ARTISTIC TOOLS VOL. ONE

by Kevin Kubota

kubota
IMAGETOOLS

empowering photographers

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"What do you call the fear of driving through a dark passageway with 3 other people in the vehicle?"

"Carpool Tunnel Syndrome."

Hey, so maybe making up jokes is not my forte, but I'm pretty darn good at writing actions. The moral of the story is: don't do repetitive tasks in Photoshop®! Actions can save the day, and I'd like to be your Action Hero. We use these tools everyday in our studio and have saved ourselves countless hours of repetitive work. Heck, we've probably saved enough time to take an extra vacation every year - seriously!

To use these actions, you need to have Photoshop® 7 or higher. Actions are recorded sequences of events within Photoshop®. Some actions are easy to record, some require complex steps, troubleshooting, and planning. All should save you countless hours of time over the long haul - giving you more time for the really fun stuff.

This brief manual will cover some basic info on using actions, things to look out for, and tips for using our actions on your images.
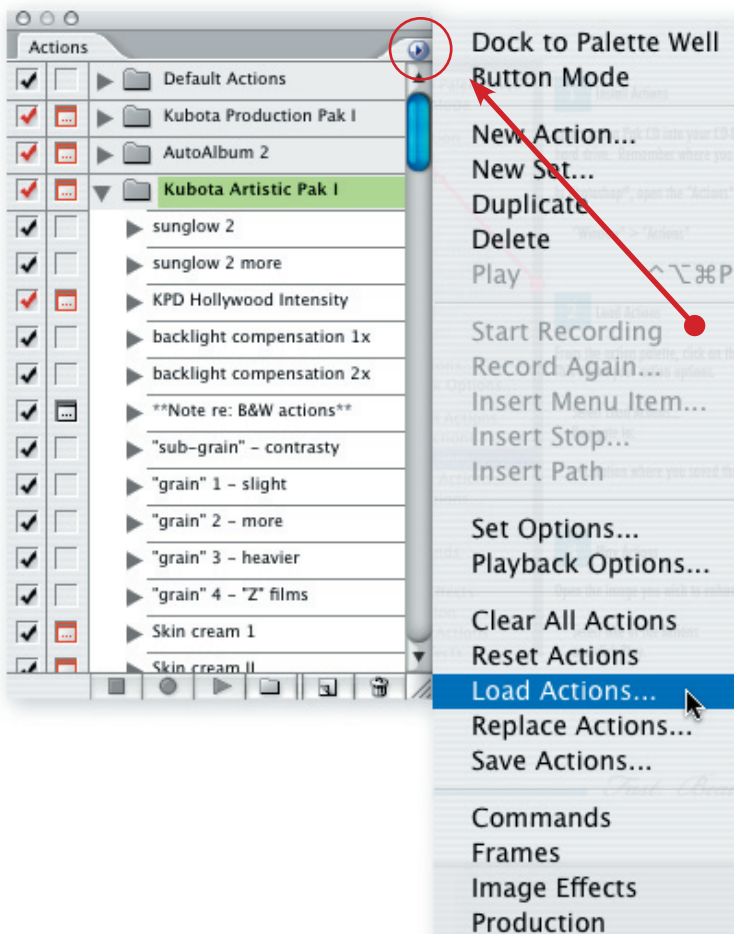
1 Install Actions

Insert Action Pak CD into your CD-ROM drive. Copy the contents onto your hard drive. Remember where you saved them!

In Photoshop®, open the "Actions" palette by selecting

   "Window" > "Actions"

