerful despite the poor weather, and because I could see that there was bags of character in his weather-beaten face. I shot with my EF 24-70mm f/2.8L lens wide open and at 70mm, both to let in as much light as possible and also so that I could blur the background. This was my first serious attempt at converting a picture to black and white, which I did in Photoshop Elements, using the Urban Snapshots preset in Convert to Black and White. I also added a subtle vignette to focus attention on the subject. I've been meaning to start a portfolio for a while, and I thought this shot would be a good start. When I got the picture printed I ordered two copies, as I knew I would be in the same area again a week later, and you should have seen the busker's face when I gave him a copy of the picture to keep — he really lit up!"

We say "This is a great street portrait Andy, and it looks all the better for being converted to black and white, which really brings out the subject's character — and it also disguises the fact that the weather was lousy! The depth of field is perfect, as you've kept enough of the subject's surroundings sharp to show the urban environment, while blurring the more distant detail so it doesn't compete for our attention. However, the image lacks a little in terms of punch, because the tones are relatively flat; there are too many midtone greys in the scene, and not enough highlights to create strong contrast. Fortunately, we can add instant impact to the shot with a few simple edits in Elements."

PHOTO CRITIQUE
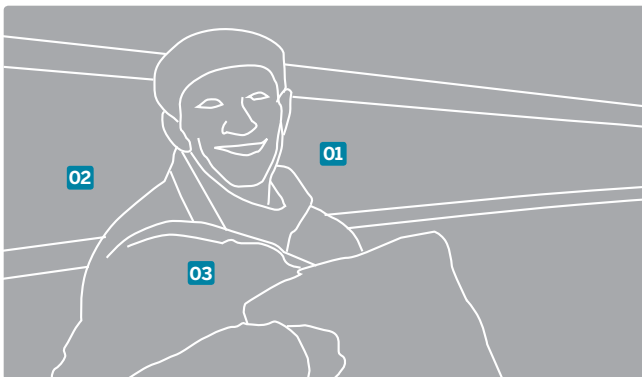
01 Great composition, and a natural pose and expression, create an engaging street portrait

02 Converting the image to mono suits both the subject and the weather

03 The image lacks punch. Both the overall contrast and the fine detail need a boost
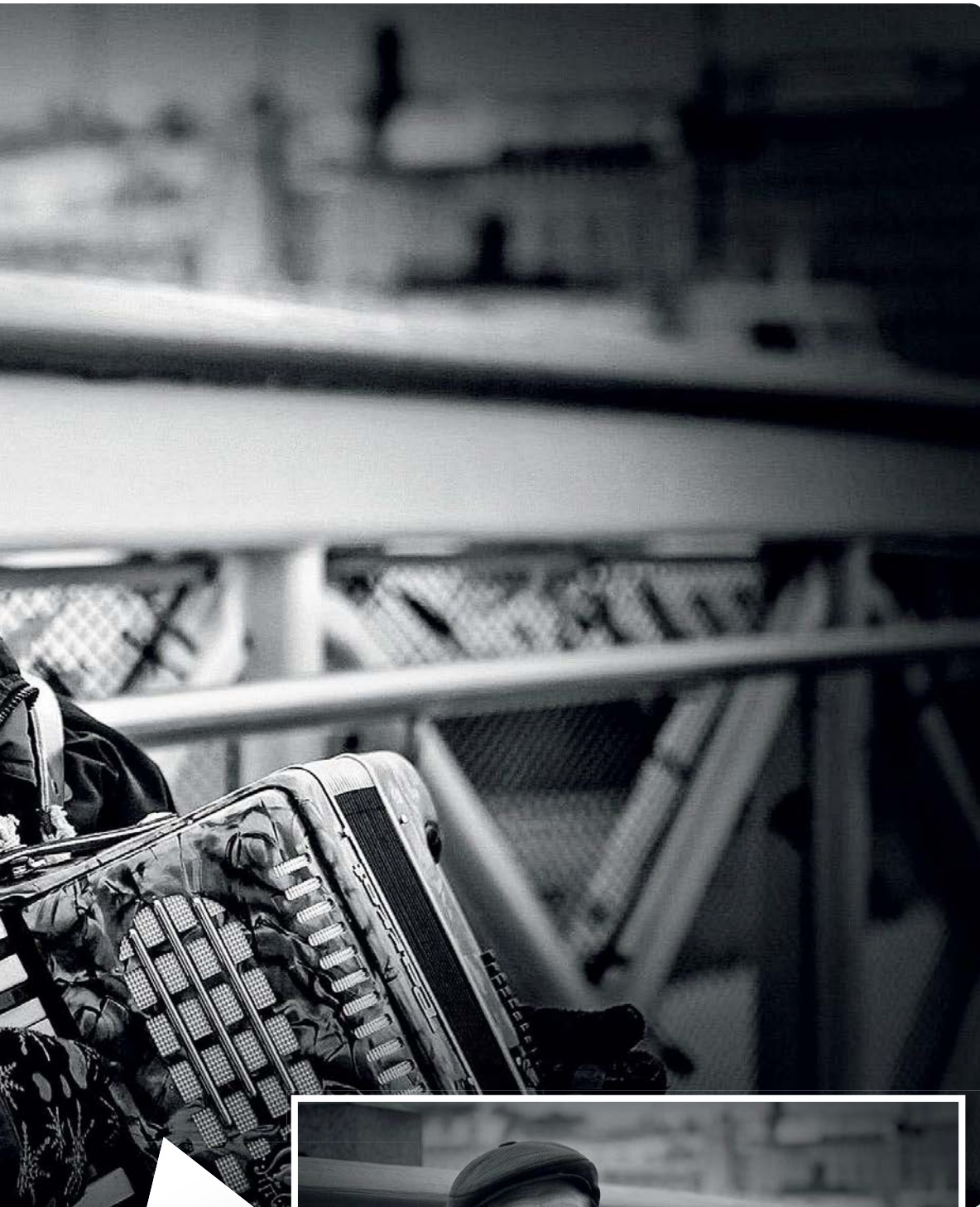
Now try this...

