

Lightroom 3 beta

Lightroom 3 beta offers significant enhancements over the prior version. While it is a beta and I'm 'hacking' my way through it, the new Folders panel, the Import panel, and through Slideshow, creation of videos, markedly improves fine art presentations.

As a teacher and storyteller, I'm now able to smoothly integrate my creation of tutorials, articles, and even future books much more easily. While Windows XP's been around a long time, its visual limitations 'grandfathered' Bridge and now Lightroom. I can see into any folder to look at any image. This very powerful feature fits my 'Put an image in Word and Dictate around it' writing motif.

We've had Lightroom for a little over a year and find ourselves preparing work plans for 2010 during an Adobe new release transition period.

Lightroom is handy for many digital photography tasks:

1. Input, labeling, and copywriting new images.
2. Tone mapping both global and local features.
3. Preparing PDF slideshows or MP4 videos for presentations.

It's the first place I turn to work up new images...

Image Management

Windows XP seems to have a distaste for presenting raw files in thumbnail format. LR3 can show you any image in any folder on your system, be they JPEG, raw, tif, or PSD. Original image files should be kept in one folder. Derivative files should be kept in related folders. As an example, a derivative file may be a JPEG scaled to different resolutions and widths to fit different production needs.

LR3 uses Adobe Camera Raw 6.0. ACR comes bundled with LR3.

In the powerful Library Module, raw image input, presets, copyright, and keyword data can be processed with LR3 for dual backup. The improved Import Panel is very helpful. LR3 quickly sorts through duplicates, showing you just new files and aggregate size. Click Import - you're quickly placing new files in fitting folders.

Beyond that, being able to Pick, Unflag, and Delete with one keystroke per image lets me quickly sort through my images for keepers which attract clients. The Library Find function is quite powerful as an aid to quick sorts.

In the field, Import and Keeper facilities are highly relevant to quick workflow.

Let's say I plan a trip to a site far back in the wilds. Between nature of the site and Magic Hour's rapidly changing light, I'm going to shoot at Dawn and Dusk. So I need to make the most of a short site time.

If I can quickly review my raw shots midday, in case I need to reshoot, that step will create a major timesaver and really expand my shooting efficiency.

Digital Darkroom Image Development

LR3 can quickly change raw files, which typically are slightly bland and require sharpening, to visually pleasing responses with the Develop Module. With Crop, Graduated Filter, and Local Adjustment Brush tools, many preliminary steps are available to begin digitally preparing your fine art. You can also use Basic, Curves, HSL, Detail, and Calibration tabs to further enhance your art.

Skillful application of these digital tools will get you 75% of the way to having your image in the early fine art stage. Further refinements in CS4 complete digital darkroom image processing for presentation, competition, sale, or publication.

Marketing and Presentation

Okay, your images from the shoot are up to spec...

If you skillfully add text, you can create a PDF slideshow. Music does not play in exported PDF slide shows.

Or, you can now create an mp4 video. Your video format is H.264 complete with slide layout, soundtrack, and other playback options.

Lightroom can play any mp3, m4a, or m4b music file as a soundtrack to a video. Music plays as the video is viewed from within Lightroom.

Either way, preparing for client acceptance is easily done in LR3.

See the following section on *Time Lapse Video...*

Adobe's Learning Curve

I learned Photoshop CS3 before I bought Lightroom 2. My well-thumbed library detailed Adobe Camera Raw, Photoshop, and Lightroom. Bruce Fraser had a magic touch - his *Real World* books, which outlined Industrial-Life and Strength Production Techniques, became my successive Bibles, then, eventually a mantra.

Scott Kelby's practical books on CS2 and LR2 created another couple of bricks in a required foundation for my digital learning.

Preliminary LR3 Capabilities

As we go to press in late 2009, there are several intriguing yet inconclusive indications of what LR3 really has in store.

Victoria Brampton, who uses the nom de plume *Lightroom Queen*, provided the most complete list of LR3 refinements I've seen. In addition, Victoria has *Adobe Lightroom 3 Beta - The Missing FAQ - Rough Cut* available in eBook form.

About a month after LR3 beta hit the street, following Rob Sylvan, Scott published *10 Things I Would Tell New Lightroom Users*. He quickly followed with *How I Use Lightroom's Collections*. You might benefit from the fact Rob and Scott discuss different viewpoints.

Timing Issues

With its masking, layering, resizing, and panoramic capabilities, CS4 reaches beyond Lightroom. Moreover, LR2 and CS4 have different release cycles, so their release is out of phase. Lightroom 3 beta was released October, 2009. Its Help package was released November, 2009. And, CS5 is still far below a distant 2010 horizon.

Nevertheless, Scott Kelby repeatedly points out 80% of his work is now done in Lightroom.

Anyone who's mastered either of these two pieces of software would agree, "*There's an initially steep learning curve...!*" As I look over on the required bookshelf, from CS2 forward, I've got some 10 to 12 technical books explaining how to use the two intertwined software systems.

The digital photography blogosphere is beginning to show aware signs of LR3. In beta form, Adobe is soliciting user input for release of the final version. In part, that means the next round of technical books typically follows formal release by a few months. So, when you step into beta land, to some degree it's currently using 'hackers' intuition' or 'in the know' bloggers to find out new features which enhance your workflow.