

POST PRODUCTION WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY

Aim

Describe how to process and present wedding photos to the clients, in a variety of formats.

PROCESSING

Photographers usually develop their photographs by hand and then assess which are the best (eg. for colour accuracy etc). The selected images are then retouched to some extent. This process should be subtle ie. airbrushing, removal of blemishes, cleaning up elements that may distract from the main subject of the photo, or to improve the composition. Depending on the photographer, black and white photos, tinted photos, special effects or hand colouring are also part of the photographer's processing techniques.

You will need to discuss with the client beforehand which images they would like in black and white – they can be the most stunning photos!

Now it is time to edit the 200-300 best out of the 800 photos or so you have taken. These will be presented to your clients to choose from.

There are many software packages available for the processing of digital photos. Photoshop is an example.

Batch Processing

Sometimes photographers batch process their photos – especially if they have used a digital camera, this is fine for resizing or adding borders, or other processes, that will not compromise the actual subject of the photo. Batch processing can save time for these purposes – but is not a substitute for individual attention; each photo should be 'tweaked' individually for fine details. If you 'wash' over batches of photos without attention to detail, you could lose the essence you tried to capture when taking the shot in the first instance.

Points to Consider when Processing your Shots

- Images should be light and airy not dark and gloomy
- Mid tones should be kept light
- Colours should remain warm
- Black and white photos should have contrast – not appear to be several shades of grey!
- Use warm duotones not just straight greys
- Remove 'noise' from your film or digital images but don't over do it! Noise in digital images is a grainy, snowy appearance - often in shaded areas. This problem is associated with shooting in low light, or using high ISO, or the underexposure of images. Clean images are better than those that appear grainy – but you can take it too far.
- Use a small amount of soft focus – but once again don't over do it.
- Don't try to remove every single blemish on a subject's face (including the bride's). An obvious blemish such as a pimple should be removed – but try not to

smooth out laughter lines or a few crow's feet. You may offend – especially if the bride does not recognize herself!

- Photos will differ in white balance, light, shade, colour, alignment and so on – these areas need to be touched up to achieve consistent quality throughout a range of photos. It can be very noticeable in an album if touch-ups have not been done for consistency.

FAULT FINDING: Guide to Faults with Black and White Negatives

Appearance of the Negative	Fault
NOT SHARP	
fuzzy definition	Out of focus
blurred all over	Camera moved
blurred in one part of the subject	Subject moved
TOO DENSE ALL OVER	
Flat and much shadow detail	Over exposure
Contrast	Over developed
DARK MARKINGS	
Dark areas with images of lens diaphragm	Light scatter
Black blobs with image of lens diaphragm	Lens flare
Black splashes	Light leak in camera
Splashes of greater density	Water or developer splashes
Black streaks from edges	Light leaks in film roll or camera
Black spots	Chemical dust
Dark degraded edges	Stored in damp place
LIGHT MARKINGS	
Clear areas of lower density	Unevenly developed
Picture fades to transparency at corners	Lens not covering properly
Large spot of lighter intensity with greater density at edges	Drying mark
Line of lighter density	Loose thread on blind of focal shutter
Undefined clear area on one edge of negative	Hand partly covering lens
DISTORTION	
Converging upright lines	Camera tilted
Exaggerated perspective	Short focus lens used too close to subject
MISCELLANEOUS	
Two images over part of the negative	Over or under winding film
Dark halo around highlights	Halation or irradiation.

Digital Colour into Black and White

Firstly, before you start manipulating your image make sure you make a copy so that valuable information isn't lost forever. Always work on the new file, giving it a name that tells you this is the manipulated one and leave the other one as your original. There are a number of ways to de-saturate your picture which requires some experimentation in order for you to know what your software will allow you to do, and which effect you prefer. All software has the option to manipulate saturation. If you completely de-saturate all the colours in your image you will have the appearance of a black and white image, however it is still a colour image until it is converted and resaved as greyscale. You can use this unconverted image to manipulate the colour tones separately which will give you a different result from a straight conversion, and will allow you to control the tones of your image before converting to greyscale. You can manipulate the tones by using the levels, channel extraction and channel mixing commands, depending on what your software offers.

Levels

Using your levels command is similar to your contrast command. It allows you to change the contrast as a whole image or select each RGB colour separately. By using the sliding arrows in the levels dialogue box you are able to reduce the brightness of the whites and darken or lighten the blacks and mid-tones.

Channel Extraction

This is available only with the more professional software. It allows you to view your image through red green or blue channels which will change the appearance of the image and you can convert it to a greyscale in your favoured channel.

