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BY DEBBIE
GROSSMAN;
PHOTOS BY
EDDIE SOLOWAY

WHILE SOME MIGHT THINK that a true Photoshop master is someone who can put a chicken head on a fish and make it look real, we beg to differ. We think chicken-fish are funny, but what we really want to do is take our already good pictures and make them even better. In other words, we want to use Photoshop as a digital darkroom—not as the digital lab of Dr. Frankenstein.

For help, we went to the master himself, photographer and teacher Eddie Soloway. A purist in many ways, he shoots mainly film and dedicates himself to making images that speak truly of the natural world. And he's the last person you might expect to use Photoshop for his printing. But he does. His whole post-production process is digital, and he was one of the medium's early adopters.

Trained in a professional print lab in San Francisco, Soloway apprenticed in the darkroom with some of the world's most meticulous printers. And he brings that careful training to his work today.

We asked him to share three of his secrets to getting great images using Photoshop. Although these techniques are somewhat advanced, anyone with a basic knowledge of the software can use them. And you don't need the most recent version of the program, either—these tricks will work even if you have Photoshop 6.

Most of us would be happy with the photographs that Soloway has chosen to improve. But he can see their slightest flaws and, perfectionist that he is, doesn't give up until he's gotten exactly the image he wanted.

Here's how...

BACK TO

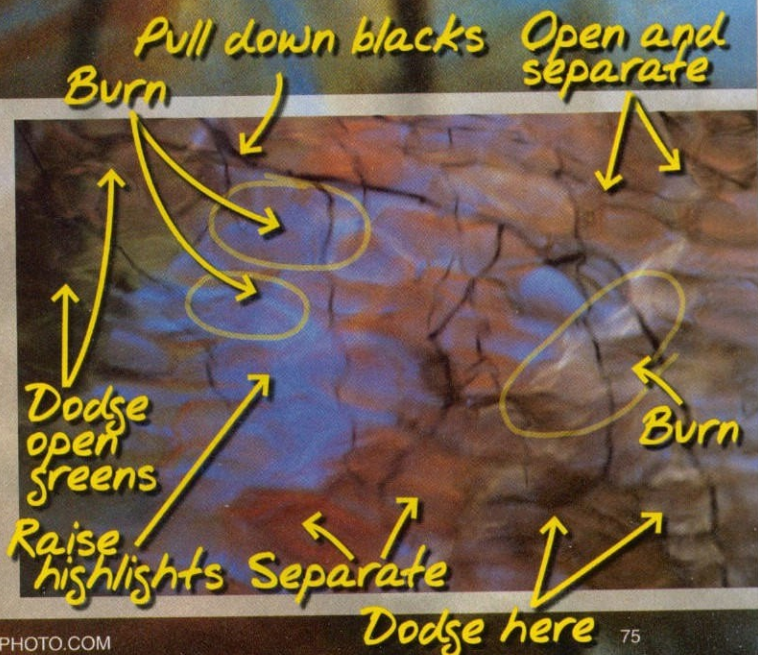


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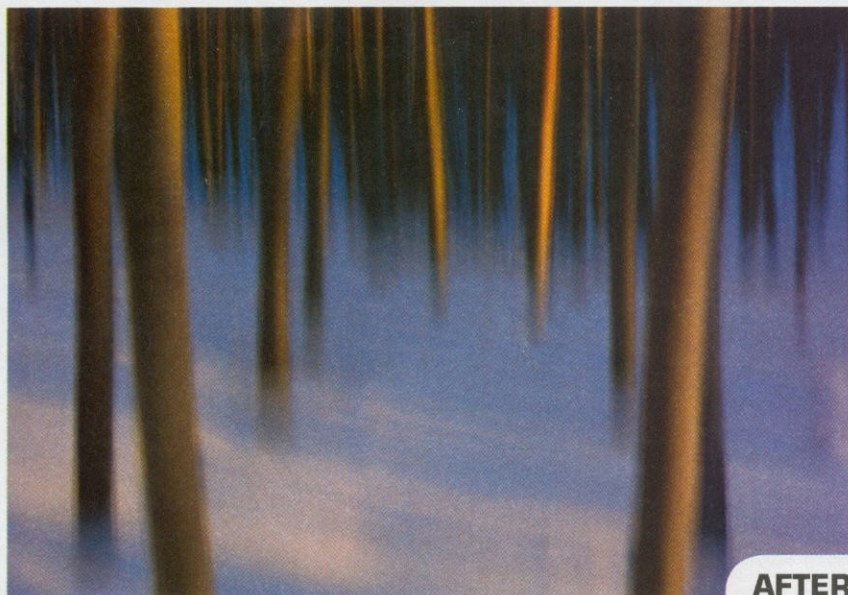
A perfect picture takes a lot of work. Look at all the fixing that Eddie Soloway did to make this photo of an autumnal reflection—which came out of the scanner looking desaturated and flat—go from bland to bold.



