Working the Landscape

by Hudson Henry and Rick LePage

A step-by-step guide to editing landscape photos in ON1 Photo RAW

Working the Landscape (Palouse)

Six Step-by-Step Lessons for Editing Landscape Photos with ON1 Photo RAW 2021

By Hudson Henry and Rick LePage

A companion guide to the video course
Working the Landscape: Field to Edit

Edited by Rick LePage

Contents

Introduction

This workbook is a companion to our June 2021 photo kit for ON1, *Working The Landscape: Field to Edit (Palouse)*. In these pages, we'll walk you, step by step, through six of the landscape scenes we created during our journey to Washington's beautiful Palouse region. We've added screen shots, final versions of the images we created, with a bunch of tips and tricks that can help you on your journey towards your mastery of ON1 Photo RAW.

As we worked in the field, prepping, scouting and shooting, our intent was to create a set of representative landscape photos for you to work with. The editing projects here include HDR captures, panoramic mergers, simple edits and more. You can follow along as we show you how to balance images with local adjustments and use range masks to mask complicated subjects from their background. You'll even get a sneak peek at ON1's new noise reduction app, NoNoise AI, which Rick had access to during the beta process.

Included with your photo kit are the original raw files we used in the videos, and you may freely use these images to follow along with the videos or the step-by-step instructions in this workbook. The names of the individual images (or components, in the case of the panoramas and HDR projects) should be fairly easy to find, but we've added the folder names to each corresponding project in the Table of Contents on the previous page.

Thanks so much for joining us virtually on our most recent adventure. We hope to see you in the field one day, where we can work the landscape together, building great photographs in beautiful places. And, if you'd like to know more about us, or get in touch with us, there is a list of links to our various homes on the web on the last page of this guide.

Hudson & Rick

1: Basic Landscape Edit (Hudson)

My first edit is an easy, straightforward image to start with. It's a shot of Rick up there on Steptoe Butte, working the scene, and I loved the juxtaposition of the soft sunlit hills in the background with Rick working in the foreground. We have a good histogram, with good contrast, decent shadows and midtones, and there's nothing complicated about this image. This will be good candidate for my standard editing workflow, where I work in Develop first, to get tone and color right. Sometimes I'll also jump over to the Local tab to work on one part of an image, but I always end up in Effects for my finish editing.

Step 1 – Raw processing in Develop

I'll work the Whites and the Blacks, and I'll adjust the sliders while holding down the **J** key, to show the areas where clipping occurs. I generally don't worry about specular highlights—small areas of pure white, seen here in some of the details in Rick's lens— when I'm pushing the Whites; they're fine for screen, and when printing, I have a little trick I use to pull the whites back slightly enough so that they print properly.

    Here, I'll go pretty aggressively with the Whites

(+26), and, still holding down the **J** key, I'll work the Blacks until I get just a hint of shadow clipping in Rick's jacket (-27). These adjustments help create contrast without blowing the scene.

I'll open the Shadows slightly (+2), and bring the Highlights back a bit (-31). Then, I'll play with the Contrast slider, adding a bunch back in (+24).

The last thing I'll do here is to warm the image slightly. My cameras do a pretty good job with white balance, but here, I'd still like to warm things somewhat, so I'll move the Temperature slider to about 5.
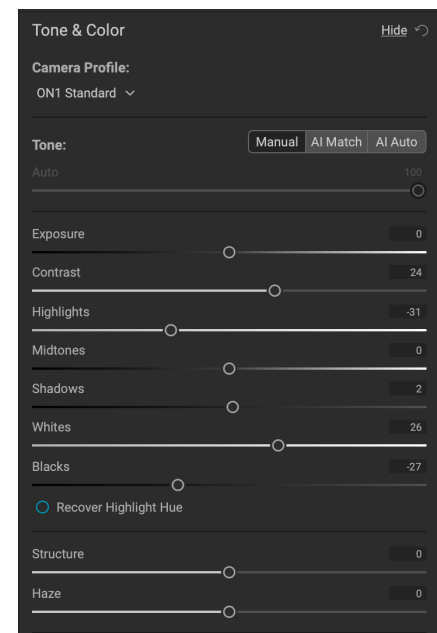
Step 2 – Local adjustment to brighten Rick a smidge

There isn't a lot I really want to do with local adjustments here, but I do think I'd like to brighten Rick's head a tiny amount. With a new local adjustment layer, I'll change the pop-up style to Lighten. This pushes Exposure more than I'll want, but it's a good place to start.