Channel Mixer

This works in the same way as a lens filter in conventional black and white photography, for example a yellow filter works by blocking other colours in the spectrum and therefore yellows in the resulting image look white and the other colours look relatively darker. The channel mixer tool works in the same way but you can choose from an infinite number of filters until you find the ideal one. Using this tool enables you to decide how you are going to convert your colour image to greyscale, and by using the preview option you can see the image changing as you change the settings. In a landscape, increase the green channel by a lot and correct overall density by decreasing the red and blue channels.

Remember to convert to greyscale when you are happy with your image which will therefore reduce the size of your file. If you are going to print your image you need to convert it back to RGB or CMYK before printing otherwise it will print solely with black ink giving you a very poor reproduction.

Digital Duotone and Sepia Tones

Duotones

Digital technology has expanded our possibilities for darkroom techniques without all the mess; the range of hues available being almost unlimited with the four colour process.

To create a duotone in Photoshop or similar software first convert your image to greyscale remembering that it deletes colour information so work on a copy of the original. Now use the duotone mode and to start with use the preset duotone options - using it in preview mode double click on one of the options to see the results. Clicking on the coloured square of the dialogue box changes the colour of the second ink,

creating different effects such as bright red giving a golden tone and dark brown creating a sepia effect. Using the lower graph you can manipulate the curve to change the effect. For example, moving the curve so that there is a greater amount of the second ink in the highlights will result in all the upper tones being tinted. Remember that you need to resave your final image as a RGB or CMYK TIFF file for printing.

Sepia Tones

Sepia toning is a nineteenth century technique that creates warm brown tones with no black or white.

To reproduce this in Photoshop, with controlled results, first convert your greyscale image to RGB. Then de-saturate your image and then using the levels tool make the image lighter and greyer and then remove the blacks and whites. Now you can add colour by using either the colour balance tool to increase red and yellow or if you have it available use the variations option to add red yellow and a little blue to get a more brown effect. The other way to create a sepia look is as described above in Duotones, using a greyscale image in duotone mode adding brown or dark orange as the second ink.

FILTERS AND IMAGE PROCESSING

Many drastic changes are achievable with image processing or digital filters, as they are alternatively known. A typical example would be filtering “noise” from an image. Many digital cameras add noise to an image in low light. This can be seen as various coloured speckles, or even white spots on a dark image. The computer can process the image and look for speckles, which appear as a change from one colour to another that is not smooth, and stands out from the colour changes around it. Unfortunately sometimes detail in our image has the same characteristics as “noise” such as the fine feathered edges of hair, or even stars in the sky.

Another example is blurring part of, or the entire image. Sometimes a digital camera may turn areas of high contrast into jagged lines, or “jaggies” such as an image of a telegraph wire on a bright sky, where the wire appears as a series of little steps, instead of a smooth line. In this case we can use a “blur” filter to make the edge appear smoother, natural looking and less “digital”. Blurring is often used similar to an airbrush to remove skin blemishes, or wrinkles.

We discussed removing noise, yet in some situations you may need to add noise to all or part of the image. This is especially effective when trying to cut and paste from an image that was taken in different lighting conditions, or on traditional grainier looking film. Once the new image has been added to our photograph, we can add in “grain” to make both images appear similar in texture and quality. Alternatively, we may just be trying to create an image that appears to have been taken in a different period, so we can add dust and scratches and alter the colour to give a faded sepia effect.

Filters in Photoshop add texture to images, often for a 3D effect. The filters also are useful for creating a fine-arts or hand-drawn look. Many of the Sketch filters use the foreground and background colour as they redraw the image. All of the Sketch filters can be applied using the Filter Gallery.

Advanced filters

There are far more sophisticated filters that apply complicated mathematical formula’s to distort the image; producing “Hall of Mirror” type effects, shimmering water or ripples, bubbles, spirals, concave and convex distortions, wrapping the image around 3d shapes such as spheres, cones or cubes, and even barrel distortions which can be used to correct the distortions caused by flaws in poor lenses.

Some of the more radical filters process the colour and texture of the image to try and create other mediums, or traditional artistic techniques. These will look at the flow of colour on the image and try and mimic an artists brush strokes, and the texture that these create. They may give the impression that the image has been embossed in metal, painted on a canvas, or made out of tiles or prisms.

There are also many third party filters that you can buy to use in your favourite image editing package that are suited best to creating special effects on text, buttons, or logo's. These vary from adding shadows behind an object giving a sense of depth, to creating the illusion that the object is made from metal, plastic or glass and giving it all of the reflective and refractive properties of these substances.

Other "Filters" add functionality, allowing you to tile images to create a texture, add various lighting effects similar to a theatre lighting technician, or even render whole 3d fantasy scenes including skies, water and various landscapes.

Special effects

Other effects can be achieved simply through trial and error and attempting things that would have been impossible to achieve with traditional photography either because of time constraints or the inhibitive cost of trying many similar variations on a theme.