DARK FOREST: Dodge and Burn Subtly



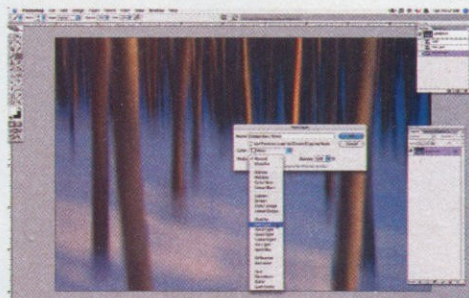
BEFORE



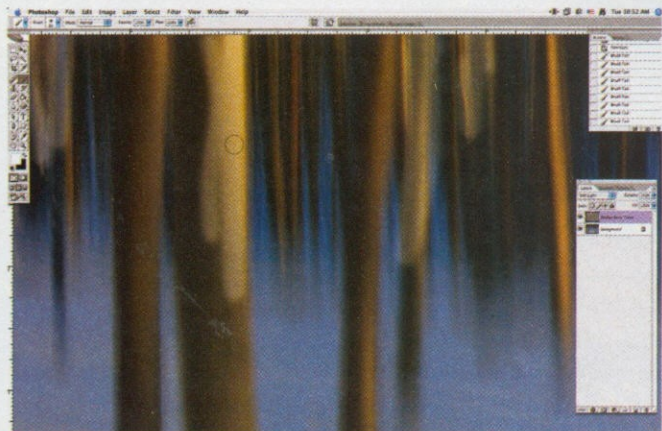
AFTER



1 **AFTER YOU'VE FINISHED** perfecting your color and contrast (see steps on the following pages), and making other fixes, you may still need to dodge and burn. We need to brighten the highlights in back and darken the ones in front. Make a new layer: Click on that little triangle-shaped arrow in the top-right corner of your Layers palette, and choose New Layer.



2 **YOU'LL GET A NEW** Layer dialog box. In that space, rename the layer to Dodge Back Trees (we'll be dodging the back trees first). Then, under Mode, use the pull-down menu to pick Soft Light. When you use this mode, your marks on the layer won't be opaque—instead, they'll change the way the layer underneath looks.



▲STEP 4

3 **FINALLY, CHECK OFF THE BOX** that says Fill with Soft-Light-neutral color. When you click OK, your image will look the same. That's because the neutral gray fill hides the effect of the Soft Light layer. When you paint on it with white or black, you'll see a change.

4 **NOW IT'S TIME** to dodge. Type B on your keyboard to get the Brush tool, and type D to get the default colors, black and white, to show up in your toolbar. Type X to make white land on top as your foreground color. Then zoom in to what you want to dodge, and paint.

▲STEP 3

Quick tip

KEEP PERSPECTIVE

When making subtle fixes, try to compare what you see onscreen to what you remember photographing. Use the picture in your head to fix the image on your computer. If you need to, step away for a while. If you look at it too long, anything can start to look good!



5

CHANCES ARE THE LIGHTENING effect is much too strong, so type Ctrl (Command) + 0 to fit your image on screen, and, in your Layers palette, drag the layer's opacity down until you can't see any difference. Then slowly bring it back up just to the point where your fix is subtle, but better—about 10%.



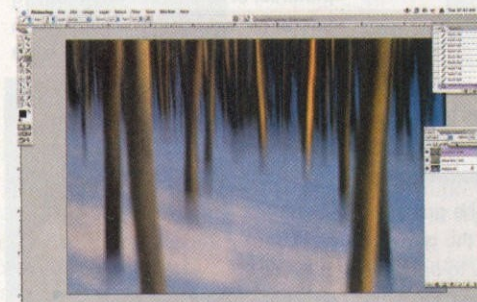
6

BURNING USING THIS TECHNIQUE is similar to dodging. Click that right-pointing arrow again, make a new layer, name it Burn, and once again choose Mode: Soft Light, and check off Fill with Soft-Light-neutral color. After you click OK, type X to make black your foreground color.



