PHOTOSHOP TIPS & TRICKS

2008 ECAC-SIDA Workshop
Saratoga, N.Y.

This handout details a few of the more common uses of Photoshop that many SIDs use on an almost daily basis. The topics that are covered are:

- Making a Selection/Clipping Paths
- Using Layers and Layer Masks
- Determining Resolution
- The Color Alphabet - RGB, CMYK, PMS
- Color Correcting a Photo
- Converting from Color to Grayscale
- Saving Photos for the Web
- The History Palette
- The Actions Palette
- The Batch Command
- Creating Contact Sheets
- Adjusting Levels

Please keep in mind that there are many different ways to accomplish the same thing using Photoshop. What matters most is the end result. Also, the number of things the program can do is virtually limitless. For more tips, tricks and instructions, there are a variety of resources available, both in print and on the web. Some web sites to check out are ...

www.photoshopessentials.com
www.photoshopquicktips.com
www.photoshopusertv.com

MAKING A SELECTION

- There are many ways to make a selection on an image. The following is one example using the **Brush Tool** and **Quick Mask Mode**.

1. Use the lasso tool to draw loosely around the portion of the image you want to select. *(Figure 1)*
2. Enter Quick Mask Mode by clicking on the button below and to the right of the color picker. *(Figure 2)* The first time you do this, double click on the Quick Mask Mode button and make sure it is set to Color Indicates Masked Areas and the opacity is at 100%.
3. Using the Brush Tool, trace around the part of the image you want to select. *(Figure 3)* It is a good idea to zoom in so you can see the edges of the desired selection better. Figure 3 shows an image at 500% using a 5-pixel brush.
4. Once step three is completed, fill in the area between the outline of the image and the rest of the image using a larger brush if you wish. *(Figure 4)*
5. Return to standard mode by clicking on the button to the left of the Quick Mask Mode button. This will give you the "marching ants" to show you the selection. *(Figure 5; page 2)* From here you can drag and drop the selection onto another layer, create a clipping path or apply whatever effect you wanted to the selection.

CLIPPING PATHS

- Clipping paths can be used to define what part of an image can be imported into your desktop publishing program. For example, a cutout of a player without the background.

1. Once you have defined a selection, open the **Paths** palette. It can be found in the **Windows** menu.
2. Click on the arrow in the upper-right portion of the palette and choose **Make Work Path**. A dialog box asking to define the tolerance will come up. Keep the value at 0.5 and press enter.
3. The defined path will now appear in the palette labeled Work Path. Double click on the path in the palette to rename it. The default name is Path 1, but you can call it whatever you like.
4. Go back into the menu by clicking on the arrow and choose **Clipping Path**. A dialog box will appear asking you which path you would like to make the clipping path. Choose the one that you just made (either Path 1 or the name you gave it).
5. Save your doucument.
6. Place the image into your desktop publishing program. Only the defined clipping path will appear. *(Figure 6; page 2)*

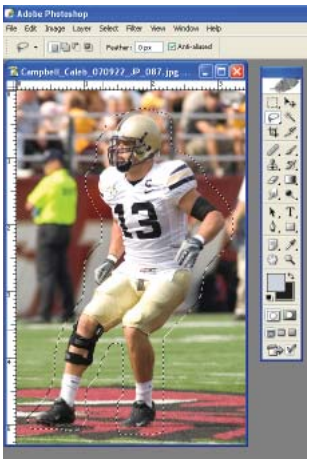


Figure 1

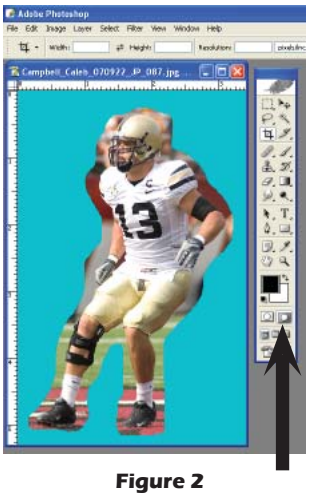


Figure 2

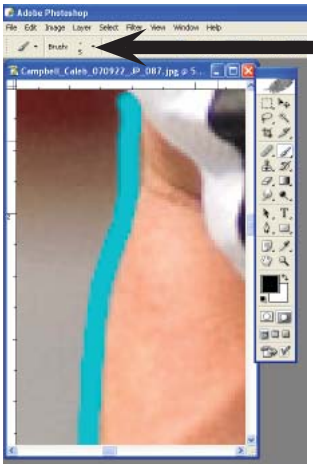


Figure 3

Define brush diameter and opacity here.

