

BW Conversion Notes: Fred LeBlanc

Black & White Conversion Class Notes

Black and white photography is a rewarding and challenging field of artistic photography. Even people who don't care about photography can find themselves drawn to a great black and white image. As a photographer, black and white can allow you to discover a whole new character in a familiar subject. For many digital photographers, black and white photography is nothing more than color photography converted by software. It is a matter for your own judgment whether this is effective for your photographs.

Often the image you assume will convert beautifully to black and white will prove a disappointment; sometimes a photo you never imagined will surprise you. However, most serious photographers will tell you that the best black and white photos are taken when the photographer deliberately sets out with black and white images in mind. This creates an entirely different mindset in terms of how you choose and approach your subject. You may, for example, start to see potential in subjects you would never normally consider for color photography.

Four very simple tips for black and white photography. Notice that they are all about the creative approach, not about settings and camera techniques. In fact most of the time, black and white requires no different technical expertise than color photography. To take better black and white photographs, you don't necessarily need to change the way you use your camera. Instead, you are looking to change the way you see the subject, and how you can use light, shade and composition to capture the character that black and white photography has to offer.

1. Look for Contrast One of the elements that can give interest to a black and white shot is contrast. Because you can't use color to distinguish one element of your image from another the tonal variances become all the more important. This doesn't mean you need to look for stark contrasts in every shot you want to convert to black and white – the subject matter will come into play here – but you should ponder how the contrast will come into play when composing your shot.

2. Shapes and Patterns Patterns or shapes that can sometimes almost go unseen in color (due to the color itself drawing attention) can come alive in a black and white shot. Black and White shots that rely upon pattern can often take on an abstract quality.

3. Capture Texture Fine detail, or strong textures such as weather-beaten stone, foliage or clouds, can help to give your black-and-white shots depth and interest. Strong side lighting is perfect for bringing out the texture in any subject. You can use strong natural light, or get creative with flash to create side lighting on the subject.

4. Graphic Composition Black-and-white images need strong compositions to really work. Keep an eye out for strong lines or features in your scene that can be used as leading lines, or positioned diagonally across the frame to create dynamic images.

When it comes to black-and-white imagery, being able to 'see' how your final shot will look is a key skill. It's important to understand how the color image you see through your camera's viewfinder will translate into a monochrome image. To get the best results, you have to look beyond the colors, and instead try to visualize how a shot's shapes, textures and tones will be recorded.

Bad for BW

Safeguarding mood

If the scene you're shooting relies on color for mood or impact, chances are you'll be better off keeping the image in color. Sunrise or sunset shots are another good example; you should always ask yourself whether the image loses some impact without the subtle hues.

Color contrasts

Subjects that rely on contrasting colors – such as a purple crocus against a green lawn – generally don't work well in black and white. This is because the two colors will end up looking similar in tone when converted.

Tip:

Mono picture style

This is handy for visualizing how your subject will look in mono, but don't shoot in JPEG format, as this will permanently discard all color information. Instead, shoot in raw so that you can take control of how the colors are converted. **Change your camera's sensor setting to *Monochrome*.**

Lighting is absolutely key to a good black and white photograph because it affects all of the above elements - shape, contrast, pattern and texture. Side lighting often produces the most dramatic black and white photos. It picks out the edges of shapes and increases contrast by adding highlights, and the shadows it creates add interest to the scene as well as enhancing textures and patterns.

Lightroom Grayscale Workflow

Global Adjustments: contrast - brightness - grayscale conversion (**HSL**)

Broad & Local Adjustments: are made to particular areas, such as *uneven or bright edges* that need to be corrected so that the image looks balanced.

GLOBAL

Avoid Clipping / Histogram (turn on Arrows)

1. Contrast Slider to Right
2. Move both Exposure & Black Sliders (**Alt** Key to visually see adjustments)
3. Clarity Slider increases/decreases Mid Tone Contrast
4. Tone Curve (if needed to get Highlights & Shadows just right)
 - a. Dark & Shadow Sliders adjusts shadow contrast.
 - b. Light & Highlight Sliders adjusts highlight contrast.
5. Grayscale Tab: adjustments sliders **Fine Tune** the gray tones until you get close to what you want.
6. Grays Target Group Control.

