

Beckham Digital Tutorials

Speeding up our Workflow in Photoshop CS3 and CS-4

When we think about learning to use Photoshop effectively we can be forgiven for putting some of its capabilities way down our list of priorities. The software is difficult enough to master without adding extra stuff we can do without, right ?

We can understand that and we did very much the same ourselves in our early days with Photoshop, but there are some great features in the software that can make many of the tasks we do very easy. Its only when we become comfortable with these automatic processes that we tend to use them and appreciate them more. So, in this DVD we are going to cover as many different techniques as we can for making our life easier and quicker.

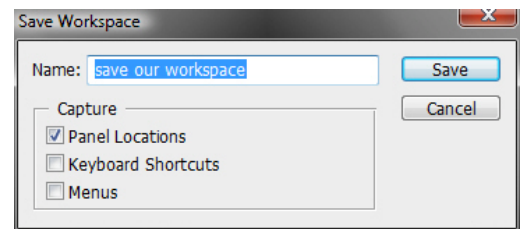
What we will not do is hand over any of the creative tasks to automation, we will retain all the creative decisions and just leave the monotonous work to Photoshop. Actions, Buttons, Function Keys, Batch Actions, The Image Processor, Droplets are a few of the techniques we have covered in this DVD.

We have not covered every shortcut and key stroke, but have made an assumption that what we find useful, most other users of Photoshop will too. We have included the actions and shortcuts that we use daily.

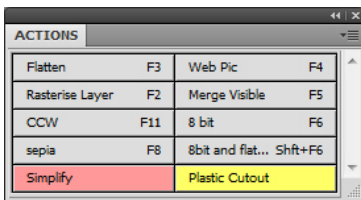
Saving Screen Locations - 7:47 mins

There is nothing worse than having your favourite screen changed by another user of your PC, or even one of those unexplained computer glitches that seems to return Photoshop to its default configuration.

In this short video we go though how easy it is to create your own settings for both Photoshop and the Bridge



The Photoshop Installed Actions - 09:11 mins



When we install Photoshop it comes with a number of ready made actions and in this section we take a brief look at them.

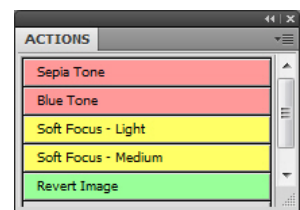
While they may have some value to some, we believe that actions are better when we make them ourselves. In this way we make only what we need and we make them to be relevant to the images we create with our camera.

Creating Basic Actions - 17:42 mins

In this section we demonstrate how to clear the actions that come with Photoshop (Not Permanently) and set up a new personal set of actions that are more in tune with what we want to achieve and that reflect our own likes and dislikes.

These are basic actions of the type we may want to use over and over again.

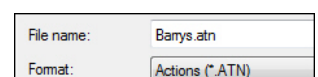
We keep things simple in this first tutorial and record the actions so that they can be started with a simple button click and we can set them up with the settings relevant to your cameras resolution. Digital settings within Photoshop still have a different effect on different resolution images. This is why a personal set of actions made for our images are often far more valuable to us.



Saving Actions for use on another PC - 13:44 mins

Saving actions onto our computer is an easy process and we can also save these actions to a USB stick or another storage device to enable us to move the action from one computer to another. This is a practical and valid task we may wish to take advantage off, but in doing so we did pick up one issue that may make finding your way back to the original location difficult.

Here we explain and demonstrate all.



Workflow Actions - 11:59 minutes

As always we try and make our work and videos reflect the real world and in this section we demonstrate a simple action for speeding up our workflow. Sometimes, our actions come to a grinding stop and we don't know why.

Here we demonstrate one of these errors, then take a look at what caused the action to stop and how to put it right. Remember, the actions that you will find most useful are going to be those you create yourself, to suit your own way of working.

Batch Renaming of Images - 11:54 minutes



This option is one we use quite a bit ourselves and it is a part of the Photoshop Bridge. We can rename a whole batch of images or just a few from a larger batch, using text, letters numbers or a combination of text and numbers. Plus a few more options too.

We can even use Photoshop's Bridge as a light box, dragging and dropping thumbnails to different locations and then renaming the thumbnails to retain their position in that folder.

50 Images or 500, it's a fairly simple task for Photoshop and there are many practical uses for renaming a large batch of files.

We can rename them back into the same folder, move them to another folder of our choice or rename and copy them to a new folder.

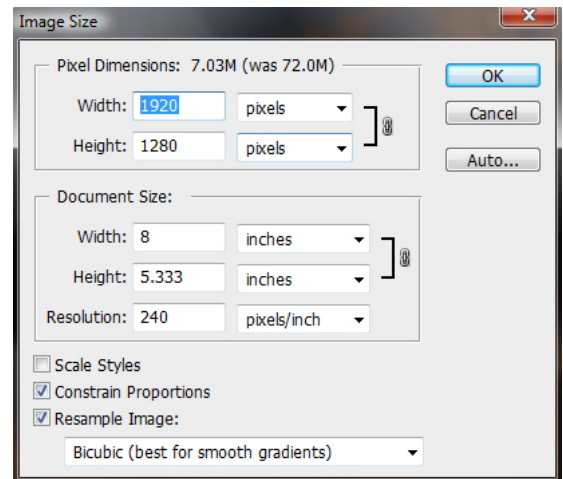
Image Size Actions 20:14 minutes

Changing the size of a batch of images is something we all have a need to do from time to time. However, if you are interested in creating digital audio visual slide shows the resizing of images then becomes a core task that we will need quite a bit.