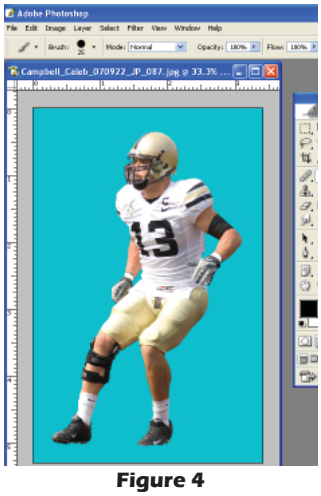


Figure 4

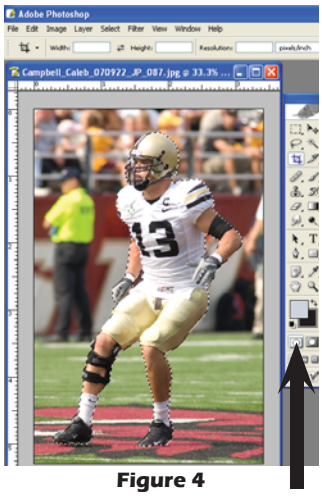


Figure 4

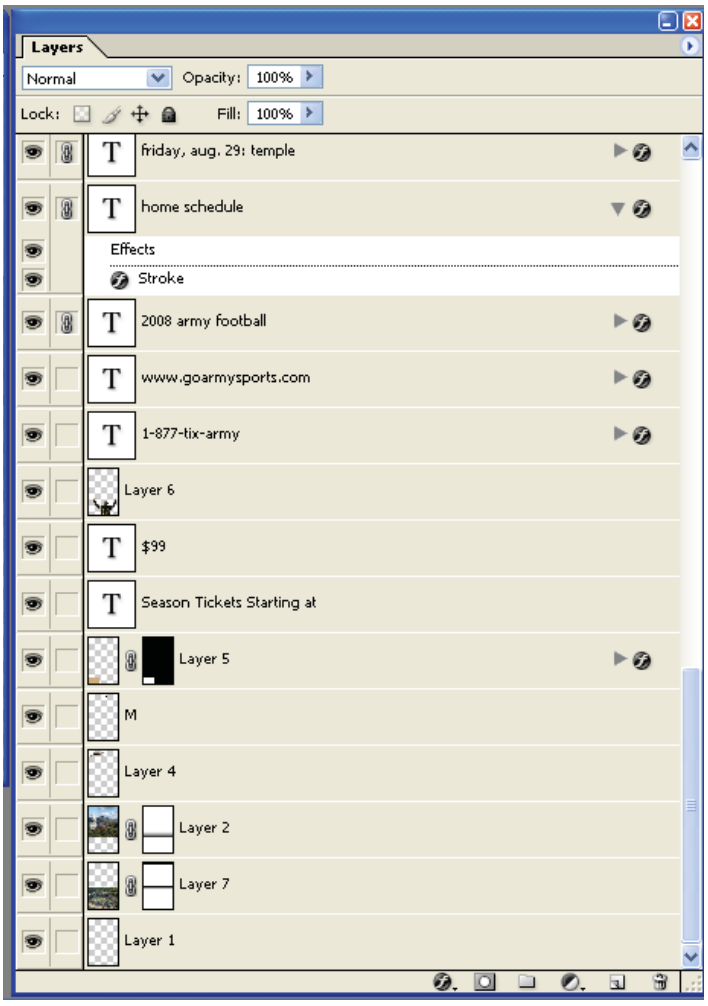
Figure 6

LAYERS/LAYER MASKS

- Whenever designing something in Photoshop it is important to understand the concept of layers. If you have more than one element, you'll have more than one layer. A layer can be an action photo, text, a logo, etc. The image below has more than 20 layers.

