

# Freeze Frame

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## Photoshop Layers Adjustment Panel

If you are still shooting JPGs, you should be using the Photoshop Layers Adjustment Panel to edit your images ... at least in my humble opinion.

I started using this powerful tool a couple of years ago and doing so helped my workflow tremendously.

While I cannot force any of you to follow suit, I would recommend you examine a few online resources that explain in much better detail than I. (No, I'm not receiving any compensation for these recommendations!)

Two that come to mind would be:

- 1 – A free alternative is the Photoshop.com website which has some great video tutorials. I've included one link here to get you started. Here is their link for Layers Adjustments - <http://www.photoshop.com/tutorials/6128> It's a quick 8-minute video and I highly recommend you watch it after reading this article.
- 2 – National Association of Photoshop Professionals (NAPP) however, there is a cost involved here that may be too much for some given the current economic situation many of us are in. <http://www.photoshoper.com>

### Non-Destructive Editing

The best thing about using the Layers Adjustment Panel is simply — YOU WILL NOT DESTROY THE IMAGE! If you mess up, you can go back! How cool is that!?

In addition, you can stack different layer adjustments on top of each other such as Color Balance, Levels, Curves, etc. Each layer will have a different effect on the layer stack and ultimately, the final image.

You can even toggle on and off each adjustment layer to see how it affects the image.

By using non-destructive editing you can apply adjustment layers to manipulate color, levels, contrast, curves and brightness to your images. Applying adjustments non-destructively to your images allows you to monitor image levels in the panel's histogram as you proceed.

Additionally, you can even "paint away" adjustments and background distractions (for photo illustrations only) with the built-in layer mask that is tied to each adjustment layer.

Using one of the images from the September Freeze Frame article, I'll now show you what adjustments I made to color correct the image.

If the color is off, I usually start with the individual RGB color values using Levels. If the image still needs tweaking I will go to Color Balance, Curves, and Brightness/Contrast to further correct the image.

Once I have all the adjustments to my liking, I'll save it as a PSD file first, then FLATTEN the image and save as a JPG ready for publication. Why PSD you ask? Because if I ever need to go back to it, all of my adjustments are still there for further tweaking.

### RAW vs JPG

The obvious choice is to shoot and edit in RAW using either Adobe Bridge or Adobe Lightroom 3.

My personal preference is to edit in LR3. To be honest, I haven't really used Bridge that much so I welcome any input from the field on using Bridge.

Regardless, shooting in RAW allows you to make the same type of adjustments highlighted on the right in the same non-destructive manner.

But, if you're pinched because one of your downtrace units sent you a JPG that needs some adjusting, now you have some new tools in your kitbag to help you in the editing process.

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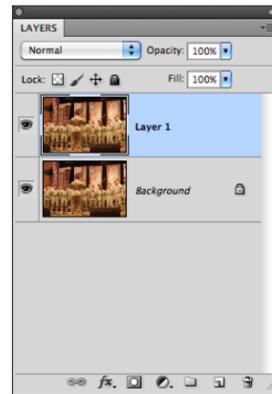
*Timothy L. Hale is an award-winning photojournalist for the Warrior-Citizen magazine at the U.S. Army Reserve Command Public Affairs Office at Fort Bragg, N.C. He is a member of Nikon Professional Services, National Press Photographers Association and National Association of Photoshop Professionals. When he isn't on assignment for the Army Reserve, he owns a photojournalism and graphic design service and he also freelances for an international photo wire service. He has been shooting professionally since 1981.*

### BEFORE



As you can see, this JPG image pulled from the Internet has a very bad orange color cast that we need to correct so the uniforms and skin tones look like they should. While adjusting an original RAW image would have been the best choice, the steps below show you how you can adjust a JPG image in Photoshop.

### Step 1



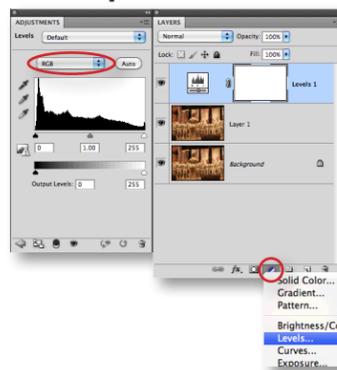
Duplicate the Background Layer and work from the new Layer 1 until you get used to the adjustments.

As you become more proficient, you can make your adjustments on the Background Layer because it's non-destructive.

You can duplicate the Background Layer by clicking Cmd J (Mac) or Ctrl J (PC).

Now you're ready to use the Adjustment Layers Panel.

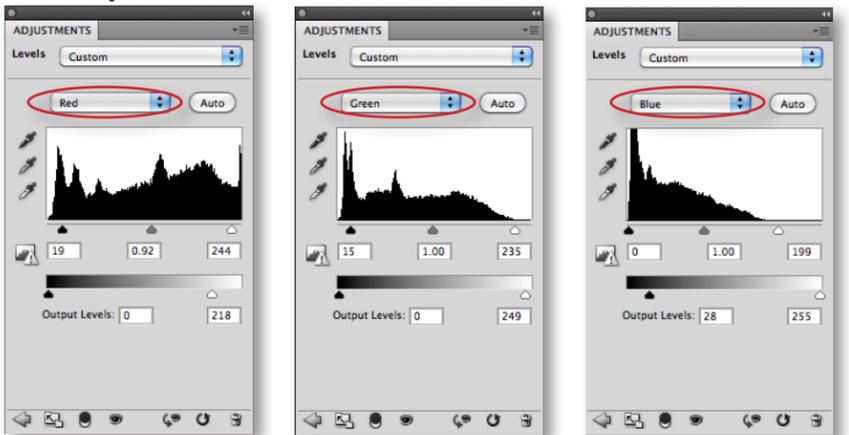
### Step 2



Select the Create New Fill or Adjustment Layer (see red circle) and select Levels from the pull down menu. A separate Adjustment Panel will now appear. For demo purposes, I have my Adjustments panel next to my Layers panel.

Now you're ready to adjust your levels. Let's start with Red, then Green, then Blue from the RGB pull down menu. (See the red oval)

### Step 3



As you can see in the images above, the adjustments vary from the Red, Green and the Blue levels. This allows you to independently adjust the color levels thereby improving the color balance. I used a combination of color sliders (Histogram ramps) and the Output Levels on each color.

### AFTER



While this final image may not be quite dead on, it's much better than the original image above that we started out with. If needed, you could make further adjustments to Color Balance, Curves, Brightness/Contrast to further enhance the image.

SOURCE: flickr.com/myarmyreserve