The Space Needle

Photographer Louis An

Louis An is a 16 Year old photographer from Colorado showcasing great highlights & perspective. If you would like to see more shots from Louis you can visit his website at
http://hashelosthismind.deviantart.com

ISSUE FIVE

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A lot of Changes Lately!

Hi everyone! Well it's been a little over a month since the last issue. My apologies for the longer than usual delay, running this PDFCast in addition to the usual day to day on-goings can be a little hectic. Recently, we have had an influx of people wanting to contribute their ideas to the magazine, so I'm proud to introduce to you in this issue, two new contributions, Nick Shulman & Larry Gorden. Nick, has written a review on Walcom tablets and Larry will be sending in Photoshop tips. It's is absolutely great to see more people contributing to the magazine. I would like to still extend the offer to YOU! Honestly, we pretty much put out an issue when we have enough information to make it worth while. The more people contributing means bigger issues and more frequent. So if you enjoy reading the magazine and want to see more, consider contributing a tip and a couple of photos. You don't need to be a graphic designer to contribute, just send a text file and any photos that go along with it and we can design an article page(s) for the next issue. We hope to hear from you. tipsandtricksphotography@gmail.com
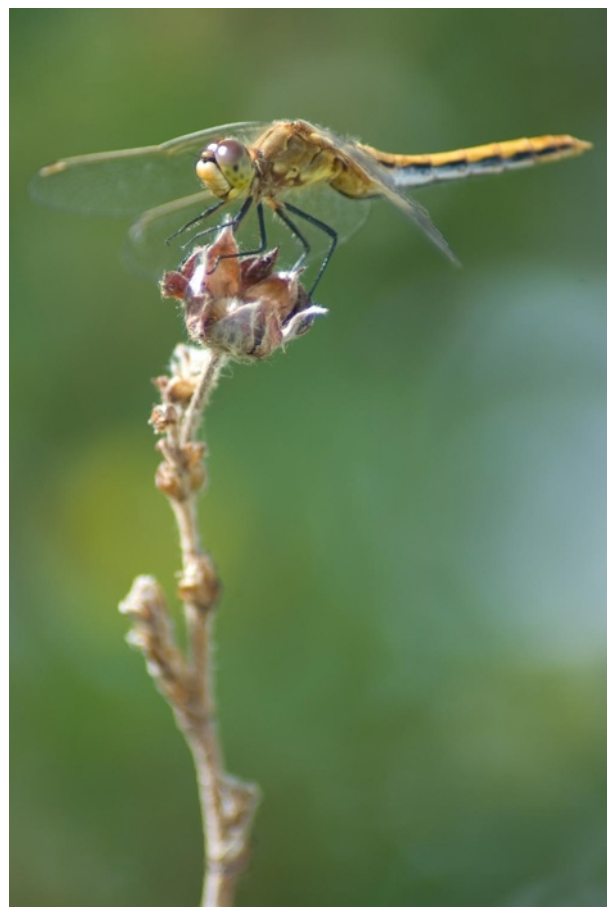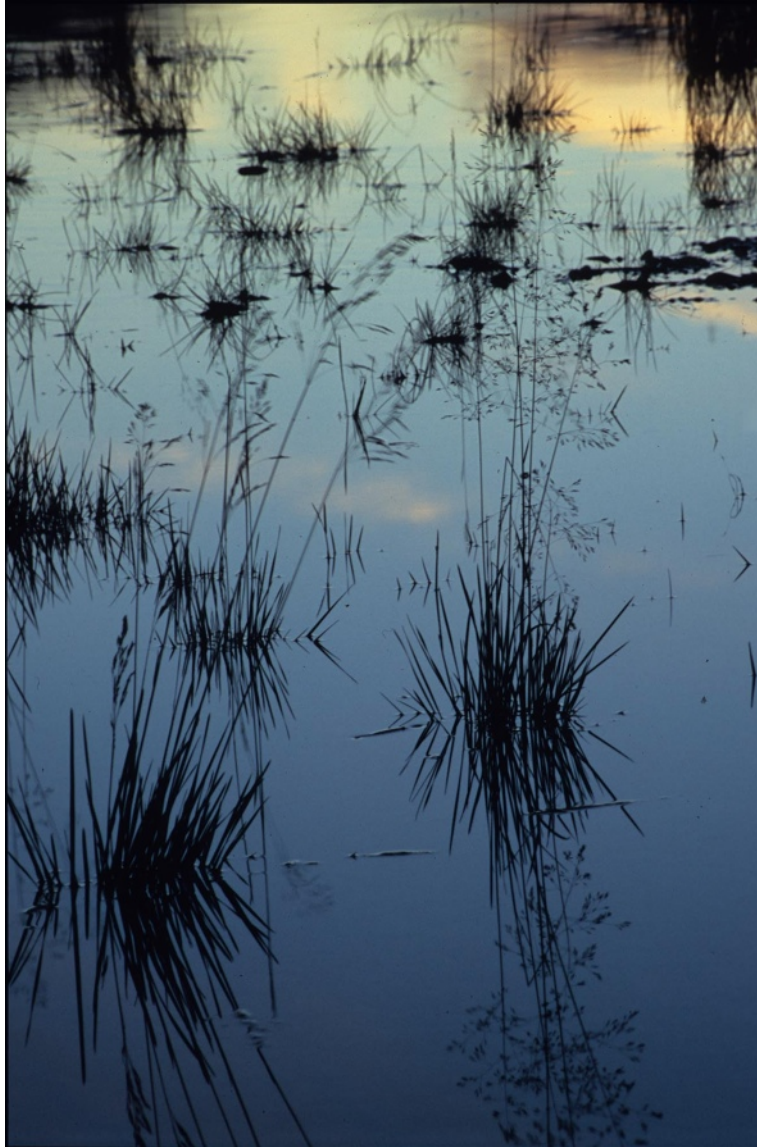
Buying Photography Books