- Usually when designing something in Photoshop, you'll be in what's called a PSD file. This stands for Photoshop Document. I recommend keeping the files in PSD format instead of a TIFF or a JPEG. The layers will stay intact so you can go back and manipulate them if you have to. InDesign will import PSD files so there's no reason to save it in a different format and create more files in your storage area.

- The layer palette allows you to order your layers so that one sits on top of another. You can also hide an object while you work around it (the eyeball to to the left of the layer), add effects to the layer, control the opacity of the layer if you want to fade it, and also lock layers together so they can be moved together. Below is a portion of the layer palette for the image.



- Any time text is used, the layer is automatically named what the text is. For the other layers, the default names are the layer numbers (Layer 1, Layer 2, etc.). It is recommended that you name your layers, especially if there are a lot of them, so you can find them and manipulate them faster. (I should have followed my own advice in the above example).

- Some things to notice in the above layer palette …
  - The eyeball to the left means the layer is visible
  - The chain link means that layer is linked with the other layers where there is a chain
  - The arrow on the right side means there is an effect applied to that layer. In this example it is a stroke on the text.
  - On layers 2 and 7, the white boxes next to the layer thumbnail mean there is a layer mask applied.

- The layer closest to the top of the palette is the layer on top. The layer closest to the bottom of the palette is on the bottom. The order of layers can be changed simply by clicking and holding on the layer in the palette and dragging it to the desired location.

LAYER MASKS

- Layer masks can be used for a number of purposes. The basic rule of layer masks is that any part of the mask filled with black will hide the corresponding part of the layer, while any part of the mask filled with white will reveal the corresponding part of the layer. In the Army ticket mailer example, the two background photos were blended together using layer masks.

1. Align the two photos in the desired positions. *(Figure 1)*

2. Add a layer mask to the top layer by clicking on the second button from the left on the bottom of the layers palette. *(Figure 2)*

3. Since we don't want to have the mask affect the whole image, but rather only the parts of the layers that overlap, use the rectangle marquee tool to select the bottom portion of the layer. *(Figure 3)*

4. Using the gradient tool, apply a gradient from the bottom of the selection to the top. This will run a gradient of black to white inside the selection, hiding the bottom of the photo and slowly fading into showing the photo. *(Figure 4)*.

