

MONO IMAGES

Bob Breach



FORMAT FOR TONIGHT

- Short introductory talk on mono and mono conversion
- Questions and discussion
- Creating mono images using your own files/laptop

Accepted and winning mono images from 2017 SPS Open Exhibition will be shown during the evening



INTRODUCTION



WHAT IS MONOCHROME ?

(Black and White)

FIAP Monochrome definition

1. A black and white work going from very dark grey (black) to very clear grey (white) with the various shades of grey is a monochrome work
2. A black and white work toned entirely in a single colour will remain a monochrome work able to stand in the black and white category

But not 50 shades of grey !!

WHEN CAN MONO CREATE A BETTER IMAGE

- Sometimes colour can distract from the image
- Mono often works better to:
 - Emphasise form, contrast and texture
 - Particularly for people or images with strong graphic shapes
 - Usually best with full tonal range - pure blacks and whites to create drama



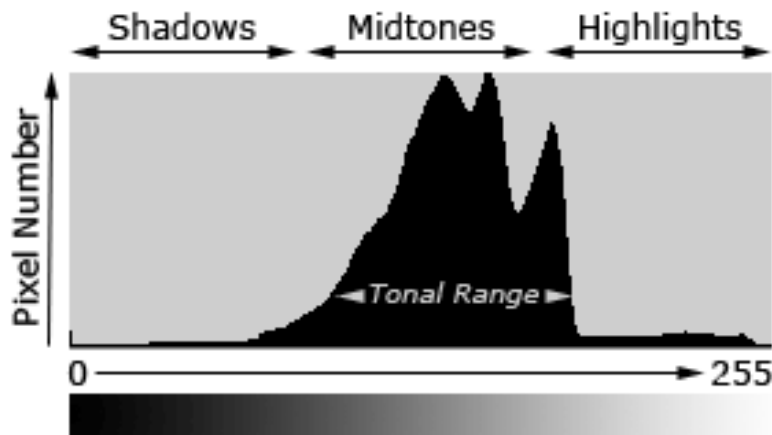
Raw file



Final image

MONO APPROACH

- Emphasise form, contrast and texture graphic shapes
- Normally use full tonal range - pure blacks and whites
- But sometimes a soft pastel approach works as well – see later



It's all about managing your tonal range

RAW, TIFF OR JPEG

- Raw
 - Much more control over image quality
 - Capture maximum (and better) range of tones
- TIFF
 - Larger files but better quality with no image degradation
 - Choice of 8bit or 16 bit
 - 16 bit much better (65000 grey tones compared to 256)
 - Not all Photoshop filters work with full 16bit TIFF
- JPEG
 - Smaller file but lower overall quality
 - Also importantly much lower tonal range (see below)



**PROCESSING
FILES TO CREATE
MONO IMAGES**

TYPICAL POST PRODUCTION SEQUENCE

Always think about image composition (see separate notes)

1. Crop and (if necessary rotate/flip) image to **improve composition** –
(Note the tighter the crop the lower the quality)
2. Adjust **basic exposure**, contrast, brightness
3. Use levels and curves or clarity/vibrance if necessary to either add
balance or punch or alternatively **soften an image**
4. Adjust or remove **highlights** to avoid distracting bright areas and where
necessary ensure adequate **shadow** detail
5. Adjust **saturation** up or down as necessary to adjust **depth of colour**
6. Adjust **colour temp/colour tone** if required
7. **Mono** conversion if required
8. Minor cloning/spot removal to **remove distracting elements**
9. **Darkening corners (vignette)** if necessary to “hold” picture



10. Final sharpening and **preparation for image output**



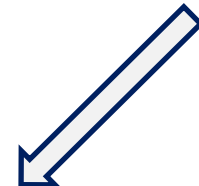
Global
adjustments

(affects all
pixels to the
same extent)



Or local
adjustments

(affects only
selected pixels
identified in
different layers)



More complex techniques (covered in other workshops)

e.g. Moving pixels around through cloning or merging elements from different
images, filters, specialist software etc.