A few thoughts when looking for a good photography book

— Written by Jeff Tindall

If you read Tips & Tricks Photography then you're likely in search for ideas, information and techniques to make you a better photographer. Now despite the great comments we have received about how useful our readers are finding our ideas (and we truly do appreciate them, so keep them coming!) another great resource can be photography books. There are a multitude of photography books on the market and often because of their high gloss pages and numerous photographs they can cost quite a bit more than a 'standard' book. I guess what sparked this article was

when I was in a photography rut; one of the ways I get out of a rut it is by going to my book store and picking up a photography book to inspire me or teach me a technique that provokes me into trying it out.   However, recently I just realized how much the photography market has exploded and the number of books that now line the shelfs of my local book store can be fairly overwhelming. I started browsing through them and realized there is a lot of choice and if you're not careful in your purchase you could be choosing an expensive book that doesn't offer

much. I classify books into three categories, general knowledge, specific/specialty books and art books. The general knowledge books are petty much the basics of photography. They are often directed towards beginner photographers and showcase great photos that attempt to lead newbie photographer into believing that after reading their book they can instantly take just as good photographs. I'm not trying to discredit these books, the techniques they offer are often good and accurate, however in my opinion I try to keep these books on the shelf because the techniques they teach can easily be obtained elsewhere. There are tons of podcasts, websites and other photographers out there that can show you about the basics of apertures, exposure, shutter speed, flash, ISO and lots of other standard ideas. I prefer to just pick up this knowledge elsewhere since it is so well known that most websites can demonstrate them accurately and provide different views on the issue. The books I prefer to read books are from the other two categories. The specialty books are typically what I purchase they are more dedicated to a particular technique or idea, exploring the idea in-depth.

These books range from teaching about portraiture photography right up to learning to see and being creative. In the example of portraiture photography they show techniques on how to position and interact with the subject to get the shot you want. These books also go in-depth with such things like different lighting techniques, right down to aperture or shutter speed effects. These are the books that your going to learn techniques that you likely won't find easily online. That's not to say they don't exist, but in my experiences are often few and far between. Why not just purchase the book and have an easy resource to access and re-access in the future.