How Andy can enhance his portrait in ACR and Elements

ACR adjustments

In Elements go to File›Open in Camera Raw. On the Basic tab set Exposure to +0.20, Contrast to +30, Highlights to +100 and Whites to -40. Set Clarity to +100 and click Open Image.

Selective contrast

Add a Levels adjustment layer. Set Shadows to 15 and Highlights to 235, then take a black brush, click the mask thumbnail and paint over areas where shadows are too dark or highlights too bright. Add a new layer, and label it 'vignette'.
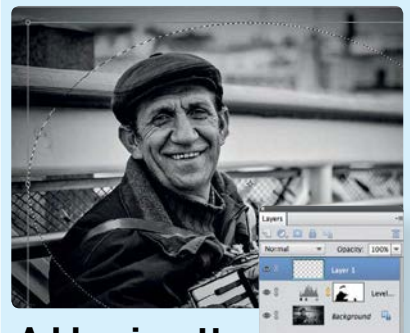
Add a vignette

Take the Elliptical Marquee tool, and draw a vignette-shaped selection. Go to Select›Inverse, then go to Edit›Fill and choose Black. Go to Select›Deselect, then go to Filter›Gaussian Blur and enter 170 pixels. Reduce the layer's opacity to 30% and fine-tune the position and shape of the vignette with the Move tool. ◼

Teach yourself **Photoshop Elements**

You Looking At Me?

BY PAUL FINE

Canon EOS 5D Mk III
Canon EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS USM
Aperture **f/14**
Shutter speed **1/125 sec**

Paul says "I spotted this group of macaque monkeys on a visit to Newquay Zoo. I immediately envisaged the shot I wanted to capture, but it took a long time for the monkeys to play ball and all look at me at the same time, despite me clicking my fingers and making various attempts at monkey noises to try and get their attention! As it was a quite dull day I had to bump up the ISO to 800 to get a fast enough shutter speed to enable me to shoot handheld. In Photoshop I adjusted Levels slightly, cropped in a little tighter to remove some background distractions, and added a vignette to draw the eye in. I love the eye contact with the macaques — even if they do look a bit sinister!"

We say "This is a great shot, Paul, and it goes to show that you don't have to go on safari to capture dramatic wildlife images! As you say, it's the eye contact that helps to makes the shot, so it was worth waiting for the right moment — and possibly getting funny looks off other visitors with your efforts to get the monkeys' attention! But it's not just that eye contact that makes this shot a winner — the tilts of the heads, and the way the monkeys are lined up as if they're in a queue, help to create a genuinely engaging wildlife portrait. Your shutter speed was fast enough to ensure a sharp image, while the f/14 aperture has kept the closest two macaques in sharp focus, and the farthest one sharp enough to capture the eye contact, while blurring the backdrop nicely. However, a slightly narrower aperture would've made the back monkey sharper; capturing good-quality images at high ISOs is all in a day's work for your 5D Mk III, so you could have gone to ISO1600 without a noticeable reduction in quality. A vignette effect is ideal for this sort of shot, but I would just suggest a couple of small tweaks to enhance the image even more — I've made these in Adobe Camera Raw, which can be used to edit JPEGs very effectively as well as raw files. The shot feels too warm, and the yellowish tint makes the subjects look a little jaundiced, so I've toned down the yellow and added blue by moving the Temperature slider left; cooling the colours adds to the feeling of drama and slight menace you alluded to. I've also brightened the image a little, boosted the overall contrast, and reduced the Blacks to further boost the contrast between the shadows and midtones. You also sent us some black-and-white versions of similar images; mono treatments can be very effective for wildlife, and converting to mono is also an easy way to banish colour casts, but in this case keeping the image in colour preserves the striking oranges of the macaques' eyes."

PHOTO CRITIQUE

01 The composition and eye contact makes for a really engaging wildlife portrait

02 Narrowing the aperture would have kept the rear monkey much sharper

03 The image feels too warm, and would benefit from a contrast boost

Now try this...

How Paul can enhance his wildlife portrait using Elements' Camera Raw editor

Correct the colours

In Elements go to File›Open in Camera Raw, navigate to the JPEG image and click Open to open it in ACR. Move the Temperature slider left to -18 to cool down the image, and move the Tint slider left to -3 to tone down the slight magenta cast.
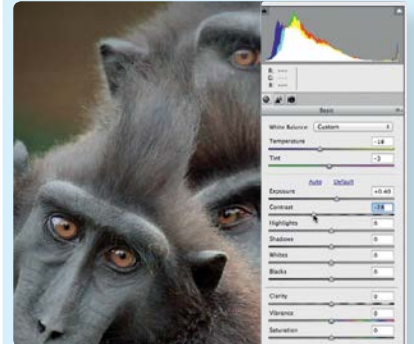
Exposure and contrast

Move the Exposure slider right to +0.40 to brighten the entire image, then set Contrast to +28 to boost the overall contrast.

