

Though photography started out as a black-and-white medium, color now rules the day. Still, there are times when only a black-and-white photo can adequately communicate a photographer's intent, but, there are subtleties to consider. The absence of color makes a black-and-white photo more reliant upon its shadows and

highlights. Shooting digitally puts a new twist on the concept of black-and-white shooting. The digital darkroom gives more control to photographers than they ever had before; beginning with the way the image is first shot—in color.

Shooting in color not only provides a control of contrast and exposure, but also in how each individual color is rendered in grayscale. This would be similar to adding a color filter to the lens when photographing with black-and-white film. The digital darkroom gives us a choice of using many color filters at the back end of the process—after the image has been taken. There are several ways of digitally converting color to black and white and the following three techniques are among my favorites.

#### USE ADOBE CAMERA RAW

This method requires using either Photoshop or Lightroom. In Camera Raw you go to the **HSL/Grayscale** panel and click the **Convert to Grayscale** button. In Lightroom, you simply have to push the V key to do the same thing. Set your Camera Raw preferences to **Apply Auto Grayscale Mix When Converting to Grayscale** if you want your sliders to change automatically based on Adobe's opinion of what an image should look like. If your box is unchecked, or if you would like to change the tonal values of the image

once the auto grayscale is applied, then adjust the sliders. This panel allows the adjustment of the reds, oranges, yellows, greens, aquas, blues, purples and magentas. Moving the sliders to the left darkens the tonal values of the corresponding colors. Moving them to the right lightens the tonal values. Using the sliders in conjunction with the target adjustment tool in Camera Raw 5.+ (as found in CS4) allows you to click on the image and then click and drag left or right to lighten or darken the tonal values. If you are using CS3 you just move the sliders on the HSL panel. You get great control over the tonal values in your grayscale image by using the sliders in the **HSL/Grayscale** panel in conjunction with the sliders on the basic panel that control exposure, highlights, shadows, brightness, contrast and clarity.

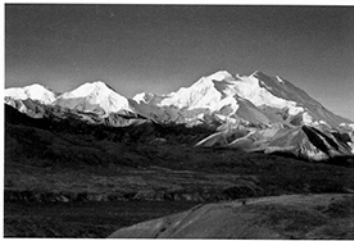
#### USE A BLACK-AND-WHITE ADJUSTMENT LAYER IN PHOTOSHOP

To avail yourself of this method, you must have Photoshop CS3 or later. Create a **Black-and-White** adjustment layer and then use similar sliders to those described above in the Camera Raw method. The sliders will allow the adjustment of reds, yellows, greens, cyans, blues and magentas. The **Auto** button on this adjustment panel will adjust the sliders to Adobe's recom-

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Converted in Raw



Converted with B&W Adjustment Layer and a Curve Layer



Converted with Selective Color and Channel Mixer Adjustment Layers

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*As you can see from the illustration, the conversions all look different when three different methods are applied to the same image.*

mended levels. You can use this as a starting place and then make further adjustments on your own. This tool also works with targeted adjustments. In CS4 click on the little hand with the two arrows to activate the target adjustment and then click and drag on the image to lighten or darken specific colors. In CS3 just click and drag on your image (at first you will see an eyedropper). The downside to using the **Black-and-White** adjustment layer is that there are no tools for working on the whites or blacks in the image. To do so you might need to add another adjustment layer such as **Curves** to work on contrast and brightness.

#### USE THE SELECTIVE COLOR ADJUSTMENT LAYER IN PHOTOSHOP

This last method is the one I used most often before the **Black-and-White** adjustment layer became

available. You first create a **Selective Color** adjustment layer and make no changes to the sliders. Click **OK** to close the panel. Then create a **Channel Mixer** adjustment layer and check the **Monochrome** box to turn the image to grayscale. You could adjust the sliders at this point if you want, but be careful that the total percentage change, found under the sliders, does not go over 100 percent or you will lose details in the highlights. Click **OK** when you are finished with your adjustments. Now go back to the **Selective Color** adjustment panel again. Reds will be the first color that you will be able to work on. To adjust the reds move the black slider left or right. In this case, left will make the reds lighter in value and right will make them darker. When you are finished adjusting the reds, you can choose yellows, greens, cyans, blues, magentas, whites, neutrals and

blacks. By having the addition of the whites, neutrals and blacks you get to work on more tonal values and contrast ratios of the image than if you are using just a **Black-and-White** adjustment layer. Because of these additional values, I rarely have to add a **Curves** adjustment layer.

#### WHICH METHOD IS BEST

Each of these techniques will yield a different result even when you try to produce the exact same result. One image may respond better with the first method while another may work better with the next. Don't restrict yourself. Try all three and see which gives the best result. Any of your color images may be a great candidate for a black-and-white conversion. ☺