One great series of books that I find myself reading and re-reading are by [Freeman Paterson](), Freeman is a well known Canadian photographer who offers workshops in New Brunswick and South Africa and cost roughly $2000 CND to attend. However for those who can't afford the cost, you can pick up his books and learn similar techniques on a wide variety of topics. The general theme across all his books is creativity and trying new things and before you ask, no I'm not sponsored by Freeman. I just find his work and books exceptional. The last type of books are photography art books. Typically seen on coffee tables these often oversized books are full of photographs with a particular theme and few words written. Books with such titles as Landscapes across Canada, Wild Flowers, Butterflies, Babies, etc... Although these books offer little in technique, they offer a wealth of information in seeing how other good photographers approach a scene. Furthermore, the large format allow for in-depth study of the photographs. Now I strongly suggest that everyone develop there own style of photography, however if you do find yourself in a rut try applying the techniques used in these types of books. Examine what pictures you like and then study why you like them, is it colour, angles at which the subject is shot,the simplicity of the scene, the confusion? I think the last thing to remember is that despite all the reading you do, the best learning tool is using your camera. There are no set techniques to the basics of photography, there are hundreds or thousands of ways to combine techniques to get all kinds of effects. The best way to figure which ones work is to try them. So get out there and experiment. A lot of the time you will be disappointed with the results, this is part of the learning experience. Don't get discouraged and keep trying, eventually one of the techniques with work and you will be overjoyed with the results.

Good Luck and Keep Shooting.

Low Light Photography

Just because the sun has gone for another day, doesn't mean your camera should!

Ervin Tong 2001

Written by Ervin Tong

When I first started photography, I packed up the camera and went home whenever it got dark. Little did I know I was missing one of the most exciting times for taking pictures. Dusk, low light, and night photography offer some of the best dramatic lighting and creative opportunities. In this article I'll offer a couple suggestions that opened up the night for me.

The first thing I tried was a few long exposures and creating car light trails. A good sturdy tripod is a must-have for this type of shot as exposure times are going to extend into the seconds. If your camera supports mirror lock up, enable it as this will help reduce the vibrations caused by mirror slap. For those of you unfamiliar with how this function works, when mirror lock up is enabled, pressing the shutter will move the mirror box up out of the way, but will not open the shutter. By pressing the shutter release a second time, the shutter opens and the photo is taken. It's a good idea to wait a couple of seconds before actually releasing the shutter, so keep this delay in mind when you're taking the picture. An-

other useful tool to have is a remote release. If you don't have a remote release, you might try switching to the timed release setting on your camera. We're trying to keep the camera as stable as possible, so avoid stabbing the shutter release with your finger if at all possible.

Personally, dusk is my favorite time of day for these shots. At dusk, there's just enough light to provide a color in the sky (so that it's not pure black), but it's usually dark enough that street and car lights are on. When picking a location, I find that two options work best: close up at street level or a wider angle from high up on a hill or a bridge.

When shooting at street level, I tend to be on the sidewalk right next to the road kneel-

ing at around the height of the car's headlight. Be careful when setting up as you don't want to be hit by a car! For exposure times, it will vary depending on the light condi-

