

Tony L. Corbell
Joshua A. Haftel



Nik® Software Captured

The Complete Guide to Using Nik Software's Photographic Tools

Covers **Dfine**® 2.0, **Viveza**® 2, **HDR Efex Pro**™, **Color Efex Pro**™ 4.0, **Silver Efex Pro**™ 2, and **Sharpener Pro**™ 3.0

Nik Software Captured

**The Complete Guide to
Using Nik Software's Photographic Tools**

Tony Corbell
Josh Haftel



John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Tony dedicates this book to his daughter Leslie, whose love and support is never-ending and who is by far the best writer in the family.

Josh dedicates this book to Natasha for her love and understanding during these weeks of hard work and time spent apart leading up to their wedding day.

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Tony has worked as a professional photographer since 1979, when he began in West Texas. Since 1990, Tony has taught more than 500 seminars and workshops throughout the world on studio and location lighting techniques and theory. Tony *loves* old John Wayne movies and is consumed with anything Beatles-related (he has been known to shoot Fab Four haunts in Liverpool, England).

Josh Haftel

Josh graduated from Rochester Institute of Technology with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Visual Media from the School of Photographic Arts and Sciences. Since 2001, Josh has worked at Nik Software and currently oversees the product management department. When not in the office at Nik, Josh is an avid hiker, mountain biker, and traveler. Josh lives to eat and travel, and loves taking pictures of both.

What's in Our Bags

Both of us use an extensive array of cameras, lenses, and technologies to create our imagery. Here is a list of our equipment:

Tony Corbell

Camera: Nikon D700 and D3s

Lenses: Nikkor 12-24 2.8, Nikkor 24-70 2.8, Nikkor 85mm 1.4, Nikkor 70-200 2.8

Memory cards: Delkin CF cards 16GB

Tripod: Enduro

Lighting: Profoto D1 500W.S. (6 heads), Pocket Wizard Wireless transmitters, Sekonic L758DR flash meter

Bag: Think Tank International 2 (roll-aboard), Domke F2 (shoulder bag)

Computer: MacBook Pro 2.3GHz Core i7 with 8GB of RAM, Photoshop CS5.1,

Lightroom 3.4, Aperture 3.2, Nik Software Complete Collection

Josh Haftel

Camera: Nikon D700 and D3s

Lenses: Nikkor 24-70 2.8, Nikkor 24mm 1.4

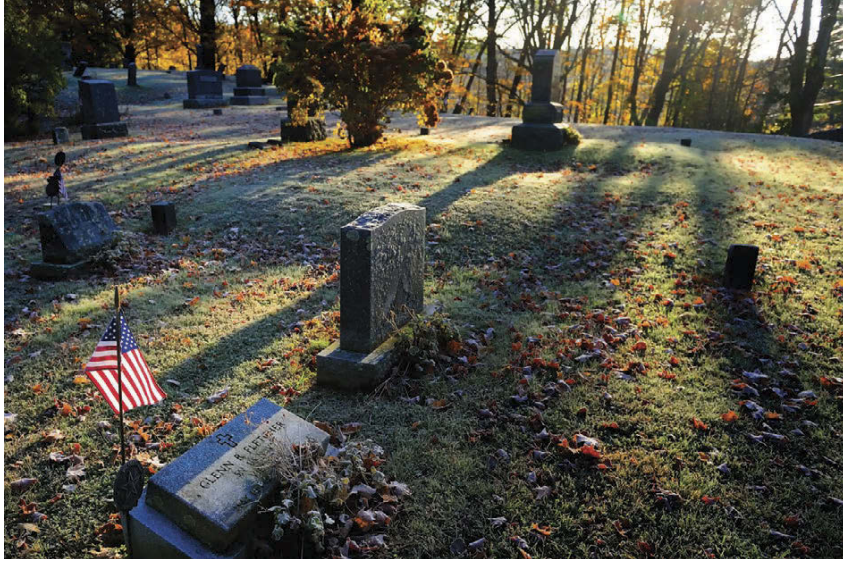
Memory cards: Lexar 600X CF cards

Tripod: Gitzo GT3154L, Markins TB-30 tripod base, Really Right Stuff BH-55 ball head, Really Right Stuff Omni-Pivot pano package

