mini ACTIONS

by Kevin Kubota

kubota
IMAGETOOLS
empowering photographers
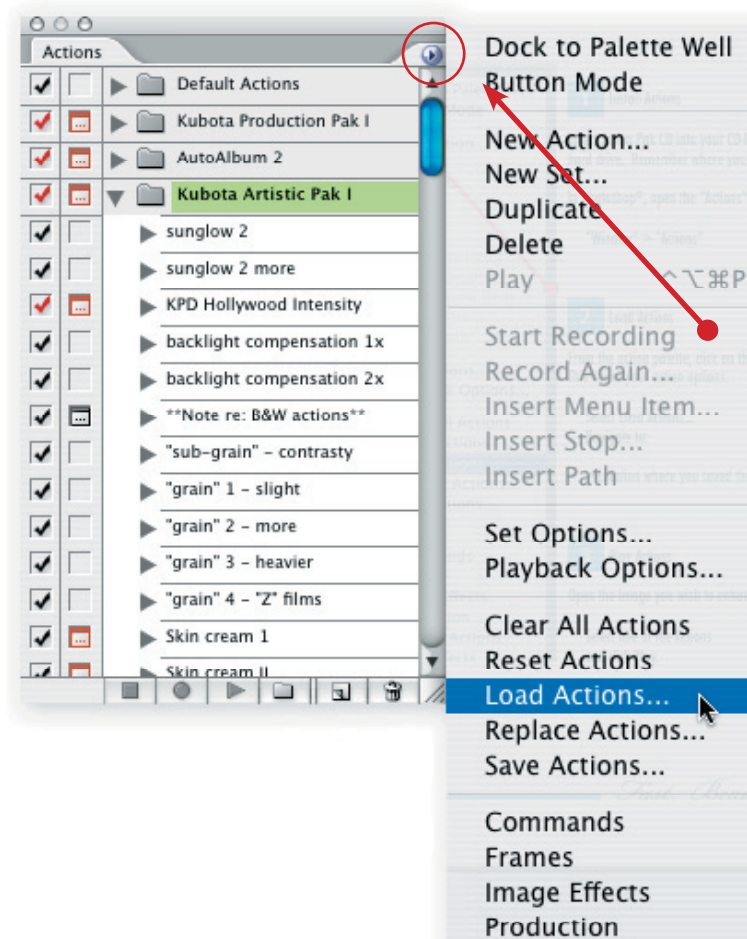
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To use these actions, you need to have Photoshop® 7 or higher. Actions are recorded sequences of events within Photoshop®. Some actions are easy to record, some require complex steps, troubleshooting, and planning. All should save you countless hours 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

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.
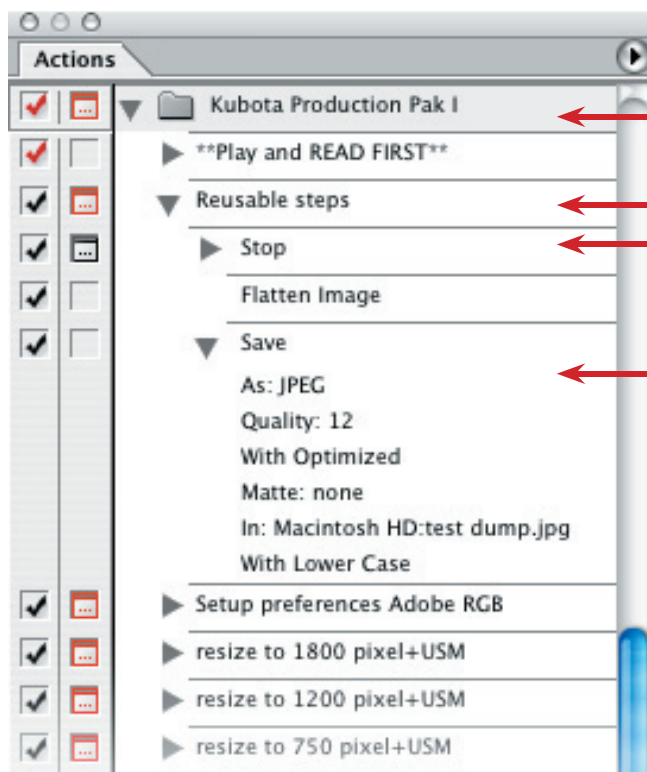
   Select Load Actions...
   Navigate to:

    • Location where you saved the Action Pak

3 Play Actions

Open the image you wish to enhance.