Ervin Tong 2007
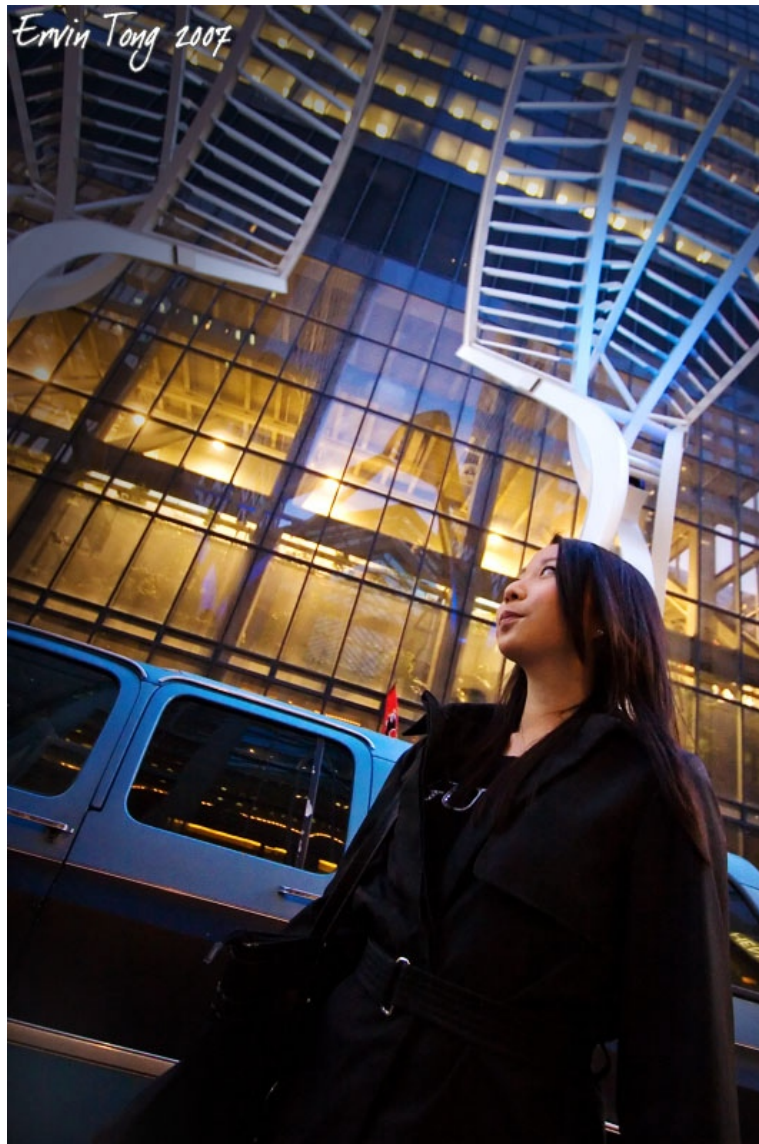
tions and the speed of the cars, but I try to time it so that cars will pass either three quarters or fully through the frame. Also, try to time it so that there's not a large clump

of cars passing by all at once. When a lot of cars pass through the shot all at once, the light trails that they create tend to be extremely bright, blown out, and lose detail.

When shooting from higher up on a bridge, try to find a section of road that meanders and has a few lanes of traffic, this way, the light trails will snake through the shot and be more interesting than a straight stretch of road. Also, make sure the shutter is open long enough so that the trails are continuous from the point they enter to the point they leave the frame. When creating light trail shots, we often get focused on creating the trails and ignore the backgrounds of our shots. Remember that the light trails enhance the background and vice versa. If you can find a location overlook-

ing the city, a park, mountain range, or even an interesting building it will increase the quality of your picture immensely.

Another low light photography idea is to wander around downtown or a street with lit shop signs around dusk. Again, the idea is to have a little bit of light in the sky but also to have building lights still lit up. These buildings or signs make some excellent subjects or backgrounds that provide interesting lighting. Personally, I like taking people pictures using the glowing buildings as my backgrounds. For this type of shot, I meter for the background so that the background lights aren't blown out and use fill flash to light my subject. I also like to either get low to the ground or up close and tight for these shots, look for unique angles and perspectives. Often, I find myself hand holding these shots so keeping up the shutter speed and using good shooting technique is important. Don't be afraid to bump up the ISO, or find makeshift tripods such as bracing yourself against a wall on a bench.

Another interesting effect you can create is a starburst pattern around lights. There are several ways to create this effect including Photoshop or a star filter, but a simple method is to stop down your lens around its diffraction limit, usually around f16 or higher. At these apertures, you'll get star patterns similar to the ones seen around the streetlights in the black and white city shot. The shape of the starburst will depend on the number and shape of the aperture blades in your lens.