Boost the Blacks

To further increase the contrast between the darkest tones in the image and the midtones, move the Blacks slider left to -18. Finally, set Saturation to +2 to subtly boost the colours throughout the shot.

Teach yourself **Photoshop Elements**

Superbikes

BY DAVE MACLEOD

Canon EOS 600D
Canon EF-S 55-250mm f/4-5.6 IS II
Aperture **f/5.6**
Shutter speed **1/640 sec**

Dave says "I shot this at the Knockhill round of the British Superbikes Championship. It shows my two favourite riders in the Superbike class: Stuart Easton (No. 5), a local rider from Hawick, with Josh Brookes (No. 3) close behind him. The hairpin always offers a good opportunity for close-up action shots, as the bikes are going a bit slower before heading up to the start/finish line. However, I was standing in the spectator area, which is higher than the track, and so I was unable to get as low as I would've liked. I've cropped the image, but I haven't done any other post-processing work on it. The sky was quite bright when I took this, with a little cloud cover."

We say "Nice work, Dave — you've captured a strong superbikes action shot at a great moment during the race, with the riders pushing each other hard as they fight for the lead. It was a smart move to position yourself at the hairpin, as the riders are moving relatively slowly here, giving you more of a chance of grabbing a sharp shot, which you've managed thanks to your exposure of f/5.6 at 1/640 sec with your telephoto lens. However, this was taken at 170mm, and I think you could have zoomed in fully to 250mm for an even tighter shot.

"I also think you're right to crop the image, to remove the distracting advertising boards. But I also think that, having held back when you took the shot, you've then gone too far, cropping too tight on the riders and not giving them space to ride 'out' of the shot. So in Photoshop I've cropped your image less tightly, and I've also angled it for a more dynamic feel. I've then added a vignette to draw the eye in, boosted the contrast, cloned out the mark on the white race markings, and sharpened the shot."

PHOTO CRITIQUE
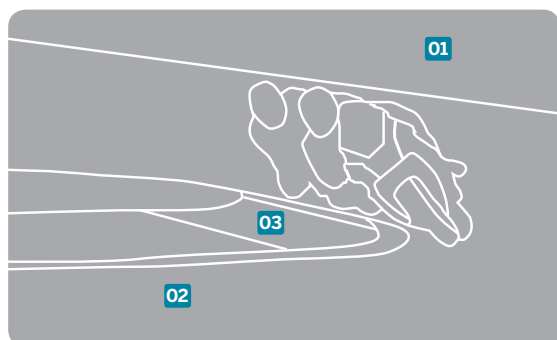
01 Dave was right to crop out the advertising boards at the top of the image...

02 ...but his crop was too tight, and the riders don't have any space

03 We've also cloned out some distracting marks on the track markings

Now try this...

How Dave can improve his results in Photoshop

Cropping correctly

Dave was right to crop, but went too tight. Using the Crop tool in Photoshop, I've cropped in, just not as much, leaving space for the riders to move into. I also tilted the crop for a more aggressive angle. Using the rule of thirds overlay grid, the riders are positioned perfectly.

Vignette and contrast improvements

Adding subtle vignettes ensures the eye is drawn to the focal point. Go to Filter›Lens Correction (Correct Camera Distortion in Photoshop Elements), and set Vignette Amount to -50. Now use Brightness/Contrast and boost Contrast to +25.
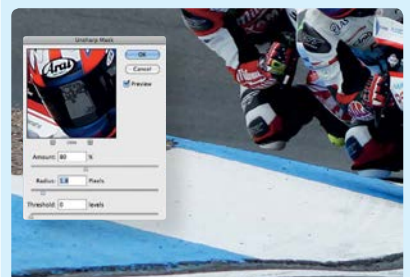
Clone and sharpen

To remove a few distracting marks, I used a combination of the Clone Stamp tool and Spot Healing Brush tool, using small brushes, and zoomed in to 100%. As always, sharpen last — using Unsharp Mask, I've set Amount to 80% and Radius to 1.8 pixels. ●

ORIGINAL

DAVE'S CROP

Teach yourself **Photoshop Elements**

Lake View

BY WAYNE GIBBONS

Canon EOS 5D Mk II
Canon EF 24-105mm f/4L IS USM
Aperture **f/13**
Shutter speed **1/160 sec**

Wayne says "This was taken in the Lake District near Glenridding and Ullswater, which can be seen in the distance. I was about 1,400ft up with no tripod and just a polarising filter. I found some rocks to use as foreground interest, and included the water and mountains in the background to add some depth to the scene. I used a narrow aperture of f/13 to capture a broad depth of field and keep as much of the scene in focus as possible, and I set an ISO of 400 to ensure my shutter speed was fast enough for a handheld shot. In post-processing I tweaked the contrast using Curves, and applied a Black & White adjustment layer with a blending mode and layer mask to boost the colour and contrast. I also applied some noise reduction, and sharpened the image using the High Pass filter."