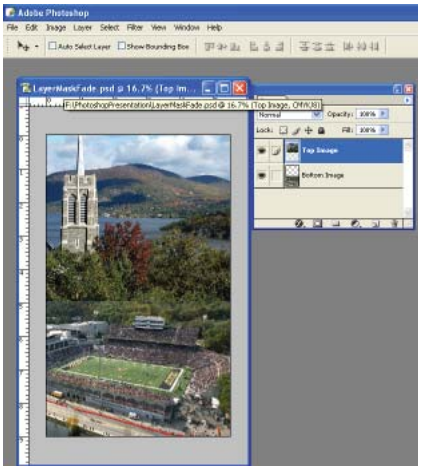


Figure 1

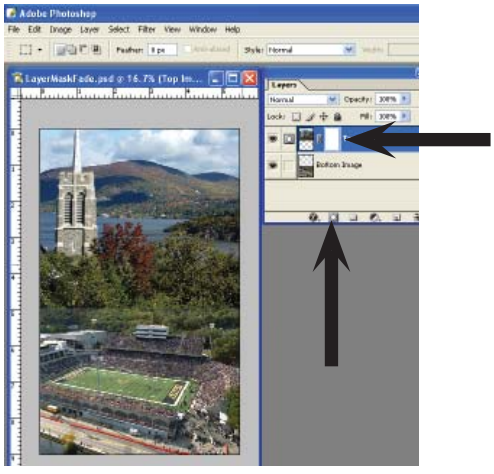


Figure 2

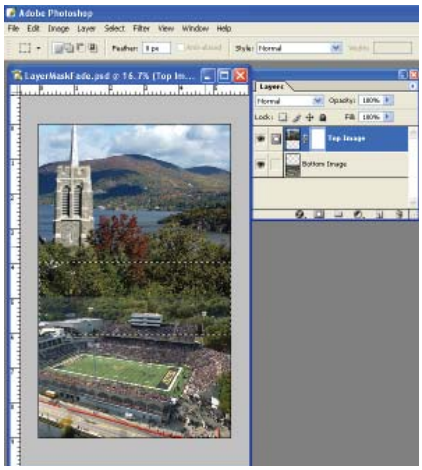


Figure 3

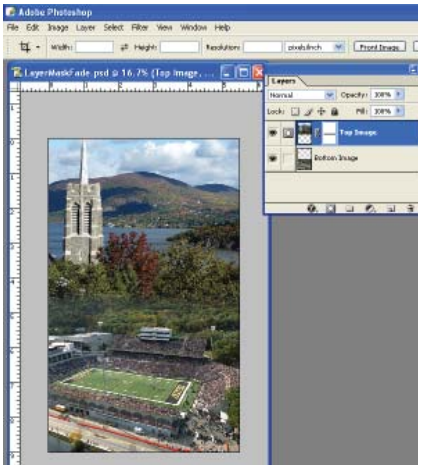


Figure 4

- Now instead of a hard edge between the two photos, they blend into one another. Here's a better look at the difference.

Before

After

RESOLUTION

- To keep it simple, there are two values you need to know. Any image for the web can be saved at 72 pixels per inch (sometimes referred to as dpi or dots per inch). The professional standard for printed material is 300 pixels per inch.
- What those values mean is that for every inch of the image there are that many pixels high and wide. For example, a 8x10 image at 300 pixels/inch is 2400 pixels wide by 3000 pixels high.
- One of the questions that people ask all the time is about using 72 dpi and making them 300 for print. This can be done if the original image is large enough. Without getting too much into the math, there is a number to remember when wanting to turn a 72 dpi photo into a 300 dpi photo - 0.24 - or 72/300. What this means is that if you turn a 72 dpi photo into a 300 dpi photo, you have to adjust the document size to 24 percent of the value it currently is. In a simple example if you have a 10x10 image at 72 dpi. It can be used at 300 dpi at the size of 2.4x2.4 (10x0.24).
- The same theory can be applied for whatever resolution the original photo is. For example the images we get directly from one of our photographers are 180 pixels/inch. Using the same theory, I can make it 300 pixels/inch, but must keep it at 60 percent of the original size (180/300 is 0.6) to avoid degrading the quality.

COLOR CORRECTION

- Sometimes you'll get an image that the color doesn't seem quite right on. For example most of our basketball pictures are off because the lighting is bad. Below is a way to help correct the color in an image. What we're trying to do is find the black point, the white point and the mid-point.

1. Open the image. With the background layer selected, click on the adjustment layer button (fourth from the right that looks like a black and white cookie). Choose **Threshold**. (Figure 1)

2. To find the black point, take the slider all the way to left. The image will turn completely white. Tap the up arrow on your keyboard to increase the threshold number in the dialog box. The first things that appear will be the darkest. Find a spot, and Shift+click. (Figure 2)

3. Do the same thing to find the white point, except take the slider all the way to the right and tap the down arrow to decrease the threshold number. The first areas that appear will be the whitest. Find a spot and Shift+click (Figure 3). Click Cancel.

4. The mid-point is a bit trickier. Add a new layer over top of the background. Fill it with 50% Gray. Change the blend mode to Difference. (Figure 4).

5. Repeat step two. As you tap the threshold number up, the first things to show up will be the mid-points. Shift+Click. (Figure 5). Click cancel and then delete the filled layer.

6. Now we're ready for the adjustment. Go into **Image**, **Adjustments**, **Curves**. In the dialog box, there are three eye-droppers - black, gray and white. Click on the black. With the Caps Lock key on, line up the crosshairs with the first click point you made (labeled 1) and click. Do the same thing with the white (second click point) and gray (third click point).

