Anasazi Pleasure ReDO Using Adobe Camera Raw

Creation of Anasazi Pleasure has been a *real* learning experience!

I'd taken the camera into the ruin with a 24-120 mm lens. After the climb, I tried to raw capture the magnificence of this rather special place.

Back in my own digital imaging space, Photoshop CS2 would not properly stitch it. Ergo, I became the proud owner of CS3; well, now I had a stitched version.

But I was new to CS3 so there were limitations to my masking skills...

Nevertheless, with a lot of machinations and enormous help from Jack Houser, Anasazi Pleasure got an *Honorable Mention* at the New Mexico State Fair.

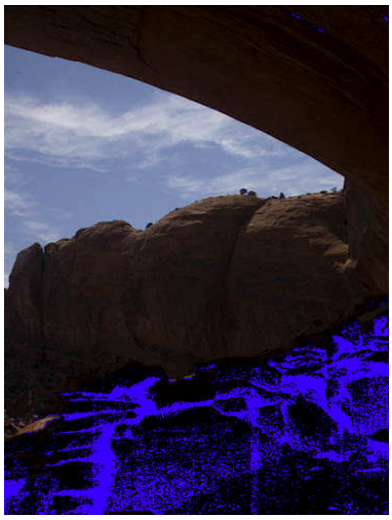
Recently, I printed a copy on card stock with a laser solid ink printer. The foreground was still in deep shadows, with considerable noise. Masking left a perceptible edge.

Between the creation of Anasazi Pleasure in August, 2007, and now, I was led to *Real World Adobe Camera Raw with Photoshop CS3* by Bruce Fraser and Jeff Schewe. In short, why not use Adobe Camera Raw (ACR) with its marvelous slider system to do an early evaluation, clipping balance, and basic tuning of raw data, before fine tuning with CS3!

Ready? Let's show you how to do make this happen in some simple steps.

Preparing Raw Files for Photomerge

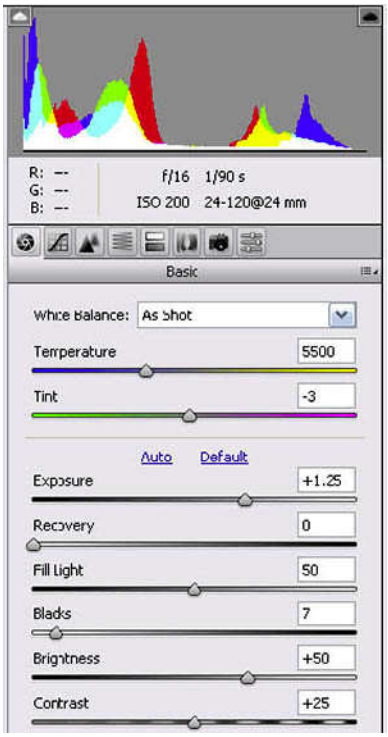
Here's our basic problem...



There's lots of noise on the right-hand side.

But, we can use ACR to balance that noise while eliminating black-and-white point clipping.

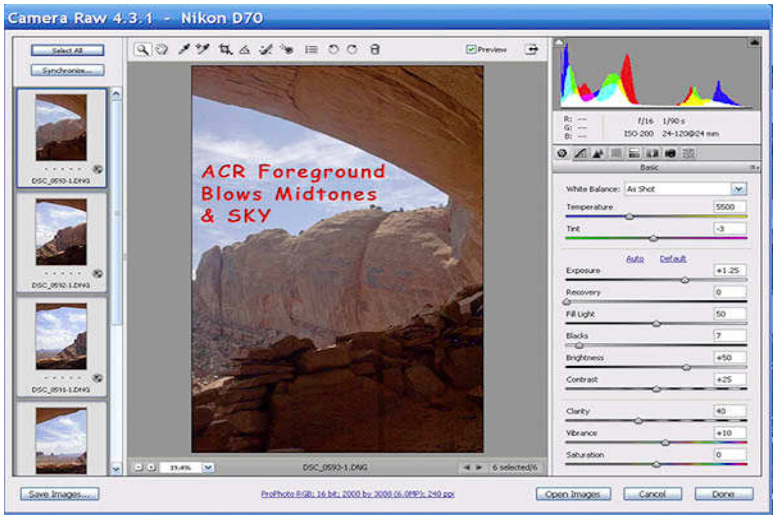
Beginning with the first picture below, we loaded all six raw images from Bridge into ACR. We played with sliders of the first image until we could get a uniform foreground lighting within that image.



Once the first image was balanced as you can see by

the histogram, we chose Select All and set the parameters of all other images the same.

While this choice created a good foreground, the background was considerably lightened. This choice would require subsequent changes in our workflow.



Here's a clip from Bridge showing four of six images which would be stitched together in a panorama (pano).

We saved those images as DNG files for use in CS3.

To create the pano, we chose Bridge>Tools>Photoshop>Photomerge and let CS3 chunk away for a while. Here are six ACR corrected images submitted as DNG files to CS3.

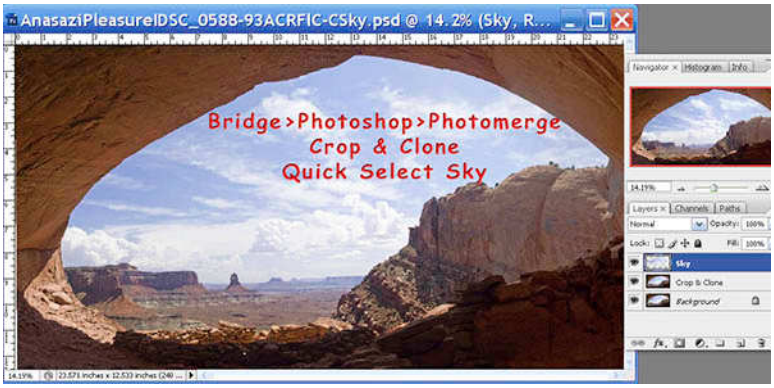
Our Foreground Detail - Sky Too Light

Here's our modified image.

Our first big need after cropping, was to clone and paint white edges of the cylindrical pano image using the Clone Tool. We left one white edge to show you how well the Clone Tool can work.

Now it's time to take glare out of that sky.

Masking the Sky



We've really got three elements in this image: foreground, mid-ground past the cave, and sky.

Let's take our Quick Selection Tool and make a layer copy of the sky. With CS3, this is way easy...

Darken the Sky

Levels has been around for a long time. Let's put some innovation into its use.

As we can see, our pano histogram is fairly well balanced. But we can change mid-foreground with the midpoint slider.

Here, we choose a value of 0.60, which means we darken mid tones to control our foreground and sky.

Levels Black Mask

Some days, we can simply smell the Rose...

When we put the levels midtone change in a layer above the other layers, we get the sky and middle foreground we want.

But, we also get a much darker foreground, defeating most of our initial effort with ACR.

Why Not Simply Reverse the Mask?

Choose a White brush. Set the Hardness to 10%. Initially, make a big brush size and began painting over the dark foreground.

Immediately, you see it begin to lighten back to ACR settings. The tedious part will be working the edges with ever smaller brushes and ever smaller opacities as you lighten the cave mouth and Anasazi structure near the edges containing strong color contrast, while maintaining a contrasty sky and

mid-foreground. But, with patience, like Martin Luther King, "*We Shall Overcome*..."

Voilà...

We've made a slight concession here.

Our marketing template is set up for pano images, but at slightly less than 2:1. When we placed Anasazi Pleasure within its bounds, our aspect ratio changed.

Yet, the vivid effect is quite dramatic!

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