I'll use the Adjustment Brush with a light Opacity setting (25), and a Feather of 100. Because I want to apply the adjustment to his whole head, I'll bypass using the Perfect Brush setting (which would be useful if I just wanted to brighten his face).

All I need to do is paint a few brush strokes over his head, his hat, and his hand. It's a subtle edit, but it's just enough to make him pop a little bit out of the scene. I'll drop the Exposure

A slight local adjustment will help brighten Rick's head.

slider down a bit, to +0.5, and I'll reduce the Contrast (-12), just to keep his face from having a little too much contrast.

Step 3 – Applying a preset in Effects

Since I like to use presets as a staring point for finish editing, I'll go through a number of presets using the QuickView Browser, looking at the preset as it's applied to a thumbnail of my image. Then, when I have one I like, I'll click it to apply it to my photo, and then take a look to see if I think it will work.

The neat thing about presets to me is that they give you a window into the person who created them, someone who might have been using Photo RAW for a long time. You can almost reverse engineer them to help you figure out how best to edit your own images, and to subsequently create your own presets. I really don't think of presets as a be-all, end-all, one-click—boom—your image is done type of thing.

In this instance, I'm using a preset called *LongShadows*, which I like, but, as I look at it, I see hard edge contrast lines and soft out-of-focus shadows. I don't want that happening, so I'll go in and adjust that.

So I'll go into the stack, and re-engineer this preset to fit this image. I'll turn off all of the filters in the stack, and work my way up the stack, adjusting as I see the need.
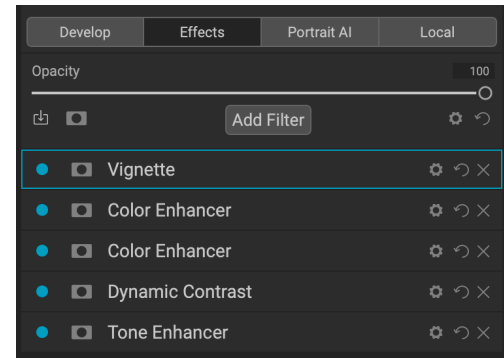
The LongShadows preset. I'll start by turning every filter off, and then work my way up the stack from the bottom.

Step 4 – Tone Enhancer

Looking at the effect on and off, I'll see too much added contrast, reduced highlights, some compression, and some bits of detail that I'm not sure about, especially in the out-of-focus areas. I'll adjust the preset a bit, backing off the Shadows (+11), reducing the Detail to 0 to keep the background areas clean, and also dropping the Compression (+11), leaving me in the end with more of a tonal change than a contrast change as I head into the next filter, Dynamic Contrast.
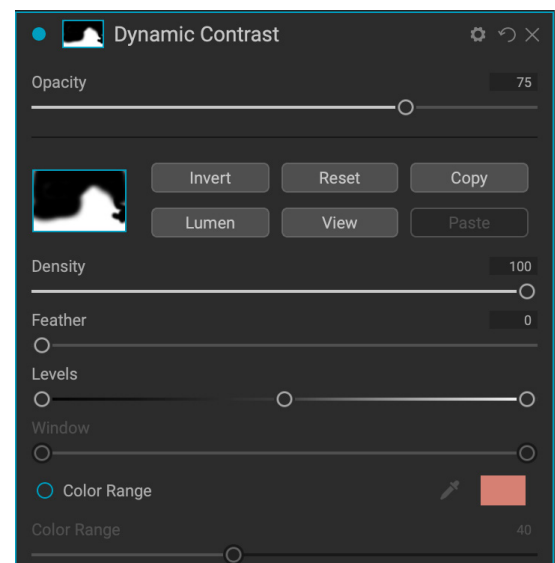
Step 5 – Dynamic Contrast

Dynamic contrast adds a bit of pop and sharpness and just plain punch. It's essentially sharpening and micro contrast enhancement. And when I turn it off and on you can see how great it is with areas like Rick's face and his camera. It pops and sharpens.