We say "What a cracking shot, Wayne! It's a shame you didn't have a tripod, but well done for increasing your ISO to ensure your shutter speed was fast enough. Selecting a narrow aperture of f/13 was a good choice, as you've captured a broad depth of field, and I like how you've included foreground, midground and background detail to add depth to the image, capturing 'layers' of interest that lead the eye through the scene. I do think there's a little too much foreground in the shot, however, so I've used the Recompose tool in Photoshop Elements to squash this area so that our main focus is on the hills, lake and sky. I've also boosted the colour and contrast even more, to really show off this spectacular landscape."

PHOTO CRITIQUE

01 It's good to include some foreground interest, but here we have too much, and it dominates the bottom half of the frame

02 The scene contains plenty of 'layers' of detail, which lead the eye through the scene from the foreground to the distant background

03 The shot's colours and contrast are a little flat, and don't do justice to the dramatic subject, so we need to give them a boost

STEP BY STEP

Now try this...

How Wayne can recompose and enhance his landscape scene using Elements

Recompose tool

Select the Recompose tool, and paint over the foreground with the Mark for Removal tool. Click the bottom handle of the bounding box and drag it up to compress the foreground detail, then drag the top handle down to produce a more panoramic composition.

Panoramic crop

Hit Enter or click the green tick to apply the transformation, and adjust the Threshold slider if required to reduce distortion. Next take the Crop tool, select 16x9in from the Crop Preset menu, and crop the image.

Boost colours

Add a Levels adjustment layer, and set the Shadows slider to 27, Midtones to 1.10 and Highlights to 254. Add a Brightness/Contrast adjustment layer, and set both Brightness and Contrast to +18.

01 The hawk in the centre is out of formation, and distracts the eye

02 The lettering and insignia on the aircraft are perfectly sharp

Red Arrows

BY ALEX MCDONALD

Canon EOS 650D
**Canon EF 70-300mm f/4-5.6L IS USM**
Aperture **f/7.1**
Shutter speed **1/800 sec**

Alex says "I visited the East Fortune Airshow in East Lothian in July to try out my new Canon EF 70-300 f/4-5.6L IS USM lens, its zoom range extended by my crop-factor 650D. I'd re-read the Masterclass on photographing aircraft from the September 2012 issue of *PhotoPlus* for some tips, and it was a really enjoyable day. However, it was hard work trying to keep up with the fast jets. I was a little envious of the photographers who had more advanced cameras with faster burst rates — it seemed to me that more frames per second and lots of luck were the keys to capturing the perfect shot! I was also a bit disappointed when I got home to find that a lot of my shots looked too dark. I'd tried keeping my ISO at 100-200, but I think the camera was foxed by the clouds, despite me using spot metering. I'd appreciate any advice on how I can capture brighter shots with more detail."

We say "A very good effort, Alex. The planes are nice and sharp — you can clearly make out the 'Force' of Royal Air Force on some of the aircraft. The image is a little dark, but it's clear to see this was a dull and overcast day — so you were never going to get bright and sunny images! Any camera will also under-expose shots with lots of 'bright' sky in the frame to avoid over-exposure, but spot metering a small moving target is tricky; using Centre-weighted Average would've been better as the brighter planes are mostly in the centre of your frame. But we can easily lighten the shot in Photoshop Elements. There's isn't much wrong with your camera settings — f/7.1 is a good aperture for shooting aircraft, but ideally your shutter speed should have been a bit faster than 1/800 sec; you could easily have upped your ISO to 200/400 to get a faster shutter speed of 1/1600 sec. I've brightened up the image in Elements, and boosted the contrast; however, my biggest issue is with the plane at the rear — it's slightly lost against the red smoke of the plane above, and it detracts from the formation."

PHOTO CRITIQUE
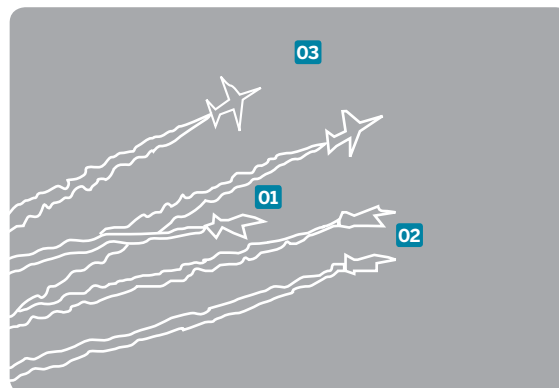
03 The sky is very under-exposed, and needs a boost in Elements to rebalance it

Now try this...
How Alex can enhance his airshow image in Elements

Select the hawk
Select the central plane with the Quick Selection tool. Zoom in to make an accurate selection, and where there's not enough contrast for the tool to work, switch to the Selection Brush. When you are happy with the selection press Cmd/Ctrl+J to float the plane to a new layer.

Clone the smoke
Select the Move tool, and reposition the plane as shown. Add a new layer below the plane layer, and clone out the plane with the Clone Stamp tool, Alt-clicking to sample suitable areas of sky and smoke. To extend the smoke trail to the repositioned plane, sample pixels from both the original trail and similarly coloured trail of the bottom plane.

Brightness and colour
Add a Brightness/Contrast adjustment layer, and set both sliders to around 60. Finally, add a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer, and set Saturation to 20 to boost the colours.