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Items in red
particularly
important for
mono

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MONO CONVERSION

- Can use a range of tools depending on software available
- If available raw converters (e.g. Lightroom) give best mono conversion
- In PS and Elements (depending on version)
 1. B/W converter
 2. Channel mixer (not as flexible)
 3. Desaturate
- Adjust sliders to modify the darkness/lightness of the different colour channels

MONO CONVERSION TIPS

- If you change the colour temperature you also change the red/blue balance which means the colour slider impact is changed
- Single colour toning is allowed in mono competitions (*colour layer to add single tone to whole image*)
- You can split tone (different colour for highlights and shadows) but then not eligible for “mono”

AN EXAMPLE



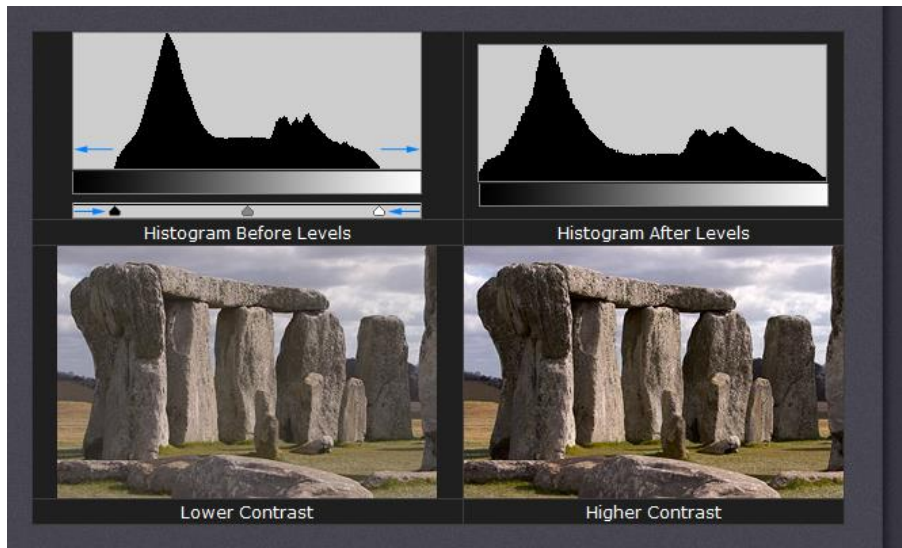


TONAL ADJUSTMENTS

ADDING PUNCH

Check the histogram to see how the image can be enhanced through

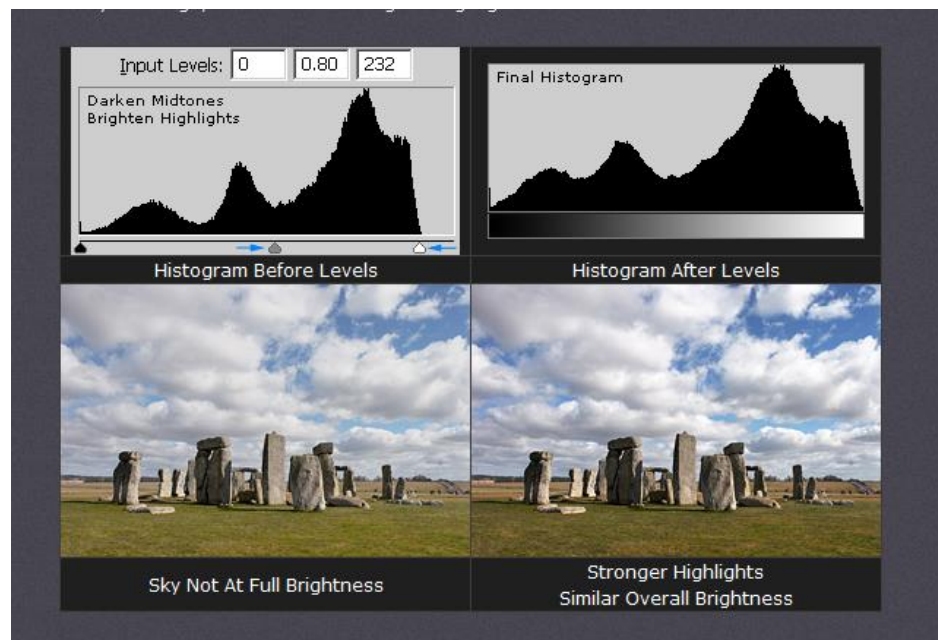
- Levels to:
 - Use whole range of tones from black to white
 - Modify mid tones
- Curves (*not in all software*) or layers/layer masks to:
 - Selectively brighten or darken certain tones within image
 - Add contrast with S curve
- Saturation/Vibrance/Clarity
 - To boost whole image or at micro level