Filters: B+W Kaesemann Circular Polarizer, B+W ND110 10-stop ND, Lee Big Stopper 10-stop ND, Lee .9 ND, Lee .9 Hard graduated ND

Bag: Lowepro CompuRover AW

Computer: MacBook Pro 2.3GHz Core i7 with 8GB of RAM and OWC SSD drive, Photoshop CS5.1, Lightroom 3.4, Aperture 3.2, OnOne Software Perfect Resize, PTGui Pro, Nik Software Complete Collection Ultimate Edition



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Introduction

Welcome to the world of Nik Software and our in-depth look at one of the most talked-about and successful line-up of tools for digital photographers. Over the past 12 years, Nik has changed the way photographers not only work but also think. Visualization has always been important to photographers as they would often expose the film based on techniques they would later use in the darkroom. Now, as you learn more and more about the things that you can do with these plug-in tools, you can once again visualize your postproduction at the time of capture, often changing how you shoot.

About This Book

We wrote this book for people who are new to image editing and enhancement, as well as for those who are completely comfortable with it. We have tried to ensure there are bits of important information for the seasoned professional and at the same time hit on elements that are key for those just starting. You will find general information on each Nik Software product as well as a step-by-step process for editing different types of images.

As you go through the process of editing, you will discover there are times you will want to spend extra effort on one aspect of your image and less effort on another. No two photographers can ever agree on how this time drain is organized — nor should they. The key is to be organized and understand the best tools available for the task at hand.

When we took on the task of writing this book, we found ourselves in a unique position. On one hand, we know the products and their use really well. On the other hand, we don't really know what people want or need to know about the topic. Then there was the decision on how to best present the information: from a technical standpoint or a more visual one? In this case, we have tried to offer a little of both. We have included as much technical data as is necessary to understand the software's functionality and enough aesthetic influence to show why the tools should be used.

Two Points of View

We come from two different worlds. Tony learned strictly on the job, having taken his first picture for a paying client. His style and desire to always learn more has helped to shape his work. Tony's story is unlike most who enjoyed photography as a hobby before making it a career. On the other hand, Josh learned his craft and honed his skills at one of the world's leading technology school, where he excelled at all things scientific and technical yet possessed a remarkable talent for the aesthetic as well.

Our approaches and techniques are quite different. Yet after coming together on this

project, we found that the final result, and ultimate goal, is precisely the same. We simply want to help people make better pictures. One of us takes a structured, engineer-like precision. The other is a fly-by-the-seat-of-the-pants kind of guy. Collectively, we have come up with what we believe is a good mix of technical and aesthetic and a good mix of how to do something and why you might want to.

We hope that as you go through this book, you will take the time to try the examples we present and recognize how much your work can improve by using these fabulous products.

Why This Book and Why Now

The digital revolution — certainly the transition from film — is complete. Today, more and more people are buying and using digital cameras, so there is an explosive need for information: purchasing the right camera, understanding how to make an image look better, and rescuing an important picture that was not taken under ideal conditions.

Photography is a wonder to us all, and we hope that as you go through these pages, the information helps you understand what is possible and how easily you can accomplish it.

Conventions Used in This Book

Although this book is chock full of how-to advice and examples, it is not full of arcane computer instructions. But occasionally, you will see a few computer conventions:

⌘: This symbol represents the Mac's Command key, which is equivalent to Window's Ctrl key. Where we do refer to keyboard shortcuts and keys, we list the Macintosh shortcut or key first, then the Windows shortcut or key. For example, if we say, "press and hold Option or Alt," that means to press and hold Option on a Mac or to press and hold Alt on a PC.

⇨: This symbol represents the use of a menu option, so File ⇨ Save means to choose the File menu, then choose the Save option, and Type ⇨ Format ⇨ Bold means to choose the Type menu, then choose Format from the menu, and then choose Bold from the submenu.

Finally, we use the code `font` to indicate URLs and other text you type in literally, such as in text fields.





Chapter 1

Editing Basics

By understanding the foundations of postprocessing, you will find that your editing not only improves but so will the speed at which you can process your images. In this chapter, we cover some of the basics of image editing as well as general terminology that you might encounter in this book or when discussing postprocessing with others.