Three Photoshop Actions

A few actions to help you get the effect you want.

Written by Jeff Tindall

A lot of the actions I use have been developed by reading books, web-pages and talking to photographers to pick-up some tips. I thought I would along some of my more favorite actions to use. Also if you don't know about the [Adobe Exchange](#) check it out, its full of great free actions, plugins and other useful tools.

Graduated Neutral Density Action

This is a great action if you don't have a graduated neutral density filter. It's a little complicated action to setup, so I added in a couple of instructions at the beginning to follow. Essentially, you take two identical pictures, one normally exposed and one under exposed. The action combines them and then adds a graduated mask you can alter. [Get the Action Here](#)

Sharpening Actions

These are a set of three sharpening actions. They are simple sharpening filters that are more dedicated to a particular scenario. This set of three are dedicated to portrait, landscapes and general photography.

[Get the Action Here](#)

Orton Effect

This action is my newest and favorite action. I made this action out of a article written by [Darwin Wiggett](#). An amazing photographer from Alberta Canada who I hope can someday obtain his skills of mastering colours and emotion in his photography

[Get the Action Here](#)

Protecting Your Images Online

A couple of techniques to make it more difficult from illegal use of your photographs

— Written by Jeff Tindall

Lately I've been working on a personal web-site to hopefully promote my photos and eventually start to sell my images or services. In doing this work, as well as just generally working on this PDFCast, I have been reading a lot on how to protect your images from someone taking your work and using it without your permission, or even worse, taking credit for your hard work. I thought I would pass along the info I have learned to help you to protect your shots.

I guess the first thing to think about is that there is no foolproof way of stopping someone from getting your pictures. Honestly, it's pretty easy to open up a web-page, hit the screen capture button and then just crop out the desktop leaving you with the photo you desire. I guess the kind of theft I was thinking of is managing to get a decent resolution photo for printing or blowing up with no really noticeable pixilation. This can be stopped (for the most part). There are a few tips that most of you likely know. Obviously, if you post images on a web-page make the

resolution and size high enough so people can see your photo clearly, but low enough so that if they try and take it they will end up with a pretty crappy version, especially if they attempt to print it or enlarge it. However, this won't stop thieves from using your
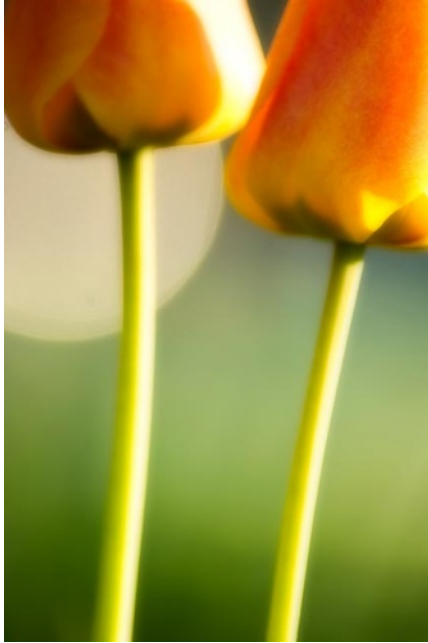
images on the web at the same clear resolution and size.

Another alternative is to insert your images in a way that doesn't allow people the opportunity to right click on the picture and hit the 'Save as' button. One of the easy ways to do this is to display your photos using flash. From what I know of flash there is no way to save a picture. Rather, if you wanted to capture a photo you would have to use a screen capture.

I have just discussed two ways to stop people from taking your photos and in both cases it's still possible for people to take them anyway.

Unfortunately, it is hard to stop someone if they really are dedicated. So what are you to do then? Well, my philosophy is to use a little logic and creativity. You can't stop someone from taking your photos, but you can protect yourself if it happens. How? Well, I've learned two techniques that work pretty well.

