

The Big Flashgun !

Early morning or late evening when the sun is just below the horizon can present the photographer with a dilemma. There is not much light around so the shadows and even the midtones can lack detail.

On the other hand the upper tones and highlights can be full of warm colours that we just do not want to trade in for detail in the lower tones.

There are various techniques we can use within Photoshop to improve such images the following is probably one of the best.

- Open an image that tends towards being dark (not necessarily underexposed).
- Make a duplicate of the image, (N.B. A separate duplicate image not an image copy on a new layer)
- Convert the duplicate Image to Greyscale (**Image>Mode>Greyscale**).
- Invert the duplicate image (**Image>Adjustments>Invert**).
- Then apply between 4 to 8 units of Gaussian Blur, for small images use a lower value.
- The duplicate image should have the appearance of an out of focus B & W negative and will be used as a 'Fill Flash'.
- Now highlight the original image.
- Choose **Select>Load Selection** choose:
 - Document – Your duplicate Image
 - Channel – Gray
 - Operation – New selection
- Choose **Edit>Fill** – choose
 - Contents – 50% Grey
 - Blending Mode – Colour Dodge
- The shadows and midtone areas should now be significantly brighter.
- Use the Opacity slider on the layers palette to fine tune the image.
- Duplicating the fill layer can further improve the image.
- Apply the appropriate edits for contrast, hue and saturation.