Fundamental Editing Techniques

Far too often, we are approached by photographers who feel completely overwhelmed by the idea of editing their photos. These photographers range from folks with many years of experience shooting film to folks whose first camera was digital. When we talk with these photographers, we find that their biggest problem is knowing what to do — and why they should do it. Although the theory and reasons why you should edit in certain ways, along with all the different approaches, could fill volumes, there are a few basics that once you learn them help the process tremendously.

Evaluating an image before editing

The first thing you should do before making any edits is evaluate your image. Evaluating doesn't mean just to determine if the image is too dark or too bright or needs to be rotated or cropped, but to really identify what is wrong with the image and what you would like to do to it. There are different ways of keeping track of the things you want to do to your image, and although over time you will get good at identifying and then resolving the edits you identified, we recommend that you start off with a pad of paper at your desk and take notes as you edit your images.

Some photographers actually have a plan at the time of shooting. They visualize the final image even before the shutter opens. This takes lots of practice, because you will need to know what the image will look like once it has been captured. You then need plenty of knowledge of what you like as well as what tools are available and what those tools are capable of doing. This is a great goal, as it makes you a better shooter, and the act of evaluating your image once you have transferred to your computer is a good first step to being able to visualize your images.

Before starting to evaluate your picture, make sure your image has potential. You can spend a lot of time editing a picture just to find out that, no matter what you do, you cannot make it a great image. By being able to quickly determine if a picture has potential or not, you will prevent wasting time editing an image that you will never use.

Basically, an image with potential will have a clear subject and at least one of the three

following elements (the more elements the better): an interesting subject, interesting light, and good composition. Put another way, you can do something with a moderately interesting subject with mediocre composition but amazing light. Obviously, an interesting subject with awesome light and superb composition makes the best image, but you would be surprised what you can do when you have only one of the three elements to work with. Figure 1-1 shows an example.

Now that you have an image with potential, look at your picture as a whole and note where your eyes go first. Is that where you want the viewer's eyes to go to? Sometimes it is helpful to sit back from your picture a bit, or even allow your eyes to defocus if you are having a hard time figuring out the focal point. We often squint to see where our eyes go first.



■ **FIGURE 1-1.** When evaluating your images, you can quickly identify images with potential. As an example, this image as shot in the camera (the inset) isn't very interesting, but with some editing it becomes memorable.

The first place you want your viewer's eyes to go should be the image's main subject. If your eyes don't go to the main subject, note where your focal point is and try to determine why. (We cover some of the possible reasons later in this chapter.)

You should next note the overall color and tonality of the image. Is the image too bright or too dark? Are the colors too bright or too subtle? Is the image too green or too warm?

What about the objects that are based on the four typical memory colors: sky blue, plant green, skin color, and neutrals? These colors are called *memory colors* because people see them so often and have an amazing ability to perceive the trueness of the colors. These are the most important colors in your image and if these colors are off, your viewers will immediately notice. Keep in mind though, it is perfectly fine for these colors to not be exactly as they are in nature. If these colors are different, just make sure they are significantly different and there seems to be a reason for a difference.

Next, look around the borders of your image. Are there things that could be considered distractions begging for the viewer's attention? Is there a curb cutting into the lower-left corner? Is there a telephone wire clipping the top-right corner? These are things that can be easily cropped and in most cases will need to be cloned if the cropping and composition are just right.

After closely scrutinizing the edges, look through the rest of the image for other elements that might become a distraction. Is there someone in the background looking right into the lens? Perhaps there's some noise, hot pixels, or dust on the sensor or lens? Note these to be fixed as well.

Finally, think about how you want the image to look. Is there an image or painting you are striving to emulate? Is there an emotion you want to impart? Knowing what you want to enhance before you start editing will help you make informed decisions as you begin to edit your image. For example, if you know that you want the image to end up with very warm, friendly tones, it doesn't make much sense to cool the image down even if it starts off a bit too warm.

