Post Processing 201 Workshop (July 2023) - John Smart
Based on Lightroom Classic with help from various plug ins including Photoshop, Nik Collection and Topaz Photo AI
(the principles would be similar in other systems)

Ethics of post processing
> Look at some examples - are they legitimate photos?
> Ansell Adams quote
> Royal Photographic Society guidelines
> My view: Do anything you like at home but follow the rules if you enter your images in any organized assessment or competition. "Open " is freestyle but still needs to originate from your own photography (Not AI or otherwise generated).
> Read the club guidelines for club photography assignments.

JPEG v RAW (and cRAW)
> RAW gives you more options / JPEG has been processed by your camera (ie it is not pure).

Lightroom Develop Module - can do adjustments in any order (you can develop your own workflow).

This is just based on what I know and do - there will be other ways of doing things.

Worth noting that Lightroom is firstly a catalogue (library) system and it uses non-destructive editing. It is a photographers storage and processing ecosystem.

Key question in postprocessing is "What are you trying to achieve?"
> Draw viewers eye to the primary story or focal point?
> Remove distractions?
> Enhance impact?
> Present an unbiased view of what you saw?
> Create a work of art?

Global v Selective and Local adjustments
> The Pros all use mostly local adjustments but global can still be worthwhile. I tend to use Global first then Selective and occasionally Local (but that is changing now with the new masks (see later)).

Importance of Contrast
> This is the key to almost everything and there are multiple ways it is effected (the contrast slider is not the best one). Improving the impact of your photo is greatly affected by what stands out and what blends in (ie internal contrast in the image at both macro and micro levels).

Histogram
> There is no such thing as a correct profile but you should avoid going over the edges (blown out highlights or crushed shadows) / there is a relationship beween areas and the basic panel sliders.

Corrections - Chromatic and Lens Aberrations
> Just do it (most lenses have distortions which are corrected by Lightroom).

Treatment and Profiles
> They are there to be explored and can be adjusted to your personal preference / I seldom use the ones in Lightroom but do use some plugins and presets (see later).

Basic Adjustments

    White Balance (Temperature and Tint sliders)

        Assuming your camera was set on Auto (AWB) there may be no need to adjust but sometimes you may want to cool or warm an image (or green /magenta) Can use the picker to find a suitable starting point if you think it is wrong in some way.

    Tone

        My first go to area - will adjust exposure only if it is way off / will usually set White point and Black point and then adjust Highlights (down) and Shadows (up) - to your personal preference / I leave Contrast alone (see Presence below).

    What about the mid tones?

        Moving the Exposure slider affects all areas including Mid tones / there is a way to adjust the Mid Tones more selectively in the Colour Grading area (see later).

Presence

    Contrast sliders

    This is where the action is but be careful not to over do it. T**exture** affects medium sized details / C**larity** affects thicker edges of primarily mid-tone pixels (can be harsher than texture) / **Dehaze** simulates light scattering effects primarily in the shadows. All three sliders can increase or decrease the effect! They collectively affect contrast but in different ways. Be careful!

    Colour intensity sliders

    The Saturation slider affects all colours equally while the vibrance slider is relative and biased ie it is the more subtle and thus useful option most of the time (it avoids already highly saturated reds, yellows and oranges). I seldom use the Saturation slider.

Tone Curve (another contrast tool)

    S curve and the kodachrome look

    Some people can spend all day playing with their tone curves! While it is a valuable tool it is best left to the Master class practitioners. Best to stick with a basic S curve.

    Manual v auto select - can adjust either manually or automatically - I typically use Medium contrast setting and move on.

    Note - the tone curve can also be used in colour toning - see later.

Sharpening (yet another contrast tool)

    All RAW images need sharpening but not too much. If the image is too soft it can't be fixed and you should take it again or bin it (although the new AI tools are getting better at recovering soft images).

    I set the slider to around 50 and mask to around 65 to limit the sharpening to the edges

Noise Reduction (plus new Denoise AI tool)

    The old Noise Reduction in Lightroom was limited but there is now a new AI tool. It is very good but it only works on RAW files (I seldom use it as it doesn't suit my workflow as I often end up with PNG files - see later for alternative).

Straightening and Leveling with the Transform tools

    Various options - best to try Auto first. If that doesn't do it play with the others. Very useful when you have structures with straight edges, also used to correct horizon lines.

