

Photoshop Mastery

Taking Photoshop to the next level

■ BY BEN WILLMORE

“Hacking” Adjustments

In this issue, let’s look at a single, simple adjustment and see how you can radically change the way it affects your image with a few modifications. For this example, we’ll “hack” the new Black & White adjustment layer in Adobe Photoshop CS3.

For each example that follows, either choose Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Black & White or hold the Option (PC: Alt) key and then choose Black & White from the Create New Fill or Adjustment Layer pop-up menu at the bottom of the Layers panel. When the New Layer dialog opens you can specify the Mode and other options before applying the adjustment.

Instead of dragging the sliders that are available in the Black and White dialog, move your cursor onto the image and drag left or right over various areas. This will cause Photoshop to measure what color was in the image and move the appropriate slider for you.

Leave a hint of color

After applying a Black & White adjustment layer, consider lowering the Opacity setting at the top of the Layers panel to bring back a hint of color from the original image.

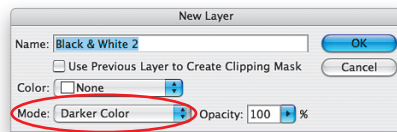
Faux infrared conversion

In infrared photography, blue skies usually become very dark while green foliage becomes almost white. To create a similar look using the Black and White dialog, move the Green slider to the right until areas that used to be green become almost white and then move the Blue slider toward the left until blue areas get close to black.

Partial black and white

If you’d like to limit which areas in your image become black and white, then set the Mode in the New Layer dialog to either Lighter Color or Darker Color. Then, to control which areas remain in color, move the individual sliders in the Black and White dialog toward the left or right to

brighten or darken areas. In Darken mode, the only areas that will lose color are those you make darker; while in Lighten mode, only areas that are brightened will lose color.



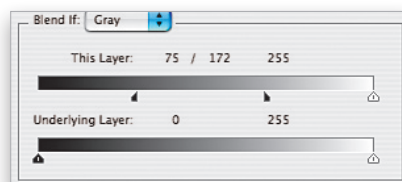
Specify options for an adjustment layer

As a brightness adjustment

If you set the Mode in the New Layer dialog to Luminosity, the adjustment won’t be able to affect the color of your image and thus will prevent it from removing the color from your image. Then you can click-and-drag within your image to adjust the brightness of each color.

Limit...based on brightness

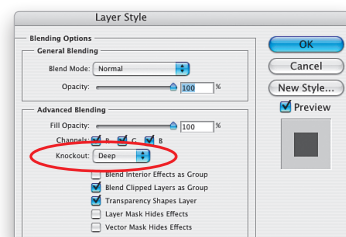
If you’d like to remove color only from the bright or dark areas in an image, after applying a Black & White adjustment, choose Layer>Layer Style>Blending Options. In the Blend If section of the dialog, move the upper-left slider (This Layer) to bring color back into the shadows, or the upper-right slider (for highlight color) toward the middle. Once you see the color starting to return to the bright or dark areas, hold the Option (PC: Alt) key and click-and-drag the outer-edge of the slider to split it apart and create a smooth transition from grayscale to color.



Multiple Black & White adjustments

If you can’t get what you want from a single Black & White adjustment layer, then consider applying more than one to your image. That’s not as simple as it sounds because a Black & White adjustment will only be effective when it’s adjusting color data—and it can only see shades of gray when you already have one Black & White adjustment layer present in your image.

The solution is to choose Layer>Layer Style>Blending Options while the second adjustment layer is active and setting the Knockout menu to Deep. This will allow the top adjustment layer to ignore (or knock through) any underlying layers and only pay attention to the contents of the Background layer at the bottom.



Deep Knockout

After setting up the second Black & White adjustment layer to “knockout” to the background, you can paint on the layer mask attached to the topmost adjustment layer to reveal any Black & White adjustments that are located below the layer that’s set to knockout.

Experiment with other options in Photoshop, and I’ll bet you’ll come up with at least twice as many “hacks” as described here. ■

Ben Willmore is the best-selling author of Adobe Photoshop CS3 Studio Techniques and Up to Speed: Photoshop CS3, as well as co-author of How to Wow: Photoshop for Photography. Ben spends many of his days as a “digital nomad” in his 40’ motorcoach. Learn about his latest adventures at www.wherisben.com.