2 Load Actions

From the action palette, click on the little triangle at the top right corner. This opens your action options.
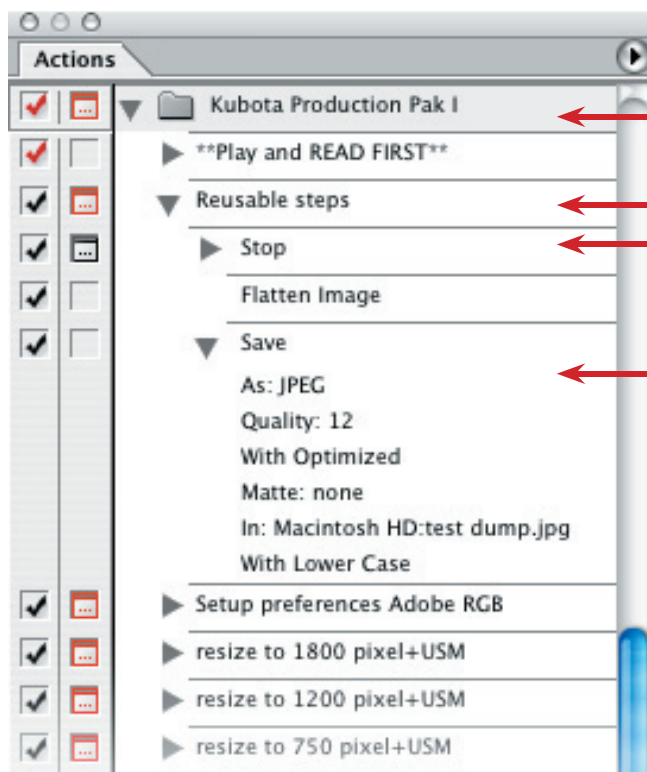
   Select Load Actions...
   Navigate to:

   • Location where you saved the Action Pak in Step 1

3 Play Actions

Open the image you wish to enhance.

   Select one of the Actions
   and click Play.
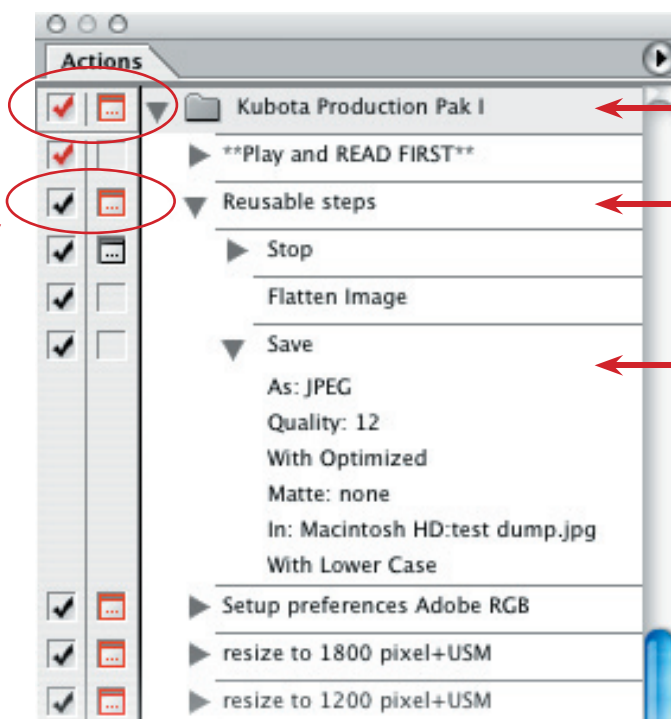
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This is the action SET

This is an ACTION

These are the action STEPS
Each action can have numerous steps

These are the step SETTINGS
This is all the information about the settings that were recorded in a step.

Caution!

Do not click in either of these columns unless you know what you are doing! If you click a box next to an ACTION or ACTION SET, you could inadvertently turn EVERY step OFF or EVERY dialog OFF. This is NOT undoable or reversible! Some actions need certain steps off and certain ones on. If it happens, you'll need to throw the entire set to the trash and re-load it from the original .atn file. Photoshop® CS2 will display a warning box before you are able to turn this option ON or OFF.


This is the action SET

This is an ACTION

These are the action STEPS
Each action can have numerous steps

No Touchie!
Only click here, next to an individual STEP, when necessary.

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• Some actions have instructions in the form of a separate action in the palette. It is usually placed just before an action that needs some explanation or setup. Before running an action, see if there is a "*Setup" or "*READ" action just before it in the list. If so, run the setup/read action first.

• Many of the actions work great when you combine them. For example, you may run a B&W action that you like, followed by a warming gel, followed by a Film Grain, followed by a border and keyline. This is how you can mix-n-match to get a variety of unique custom looks. Actions that work well together are generally placed next to each other in the list.

