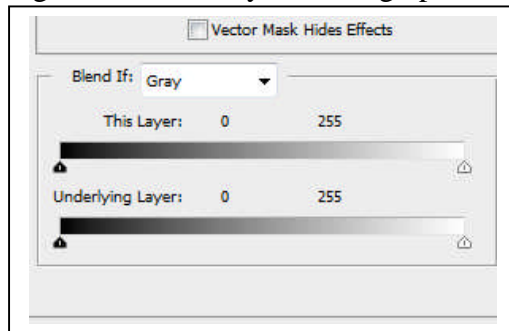


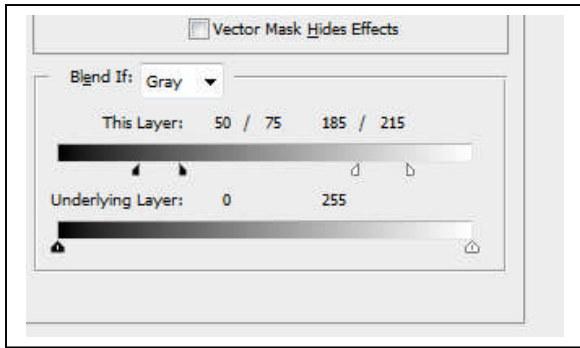
Tech Tips – High Pass Filter For Contrast Control By Rick Cloran

In the first article on using the High Pass Filter we explored how to use it for sharpening and for softening. This article will examine a third use, that of bringing out added detail in a given tonal range. More often than not, this will be in the midtones. I have to start by apologizing to the Elements users. This technique isn't possible in Elements, at least that I know of, because it relies on using the layer blend styles (as opposed to blend modes) that are only available in full Photoshop. To appreciate the potential in this technique try it on something that has a lot of texture in the midtones, say something like the foreground sweep of rocks at Pemaquid Light, brick or stone work, a long stretch of sandy beach where there are ridges in the sand ala the dunes in Death Valley.

As before, complete all of your primary adjustments to the image. Next either flatten it and then duplicate the background layer or generate a new composite layer by pressing <CTRL><ALT><SHIFT>E for a PC (<CMD><OPT><SHIFT>E on a MAC). To make this adjustable, I would recommend converting the layer for smart filter use. Now apply the High Pass Filter (Filter > Other > High Pass) and use a setting of around 50 pixels and hit OK. Note that you can play around with the exact number, but you do want to see a significant amount of definition in the area that has the texture you want to bring out. In part, that is why I recommended converting the layer to a smart filter because you can just double click on it and adjust the settings after everything is done. Using this much radius on a High Pass filter has likely introduced colors to the layer, rather than the grays that we want. To fix this press <CTRL><SHIFT>U for a PC (<CMD><SHIFT>U on a MAC) to desaturate the layer.

Change the Blend Mode on the layer to Overlay and then dial back the opacity to about 20%. Now double click in the blank area to the right side of the layer to bring up the Layer Styles dialog box. We are interested in the blending options at the bottom of the dialog. (You can bring this up by going to Layer > Layer Styles > Blending Options as well.) This is where we limit the impact of the effect to the tonal range that we want to bring out. You are working on the upper slider that says "This Layer". Start by drawing the slider over to around 50. Now hold down the <ALT> key (<OPT> on a MAC) and click and drag on the right side of the triangle. The triangle will split in two. Drag the right side over to about 75. Repeat the process for the highlights (left triangle) by dragging it to about 215, then holding down the <ALT> key (<OPT> key on a MAC) drag the inner part of the triangle to about 185.





Your results should look like the second example. What this does is eliminate the High Pass effect in the shadows, below 50, and in the highlights, above 215. It then phases in between 50 and 75 and between 185 and 215. The full effect is confined to between 75 and 185, or what serves as the midtones in most images. If your textures are lighter or darker, adjust the blending and exclusion zones

accordingly. Now you can adjust the layer opacity a second time to increase or decrease the effect to get what you are looking for.

You can use several of these layers to make fine adjustments to very specific tonal ranges by controlling the blending to restrict the effects of each layer to a very specific tonal range. When coupled with the use of a layer mask, you can literally custom build the midtone, shadow and highlight contrast for an image. I do have to admit that if you own the NIK Color Efex Pro complete edition you can do the same basic thing in far less time using the Tonal Contrast filter. If you do go that route remember to change the Blend Mode for the layer created to Luminosity or the saturation aspect of the Tonal Contrast filter will push your colors into the “non-realistic”, I look HDR’d realm.

The High Pass technique I’ve described was pioneered by Mac Holbrook of Nash Editions. It is a favorite of well known printers such as John Paul Caponigro. Try it and take your image control to the next level.