What I don't like a lot is what it does to out-of-focus details in the background of an image like this. So I'll click on the mask icon in the filter's pane, and choose a big, soft Masking Brush with 100% Opacity and Feather. Then, I'll just paint it out of the image I don't want the effect, those soft and out-of-focus areas. As I work, I'll shrink the size of the brush so I can paint the areas around Rick's jacket. I'll also stay away from the foreground grasses; I love them nice and sharp.

I don't need to be ultra-precise here, just enough to get those big areas masked out.

When I'm done, and I turn the effect on and off, I can see that it's really just about Rick, the camera and the grasses in the foreground.

By using a soft brush at 100% Opacity and Feather, I can paint out the Dynamic Contrast filter in those soft, out-of-focus areas, and leave it in on Rick and in the grasses in the foreground.

Step 6 – Color Enhancer #1

I love the flexibility and power of the Color Enhancer filter, and in this preset, it's clearly helping boost the greens. I might go into the Greens section of the Color Range, and boost the Saturation a bit (+12), but I might also push the Hue slider away from yellow, and more towards the aqua end of the spectrum (+7).

I'll also go into the Yellows section, and push the Hue away from orange, and more towards green (-30).

Step 7 – Color Enhancer #2

My presets usually have a Color Enhancer filter that solely targets the sky, and this preset is no different. Looking at the Blues section in Color Range, I can see that this filter is darkening the blues, and saturating them as well. I'll back off the Saturation (+5), but leave the darkening alone.

I'm not a huge fan of what this filter is doing to the hood of Rick's jacket; I'll grab a Masking Brush, make it really small, and paint it out of Rick's hood with a few quick strokes of the brush.

I'll have two Color Enhancer filters in the LongShadows preset. The left one above is used for working with the greens and the yellows, while the one on the right is designed to solely work on skies.
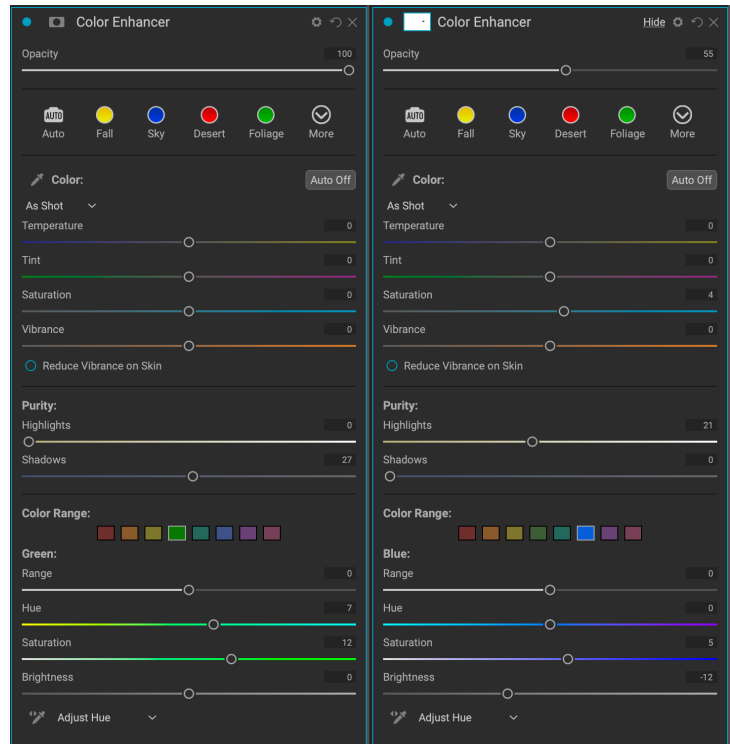
Step 8 – Vignette

In my presets, I tend to create a big, wide open kind of vignette, so you can decide whether you want it or not. I'll drop the Feather down to 0, so I can see very clearly the area of the vignette, then adjust the size and roundness to get it right for the scene.