• The base settings in the actions will usually give beautiful results. But, the beauty of it all is that you can tweak the settings to get just the look you want. A good example is the Gradient Map B&W actions. The gradient map adjustment layer can be double-clicked, which will open the settings for editing. Click on the gradient graphic to edit the gradient settings. Try moving the middle color stop left or right to change the middle gray values. Or, double click the middle color stop and give it a hint of warmth. This makes beautiful, rich B&W images or sepia/color tones.

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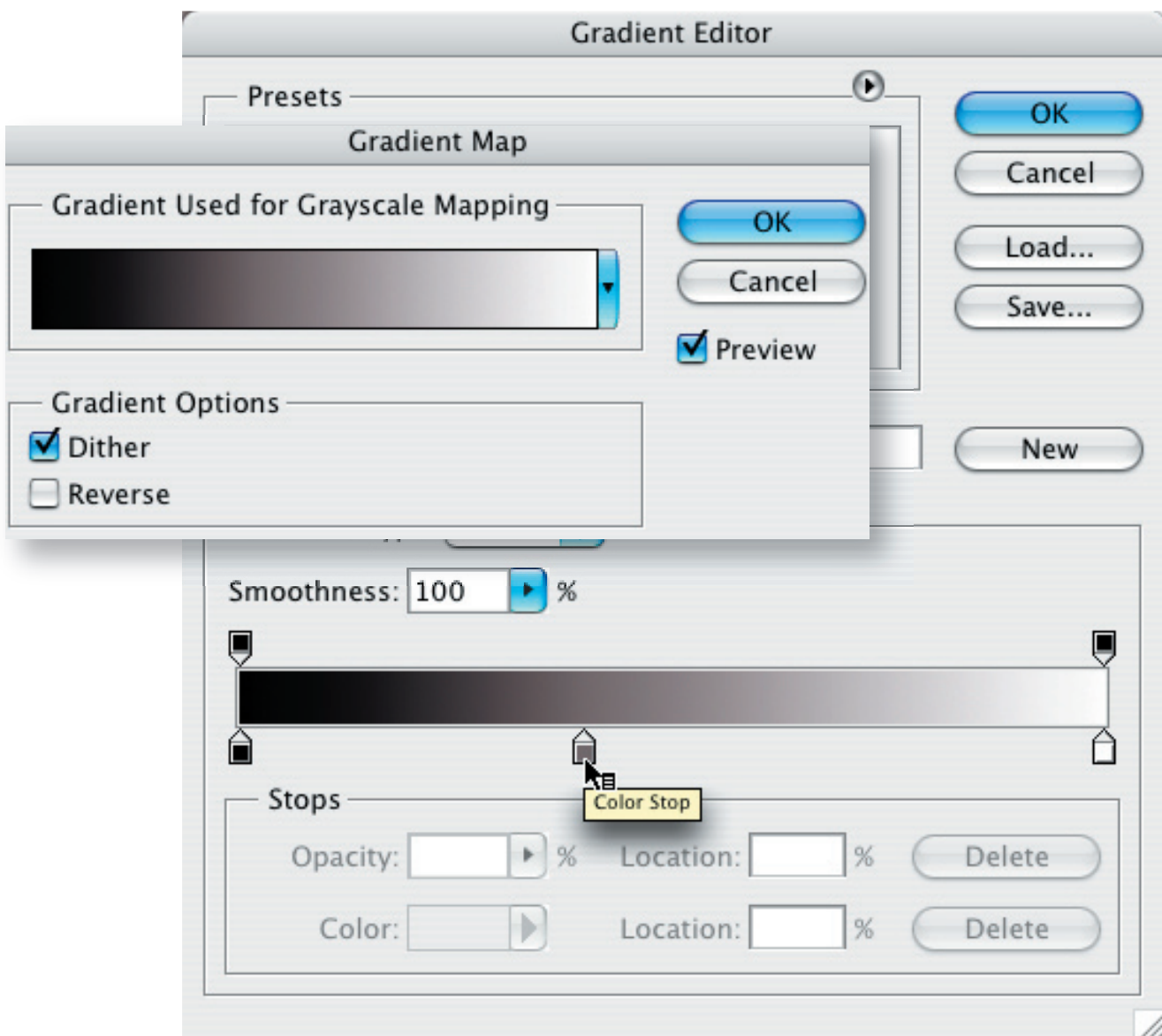
• Don't forget to assign hot keys to your favorite actions! This one step alone can save hours a month (OK, maybe one hour a month, but that's enough for an extra special long lunch!) If you find yourself using a favorite action all the time, double click next to the name of the action and assign it to a function key. We put labels on our keyboard showing what each F key does.
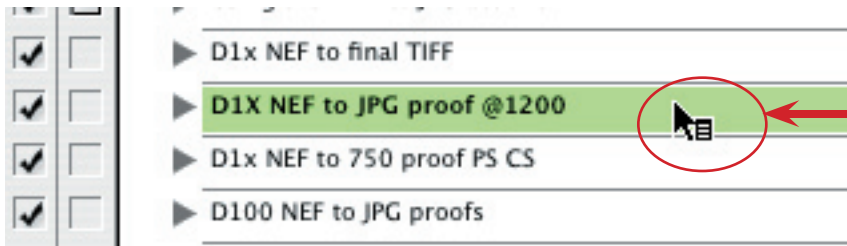
**Make sure to double-click to the side of the name, here...**

