

Digital Doctor

By Stuart Gershon

In my class on Touchup Techniques, I discuss changes you can make to the image that are not solved by the click of a mouse. In most programs, these processes are called Touchup Filters.

The first and most important adjustment you can make to your images are determined by Brightness and Contrast. Brightness is literally how "bright" you can make the image. The Contrast determines the difference between light and dark components of the image. Both features are usually manipulated by a slide control, allowing you to adjust by degrees. This feature gives you infinite possibilities with your image. If the controls are not slide control, they will be in "steps" as in the Picasa program. This means each tap on the control changes the degree of modification.

Another of the filters you may find is Color Control. Within color control you may find one or more of these switches/slides: Hue, Saturation and Value. If you recall the "ROY G BIV" mnemonic of your art class days, it stood for the seven basic colors of the spectrum (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet). These are the different colors Hue represents.

Saturation is the *amount* of a particular color in an image. If you want a brighter red, you would move the slide to make the red "redder;" if you wanted it milder, you would move the slide in the opposite direction. If you move Saturation to its minimum values you will get a black-and-white picture. When people ask me if they should shoot in black and white or color, I remind them, "If you shoot in color, you can make it

black and white," by reducing the Saturation. Also, many programs have a switch or control to make the entire image black and white, sepia or many other possible special color situations.

Another filter or control that may be in your photo editing software is Sharpen. Sharpen is used to make the clarity or the focus of the image clearer or sharper. In most cases, this control or switch allows for certain degrees of sharpness and you can choose which view is most comfortable for you. However, be aware that the more you increase sharpness, the more you increase "noise," which are highlights of tiny, bright portions of the photo image. This means, if you increase the Sharpness, the detail in the hair of the subject might start to look scratchy.

Another tool that may be found is the Clone function. Clone is used to take "good" information from one part of the photo and cover over "bad" information (scratches, dust spots, etc.) on another part of the photo. This tool is especially handy when you are trying to restore an old black-and-white photograph that has scratches, dust spots or faded color. There are usually three steps in Cloning: Set the Origin (tell the computer where to take the "good" information from); select the size of the



"brush" or area you are going to copy; and paint over the "bad" information. There may also be other adjustments in your Cloning tool like setting the opacity (density of the image) to control the strength of the new information, and you may also be able to control the type of "edging" your new information has (soft to hard).

I know this may sound very complicated, but the only way to learn these techniques is to try them. If you work with a copy of your original photo, you have nothing to lose, and you'll learn from your mistakes.

One last thing, the more sophisticated your photo-editing program, the more control you will have. In Picasa, there are 12 effects or controls, while in Photoshop Elements there are 13 filters alone — each having sub-menus.

The more advanced a program is, the more creativity it gives to the user, *but* it also means you have to make more decisions. I once calculated that there were 21 available choices in Picasa and 98 choices to make in Adobe Photoshop Elements 4.0!

In next month's column I will attempt to explain some advanced editing techniques.

Stuart Gershon is known as "The Digital Doctor." He has given over 200 classes at 54 different libraries in Nassau and Suffolk. You can get more information and the schedule of his classes at: www.DigitalDocOnline.com. If you have any questions for the Digital Doctor, please send them to digitaldoc50@optonline.net.