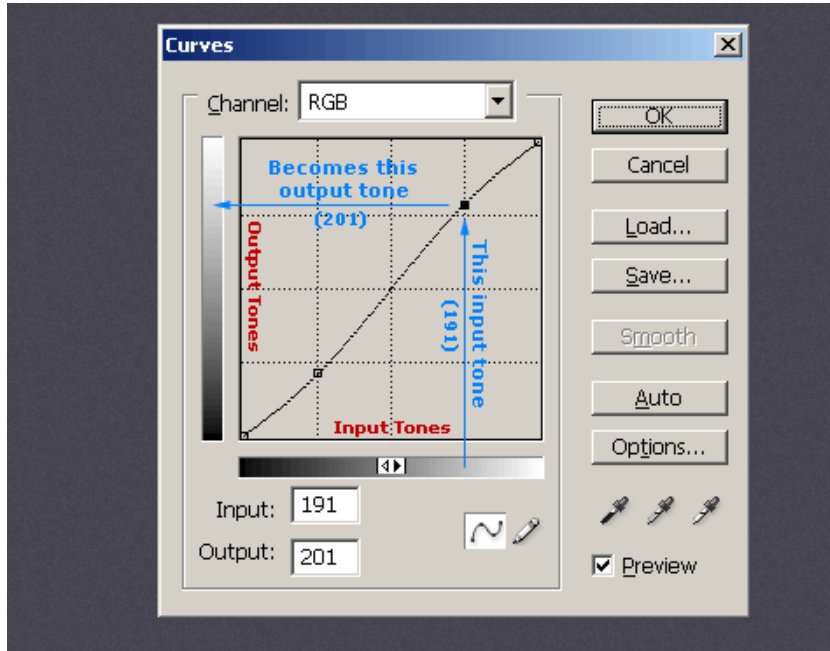
Hold down alt key to show clipping when moving sliders

USE OF LEVELS

<http://www.cambridgeincolour.com/tutorials/levels.htm>



CURVES



The levels tool only allows changes to:

- Black point
- White point
- Mid tone (grey)

The curves tool allows you to selectively brighten or darken any particular pixel brightness value

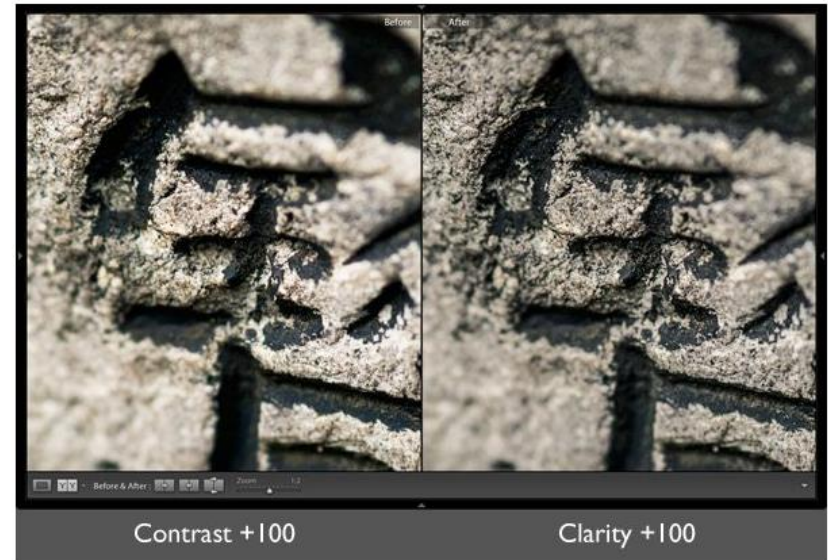
Can adjust tonality of all colours (RGB) or selective colour channels

HIGHLIGHTS AND SHADOWS

- Need to avoid
 - Completely burnt out areas(unless intentional)
 - Bright areas that take the eye away from the main subject, particularly at the edge
 - Blocked out shadow areas (i.e. solid black) unless intentional silhouette effect
- Use:
 - Highlight/shadow tool in raw
 - Masked layer with less exposure
 - Clone out highlight areas (see later)
 - Dodge and burn tool
- Sometimes helps to add small dark vignette to help focus on main subject