• Many of the actions have steps in them that stop and present a dialog with instructions on its use. After you have used the action a few times, you may not want the instructions to bother you any more. No problemo, you can disable any step by clicking the check box next to its name. BE CAREFUL to only click on the check next to the individual step, not the whole action. You would normally look for the STOP step and turn it off.

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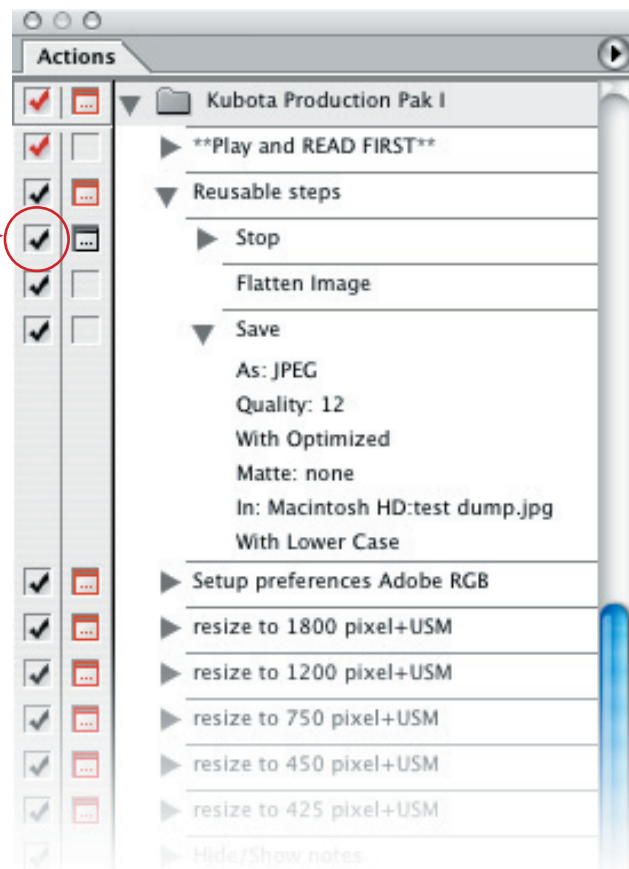
• If an action is stopped - because a stop step may ask you to do something before continuing, you can resume where you left off by simply clicking PLAY on the action palette again.

• Some actions have SAVE steps in them. They often need the save step in order to run correctly in batches. Make a habit of OPENING AN ACTION before running it to see what's inside. If it has a SAVE step, it will try to save your file (unsuccessfully). So, you must either turn OFF the SAVE step or customize it for your computer.

To customize a SAVE step, or any step for that matter, just DOUBLE CLICK on it. This will allow you to re-record THAT STEP ONLY. This is perfect for changing the location of a save step to a spot on your computer. If you plan to use the action in a batch, the actual LOCATION that was recorded in the save step is not important - as the batch dialog will allow you to over-ride the destination. However, the save step is important because it determines the FILE TYPE and COMPRESSION settings for the saved file. Don't disable save steps for actions that are to be used in batches.

