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DIGITAL DUO

Quick Photoshop Fixes for Underwater Images

A HOW-TO ON DIGITAL IMAGE-EDITING SOFTWARE

BY JACK & SUE DRAFAHL

Today, most underwater images are converted to digital files directly from digital cameras or from film cameras via film scanners. Once that is done, the images can then be edited using

and Auto Color. The Auto Levels automatically adjusts highlights, midtones and shadows, which also has some effect on the color balance of the image. The Auto Contrast function merely adjusts the image so that it fits within a full spectrum range from white to black, and makes no color adjustment. The Auto Color adjusts only the color of the image while maintaining the contrast and levels. If you don't know which one is best suited for your image, try one at a time. Then you can Undo and try



COLOR GONE WILD Photoshop has more than 700 controls for correction and enhancement of digital images. The image above clearly shows the difference a couple of quick fixes can make.



JACK & SUE DRAFAHL (2)

one of the image-editing programs on the market. Programs like Adobe Photoshop CS, Adobe Photoshop Elements, Jasc Paint Shop Pro and Ulead PhotoImpact are just a few of the more popular.

These can be overwhelming and intimidating to first-time editors. For example, Photoshop has more than 700 controls for correction and enhancement. Many people don't know where to begin, but not to worry, as we have a few simple solutions for you.

Many of these editing programs feature several automatic or quick-fix features, which are great places to start. Just give one a try, and if you aren't satisfied with the results, then just Undo or Step Backwards, and try another direction. You might even try them all to see which one works the best for your specific editing needs.

Starting with the most popular program, Adobe Photoshop, we find four easy solutions for image editing under the Image>Adjustments pull-down menu. The first three are listed in a group called "The Three Autos," which consist of Auto Levels, Auto Contrast

the next one until you discover the one that makes the best correction to the image.

If the problem is color balance, and the Auto Color doesn't work to correct this, you can then try the Variations, which is found in the Image>Adjustments>Variations pull-down menu. When this menu appears, you are presented with the original image in the center, circled by nine color variations. Clicking on one of the color variations moves it to the middle spot, and nine new variations appear. On the right side of the screen, you are given variations of exposure. Your original image is in the center; two versions of the original are shown with one increased and one decreased exposure, above and below, respectively. Selecting either exposure variation moves it to the middle to create a new set of exposure variations. You are also given a before-and-after image so you can easily see your progress.

Adobe Photoshop Elements 2.0 has the same four corrections as Photoshop, plus a

new one called Quick Fix. All are located under the Enhance pull-down menu with the exception of the Variations, which is under the Enhance>Adjust Color>Color Variations menu. The Quick Fix menu has 14 different semiautomated functions that include brightness, color, levels, contrast, saturation, focus and cropping controls. Thumbnails showing the before-and-after corrections are presented to help you with your choices. At any time during the process, you can press the reset button, and the image will go back to the beginning so you can start over again.

Jasc Paint Shop Pro has an Auto Color control that features adjustments for color temperature and color-correction strength. The Automatic Contrast enhancement has various bias settings for brightness, strength, and bold/normal/flat contrast settings. The Auto Saturation control has a bias for strength of the saturation that matches your personal taste. The One Step Quick Photo Fix combines all three of the auto functions plus a clarify, edge-smoothing and sharpen feature. With each of these automated features, you have the option of using the Undo command to go back to the point before the auto feature was applied.

Ulead PhotoImpact uses a series of eight automatic process commands to adjust variations in brightness, contrast, gamma, sharpness, saturation, cropping, horizons or all combined. The Batch command allows you to select certain features you want to group together and apply to your image. As you add each command, thumbnail images show the before-and-after effects.

There are also dozens of smaller photo-editing programs, which often come with your digital camera, or "Lite" versions of the programs we have mentioned. They may offer fewer image-editing controls but generally still do a good job and offer quick-fix, one-step or automated features.

You have to start somewhere, and these automated features are the perfect places. When you feel more comfortable with the program and your editing skills, then you can start to explore some of the more advanced features without becoming overwhelmed. Remember: Practice makes perfect.

We know that editing and digital-camera questions will continue to arise, so send them to us at digitalduo@jackandsuedrafahl.com, and we will try to answer them directly or in an upcoming column. For further information about our books and dive trips, check out our Web site at www.jackandsuedrafahl.com.

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