

## Digital Darkroom

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**A**nsel Adams is quoted saying, "You don't take a photograph, you make it." I take this to heart when processing digital image files.

Our eyes and brain perceive so many more colors and levels of light than any camera or processing could ever hope to duplicate. The number of colors and levels of light diminish each step of the way from the camera to the ink on a photographic print. Unfortunately, technology cannot prevent this from happening. PhotonJohn uses digital darkroom techniques, tools, and best practices to minimize the losses.

Artwork photography and digital image file processing workflow in the digital darkroom goes like this:

- My digital imaging processing workflow leverages the work of others.
- Studio session images are delivered from the camera as RAW image files, meaning the camera did not do any image processing. This is in contrast to JPEG image files that are the end result of the camera doing extensive processing, including removing a great deal of non-essential image information captured by the camera. Fortunately, enough image information is left in JPEG image files for further processing.
- Camera noise and lens distortion, chromatic aberration and vignetting are minimized using DxO Optics Pro software. If DxO Optics Pro does not support the camera or lens, LensFix is used to correct lens distortion, chromatic aberration and vignetting.
- Image exposure, shadows, and tones are adjusted using Adobe Photoshop Lightroom, and are passed to Photoshop for further processing as 16 bit TIFF images.

- Noise reduction is applied to the image, if needed, using Noiseware Professional Photoshop plug-in.
- The Alien Skin Software Photoshop plug-in Blow Up, is used to increase the size of artwork details, if necessary.
- Image black and white points are usually set using Adobe Photoshop LAB color mode.
- The next step is sharpening the image with PixelGenius Sharpener Photoshop plug-in.
- Any image color cast is usually corrected using PixelGenius PhotoKit Color Photoshop plug-in.
- The colors existing within the image are enhanced using a set of LAB color mode Photoshop actions.
- The image undergoes sharpening once again to optimize it for printing.
- At this stage in the digital darkroom workflow, image processing is complete and JPEG image files are suitable for viewing and printing.
- The Photoshop processed image files are returned to Photoshop Lightroom, where they are convert to JPEG image files, and upload to your private Web site, where they can be viewed, downloaded, and several sizes of high quality prints produced by a professional photofinishing lab may be ordered online from your private Web site.
- The 16 bit TIFF Photoshop processed image files will be made available to you on your private Web site upon request.
- Click on *Tools* on the PhotonJohn home page for links to all the products mentioned (<http://photonjohn.com>).

So you see, I don't take images, I make them.

...John