• Some of the actions use complex layering schemes to achieve a result. If your document is already heavily layered. Things could get confusing. It might be a good idea to flatten your image first, before running the action, so the action can't get confused. You can always make a SNAPSHOT of your current image before running the action, so that you can restore it pre-action condition if you don't like the effect. If you don't flatten, at least make sure your main image layer is the ACTIVE layer before running the action.

The active image layer
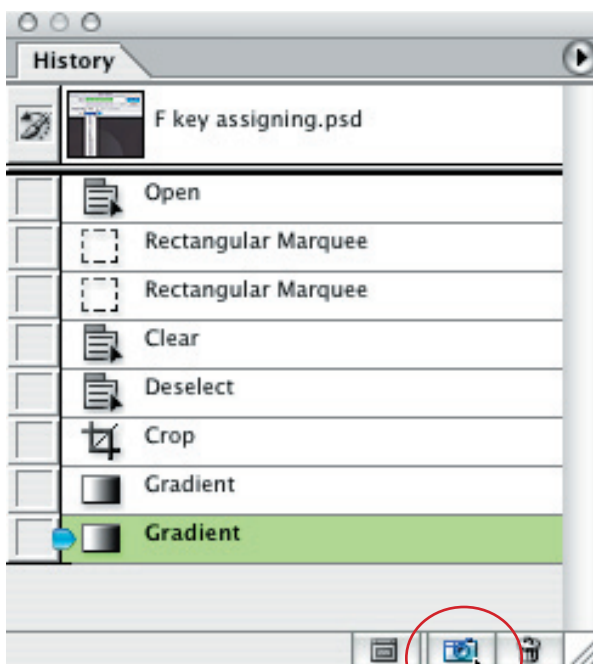
Create a SNAPSHOT of your current document

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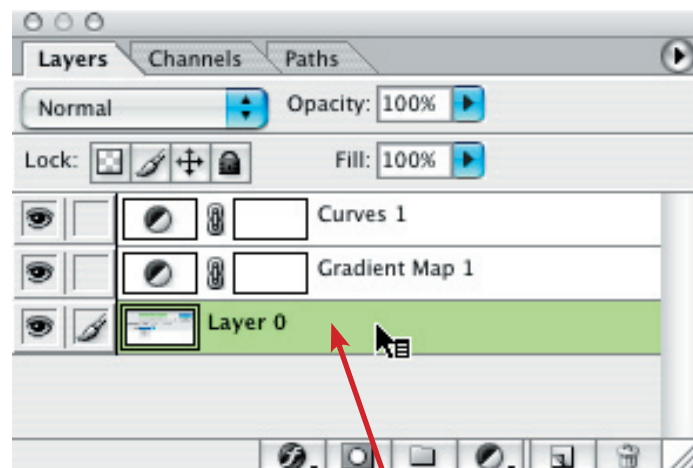
Actions in detail

Action: Sunglow 2
A bright, sunny, glowing effect. Try it on outdoor natural light images with bright highlights.

Action: Sunglow 2 more
A softer version of above

Action: KPD Hollywood Intensity
Rice color, deep and romantic, similar to Hollywood film technique of using black net over lens - but more color enhanced.

Action: backlight compensation 1x
Raises the shadow values without affecting the highlights as much. Try it on backlit photos with slightly under-exposed foregrounds

Action: backlight compensation 2x
Stronger version of above.

Action: **Note re: B&W actions**
A note, probably should play and read.

Action: "sub-grain" - contrasty
Action: "grain" 1 - slight
Action: "grain" 2 - more
Action: "grain" 3 - heavier
Action: "grain" 4 - "Z" films
The above are nice "film-like" grain effects in varying styles and amounts. We've used proprietary techniques to avoid the "Digital noise" look. They give a more organic feel to images and often increase apparent sharpness and contrast slightly. Use one after a B&W action for best effect.

Action: Skin cream 1
Run this BEFORE a B&W action to brighten and smooth skin color in the resultant B&W. Works best on redder or ruddy skin tones. Works nicely on children or babies with red, spotty cheeks. Use on color images will be gross.

