



# Photoshop Mastery

Taking Photoshop to the next level

■ BY BEN WILLMORE

## Revelations in RGB

In my seminars, when I explain how most images are a combination of Red, Green, and Blue light, it's usually greeted by yawns. But when I proceed to physically dissect the image, taking out one RGB component at a time, and then put it back together, everyone wakes up!

Open the Channels palette to see how Photoshop creates your image behind the scenes. The general idea for this technique is to transform each individual channel (RGB) into a separate layer so we can easily move them around. Let's start by making a simple color wheel that we can split up into its Red, Green, and Blue components.

Create a new document in RGB mode, type "d" to reset the Foreground color to black, and then press Option-Delete (PC: Alt-Backspace) to fill the document with black. Now choose View>Rulers and drag guides from the top and left rulers to define the center of your image. Next, create a new layer and select the Elliptical Marquee tool. Click where the guides intersect and drag while holding both the Shift and Option (PC: Alt) keys to make a round selection that's centered on the guides.

To make the color wheel, choose the Gradient tool (G), and select the Spectrum gradient style (rainbow of colors) from the Options Bar. Next, click where the guides intersect and drag straight up. To delete the center, type Command-D (PC: Control-D) to get rid of the selection, make another selection using the same technique as in the paragraph above to make a slightly smaller circular selection, and then press Delete.



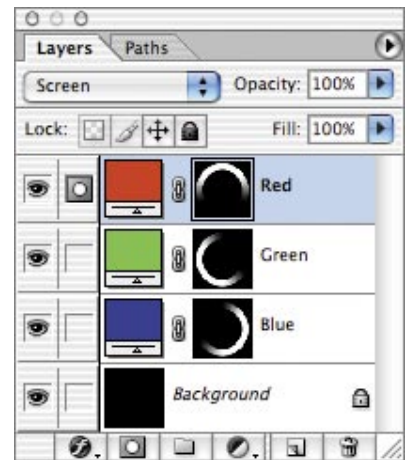
Left: Original  
Right: End result

Now let's transform our simple image into one that we can take apart. We're going to work with the Layers and Channels palettes at the same time; so, separate the Channels palette from the Layers/Channels/Paths grouping (choose Windows>Channels then drag the Channels tab away from the palette grouping).

We need to get information in the individual RGB channels into separate channels. Start by Command-clicking (PC: Control-clicking) on the Blue channel (this will give you an odd-looking selection). Next, hold the Option (PC: Alt) key and, from the Adjustment Layer pop-up menu (it's the half-black/half-white circle at the bottom of the Layers palette), choose Solid Color. When prompted for a name, call this layer Blue, set the Mode pop-up menu to Screen, and then click the OK button to bring up the Color Picker. Set the Red and Green numbers to zero and enter 255 for Blue.

Before we repeat this process for the other two colors, go to the Layers palette and click on the Eye icon next to the layer you just created—to hide it. To convert the Green channel into a layer, Command-click (PC: Control-click) on the Green channel, hold the Option (PC: Alt) key, and choose Solid Color from the Adjustment Layer pop-up menu at the bottom of the Layers palette. Name the layer Green, set the Mode to Screen, and click OK. When the Color Picker shows up, use the following numbers R=0, G=255, and B=0.

Finally, we'll convert the Red channel but first, hide the Green layer you just created. Command-click (PC: Control-click) on the Red channel in the Channels palette, hold Option (PC: Alt), and choose Solid Color from the Adjustment Layer



What you'll end up with in the Layers palette

menu. Name the layer Red, set the Mode to Screen, and click OK. Use R=255, G=0, and B=0 in the Color Picker. When you're finished, press Command-D (PC: Control-D) to deselect the active selection.

Drag the layer with the gradient applied to the Trash icon so you only have a black Background layer and the Red, Green, and Blue layers. Click on the Eye icons to make all the layers visible. Now we have all the layers for this effect.

To pull out our component colors, grab the Move tool (M) and Command-click (PC: Control-click) on the reddest, bluest, or greenest area of the image and then drag. This will make the appropriate layer active so you can move it around. □

*Ben Willmore is founder of Digital Mastery, a Colorado-based training and consulting company that presents the national seminar tour of "Photoshop Mastery." He's also author of Photoshop CS Studio Techniques. Check out the free Photoshop tips and tutorials at Ben's Web site, [www.digitalmastery.com](http://www.digitalmastery.com).*