Teach yourself **Photoshop Elements**

Apocalypse Now

BY JOÃO FREIRE

Canon EOS 5D Mk II
Canon EF 16-35mm f/2.8L II USM
Aperture **f/11**
Shutter speed **30 secs**

João says "This shot is of the palafitte (stilt) quay at Carrasqueira, a fishing village on the Sado Estuary in southern Portugal. The fishermen here still use traditional methods, and the network of jetties has been expanded over the years to enable them to get to and from their boats at low tide. The quay draws photographers from as far afield as the United States and Japan, and I must have taken more than 100 photos of it myself. On this day there wasn't so much as a breeze. I mounted my 5D on a tripod and used my Lee ProGlass 0.9 ND filter to obtain a slow shutter speed, and an ND grad to hold back the sky."

We say "This is a stunning shot of a striking subject, João. You obviously know the location well, and you've timed and composed the shot perfectly, so the lines of the jetty lead the eye to the sunset; the colours are beautiful, and the rugged detail of the pier contrasts nicely with the smooth water and sky. It must have been an incredibly still day, because despite the slow shutter speed the clouds aren't 'streaky', and you can make out the writing on the boat. My only concern is that the jetty itself is quite dark, and doesn't stand out enough against the dark water and sky, so after tweaking the colours and exposure in ACR, I've used Levels to lighten the jetty, and boosted the local contrast to really bring out the texture and detail in the timbers, masking both effects with gradients."

01 The curves of the jetty lead the eye towards the setting sun, which is nicely placed at the top-left intersection of the third lines

02 The dramatic sky is beautifully reflected in the glass-like water, and the lines of the clouds subtly mirror the lines of the jetty

03 The jetty is quite dark; lightening it and boosting its detail creates contrast, and makes the composition even more effective

STEP BY STEP

Now try this...

How João can enhance his image in Elements

ACR adjustments

Open the JPEG image in Camera Raw. Set Temperature and Tint to +10, Exposure to +0.25, Shadows to +60, Contrast to +20 and Vibrance to +20. Open the image in Elements and duplicate the background layer.
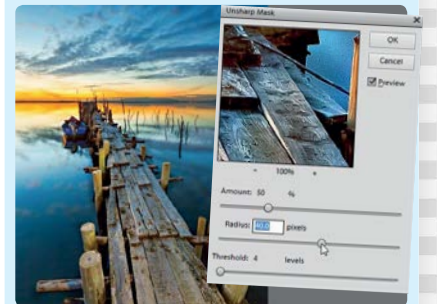
Local contrast

Go to Enhance›Unsharp Mask and set Amount to 50% and Radius to 40 pixels. Add a mask to the layer, select the Gradient tool and set the foreground colour to black. In the Options panel tick Transparency and Linear, then click Edit and select Foreground to Transparent.

Selective exposure

Draw one gradient to mask the effect from the sky, and two more to mask the water. Add a Levels adjustment layer, and Alt-drag the mask from Layer 1 to the Levels layer's mask to copy it. Set the Highlights to 220 and Midtones to 1.10 to lighten just the pier. ●

Woody

BY STEPHEN COSTIGAN

Canon EOS 5D Mk III
Canon EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS USM
Aperture **f/5.6**
Shutter speed **1/1000 sec**

Stephen says "I've been trying to photograph this woodpecker in my garden for several weeks now, but it rarely settles for more than a few seconds before flying off, so eventually I decided that my best option was to set the camera up inside the house, and shoot through the French windows. I mounted my 5D Mk III with 100-400mm lens on my tripod and attached a cable release. To obtain the correct focusing distance, and to stop the autofocus system from 'hunting', I autofocused on the coconut shell and then switched to manual focus. The bird's movements are extremely rapid, so to capture a sharp shot I selected a shutter speed of 1/1000 sec at f/5.6, which meant I had to bump up the ISO to 800, and used a focal length of 400mm. In post-processing I cropped the image at little, reduced the noise and sharpened it."

We say "Well done, Stephen — you've done a really good job of photographing a notoriously shy and skittish bird. Your composition is strong, with the woodpecker placed on the right of the frame, and your aperture is ideal for this kind of shot — f/5.6 at 400mm is wide enough to blur the background, but with enough depth of field to keep all of the bird in sharp focus. Pre-focusing on the coconut shell was a good move too, as your focusing is spot on. My only criticism is that the shot looks too dark — it's under-exposed by about a stop, so increasing your ISO to 1600 would've fixed this. However, we can easily brighten things up in Elements! First, I've applied a slight crop, then I've brightened the image, and I've also boosted the colours both globally and selectively — see the walkthrough for the details."

01 Good use of technique means the bird's whole body is in focus

02 The aperture used is wide enough to suitably blur the background

Now try this...

How Stephen can improve his bird portrait in Elements

Crop in

In Elements, I've used the Crop tool to crop the image at the same 3x2 (or 6x4) ratio of the original shot to lose the sharper foliage in the bottom-left corner. Using the rule of thirds grid I've placed the woodpecker on the right third line for a balanced composition.
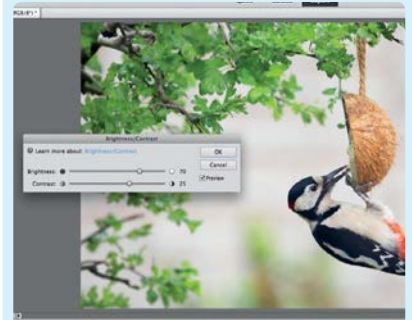
Brighten the image

A Brightness/Contrast adjustment layer offers a quick and simple way to fix under-exposed images. Here I've set Brightness to 70, which has lifted the image while retaining the detail in the lighter feathers on the woodpecker's chest, and I've also boosted the Contrast to 25.

