



The Revolution Continues: Lightroom 2 Has Arrived

Lightroom 2, the final shipping version, is here and with it you're witnessing the evolution and a revolution in the way software is developed. It feels like it was developed by photographers. It feels like it was crafted by the wants and needs of real users. It feels like "our program."

Adobe also continued something they did with Lightroom 1. The last public beta was Lightroom Beta 4 and between that public beta and the shipping product, they snuck in some extra features that turned out to be really significant. Well, they've done that same thing in Lightroom 2, so if you downloaded the public beta and thought you've seen Lightroom 2, you're once again in for a pleasant surprise.

Here's my quick look at what's new in Lightroom 2, how it evolved, what they did right, and what they still need to tweak.

The biggies

There are a lot of new features in Lightroom 2 but every release of software I'm always looking for that one "killer" feature one that's so brilliant or necessary that if it were the only new feature added, it would totally be worth the upgrade price by itself. Not every update of every program has this, but Lightroom 2 has one, big time: the Adjustment Brush. It kills!

The obvious thing about the Adjustment Brush is that it brings nondestructive dodging and burning to Lightroom (which was at the top of so many photographers' feature wish lists), but we can do so much more than just simple dodging and burning. We have a new power, flexibility, and a whole new

workflow that keeps us from having to jump over to Photoshop as often. Although the concept (and the brush) was introduced in the Lightroom 2 Public Beta, Adobe snuck in a number of additional features in the shipping version that takes it over the top.

Now, under the Histogram there's a new horizontal Toolbox, and when you click on the Adjustment Brush (K), an options panel pops down. It works a little differently than you might think because you choose which Effect you want to "paint" onto your photo. For example, you'd choose Exposure for dodging and burning, then decide how bright (or dark) you want the area you're going to affect, and start painting directly on the image. What makes this so slick is that when you're done painting (let's say you dodged [brightened] an area of grass in the foreground of your photo), you can change the Exposure and dial in exactly the right amount.

So what it's really doing is masking the area for you as you paint, and if you turn on the Auto Mask option (I leave it on most of the time), then it helps you by sensing the color and texture of what you're painting and keeps you from accidentally spilling paint "outside the lines." It works much better than you might think.

If they'd just added this digital dodging and burning, I'd be plenty happy, but that's just one effect you can paint onto your image. Imagine being able to "paint" Clarity, Sharpness, Brightness, Saturation, or even a color tint. It does all that and once you've painted over an area, you can apply one or more of these effects without repainting - just drag the slider and it's there.

It's a totally nondestructive way to work - if you don't like an adjustment, you can remove it in one click. You have the standard brush controls you'd expect (brush Size, Feather, Flow, and Erase). Because you have all this power, you can actually do portrait retouching in

Lightroom, including brightening eyes, smoothing skin, removing blemishes, enhancing makeup,, adding highlights to hair, changing eye color - things you could only do in Adobe Photoshop until now.

Because of space constraints, I've only scratched the surface of what you can do with the Adjustment Brush, and before I go on, module by module, let's go over some general stuff.

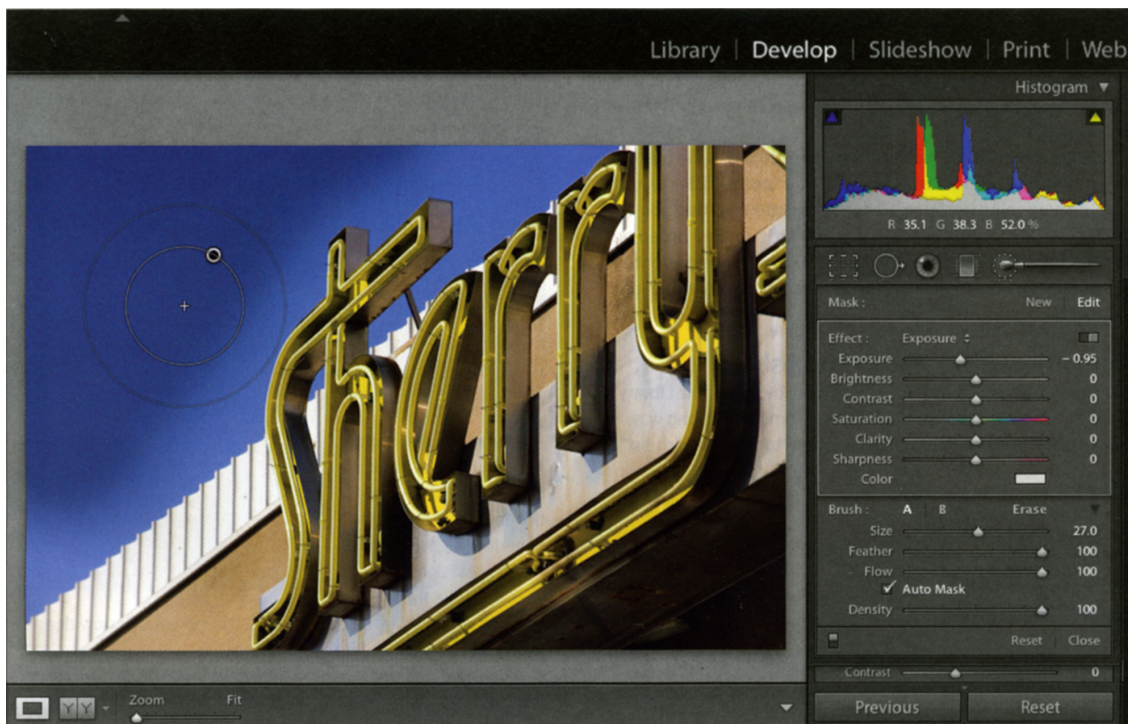
A better Lightroom experience

New features are necessary (and that's what gets the big buzz, right?), but if you've been reading my daily Photoshop Insider blog (www.scottkelby.com), you know that I'm an advocate of making our everyday experience better. Well, I'm happy (actually, relieved) to tell you that Adobe has been working on fixing and enhancing the "little things" that we deal with (and gripe at) every day.

First, they've addressed the issue of having to jump back and forth between the Library and other modules by putting the Collections panel in the Slideshow, Print, and Web modules. Now you can get to your images without jumping back - a bigger boon to your workflow than it sounds.

Adobe has also streamlined the interface throughout the program in ways that just make sense. Buttons are where you think they ought to be, and actually large enough to find. They've added little features, preference and thoughtful tweaks throughout the program that will just make you smile.

Also (and this is really big), it's first version of Lightroom (or and Adobe app) that's 64-bit compatible on both Mac and Windows, so now it can access insane amounts of RAM to keep your workflow screaming along (provided that you have insane amounts of RAM on your computer). Multiple-monitor support - another huge feature



Decreasing Exposure (burning) in the sky by painting with the new Adjustment Brush