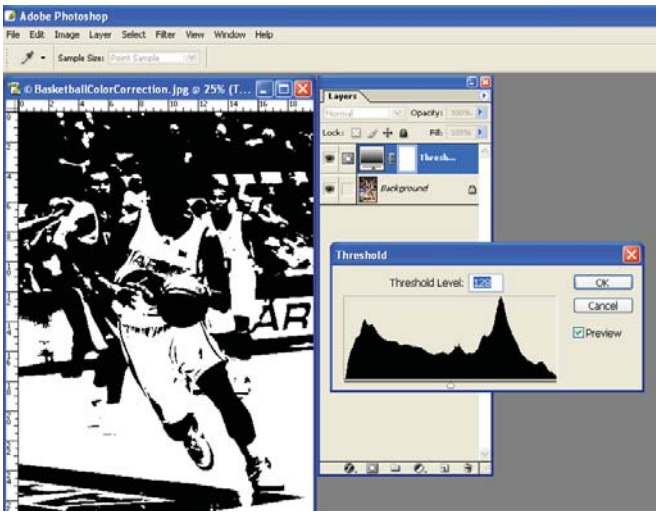


Figure 1

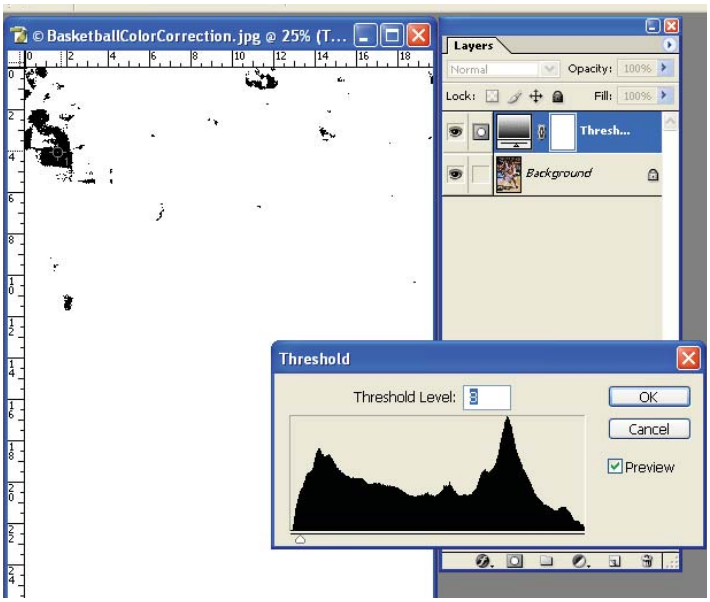


Figure 2

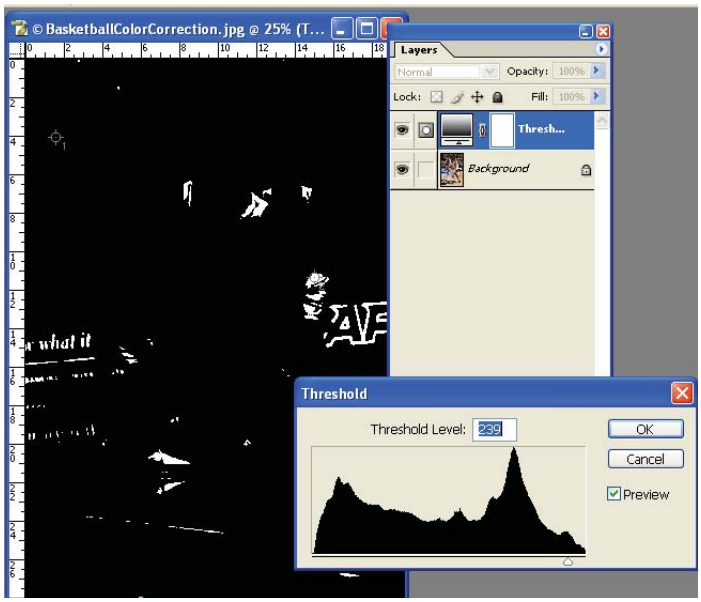


