

Helpdesk

Our expert helps you solve some of your niggling Photoshop problems. This month we get rid of readers' halos, check out their size and get reflective **BY RODGER PAGE**

FLASH TROUBLE

I have a Photoshop document that has some components that I want to use in Flash, namely some graphics with Drop Shadows and other layer effects. I can create a Drop Shadow using the filters in Flash, but they're just not as good as shadow effects in Photoshop. I have tried using a GIF with transparency turned on, but it still appears with a white halo.

Lisa Brown

The GIF is a great format that compresses the graphic and doesn't affect the quality, but it can only be used on solid colours and contain no more than 256 colours, so this tends to be good for simple graphics such as buttons and simple illustrations as it keeps the size down. The GIF does contain an alpha channel, but it's only one colour, that's why if you hide the white colour #FFFFFF, other colours that are close and should be hidden are still visible. But there is an alternative in the PNG file format. This combines the best of both worlds – loss-less compression with a continuous tone and containing a true alpha channel. PNG opens up the possibilities, as you can create a Drop Shadow and import it into Flash, maintaining the alpha channel. Be aware that the SWF file exports bitmaps as JPGs unless otherwise specified in the Library. The main reason that we have only just begun to use the PNG format is because Internet Explorer is slow off the mark and has only just started to support it.

SHARPENING THE PROFESSIONAL WAY

I love digital photography and enjoy putting my images up on the internet. I'm more of a photographer than a designer and, as such, I'm missing a few finer points when it comes to digital imaging – which is why I buy your fantastic mag! My biggest problem is the Sharpen filter as I always end up having a white glow around my subjects. Is there a way to improve the sharpness of my images without creating this halo?

Mark Sherman

Thanks for your comments Mark. There are two ways of sharpening your images, the first is by simply choosing Filter>Sharpen>Unsharp Mask and moving the sliders



LOSE THE HALO: Rid images of the annoying white halo around images, by using Unsharp Mask found under Filter

around to find a nice balance between a sharp image and where the halo appears. The second method is a bit trickier and involves converting your image to Lab. Select Image>Mode>Lab Color, you'll notice immediately that, unlike converting your image to CMYK, Lab does not affect the colour or tonal range and opens up your Channels palette. The three different channels stand for Lightness, which is a greyscale tone, A, which is the colour range from Red to Green and B, which is the colour range Blue to Yellow. In the Channels palette, highlight the lightness to isolate the channel. Now from the Filter menu, select Unsharp Mask and move the sliders around to get a nice balance of sharpness before the halo becomes overwhelming. To finish, convert your image back to RGB and your image will be perfectly sharpened with no halo.



SIZE DOES MATTER: Press Alt and click on the Info bar to conveniently view an image's measurements

QUICK INFO

On occasion I have to open lots of images to check the resolution to see if the document needs down-sampling. I always have to use the image size function, which is okay, but when you have 30 documents open it can be quite a chore.

Is there a quick and easy way to do this?

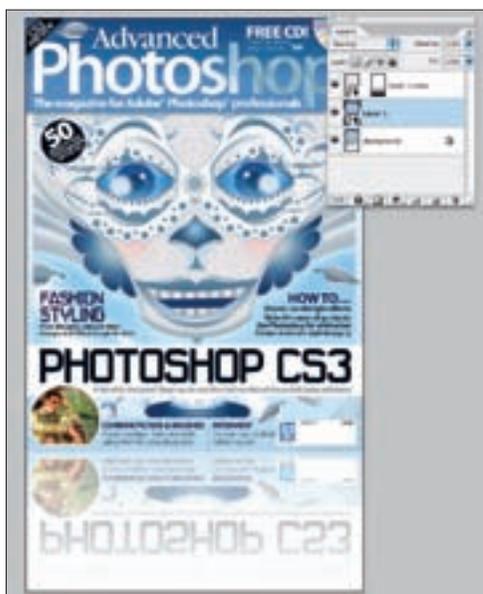
Donna Craig

There is a quick and easy way of determining the document size and resolution. Simply hold down the Alt key and within the info bar located at the bottom of your document click your mouse button. The details displayed give you the size in pixels and the size in your chosen preset measurement, along with the resolution. You do, however, still need the image size function to change things, but it does give you a quick overview.

EASY EFFECT

I have to use Photoshop for regular product updates for my website and I love the Apple reflection look that I use to good effect. The

“GIF IS A GREAT FORMAT THAT COMPRESSES THE GRAPHIC AND DOESN'T AFFECT THE QUALITY”



MIGHTY SMART: To achieve this cool reflection effect, you need to master CS2's Smart Objects

problem I have however, is that it's a major pain to do this over a range of 20 new DVDs and still achieve the effect of a uniform look across the board. Is there a foolproof way of automating this process so I ensure cohesion?

Andrew Buxton

This is indeed a nice effect and it can really bring a web page to life, giving it a sense of depth. With the updates to CS2 (which seems so long ago now) came many innovations, making it the most important update in Photoshop's long history. Possibly the best innovation is Smart Objects and this is what needs to be used here.