BROAD

1. Balances the image visually
2. Un-balanced images let the viewers eyes exit the image.
3. To determine balance stare at the center, if something pulls your eye to the edge its un-balanced.
4. Graduated Filter to balance image. (**H** Key show/hide points **Delete** Key to remove point)

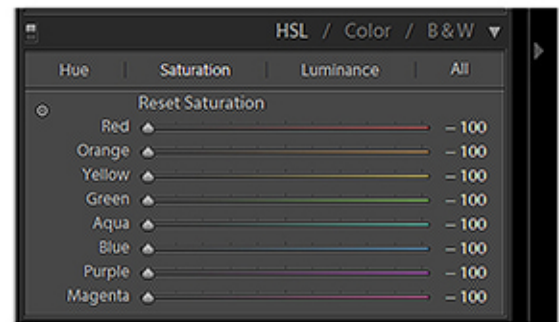
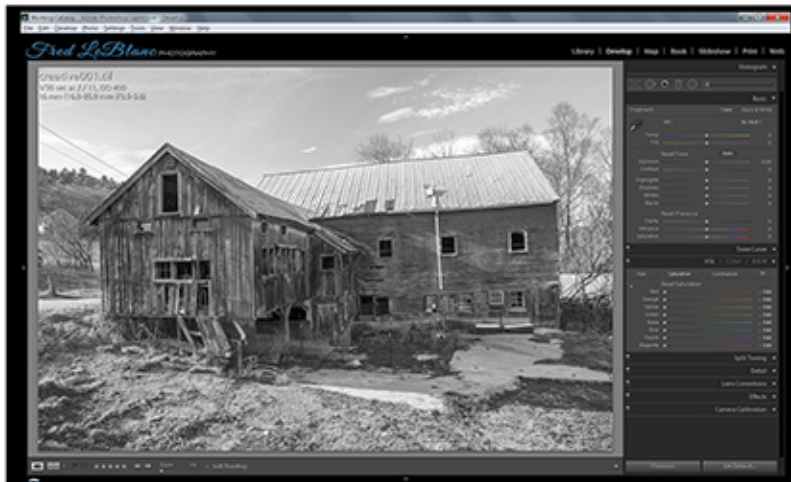
LOCAL

The ability to see and correct miniscule local problems separates good photographers from mediocre.

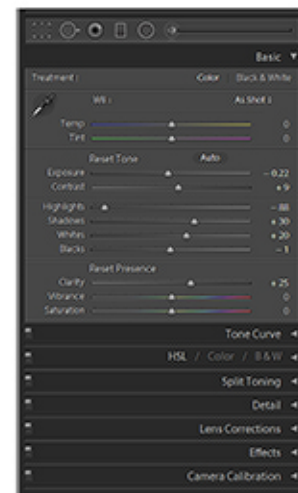
Adjustment Brush:

1. Brush size & Feathering
2. Density Slider
3. Auto Mask – ON- don't go outside lines. (Set Feather to – 0)
4. **O** Key opacity orange mask

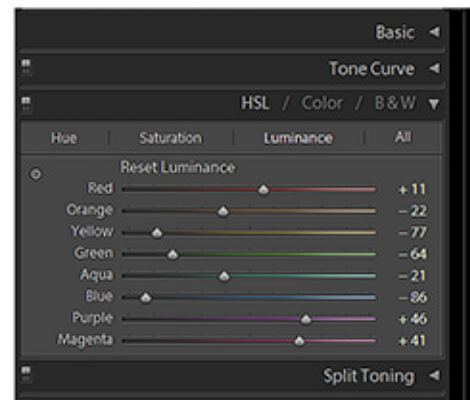
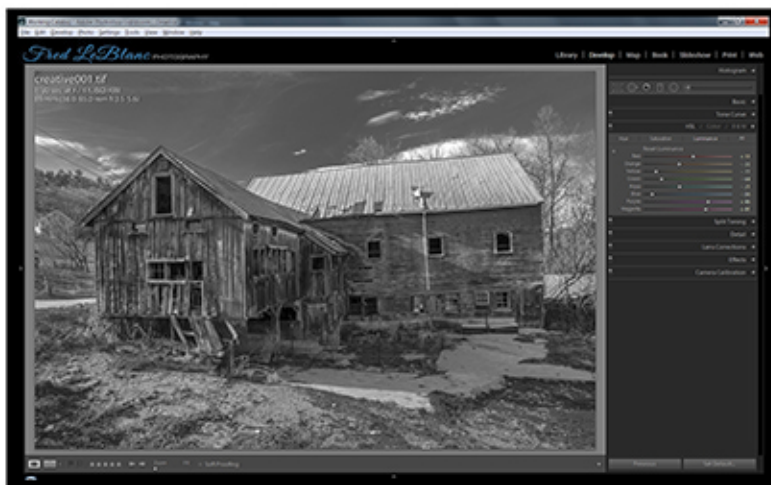
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1. In the HSL Panel desaturate each color (-100) to preserve usage of the Vibrance & Saturation Sliders