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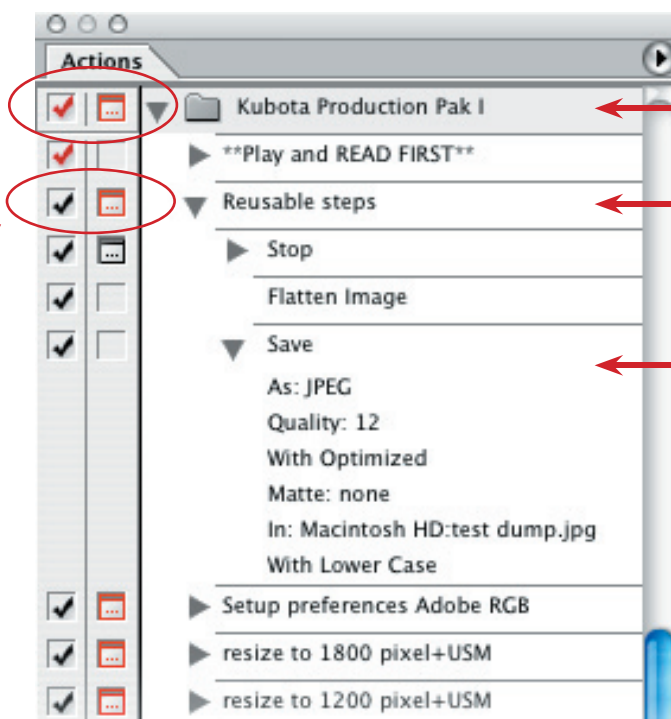
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This is the action SET

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.

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

This is the action SET

This is an ACTION

These are the action STEPS
Each action can have numerous steps

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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 midtone boost, followed by a Film Grain (from Artistic Tools vol. I), followed by a border and keyline. This is how you can mix-n-match to get a variety of unique custom looks. Take some time to experiment, you'll create your own unique looks with very little effort!