Figure 3

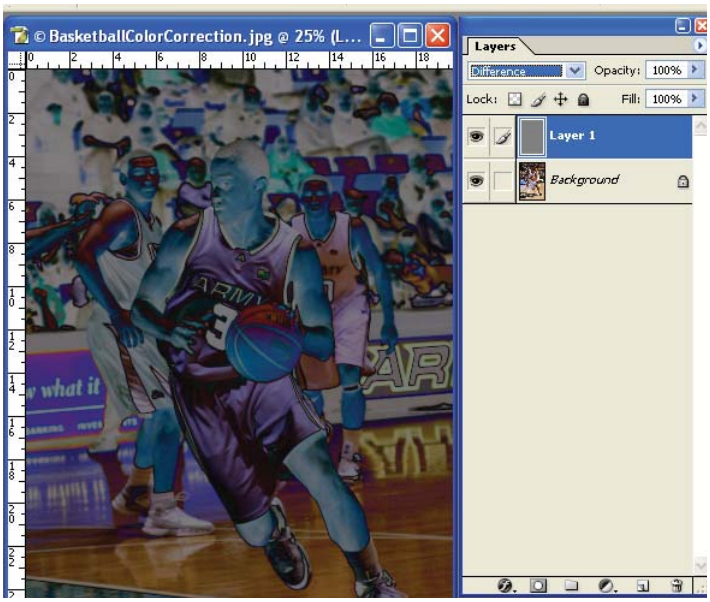


Figure 4

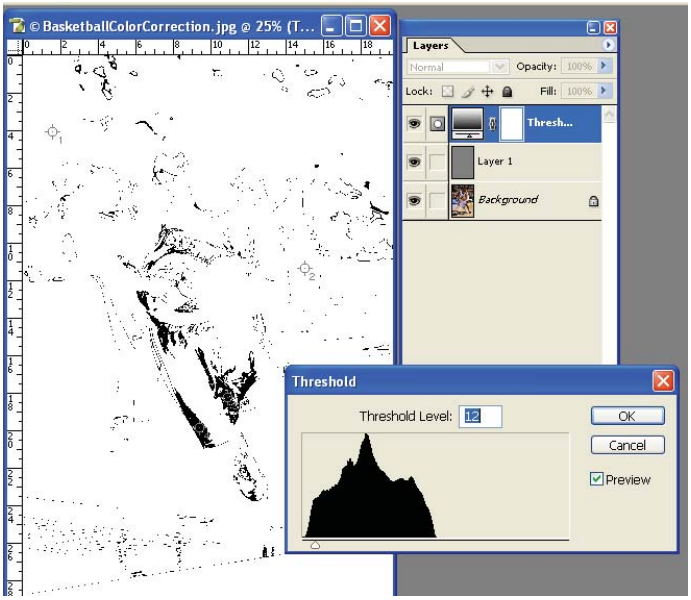
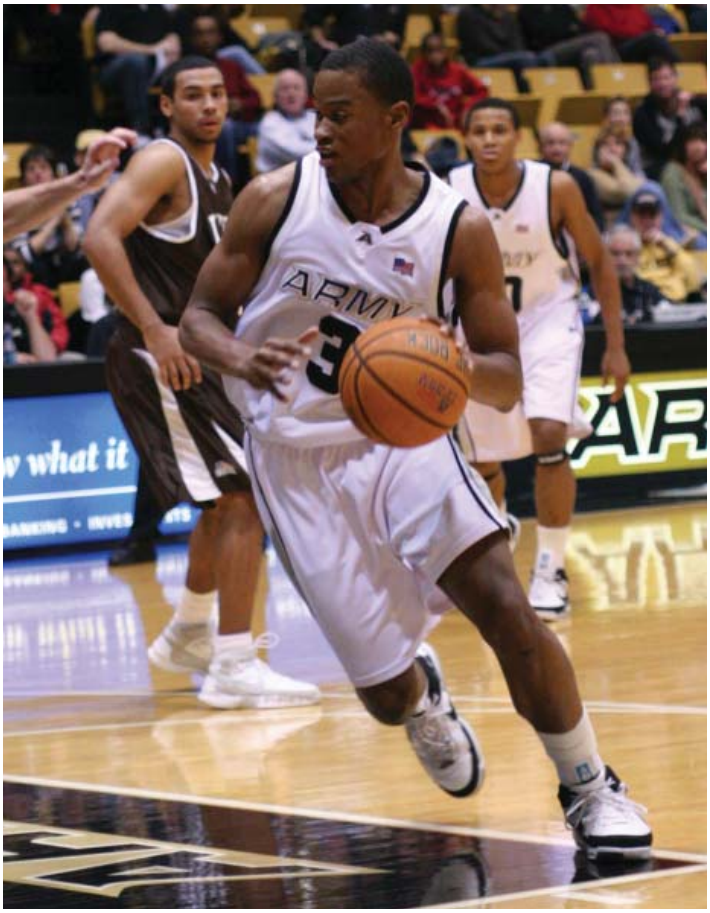