How we create an image size action will depend on the images we start with. For example, if we need to keep all the images the same size for slide show purposes, then achieving a fully automatic action may not always be possible.

Unless we start off with uncropped images directly from our camera and then we can create the action to be fully automatic retaining our format, but also creating the perfect sized images for us. We also need to be aware that landscape images need to have a different approach to portrait format.

In addition we also demonstrate how we can create an action to work alongside a crop for images that start off at all different sizes. Here a fully automatic action would not work, so we choose an approach where we get the best of both worlds.



Testing A Technique - 13:39 minutes

At some point, we are bound to be told of a great filter effect that maybe needs three layers and a multitude of steps to achieve it. The trouble is when we try it out, we can often be disappointed that it doesn't seem to have the charm we saw in the original example.

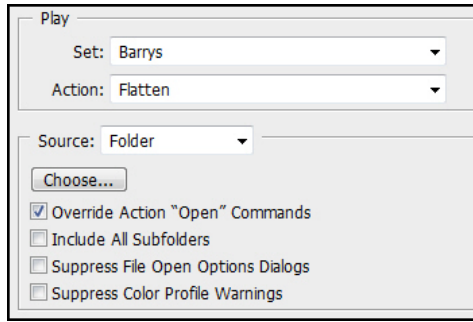


This can be due to a number of things, but the first one is we may have just selected the wrong image. Not every image lends itself perfectly to these techniques.

We may have the resolution in our image too high to get an interesting effect and the filter effect rather than adding charm, looks like a mistake. For some years we have had a few actions that test a technique. Here we program a watercolour effect into an action so we can apply it to an image in a few seconds. We take away all the tedious stages, but we are not handing over creative control to our PC.

Here we use the action to test the water, run the action on a series of images, some will not work well at all, others better and some really well. Once we have quickly identified which images work best, we can work them through the process manually, where we retain full creative control.

The Batch Process - 10:03 minutes



So far on the DVD we have launched our actions either with a Button or a function key, but we can also apply any action we make to a batch process. One word of warning before you run a batch action. Be absolutely sure the images you are using are copies and not the originals. Once you resize 200 images in a folder, there is no going back if a mistake is made.

In this section we take one of the actions we have already created and apply that to a batch of images, that could be 20 or 200.

Web Actions - 15:19 minutes

One of the repetitive tasks we do all the time is to prepare images for our web site. We need a small gif thumbnail and a larger jpeg image, but we also like to apply a nice presentation technique to the Jpeg too.

This is a tedious operation, especially if you have a batch of 20 images for a web gallery, but not if we allow an action to do the work for us. Here we demonstrate how to create the jpeg at the size we want it, apply our presentation technique and then create a small thumbnail gif.

We apply unsharp mask to both the jpeg and the gif so that at the touch of an F key all our web output is produced for us and saved into the right folder too.

We also follow through with this action and apply it to a whole folder or gallery of 20 images.

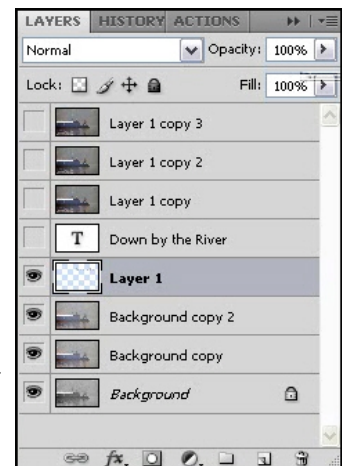


Stop the Action - 15:44 minutes

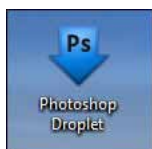
For many of the tasks we perform with actions most will be fully automatic using the settings we record into the action. However, some tasks cannot be programmed in this way as they will need some manual intervention along the way. A good example may be a Vignette, which we can create fully automatically using an action.

However, we would have to settle on a feather command into the selection to add the softness, but different images need a different feather. In this section we demonstrate how to add a stop the action at the right place to allow us manual input. So here we create a semi automatic action, where we gain as much speed as we can, while retaining manual input and full creative control.

We also demonstrate how we can create a multi- image intro sequence for a slide show where we use these action techniques to allow us to save images from the layers palette in Photoshop. We combine the speed of actions with the control we need for a practical job.



Creating Droplets - 12:49 minutes



Droplets are yet another way Photoshop allows us to use a batch process. Generally created on the desktop for speed, we simply drag and drop a whole folder of files over the droplet to carry out any tasks we choose.

They are probably more suited to those tasks that you do need to do quite often, but you can create as many droplets as you like.