In this instance, I'll make the Size as small as it can be (0), and the Roundness pretty much a full circle (100). Then I'll use the Center tool to place the vignette right over Rick. Then, I'll put the Feather back at 100, and drop the Brightness slightly (-28). I don't want you to notice that there's a vignette applied, yet I want to draw your eye to Rick.

Setting the Feather to 0 lets me size and position the vignette for my scene. When I'm done, I raise it back to 100, then adjust the Brightness as desired.

Step 9 (Bonus) – Printing with specular highlights

When you're printing an image that has specular highlights— smaller points or areas of pure white in your image—those areas might stand out, and look a bit ugly because they have no ink applied to them. I have a quick tip that you can use to eliminate that problem, and it involves putting a Curves filter at the very top of your Effects stack.

What we're going to do is to remap the brightest point in your image. All the colors in your image (RGB) have values from 0 to 255, and when each color is set to 255, then you have pure white, which is what those highlights are. And they don't print at all.

To remap pure white to a light gray, I add the Curves filter, then adjust the topmost point in the curve on the right, which represents pure white (and is labeled with In 255 and Out 255). I just click on the point and drag it straight down so that the Out point is now 250.

Now when I print, instead of printing pure white, my printer will use a very light gray, which is imperceptible to any viewer.
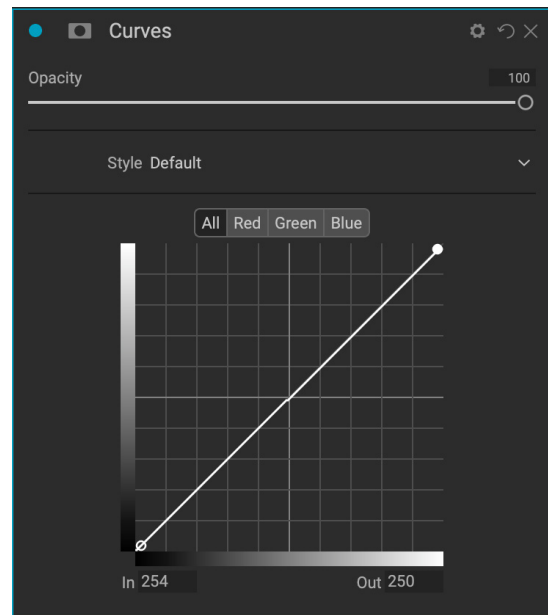
Clicking the point at the top right and dragging it down just a touch to 250 (or thereabouts) will map pure white tones to an almost-imperceptible gray, reducing gloss differential areas in a print where there is no ink applied to the paper.

We hope you found this course helpful. If you'd like see more, are interested in attending a workshop with us, or just want to get in touch, we can be found in the following places:

Hudson

HudsonHenry.com (main website)
Hudson Henry Photography (YouTube channel)
Approaching the Scene (weekly video series on YouTube)
Hudson's gear page
hi@hudsonhenry.com (email)

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ricklepage.com (main website)
completedigitalphotography.com (books and photography-related)
Complete Digital Photography, 9th Edition, by Ben Long
Printerville (photo printing website)
rick@completedigitalphotography.com (email)

If you'd like to see about joining us on one
of our workshops, you can find information on Hudson's website.
Go to the Workshops page for the current list.
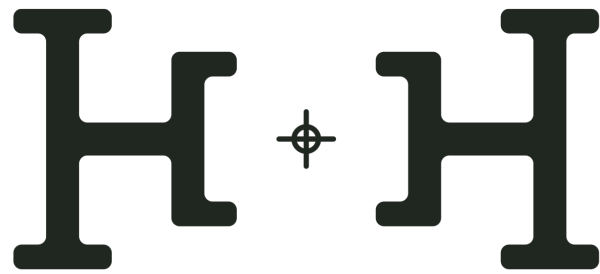
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