The Fake Image

The Fake Image technique is pretty much exactly as it sounds. You insert a fake image that overlays the image to be viewed. In my opinion the best way to examine someone's photography is to be able to look at a nice big picture for as long as I like. This means that using flash-based slide shows typically doesn't work well because they tend to function best when the picture is smaller, and many of them have time limits before moving to the next shot. However, displaying that nice big image I mentioned above leaves you vulnerable. The Fake Image technique is designed to eliminate this vulnerability. When you post a photo on your website, try placing a transparent image (i.e. Transparent GIF file) on top of the image you want to show. That way when you display your site you can see through the transparent image right to the actual image. However, if someone tries to save the image, the only thing they save is the transparent image since it's the topmost object. Want to see how it works? Go to http://www.naturephotographers.net/. If you're not familiar with the site, it's excellent for nature photography tips and the photo-

graphs are usually spectacular. When you go to that website the first thing you will see is a nice sized image. If you right click and 'save as', the only thing you're saving is a transparent file.

The Crop Factor

The Crop Factor technique is not really a way of stopping someone from taking your image, but is a way to prove yourself the rightful owner if you ever need to do so. It's a pretty simple idea. Most of us often crop our

images in post-processing. Here is the trick: save the excess that you cropped. That way if it ever comes to the point where you need to prove you're the rightful owner (I guess the most extreme case would be in a court of law), you have a crucial piece of evidence since you can show the crop around the picture in dispute. If your picture has been stolen, ask to see the cropping of the image. Since the photo posted online never showed the crop there is no way for them to produce the rest of the image.

Despite the techniques above, if someone is going to take your photo there's not much you can do. I used the word 'thieves' or 'thief' a couple of times in this article and in retrospect it seems a little harsh. Honestly, if someone is going to take your photo, they're usually going to use it as a personal wallpaper for their computer. However, if you do find someone reproducing your images or representing them as their own, then the above techniques can help stop them or at the very least help support your claim that the
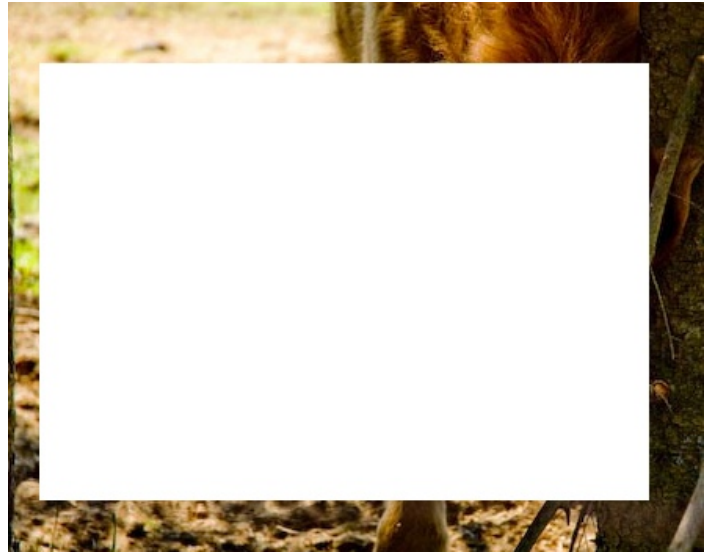

image is indeed yours. Also, if you do want to copyright your images, there is a website that can help you do so free of charge. It's called the Creative Commons and there you can specify how your image is to be used. This lets people know your intentions for the image and provides a record of when it was copyrighted.

What Can Wacom Do For You?

Walcom Tablets are fast becoming the newest sensation for working with your photographs.

Nick Shulman had a chance to test one out and has sent in a review.

Tablets are a pros best friend. Be they photographer, designer, architect, or cartographer, many respected professionals have been using tablet input systems for years. I have always been afraid of them. I suppose it's the same way people who have never seen a mouse are skittish around them. Contemplating their potential efficiency boost, I can't help recalling playing Cranium as a child; the drawing game in particular. In this game, the player must draw an object without looking at the paper while his/her partner guesses what it is they are depicting. Needless to say, I wasn't

very good at this game. Thinking of drawing without looking at the tip of my writing utensil is not the most intuitive concept. However, how intuitive is anything in a computer?