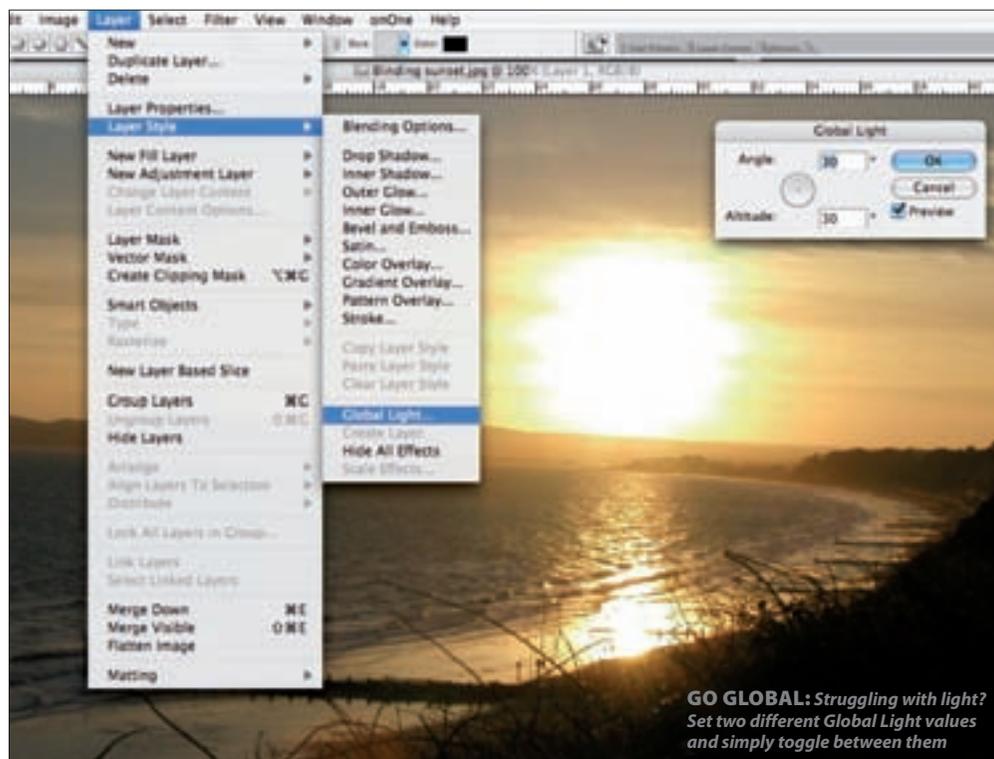
First, create a new doc to the specifications you require for your website. Create a Smart Object of your DVD box, duplicate this layer and flip on the vertical axis. Add a Layer Mask and apply a gradient of black to white to achieve the effect, save your document as a PSD. Now all that's required to change the artwork is to double-click on the Smart Object layer within the Layers palette to edit, add in your new imagery and close the window to save. You'll notice that both the main image and its reflection are now updated.

GLOBAL LIGHT

Is it possible to change the angle of the Global Light? I'm having some trouble with the different angle of effects in a scene that I'm producing, as the light source is just off-centre. This means that half the time when I change the angle of the Global Light in the Effects palette it alters the other effects on the other objects. I have turned off the Use Global Light function, but this means I have to constantly enter the correct values.

Karen Perkins

It's unfortunate that you can't set more than one light source, that would open the door to a whole host of cool effect possibilities. What you can do however is simply set the Global Light to the angle of the light source for the majority of the objects on which it will be applied to. To do this, select from the main menu: Layer>Layer Style>Global Light and set the angle and distance. Now in the Effects palette use the Global Light checkbox to apply the effect. The easiest thing to do now would be to turn the checkbox off, alter the angle and copy and paste the effect using the checkbox to toggle between the two different angles.



GO GLOBAL: Struggling with light? Set two different Global Light values and simply toggle between them

RELEASING EFFECTS

I need to create a Drop Shadow that runs along a line of perspective. The shadow layer effect is perfect, but it's firmly attached to the graphic and is flat, for want of a better word. I have tried creating a new layer, filling in the selection with black and applying a Gaussian Blur but it just doesn't look the same. How can I make this work?

Gavin Chadwick

There's a neat little trick for getting around the layer effect issue. The first thing to do is apply the Drop Shadow effect to get it just the way you want it. Now, within the Layers palette right-click on the Layer Effect icon and select from the menu Create Layer. You will now see that in the Layers palette your Drop Shadow is released to a new layer and taken off the original layer. Use a combination of the Perspective Transform and Layer Mask to create the depth effect. Any layer effect that is applied to an image is released to its very own layer that you are then free to do with as you please.



UN-STICK EFFECTS: Use the Create Layer option in the Layer Effect menu to release effects from their layers allowing you to alter them separately

HELPDESK

CALL FOR QUESTIONS

Want help with Photoshop?

Send your emails to us at:

advancedpshop@imagine-publishing.co.uk

or post a message on our forum board at

www.advancedphotoshop.co.uk/forum.

Remember to specify whether you're using a PC or Mac and the version number of your edition of Photoshop.