Tweak the colours

Next I've added a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer, and set Saturation to +15 to boost the overall colours. I then selected Greens from the menu and set Saturation to +12 to lift the foliage, and selected Reds and set Saturation to -8 to tone down the bird's feathers.

PHOTO CRITIQUE

03 The shot is under-exposed by about a stop, but this is easily fixed

Porth Colmon

BY ALAN LODGE

Canon EOS 5D Mk II
Canon EF 17-40mm f/4L USM
Aperture **f/16**
Shutter speed **20 secs**

Alan says "This shot was taken at Porth Colmon — it's my favourite spot on the North Wales coast, and I try to spend as much time as possible down on the rocks at sunset. This shot was taken in the evening after a hot sunny day with no cloud, but as the sun started to set, some clouds began to form on the horizon. I waited until the sun had gone down, and crossed my fingers that the clouds would light up — they did, and I was very happy that my wait had paid off. It's always hard to expose the rocks properly, as they're so dark. I shot in raw, and used a Lee 0.6 ND filter, which in tandem with the narrow aperture of f/16 gave me the long exposure I was after to smooth the sea. I also used a 0.9 ND grad to hold back the sky while bringing out as much detail in the rocks as possible. Apart from some sensor dust marks I'm happy with the shot, although I'd still like to have captured more detail in the rocks — I'll try again next time!

We say "This is a great long-exposure seascape, Alan. The sea and sky are well-exposed, and the colours of the sky and the reflection in the blurred water are spectacular. The rocks are a little under-exposed, as you say, but even shooting raw it's hard to expose such a high-contrast scene, and if you'd exposed for that shadow detail you'd have clipped the colours in the sky; when we talk about clipping we're often referring to pure white highlights, but if you've got strong, bright colours it's possible to clip these too, so they become patches of flat orange or red, with no gradation in tone. I like how you've used the curve of the shoreline to frame the central rocks, although for me the composition is a little too simplistic with the horizon in the middle. I've applied a fairly radical crop, going from landscape format to portrait, and turning a conventional seascape into something that, without the context of the shoreline, is more abstract. It also puts the horizon on the top third line. With your large 21Mp raw image from your full-frame EOS 5D Mk II, we're still left with a good-sized usable image. I've also lightened the water to bring it closer in tone to the sky and muted the sky colours a touch, so the central rocks become the main focus against a wash of colour; the blurred water adds to the abstract feel. Hope you like it!"

PHOTO CRITIQUE

01

02 **03**

01 Well-exposed to capture the spectacular colours of the sky and its reflection

02 Nice use of the shoreline to frame the central cluster of rocks

03 The composition is a bit too symmetrical, and the foreground rocks are dark

Now try this...

How Alan can enhance his sunset seascape in Elements

Portrait crop

Take the Crop tool, choose 8x10in from the crop preset menu and crop as shown, then use the Clone Stamp tool on a new layer to remove the bits of rock from the edges of the frame, and the dust spots.

Brighten the foreground

Add a Brightness/Contrast adjustment layer and set Brightness to 20. Take the Gradient tool, and draw a black-to-white linear gradient on the mask so that just the foreground is lightened.
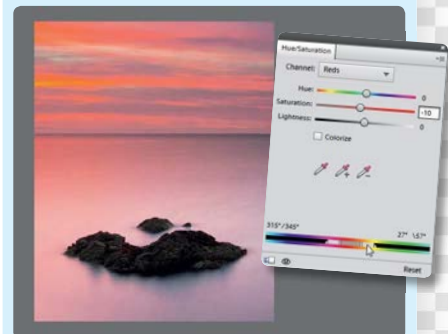
Tone down the reds

Add a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer. Choose Reds from the menu, set Saturation to -10, then drag the right-hand pair of markers at the foot of the panel right a touch, so that the oranges are desaturated, along with the reds.

Teach yourself **Photoshop Elements**

PHOTO CRITIQUE

01 The image is nicely composed, and the all-important eye is perfectly sharp

02 The shot is well-exposed to capture detail from the dark eye to the highlights

03 The background object in the bottom-right of the frame is a little bit distracting

Tree Frog

BY PAUL DIXON

Canon EOS 7D
Canon EF 100mm f/2.8L IS USM Macro
Aperture **f/14**
Shutter speed **1/160 sec**

Paul says "I recently won a day-long photography workshop with Wild Arena at Knowsley Safari Park, near Liverpool. Canon made a range of equipment available for the winners to try, including the EOS 6D, 5D and 1D X. The morning was spent driving around the park using telephoto lenses, and I got to try out the EF 200-400mm f/4L IS USM Extender 1.4x and EF 500mm f/4L IS USM. In the afternoon we took macro shots in a small studio. This tree frog was placed on a twig positioned between two studio lights, and a fine water mist was sprayed onto it and into the air. I knelt down to take the picture from slightly below, focusing on the eye."