The one system I have seen that remedied this problem most efficiently was in a local photography shop. The Wacom Cintiq is an impressive piece of hardware, with an equally impressive price tag: $2499 USD. The Cintiq is a 17" tablet with the monitor underneath the plastic covering. Through some mystical voodoo, they have made a

surface that is both transparent and touch sensitive. Unfortunately, it's a little out of my range.

I have long been interested in tablets, but couldn't ever bring myself to purchase one. I have tested them out at stores, and even

ones, but it gets the job done. The size of the writing surface is important for two main reasons. Firstly, the bigger the board, the more precise the user can be. Secondly, due to the recent trend in monitor technology, most people have wide screens with an as-

believed that I would get used to the mode of operation, but I was never sure that there was a great use for them. What am I missing? What can't I do with ye olde mouse?

My nagging desire was removed this past week when I was lucky enough to be lent a Wacom Intuos 4x5" tablet. It is a lightweight compared to some of the bigger

pect ratio of 16x10 (difference illustrated). Some professionals have two 16x10 displays side-by-side, which makes the effective aspect ratio 36x10. The problem that this poses is the recognized area on the tablet. For the pen's movement to be registered, the software must map the screen area to the tablet. I happen to (temporarily)

have two Dell 2007FPWs, which are 16x10, 20" displays. Luckily for me, the tablet has the ability to only move the mouse on one of the two screens. This minimizes the problem of screen mapping, but it does still have an effect. The 4x5 physical size of the tablet combined with the 16x10 aspect ratio of my monitor makes for an effective tablet size of 5.02x3.14" (pictured). This is not ideal, but

in the packaging. The extra program is simply a toolbar that allows the user to write memos, and even convert them into typed text using Apple's Ink application. All in all, the Macintosh side has excellent (preexisting) driver support, and an unnecessary program on the CD. I did not test the tablet on a PC, nor Linux, but I am quite confident that the CD contains the drivers and soft-

is easily forgotten by simply zooming in further when editing photos.

As soon as I plugged the tablet into my brand new Mac Pro, it was recognized by the computer. Depending on your operating system, your mileage may vary. Apple computers generally don't require any kind of driver, but a software CD was included

ware necessary to replicate the experience on Windows. Vista may be a problem for now, as drivers for that platform are few and far between, but support is slowly but surely ramping up. Linux is not an officially supported platform, but if you are one of the renegade users of said platform, then I am certain you will be able to find home-

brew drivers for whatever distribution is your favorite.

The experience as a whole was not one that is easy to write about. The tablet is an amazing tactile perception shift. A mouse is an entirely abstract idea, whereas the pen and paper is something we use all the time. The Intuos has really changed how specific I can be, but more importantly, my interaction with my photos. A tablet user will use the same programs and tools: Photoshop, dodge, burn, selection tools, etc. The difference is, that a tablet user can actually shade the pictures, instead of moving a mouse from side to side. It is difficult to say if this type of input device will really improve my images, but at the very least, it feels more like I am drawing over the areas that I want to change, and I am therefore more connected to these pictures. The motions that are required to modify images with a mouse are far less photography-like. All photographers, professional or otherwise are artists. While I must reiterate that your

mileage may vary, the experiences I have had with the Intuos 4x5 were far more artistic than the sterile conventional tools. I cannot be certain, but I feel that my pictures are better with this tool, and be that subconscious or fact, having confidence in one's abilities and final products is an essential part of this art.