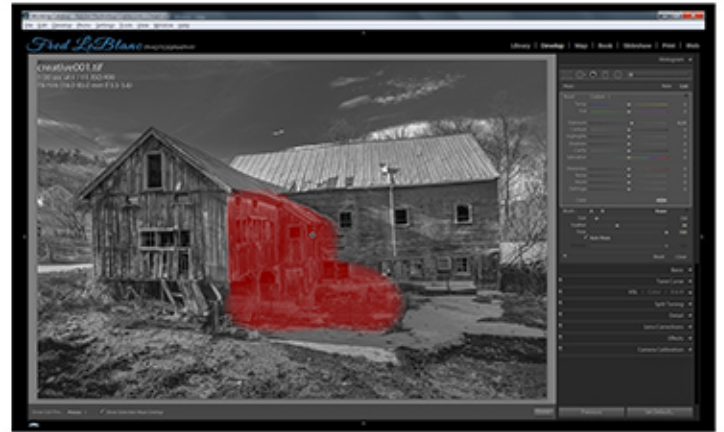
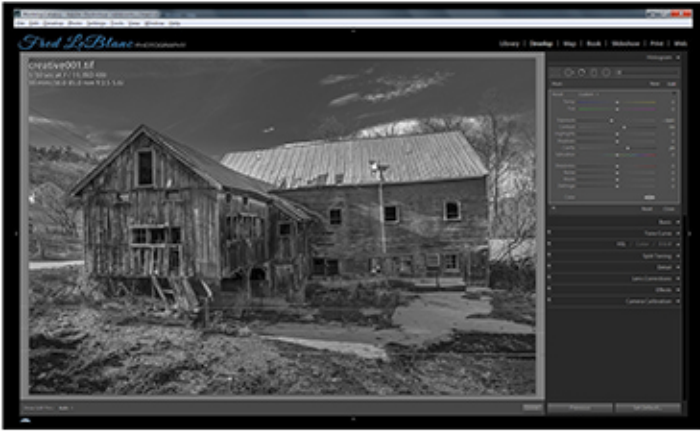


2. Global adjust tonality In the **Basic Panel** adjust image to taste.

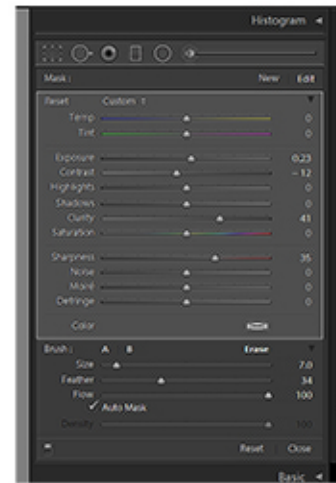
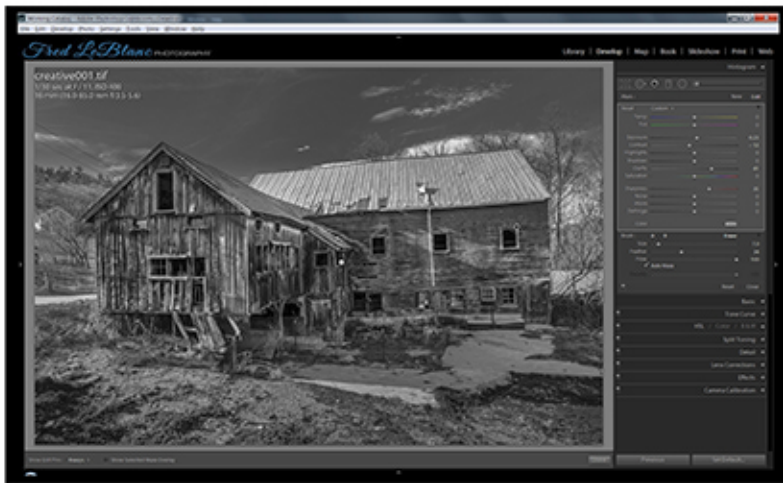