Action: Skin cream II
A variation on above

Action: BW GM warm 1 + snappy
One of our favorite B&W conversions. Allows for tunability of the tonal qualities and imparts a slight warmth and punch. See the instructions earlier in this document on how to tweak the Gradient Map settings.

Action: BW GM warm 2 + snappy
A variation on the above

Action: B&W KPZ Grainy film
A high speed film effect with grain added

Action: B&W KPZ II GMap grainy film
Another high speed film effect using Gradient Mapping and grain added

Action: B&W via LAB
B&W conversion using the LAB color mode

Action: B&W via LAB with color
As above, but with the original color layer added back for use in hand coloring effects.

Action: B&W punchy+bump+grain ChaMix
A snappy B&W conversion with some grain

Action: B&W Channel Mixer 70/20/10
Action: B&W Channel Mixer 45/32/32
Two conversion using favorite formulas

Action: B&W Film/Filter Adjustment II
Allows for pre-filtering the image to control the way certain color values are converted to B&W, similar to putting a colored filter over the lens and shooting B&W film - but much more powerful.

Action: B&W 100 red
Using the classic channel mixer formula. Light etheral skin tones.

Action: B&W 100 red punchy
As above, but with more contrast

Action: B&W TastyGlow II
B&W and a glowing effect

Action: B&W Glow punchy
Similar to above but with more punch

Action: B&W InfraKev I
Not exactly infrared, but a similarly enhanced B&W conversion

Action: B&W Edgy
A fashion B&W look. More contrast, punch, and drama

Action: B&W Kevin's secret formula
Rich and dramatic, not for the conservative! Works nice where faces are well lit. Otherwise creates a very dramatic lighting feel.

Action: B&W warming filter
Use this after a normal B&W conversion to add depth and slight warmth. Not enough color to be sepia, just a warmer, tastier B&W.

Action: B&W Enriching formula
Another formula to richen a B&W conversion.

Action: Sepia w/deep black 1
A sepia conversion that goes beyond the typical. Maintains true black in the deepest shadows and clean whites in the highlights. Avoids the muddy look of most sepia conversions. Rich and yummy.

Action: Sepia w/deep black 2
A tonal variation on the above

Action: Sepia w/deep black 3
Another variation

Action: Chocolate syrup 1
Mmmmm, like a hot Mocha in the morning

Action: Chocolate syrup 2
More, more, more!

Action: Eyes & Teeth enhance
Creates layers pre-set for retouching the eyes and teeth. Use for lightening eye whites & teeth and for removing red/yellow from eyes and teeth. Also use for an "eye-liner" effect to enhance lashes and eyebrows. Instructions will display when run.

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Action: Vignette
One of our most used actions. Simple but highly effective. Program an F key for this one!

Action: Vibrant glow
Vibrant, radiant color and a subtle glow

Action: x-process I
Action: x-process 2
Action: Kev X-process combo
Three variations on a classic fashion look: cross-processed film

Action: Kubota light GlowSoft
Action: Kubota light GlowSoft vibrant
Action: Kubota light GlowSoft highlights
Action: Kubota darker GlowSoft
The above give beautiful romantic effects. Try the variations to see what you like best for each image.

Action: 81K warming
Action: 82K warming
Simple but useful warming gel filters. Add a little mood to a blah, cool image.

Action: Fuji snappit
Contrasty, enhanced color similar to Fuji's Velvia

Action: VPS it
Lower contrast and color saturation for portraits

Action: KPD midbright
A very useful midtone brightener. Works surprisingly well and many images.

Action: *Note on WB correction actions
A note to read

Action: Too blue - tung -> daylight I
Action: Too blue - tung -> daylight 2
Action: Too warm - daylight -> tung 1
Action: Too warm - daylight -> tung 2
Action: day to tung filter PS CS only
Attempts to fix images shot with the wrong white balance settings. Note, however, that each camera and each scene, and different settings will give different variations in the white balance error, so the action may need some tweaking for your particular images. It should get you in the ballpark though.

If you would like more information on other training products:
The Digital RAW Workflow for Photoshop® CS2, Photoshop® for Digital Photographers, The Digital PhotoFlow,
AutoAlbum, Mini-Tutorials, more Actions, or live workshops, please visit our website:

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info@KubotaImageTools.com

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