

Contrast Masking

Many images contain deep shadows with detail but also have highlights on the brink of bleaching out. Using unconventional Photoshop selection techniques it's possible to make localised selections and then edit the areas as necessary.

However it can be time consuming and not always as accurate as we would like. Would it not be nice if we could use the old time wet darkroom trick of contrast masking to control the highlights and boost the shadows?

This method shows how it can be done in Photoshop.

Method in Photoshop

- Open the image and make a duplicate layer (Layer>Duplicate layer or drag the image layer to the page icon in the layers palette).
- Desaturate the copy layer (**Image>Adjustments>Desaturate**).
- Invert the copy layer (**Image>Adjustments>Invert**). We now have a Black & White negative.
- Apply between 5 to 10 units of Gaussian Blur to the copy layer.
- Apply Overlay Blend via the layers palette.
- Carryout appropriate colour edits etc.