3. In the HSL Panel under **Luminance** adjust each color slider which will adjust the tonal range and brightness levels of each grayscale color in the image.

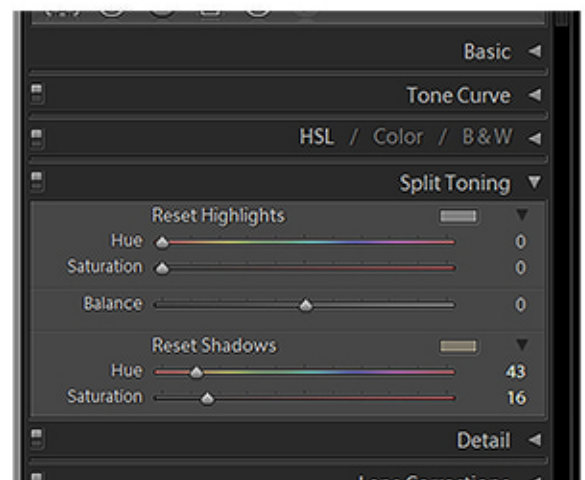
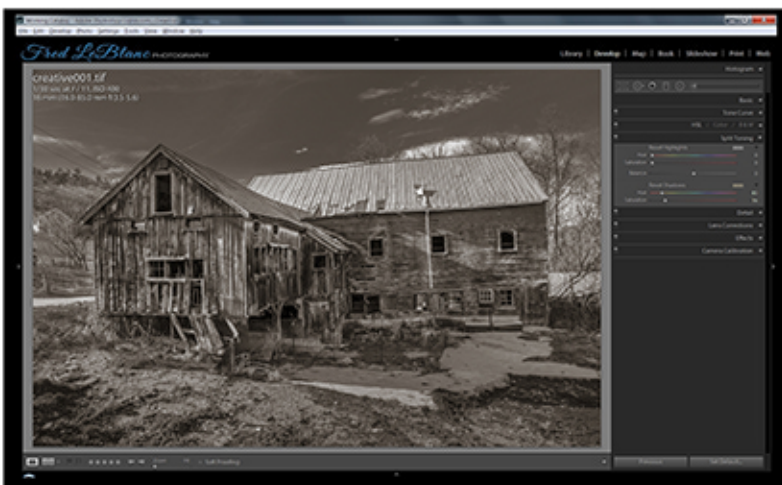
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4. Local adjust tonality with the **Graduated Filter** (M key) and **Adjustment Brush** (K key) tools, (O key) turns the red overlay on and off.



5. **Adjustment Brush** (K key) lighten, darken, sharpen etc. selected areas



6. **Split Toning** first add some Saturation then adjust Hue and balance.