Figure 4



Before

After

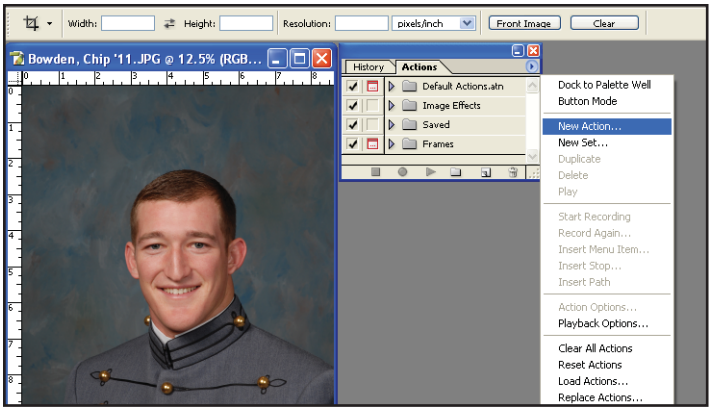
THE ACTIONS PALETTE

- The Actions Palette can be a huge time saver. It allows the user to save different things that are done over and over, such as resizing an image, and execute them with the touch of a button rather than manually doing it each time.

- The palette also contains pre-set actions. These include different effects and frames for images.

Recording an Action

- To access the actions palette go to **Window**, then select **Actions**. New actions can be saved in any existing folder, or a new folder can be created, by clicking on the arrow on the top right of the palette and selecting **New Set**. To being recording the action, go to the menu on the top right and click New Action. This will prompt up another menu to come up. In this menu, you can name the action, tell it where to save it, and assign it a function key such as F1, F2, etc. Once this is done, press the record button.



The actions palette to the point of defining a new action.

- Now simply go about manually executing the function you wish to save. Depending on what you are doing, it is often times a good idea to include doing a save as to the file as part of the action. This is useful when combining actions with the Batch command which will be discussed later. When the function is complete. Press the stop button on the bottom of the actions palette (the square button that is the first one on the left). Now the action is saved. Each time you want to execute that action, you can either open an image, highlight the name of the action in the menu and press the play button on the palette, or by pressing the function key you originally assigned to the new action.

Using a Preset Action

- Photoshop omes with a number of preset effects located in the Actions Palette. You can load them by going to the actions menu (top right again) and selecting which one you want. The program includes frames, text effects, image effects and textures. There are too many individual ones to name, but below are a few examples of frames.

Examples of preset frames in the actions palette. From left to right - photo corners, spatter, brushed aluminum.

Combining New and Preset Actions

- This is useful when you want to execute a preset action to a number of photos and then do something else to the images, such as turn black and white for the interior of a media guide. The steps are the same as creating a new action. When you want to execute the effect, just highlight it in the palette and press play.

THE BATCH COMMAND

- The Batch command allows you to tell the program to execute an action repeatedly to specified files automatically. For instance, if you have to re-size 100 football headshots for the web, the batch command would tell the program to do it automatically without the you having to open each file yourself.

- The Batch command is located in the **File** menu under **Automate**. When selected it will bring up the Batch menu. This is where you set your parameters.

- **Play:** This is the where you specify which folder the action you want to repeat is in.
- **Action:** This is where the exact action is chosen.
- **Source:** The majority of the time it will be "Folder". This tells the program you are going to select a folder with the files.
- **Choose:** Click this to select the specific folder.
- **Check boxes:** None of these should be checked. The exception would be if the Open command is part of the action. Then the Override Action Open Commands should be checked.
- **Destination:** Again, most of the time this will be Folder. If you choose Save and Close, it will overwrite the original files. Choosing Folder, allows you to maintain the original files.
- **Choose:** Same as above. Click to select the specific folder you want the new images to go to.
- **Check Box:** This is where doing a save as part of defining the action comes into play. If you did not do this, it will also overwrite the original files. Check the box.
- **File Naming:** You can specify what the files will be saved as in the folder. There are pulldown menus in each box with different choices.

When all the information has been entered, press OK.