Using masking can achieve interesting results, using a vignette or blending one image to another in an unexpected manner, or objects and geometric shaped masks as frames or silhouettes.

Another technique is to combine many photographs to create a panorama view, or to have magnified insets to show fine detail.

COMPOSITING

Compositing is the process of "super imposing" one image onto another. Traditionally this would be achieved by double exposure of the film to a scene, or by cutting and pasting parts of various negatives together, which is then developed on the same piece of paper. This process was complicated and took many hours of work, the results being hard to predict and control.

Today we work with multiple "layers" within a digital image, allowing us to place objects in front of and behind other objects, make them transparent or translucent, and through careful selection of edges we can carefully remove an object from one scene and place it into another.

When compositing, take special care to ensure that light sources match in both images, and that the texture or graininess is similar, this will give a natural feel and help to suspend the viewers sense of reality. The brightness of the scene behind the object will affect how easy it is to remove the object from its background.

When taking photographs for compositing later, keep in mind the time of day, and the shadows and lighting this creates.

If you can take a prepared shot of an object you want to use in the future, try on a matte black background, a matte white background, and even on a mirror for the highest reflections; then later you can tone down the background and match it to your new scene.

PRESENTATION

Wedding photographers vary in what they present and deliver after the wedding – there is really no set or common standard. Clients usually select a photographer that they think will be best to capture the day and deliver their photos in a style that they like. You should always discuss the client's expectations with them and discuss your presentation styles.

These days many photographers deliver a range of presentation styles including:

- Formal portraiture often framed
- Digital prints or slide shows
- Traditional Albums
- Contemporary albums (flush mount type for example)
- Online albums
- Framed images
- Enlarged images
- CD/DVD with a slide show version of the album, often set to the music used at the ceremony.

The number of images provided also varies amongst photographers. A professional photographer will take between 600 and 1200 shots at a full-day wedding. The best are selected and edited (usually around 200) and the amount of shots used in the final presentation and how they are presented depends on the price the couple is willing to pay. Most albums are made up of around 50-70 images.

A set of proofs (usually not re-touched at this point) are usually presented to the couple about 10 days to 2 weeks after the wedding.

At this point the photographer provides (depending on the photographer) the couple with some or all of the following:

- Hard copies (4x6 or 4x5 prints).
- Multiple pages of thumbnail images.
- An online proof gallery (becoming more popular).
- A CD or DVD with a gallery slideshow (often with music added).
- High resolution files that can be downloaded (from a secure website) with limited rights to reproduce a certain amount of images. This usually comes with an extra charge as this service is mostly used by clients wanting to create their own albums. Photographers that give up complete copyright will charge a lot more.

Sometimes the photographer allows the couple to retain the proofs others ask their clients to choose final prints from the proofs, and then return them. Some photographers will charge a fee for the proofs.

The clients are given around 4 weeks to decide on which photos they want, and how they want them presented.


Many clients want extra photos or sets of photos, for themselves, for family members, for the wedding party members or for special guests.

Photographers usually (but not always) provide a range of photo albums so the clients can choose between them; most couples will choose more than one type of presentation. These include:

- Traditional albums (with matt covers)

- Digitally designed 'coffee table book' albums
- Contemporary albums - such as flush mounted
- Scrap-book albums

The cost of the albums may be part of the original price, or may be charged as an extra - after the wedding. The layout of the album is discussed with the clients and the final product should be ready within 8 – 12 weeks from then.

	<p>SELF ASSESSMENT Perform the self assessment test titled ' Self Test 8.1'. If you answer incorrectly, review the notes and try the test again</p>
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SET TASKS

1. Investigate different ways of presenting a collection of wedding photos to a client.

You might do this by looking at wedding albums that family or friends have.

Another way of doing this is to investigate promotional material such as web sites or brochures that are produced by different wedding photography businesses.

Try to spend at least 1 hour but no more than 3 hours actually looking at these albums.

If you can compare costs, do so.


Take note of any other differences, such as style, quality and anything else.

2. Using the internet research various methods of photo *processing*, take notes; make a list of soft-ware and equipment available for the processing purpose. Research some traditional methods of photo processing (non-digital).

3. Take photos of people that could be part of a wedding party (remember to use good backdrops) – they do not have to be dressed in wedding outfits; from the shots you have taken choose 3 to process ie. one of a woman (bride), one group photo and one other wedding type photo. Now process these photos using a processing software method familiar to you (e.g. Photoshop).

The task below is **OPTIONAL** (but recommended):

Contact a wedding photographer near you and ask if you can volunteer to be their assistant at one wedding – just to get some experience. If you do this please submit five of your best shots with the assignment below (resized of course).

	<p>ASSIGNMENT Download and do the assignment called 'Lesson 8 Assignment'.</p>
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