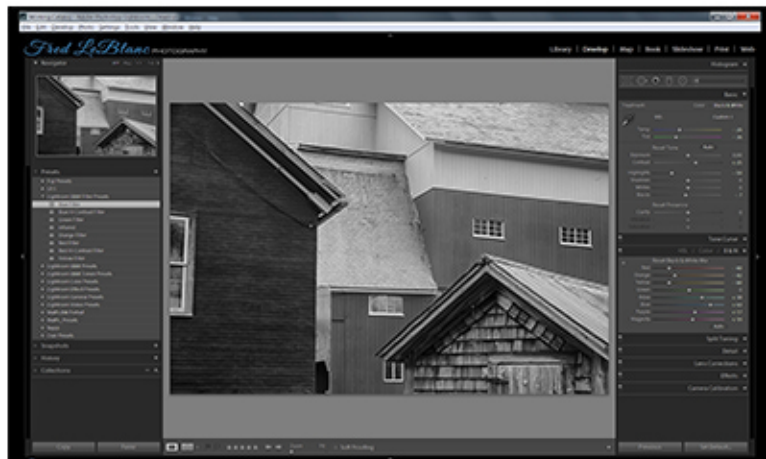
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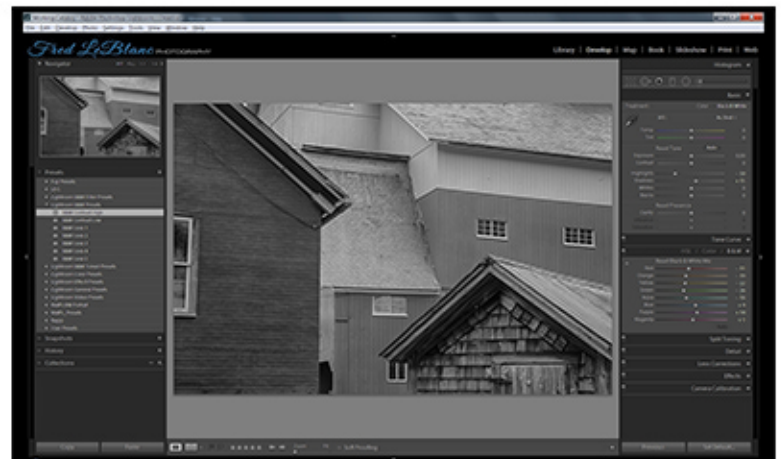
Before



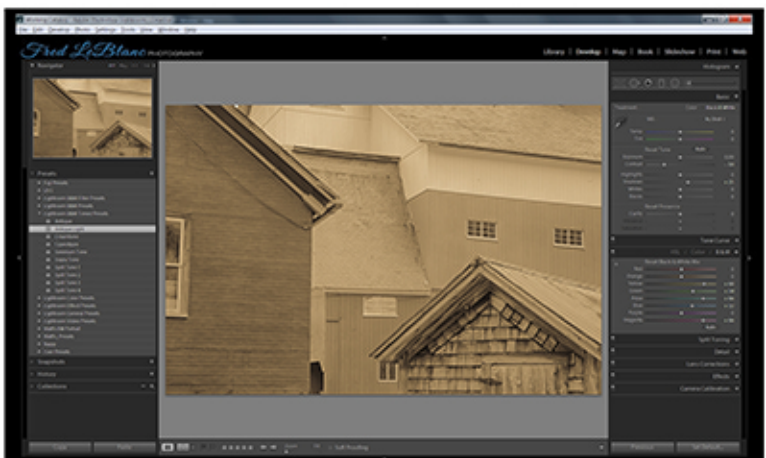
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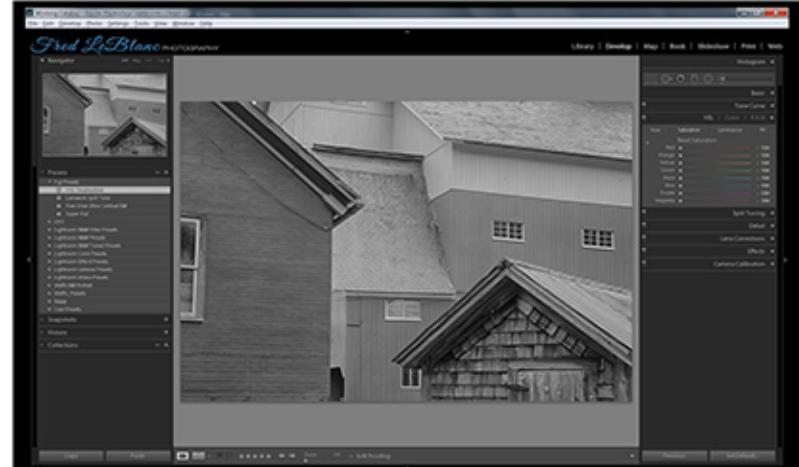
Lightroom B&W Filter Presets



Lightroom B&W Presets



Lightroom B&W Toned Presets



Create **Custom Preset** after Desaturation image with the HSL Panel.