7/8

ZOOM IN, GRAB THE BRUSH TOOL, and start your burning. This time, you'll see your trees get very dark, but don't worry. When you've done enough painting, zoom out. Then reduce the opacity of this layer until your darkened areas are just barely darker.



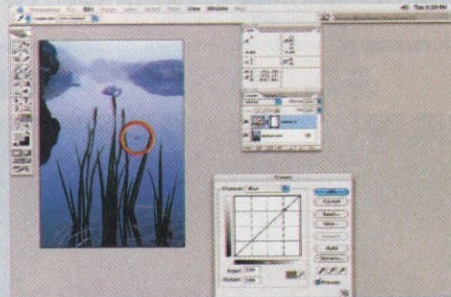
LONE IRIS: Fix a Particular Color



BEFORE

1

THE WATER SHOULD be neutral, but it's too blue. Make a Curves

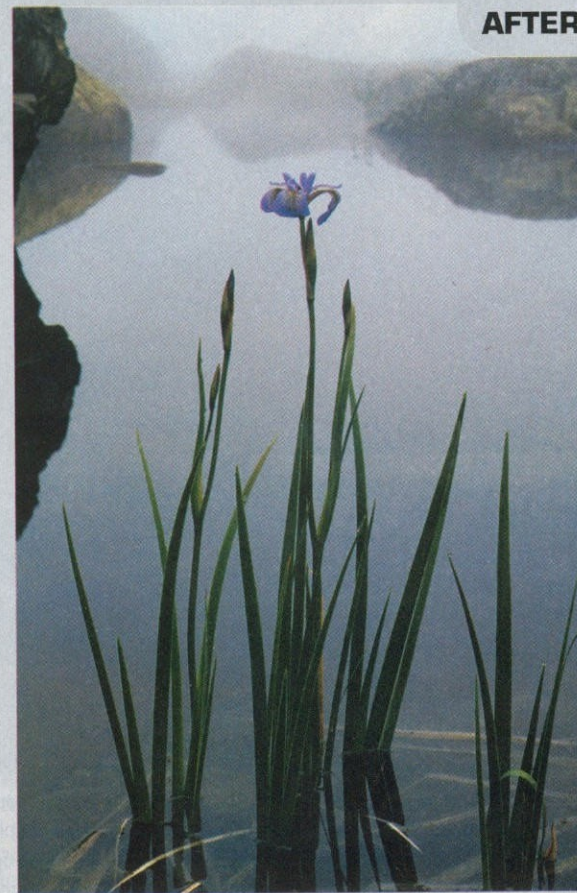


adjustment layer (see Quick Tip below for how). Then select the Blue channel to adjust (the default will be RGB). We want to change the curve that affects blue because there's too much of it. Hold down Ctrl (Command) on your keyboard and click on the water (circled).

2

CLICKING ON THE TOO-BLUE WATER marks the trouble spot as a point on your curve. Now we can affect it directly. Since we have too much blue, pull down the curve to get rid of it. Use your arrow key to tap the down arrow until you've got satisfyingly neutral-hued water.

AFTER



Quick tip

ADJUSTMENT LAYERS

To make one, go to Layer > New Adjustment Layer, then pick the kind you need. This layer doesn't modify your pixels directly, but just floats above your image and makes it look different. You can always trash or adjust it again, and your pixels remain untouched.

REFLECTING POOL: Contrast Control



BEFORE



AFTER



1

TO GET STARTED using Curves to add contrast, make a Curves Adjustment Layer (see Quick Tip, page 77). Move your mouse outside the Curves dialog until you see a dropper, and hold down the Ctrl (Command) key on your keyboard. Click on the area of the cloud (circled) to brighten.



2

NOW THAT YOU'VE MARKED the area that needs improvement as a point on your curve, you can alter that exact tone. Use your keyboard's up arrow key to lift the curve one tap at a time. When you like the way the highlights look, move on to the next step.



3

NEXT WE'LL CHANGE another point on the curve: the shadows. Mouse over the area you want to darken. Again, hold down the Ctrl (Command) key while you click. Pick an area with detail you could do without, so you don't lose anything you need.



4

USE YOUR DOWN ARROW to darken the shadows you marked. Tap it down until you like how it looks. Choosing your own highlights and shadows is a great way to get more control over contrast.



5

WE'RE NOT DONE. The midtones in the grass are a little dark. Ctrl (Command) click on the grass to mark it on your curve. Use the up arrow to open the density and give all the midtones a boost. Perfect!

The Photographer

To see more of Eddie Soloway's pictures, or to find out about taking one of his workshops, visit his web site: www.anaturaleye.com.