We say "You were very lucky to get the chance to try out all that high-end kit, Paul, although of course, your 7D and 100mm f/2.8L are no slouches either, as this image shows. Amphibians and reptiles make great wildlife subjects, thanks to their colourful and intricately detailed skins, and tree frogs have the added appeal of those huge eyes. You've focused this shot nicely to ensure the eye is sharp, although the depth of field falls off a little too quickly for my liking because of the 100mm focal length — a slightly narrower aperture would have kept more of the head sharp. The frog is fairly well-positioned in the frame, but the object that looks like a piece of bark in the bottom-right corner is distracting, as it butts up against the frog's chin and is similar in colour to the frog's underside. I've cloned the object out; this is a relatively easy job, as the background has smoothly gradated and blurred tones, although it's important to preserve the slightly out-of-focus edges of the frog's head. With that done, I've made the frog stand out more from the background by lightening it, and boosting the colours and contrast with adjustment layers. Finally, I've cropped the image to make the frog a bit larger in the frame."

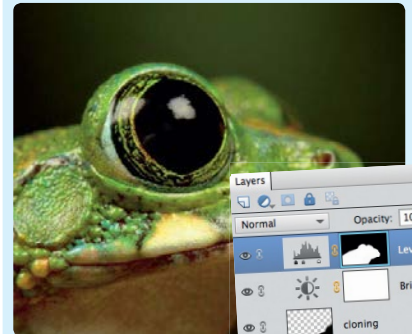## Now try this...

How Paul can enhance his froggy close-up with Photoshop Elements

Clone the background

Take the Clone Stamp tool and clone out the bark, Alt-clicking to sample suitable background pixels. Press Shift+[to reduce the brush hardness when cloning close to the frog's head.

Refine the tones

Add a Brightness/Contrast layer, and set Brightness to 40. Add a Levels layer, set Midtones to 1.20 and Highlights to 230, then invert the mask and paint the effect into the frog.
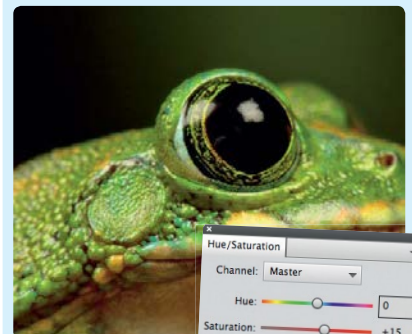

Boost the colours

Cmd/Ctrl-click the mask to load it as a selection. Add a Hue/Saturation layer — the attached mask will be identical to the Levels layer's mask. Set Saturation to +15. Crop the image to finish.

