

Photoshop CS4

Adobe Photoshop CS4 is our deep image refinement tool; particularly masking, subtle tone mapping, and panoramas! While Lightroom is growing in its capability, there are certain things where I always step into CS4's amazingly versatile depth.

Beyond that, CS4's very handy at creating impressive components for a marketing presentation. When you're ready to create a presentation, resizing, compositing, and text modes become quite important.

Clearly, my workload has shifted from CS4 to Lightroom where applicable. Yet it's this steady old workhorse I can always rely on...

We've had Photoshop since CS2 and find ourselves preparing work plans for 2010 during an Adobe new release transition period. CS5 is preeminent...

CS4 is handy for many things beyond LR3;

1. Refined masking.
2. Subtle tone mapping.
3. Panoramas.
4. Resizing.
5. Composite text and image creation.

Refined Masking

While LR3's local adjustment brush is a new tool, I tend to work in CS4 as a personal preference for masking. My digital darkroom training involved making image presentations for fine art competitions. So I may want to use several masking techniques on different landscape segments to reach the final image.

In the Masks Panel, I've learned to use Mask Selection, Mask Edge, Color Range, Invert, Density, and Feather. Interaction between Color Range and Mask Edge help delicately select some difficult regions in landscape image processing.

Masking becomes particularly important when considering combining multiple raw files as high dynamic range (HDR) images. If you go to Full Range HDR, you may combine perhaps 20 images to get the full light range. You're going to be dealing with noise, chromatic aberration, and other features. Most effects can be repaired with CS4 tools.

Subtle Tone Mapping

Processing images in an HDR digital darkroom requires careful thought to avoid both features listed above and farther complications. Experiments show Photomatrix Pro should only be used in default Tone Compressor mode. Even though

this minimal treatment produces an HDR file, while Photomatix makes some effort at noise reduction and chromatic aberration, it leaves remnants of both.

CS4 to the rescue; advanced masking, clone stamp, curves, etc. It's like a recovery process - finally, several steps allow you to digitally process the image such that it is happily accepted in competitions by fine art judges.

Panoramas

Some landscapes simply can't be captured without panoramic images.

CS4 is Adobe's currently best effort at putting panoramas into proper perspective. My compliments to the Adobe engineers; in the past few releases (CS2, CS3, and CS4), they've made steady progress in presenting awesome panoramas.

Resizing

When I produced a fine art image, it might take any one of the following sizes: 2x1, 3x2, 6.5x5, and 18x12 depending upon its application. As far as I presently know, LR3 does not presently have this capability.

Composite Text and Image Creation

An image by itself may not convey all you wish for a presentation. In today's fast-moving professional photographer blogosphere, teaching videos are becoming a commodity. With such videos, words and images seem to flow more naturally.

Depending on presentation format, different image sizes are often required.

And, if you want to add the allure of words, text can be formatted in so many different ways.

LR3 and CS4 are premier digital darkroom programs. Their width, breadth, and depth create a steep learning curve. As premier software, while they're expensive, their products are absolutely classic.

Each time I try a new path in either program, I write a tutorial clearly disclosing individual steps in such paths. Starting with CS2, then LR2, these tutorials are available on CD.

Beyond that, I usually provide a tip/trick as an individual blog entry at *Pathways of Light* when the topic is appropriate.

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