From the limited time I have had it, it seems to me that the tablet has increased my precision, and more importantly connection to my photos. The ability to select the edges of an object by actually tracing it is fantastic! Actually touching something digital is a brand new experience for me, and it's one I would like to repeat. In my opinion, the device is a superior method of interaction with images in particular. I haven't found any other great uses for the tablet, and I don't plan to throw my mouse away anytime soon, but there is a strong argument in favor of buying one of these very affordable tools.
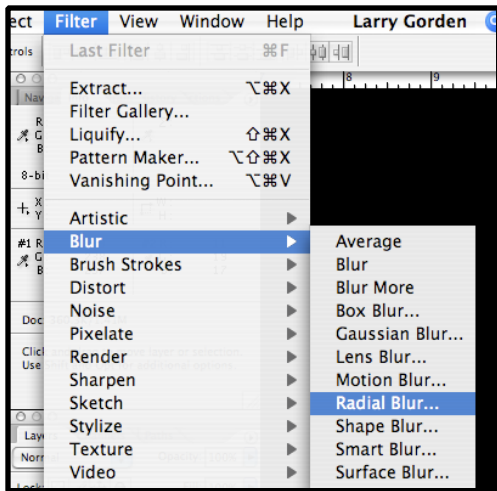
Filter Effects
Radial Blur
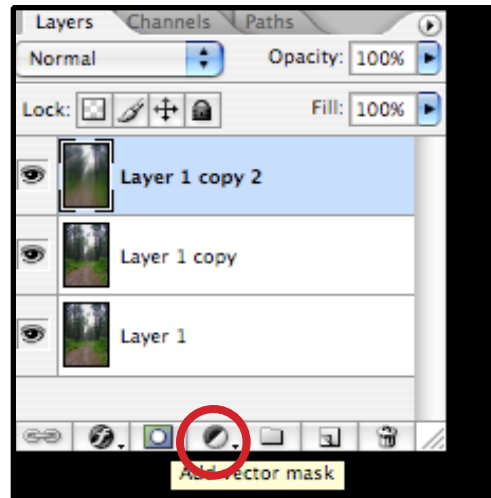**By Larry Gorden**

Radial Blur is great for adding some interesting effects to images that need a little something extra. Use this technique to add a little extra flare.

Before

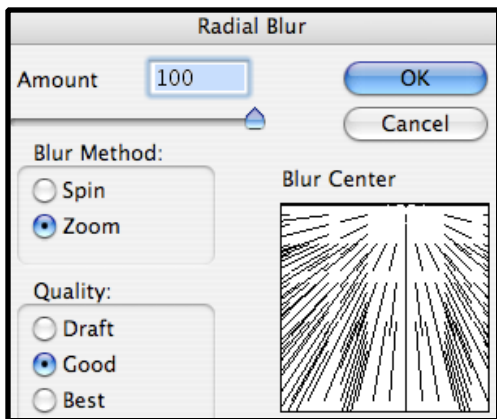1. Open your image and make two copies by hitting command + J two times.

2. Now go to your layers palette and click on the top most layer in the layer stack. Go to Filter > Blur > Radial Blur

4. In the Radial Blur dialog box set your attributes as follows.

5. Choose a large soft brush and lower the opacity, I used 50% in this example.

6. Choose your top most layer, this layer should be the layer you blurred. Add a layer mask by clicking on the vector mask icon at the bottom of the layer palette.
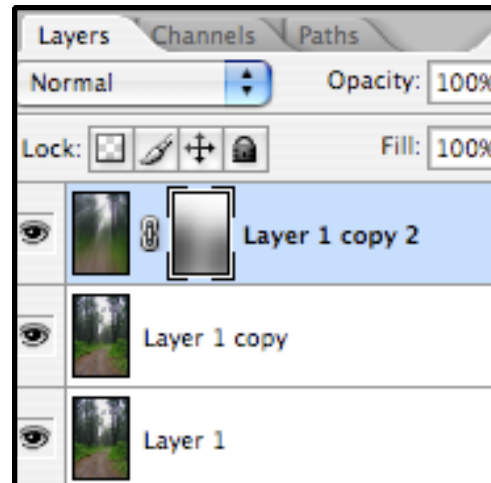

7. Use the Brush Tool and paint with black in your image, not the layer mask thumbnail. This will reveal the image below in the layer stack which is the same image without the blur filter applied.

After