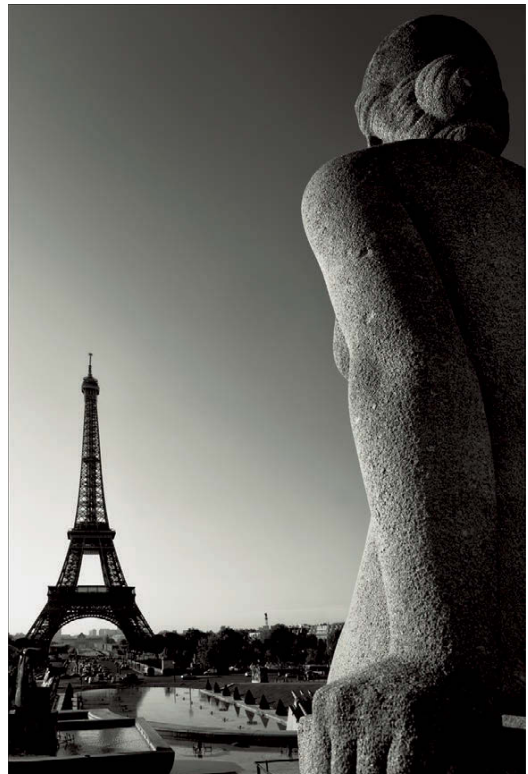
Planning your edits based on the human visual system

In addition to developing your editing plans, it is a good idea to keep in mind a few things about the human visual system. Because we all make images for other people to enjoy, knowing how people look at images is very helpful when you plan your edits. Without simplifying things too much, think about the perception of a scene as a series of elements that will draw the viewer's eye. Those are, in order:

- 1. Faces and text.** The first and strongest attractor to our eyes is the human face. This



■ **FIGURE 1-2.** Any picture with a face draws the viewer's attention right to the face, and usually to the eyes.



■ **FIGURE 1-3.** Although the eyes of the statue are not visible, any viewer can tell that the statue is looking at the Eiffel tower. You can use explicit and obvious leading lines, or implied leading lines such as in this photograph.



■ **FIGURE 1-4.** The use of blur to separate the subject from the background helps direct the focus of the viewer.

includes both actual faces and objects that look like faces, as Figure 1-2 shows. After human faces are the faces of animals. Text is also one of the first attractors.

- 2. Leading lines.** Think about how easy it is to stop people by just pointing somewhere. You don't even need to point at anything in particular, you just need to point and people will look in the direction you are pointing. Leading lines act the same way, by pointing the way to people. You can use leading lines either to keep the viewer looking within your photo or to point to a subject in your image that you want someone to notice. Leading lines can also be implied, either by someone pointing in the image or through the gaze of a person in the photograph, as in Figure 1-3. The viewer will likely look at whatever the person in the photograph is pointing to or looking at, if they are not looking into the lens.
- 3. Objects in focus.** Assuming that the image has a shallow depth of field, the viewer will certainly pay attention to the objects in focus first and foremost, as Figure 1-4 shows.
- 4. Bright objects.** Just as when you are driving down a street at night and a car passes you but you can't stop looking at the headlights, we are attracted to bright lights. Any image with a very bright area will attract the viewer's attention to that spot, as Figure 1-5 shows.
- 5. Colorful objects.** The more colorful, the more attention we give to that object, as Figure 1-6 shows. There is even a whole science to the way different colors attract our attention, but perhaps that is something for a book on advertising.

■ **FIGURE 1-5.** The sun in this picture is the brightest object and thus draws your attention directly into it and the castle in front of the sun.



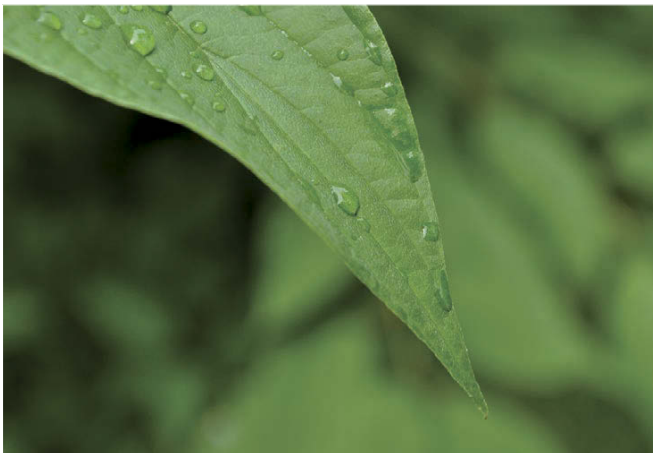
- 6. Objects with high contrast.** The higher the contrast of an object, the more attention we pay to it, as Figure 1-7 shows.
- 7. Objects with more detail, compared to others.** If you have objects that are sharper than others, the viewer will look at the sharper objects first, as Figure 1-8 shows.