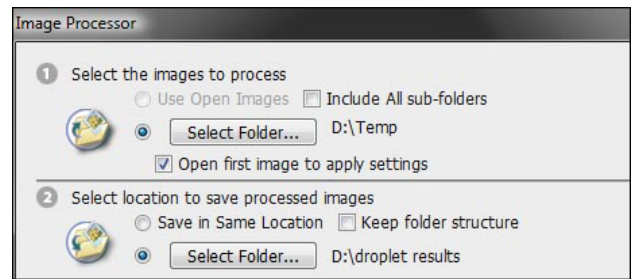
The Image Processor - 19:05 minutes

We find we use the image processor quite a bit and it is yet another way Photoshop allows us to speed up our work flow. It has numerous uses and we demonstrate just a few in this video.

It can be put to great use by Digital Audio Visual enthusiasts where we could create derivatives of a slide show we have made within a couple minutes. Even a slide show containing 50-60 images or more. Imagine seeing what your slide show looks like in sepia tone in no more than 2-3 minutes.

Here we use the Backup to zip option within PicturesToExe and link that to our Image Processor.

Within minutes we could be watching our slide show in black and white, as a sepia tone or even with filtered images. All created in minutes with no risk at all to your original show.



Navigation Shortcuts - 12:21 Minutes

Here we look at some of the most useful navigation shortcuts and we think some of the first we should learn.

Miscellaneous Shortcuts - 10:09 Minutes

Here are a few we use constantly ourselves

Crop and Straighten - 1:49 Minutes

You can see from the length of this video, that this is a quick and simple shortcut, but so useful when we have some flatbed scanning to do.

Camera Raw Shortcuts - 9:10 Minutes

Even in Camera Raw we have shortcuts to help our workflow

Picture Package and Contact Sheet - 15:30 Minutes

If you are a user of earlier versions of Photoshop you may notice that these two great options appear to be missing in Photoshop CS-4.

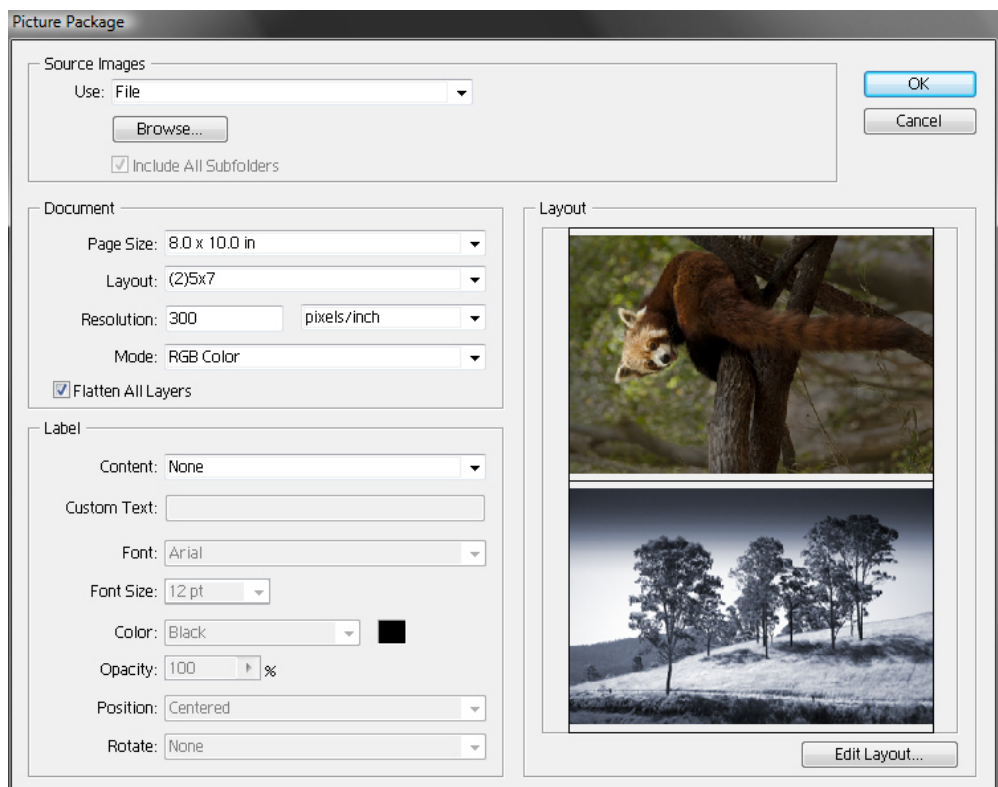
If you are new to Photoshop and have come straight to CS-4 you would not even know that these tools are missing.

Well, for reasons best known to the Photoshop boffins these tools still exist, but are not automatically installed with Photoshop CS-4.

In this video we demonstrate where these files can be found, how to install them into Photoshop CS-4 and how to make use of them.

Both of these tools are great time savers and we cannot think of any reason to leave them out of the basic install.

Having said that the installation of these files is quick and easy.



Remembering Shortcut Keys - 5:39 Minutes

Just a short video to suggest a way to remember those important shortcut keys.