CONTRAST AND CLARITY

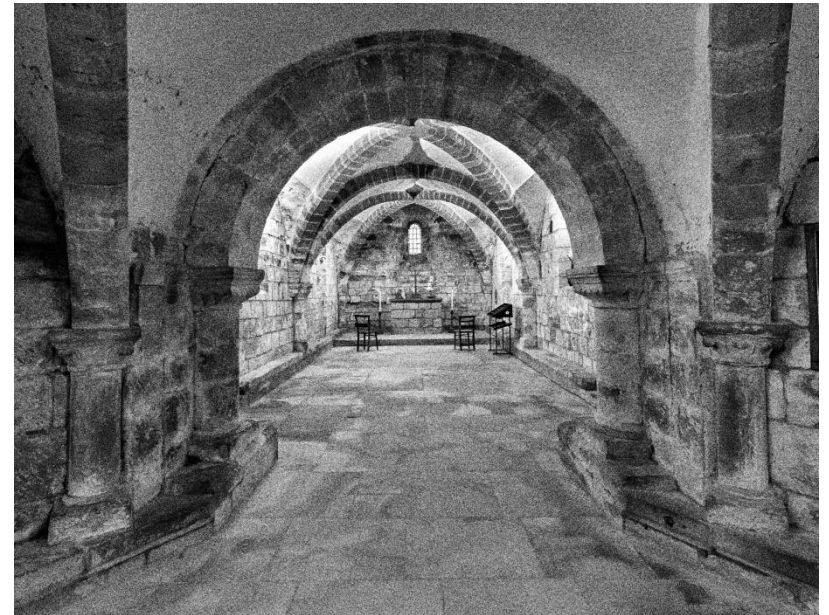
- Contrast darkens the shadow areas and brightens the highlights
- Clarity is a more subtle increase in micro-contrast by working more on mid tonal values
- Both can increase drama and mood and be a creative tool at extreme values
- Negative clarity can sometimes soften an image



Clarity tool can bring out texture better than contrast

ADDING NOISE!!

- The quality of modern digital cameras is now such that “noise” is rarely a problem
- This is in contrast to older (fast) film based images that often had a degree of visible grain (noise) that added atmosphere
- For some mono images you may wish to recreate the “look” of old film emulsions by adding back grain
- This can be done in Photoshop or a number of other processing software packages

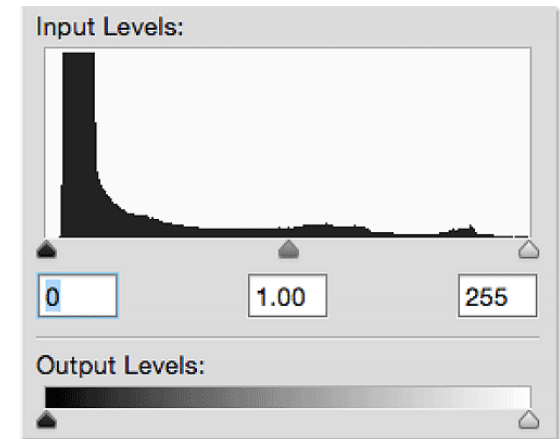




HIGH AND LOW KEY IMAGES

LOW KEY LIGHTING

- A low-key image is one that contains predominantly dark tones and colours
- Conveys atmosphere and mood which is usually dramatic and full of mystery
- Creates striking contrasts through reduced lighting where shadows are now the primary element of the composition
- Can work with colour but often better with mono



AND CAN ALSO USE FOR OUTDOOR
SHOTS AT NIGHT



CREATING LOW KEY SHOTS IN POST PROCESSING



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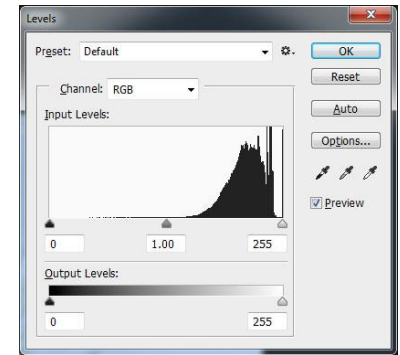
© Linsey Wilt Photography for iHeartFaces.com

Different ways

- Convert to mono
 - Use levels with layer masks to adjust tonal values and contrast
 - Clone out light areas where necessary
- Copy main image onto black background and paint back relevant areas

HIGH KEY LIGHTING

- A high key image is one that is mostly bright, with a range of light tones and whites and not very many blacks or mid-tones
- A high key image tends to be upbeat, optimistic or youthful
- Often also used with an added diffuse layer or less saturation to create a soft mood



- Can create in studio
- Or in post processing
 - Convert to mono or desaturate
 - Use levels and curves (where necessary in layers)
 - Add light Gaussian blur and/or reduce clarity/vibrance



PRINTING MONO

PRINTING MONO IMAGES

- Mono printing should be straightforward but can prove problematic
- Can often get a slight colour cast which spoils the image
- Ideally use printer with dedicated mono option with more than one black ink cartridge
- If not available make normally sure that the grayscale box on your printer menu is enabled
- Good ordinary paper can work well but for good mono many prefer Baryta paper which gives strong blacks



NOW IT'S YOUR TURN TO
MAKE SOME STUNNING
MONO IMAGES