

Automating Digital Workflow

Which would you rather do?

Be in the field shooting pictures, *or*, processing in front of a computer screen in your studio?

Hands down, I know the answer for me: get out, enjoying nature, and shoot!

After you make that decision, your next problem is really what I call "Gigabyte Land..." That's a euphemism for the most efficient way to handle the gigabytes of data created every time you decide to go out and take a 'few' classic shots.

Before his passing, Bruce Fraser, an acknowledged master at most things digital, asked several cogent questions:

1. What edits should I make in Camera Raw?
2. Can I speed up initial selects (hot images) from a days shoot?
3. How can every image I deliver contain copyright and rights management notices?
4. Can I automate conversion of raw images to deliverable files?

You are the lab. With raw capture, you have total control, and hence total responsibility. Since you're drowning in data, you *need* to build a workflow which lets you work smarter, rather than harder.

Let's take a fast tour of how to do just that...

Work Smarter, Not Harder

A computer is really good at doing the same thing time-after-time. Tapping the power of automation is key to building an efficient workflow.

Bridge serves as Command Central for leveraging work you've done to create deliverable images in a variety of formats. Workflow boils down to five-steps:

- ***Image Ingestion.*** Copy raw files to at least one computer hard disk.
- ***Image Verification.*** Let Bridge cache thumbnails, previews, & metadata.
- ***Preproduction.*** Work with images in Bridge, selecting, sorting, ranking, and applying metadata, then editing with Camera Raw.
- ***Production.*** Process raw images to output files.
- ***Postproduction.*** Deal with all files to print, post, deliver, and archive.

Do Things Once

When you apply metadata such as copyrights, rights management, and keywords to your raw file, metadata is automatically carried through to all the TIF's, JPEG's, or PSDs you derive from that raw file. You need to enter that metadata *only* once.

By the same token, if you use Camera Raw's power to its fullest, your images may need little or no postprocessing in Photoshop.

Key Strategy: Do things once, and only once! Start with what you can do with the most images. Precede to more detailed treatments of an ever decreasing number of images. Reserve careful Photoshop hand-editing to images truly deserving attention.

Do Things Automatically

Survival and future growth depends on simply dealing with volumes of data raw workflow expects. Photoshop actions are a very obvious automation feature. Metadata templates and Camera Raw presets are automations as well. Yes, I grant you; less obvious ones.

When creating converted images Photoshop can open, use either Batch or Image Processor, applying actions that sharpen and create adjustment layers so when we open the image in Photoshop, it's immediately ready for editing without having to first create layers.

Be Methodical

Everybody finds a different rhythm, a different workflow. When you find that rhythm, stick to it. Being methodical and sticking to a routine makes mistakes less likely. It allows you to focus on important decisions ~ only you can make.

Working with DNG (Digital Negative)

You can save Camera Raw settings either in Camera Raw Database *or* in sidecar .XMP files *or* write settings directly into file formats that accept XMP metadata.

DNG is Adobe's proposed standard for a documented, open, nonproprietary raw format. DNG files are designed to be metadata-friendly. If you use DNG files, you don't need sidecar .XMP files to hold camera raw settings or other metadata. Instead, all these things get written directly into the DNG file so they can't get lost or disassociated from the image.

What's in a Name?

We know a good many photographers whose sophisticated naming schemes are a core part of their workflow. Adopt a naming convention that makes sense to you, then stick to it (be methodical).

If you want that name to be consistently readable across platforms and operating systems, use a strict alphanumeric character scheme.

Ratings and Labels

Bridge and Camera Raw have two different mechanisms labels and rating, for flagging images.

The rating system was designed to mimic the time-honored practice of making selects on a light table by marking keepers from the first round with a single dot, adding a second dot to keepers from the second round, and so on.

That's how I use it - it's simple and *really* effective.

All Aboard - Let's Learn How to Get out in Nature and Become an Award-Winning Photographer

I know; this is just *barely* enough to titillate an avid digital photographer. Sorry there weren't pictures to illustrate such valuable points. But, it's a good start...

Looking forward, we present some 25-30 tips and tricks using this amazing software suite - Bridge, Adobe Camera Raw, and CS3. As a fillip, we even provide a detailed Study Guide of ~ 130 pages, images for your learning curve, all on a CD.

You receive the full CD when you attend either

1. ***Anasazi Adventures*** - our digital tour into ancient Anasazi heritage and culture
2. ***PS Workflow Workshops*** - our hands-on Photoshop workshops

Or, you can purchase the CD separately.

PS: BTW, for convenience, we use PDF files for several reasons. They can be used on most operating systems. They avoid the ungainly hassle of HTM files with additional folders when you're using images. Unfortunately, when you first open one of our PDFs, you will immediately see - they come only with white backgrounds.

Real World Camera Raw for Adobe Photoshop CS3, Fraser and Schewe, ©2008

©2008, Chopawamsic LC, All Right Reserved
BistiArt@geocompa.com ~ www.BistiArt.Smugmug.com