Vignetting

It is an artistic choice if you want a visible black or white vignette. Can adjust its shape, intensity and feathering. But best to avoid most of the time. A subtle -10 is sufficient and shouldn't be noticeable by the viewer but serves to draw focus to the centre of the image. (ie contrast again)

The Colour Tools

Temp and tint

Already discussed and first option to adjust warm/cool balance.

Tone curve

Can play with the three colour tone curves - to personal taste.

HSL

My typical go to option. I'll typically reduce Luminance of a prominent colour first (eg a blue sky), and then increase Saturation if needed. I don't usually adjust Hue.

Colour Grading (and the missing midtones)

A more complex set of tools and has the missing mid tones / I've not really used these but am sure they are good if you are into micro managing your colours. It allows for split toning (eg warm the highlights and cool the shadows or whatever).

Calibration

Even more technical - the colour calibration slider affects all pixels (not just those of the colour you have chosen). Even more fun for nerds.

There are other colour grading or altering options including Match Colour in Photoshop, LUTs and Colour EfEx (in Nik EfEx) for the enthusiast.

Black and white

Again there are many options. Can simply change to B&W in Lightroom and play with the colour sliders in HSL, There are also a number of Presets you can try out - often best to take these as a starting point and then adjust with your sliders. I mostly use a plug in - Silver EfEx (part of the Nik Collection) and have a few presets I've tweaked that are my go to starting points.

Presets and Profiles

There are myriad to choose from and you can buy more or make your own. Sometimes they can give you a look you wouldn't otherwise create yourself - have a play (you can always adjust the sliders to suit your taste).

You can also make your own custom preset - I have one I use on most images. It gets me started and then I adjust from there.

Selective and Local Adjustments

Cropping - the most important composition tool!

FYI - our cameras typically take images in a 3:2 ratio. Modern computer and TV screens are typically 16:9 . Our standard print matt board is 5:4

There are a number of useful crop overlays you can toggle through (hit letter O) to assist your compositional choices - I leave mine set on the Thirds.

Can choose a standard crop ratio - especially if you are doing a set of images (can also create a custom crop ratio).

Can also go freestyle.

Make the crop tool your friend - did I say it is the most important composition tool you have (after taking the photo).

Spot Removal

There is an OK Spot Removal tool in Lightroom - use for minor blemishes. The spot healing tool in Photoshop is better and the new AI Remove tool even better (see below).

Masking (a whole new world in Lightroom over the past year which is transforming post processing.) Too complex to describe in detail so will just demonstrate/play

> **From Linear and Radial Gradients to Brush**
> **From subject to sky to background**
> **People (and bits of people)**
> **From colour to luminance range masks**
> **Object selection**
> **Inverting**
> **Subtracting**
> **Intersecting**
> **Sliders and Tone Curve**

Plug Ins (ie can access from Lightroom)

> **Nik Collection (incl. Silver EfEx and Colour EfEx) - can buy via DXO.**
>> SilverEfEx is my go to for black and white conversions.
>> Has lots of presets and you can adjust via sliders and sometimes with localized point controllers.
>> Colour EfEx looks similar for colour images.
>
> **Topaz Photo AI (assume DXO has similar functionality)**
>> My go to tool for fixing Noise/Sharpening and Resolutions issues - all in one tool and works on all file types (and is very good).
>> They recommend you use as first step on RAW files (but that would be a nightmare workflow so I only use on images I think are worth the effort and I use as a polishing step at the end). It generates a new image file back in Lightroom.
>
> **Photoshop (comes with the Adobe subscription and is a phenomenal photo and graphics processing tool in its own right**. I only use it when I can't do what I want in Lightroom). Could do a full day workshop on Photoshop alone. But will limit it to a few things here:
>> - **Remove tool**
>> - **Fixing halos**
>> - **Colour matching**
>> - **Neural filters including Blur / Photo Restoration**
>> - **Generative AI**
>> - **Image and canvas size (and adding stuff)**

Not covered (much/unless there is time)

> **Catalogue management**
> **Merging, stacking and stitching**
> **Filters**
> **PS Layers and Masks**
> **Compositing**
> **Custom or purchased actions**
> **Printing**

> **Work examples some examples (if time) :**
>> Northland Church
>> Whanganui Public Toilet
>> Lime Street London
>> Downtown
>> Cathedral w Halos
>> Korimako
>> Ninety Mile beach
>> Ollie