■ **FIGURE 1-6.** The colorful lanterns immediately draw the eye in this photograph.





■ **FIGURE 1-7.** The high contrast building in this photo draws and captures the eye.



■ **FIGURE 1-8.** The combination of the out-of-focus background, the varying levels of focus on the leaf, and the leading lines of the leaf itself draw the eye to the tip of the leaf almost magically.

To put all these points into perspective, you want your subject to be in focus and normally be the brightest, most colorful, highest contrast object in the image that is also sharper than the rest of the image. Alternatively, you want to avoid areas outside your subject having these attributes, as they will be distractions.

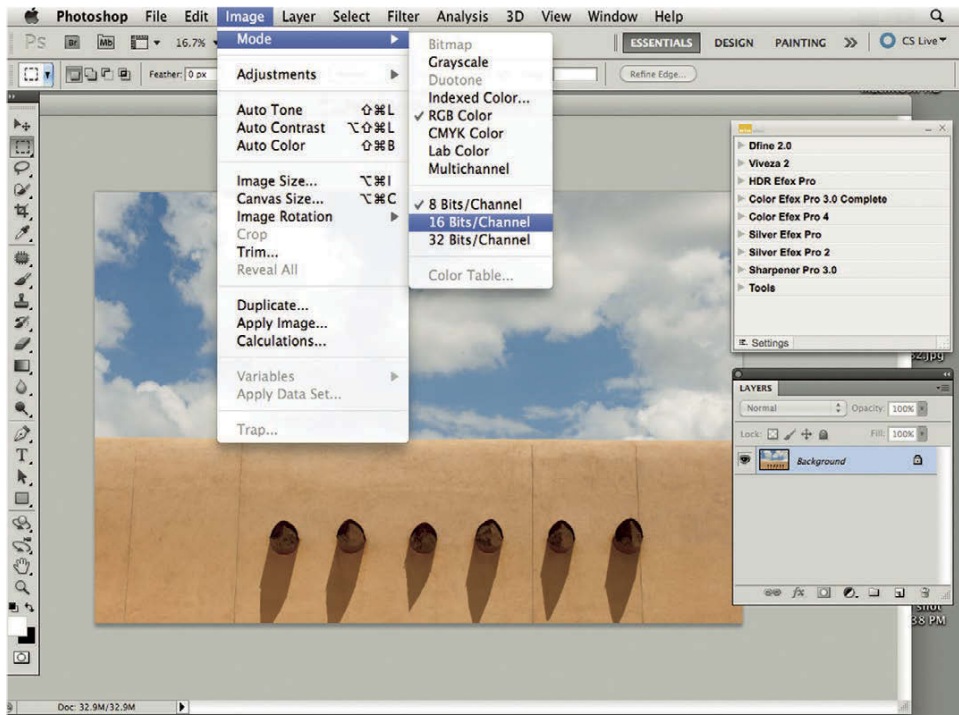
Editing Terminology

With any new technology, concept, or practical science comes a new language. There are new words and phrases that become part of the daily work of people engaged in the same activity. Photographic editing is no different.

The following list contains the terms used in this book as well as terms generally used by photographers and digital artists. Although the list is in no way complete, it represents the most important terms photographers use on a daily basis.

Artifacts. Artifacts take on many shapes and sizes but are all unwanted details in your photo. Common types of artifacts are noise, hot pixels, JPEG artifacts, and chromatic aberrations.

Bit depth. Also known as *color depth*, this term describes the resolution of color information as well as dynamic range. Normal images have a bit depth of either 8 or 16



■ **FIGURE 1-9.** In Photoshop, you can change the bit depth for your images by choosing Image ⇨ Modes. Note that to get the true benefit of a higher bit depth, you need an image that originated with that bit depth.