Teach yourself Photoshop Elements

Teach yourself Photoshop Elements is also available as a 50-part video course. Choose either the DVD edition or the interactive iPad app and discover another great way to learn
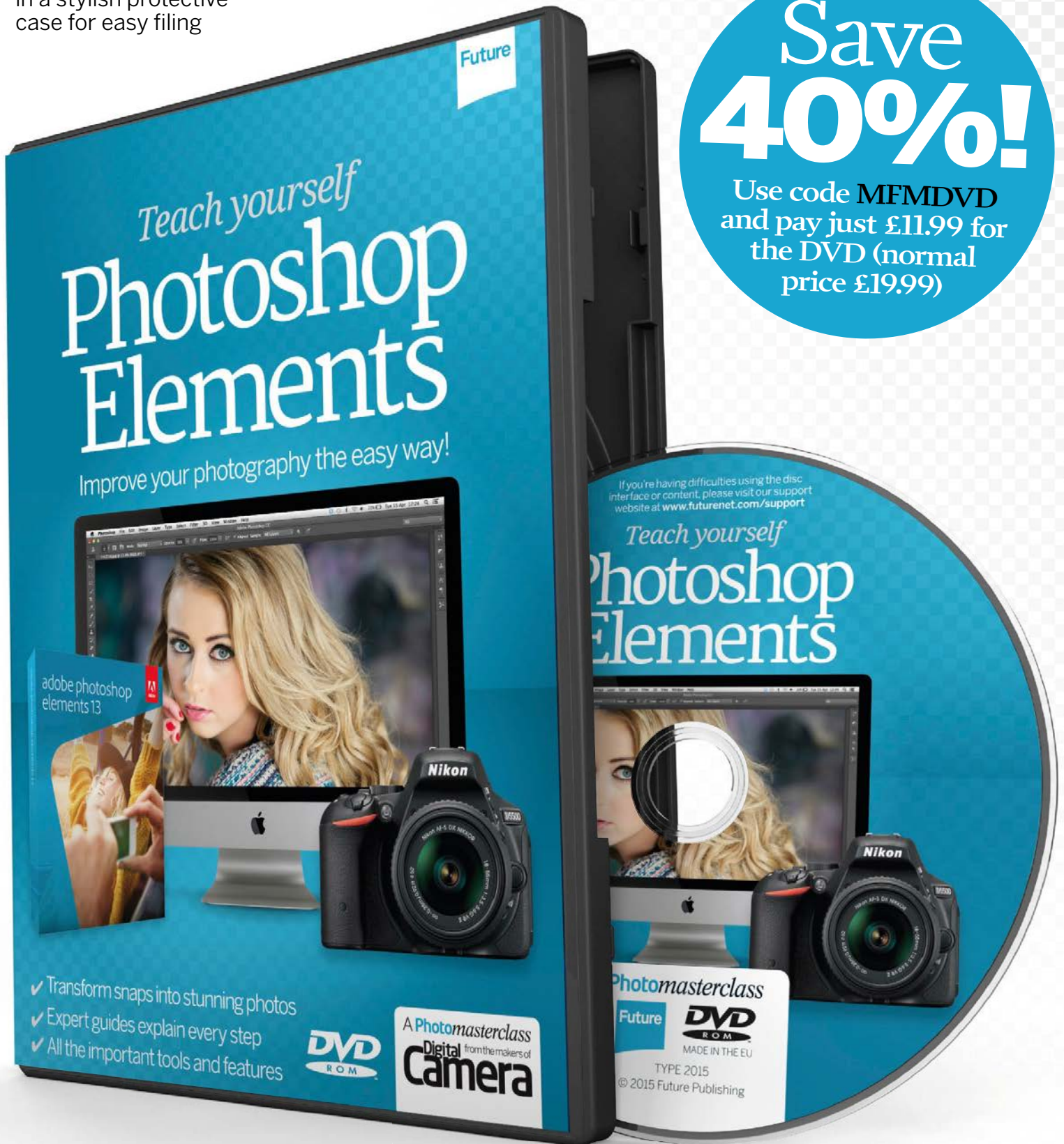
Easy-to-use interface helps you focus on learning Photoshop
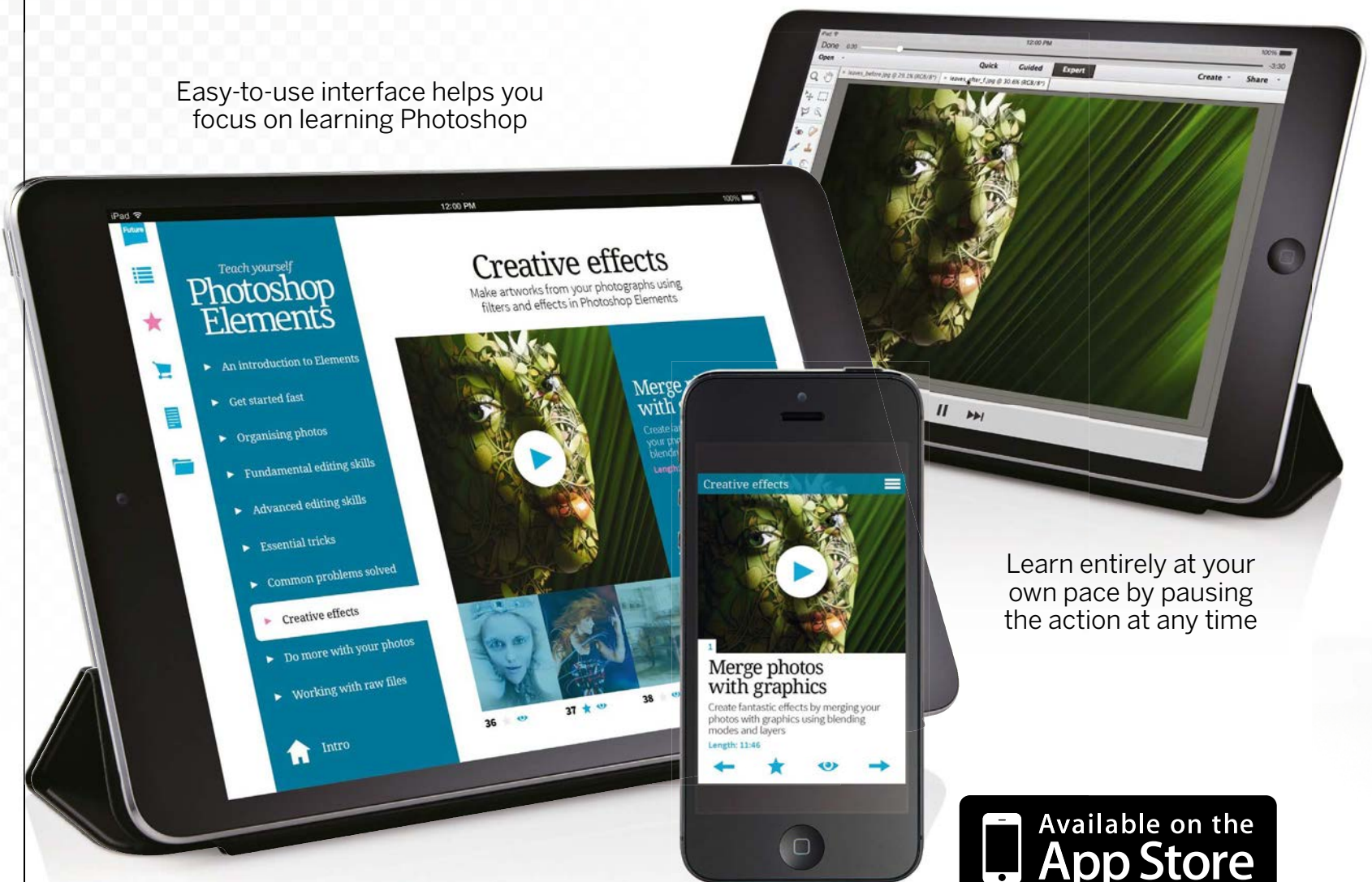
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