• 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 B&W actions. Most of our B&W actions are based on our unique Gradient Map technique. 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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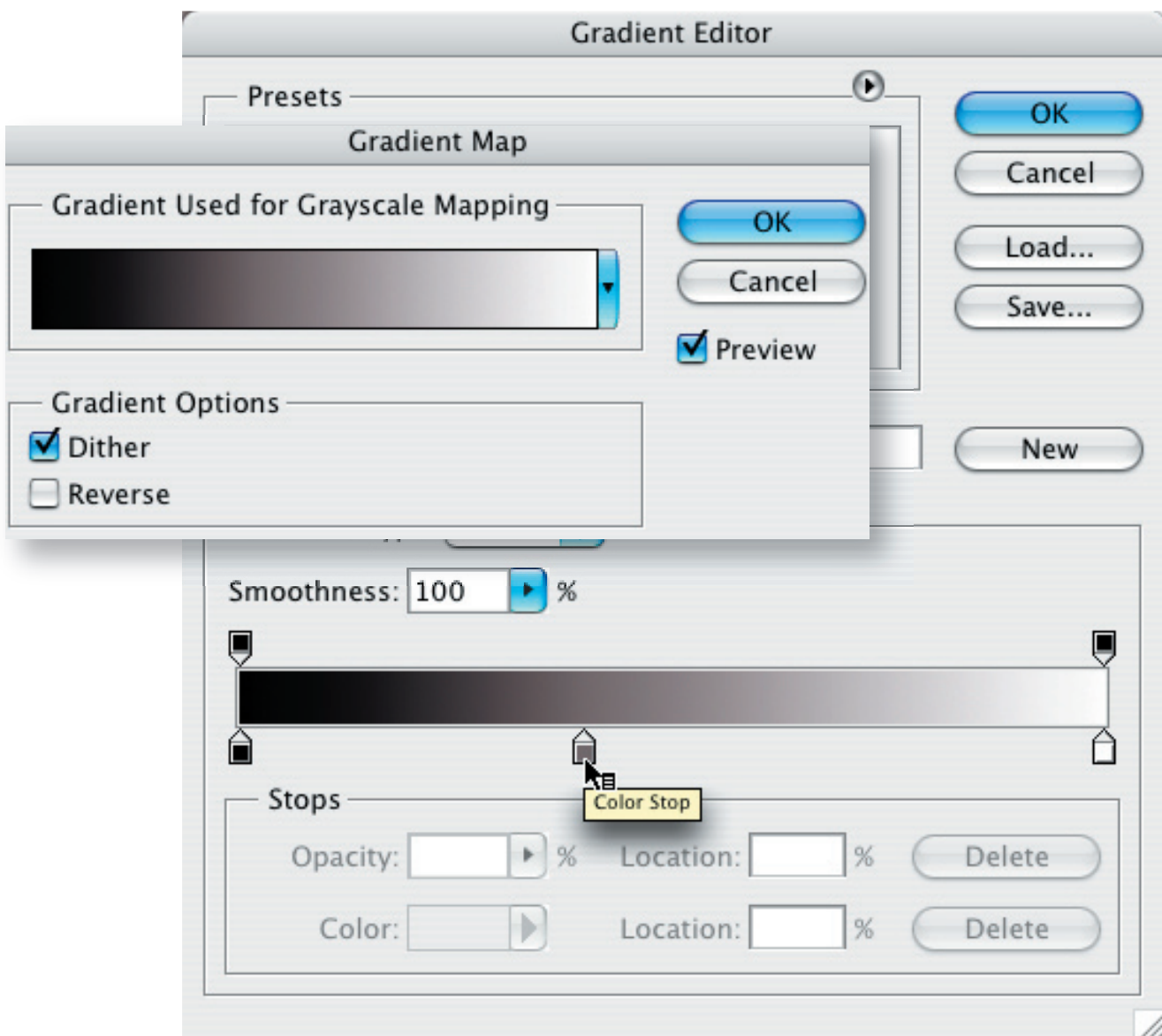
• Don't forget to assign hot keys to your favorite actions! This one step alone can save hours a month (OK, maybe one hour a month, but that's enough for an extra special long lunch!) If you find yourself using a favorite action all the time, double click next to the name of the action and assign it 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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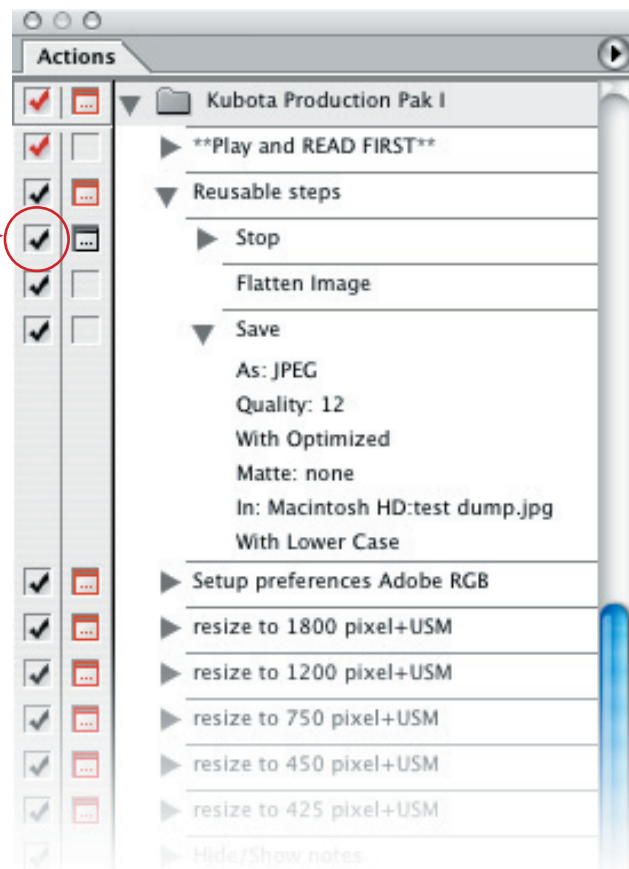
• If an action is stopped - because a stop step may ask you to do something before continuing, you can resume where you left off by simply clicking PLAY on the action palette again.

• Some 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. In fact, many of the actions will take a snapshot and flatten the image first for you - saving you the extra steps.

The active image layer
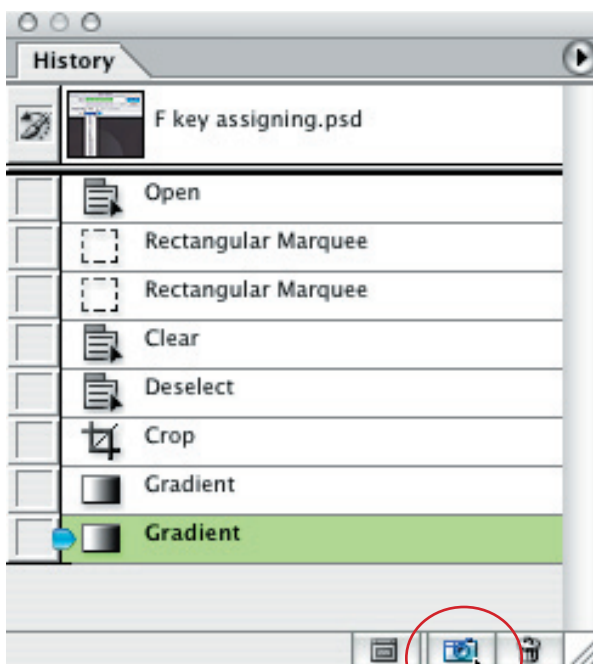
Create a SNAPSHOT of your current document

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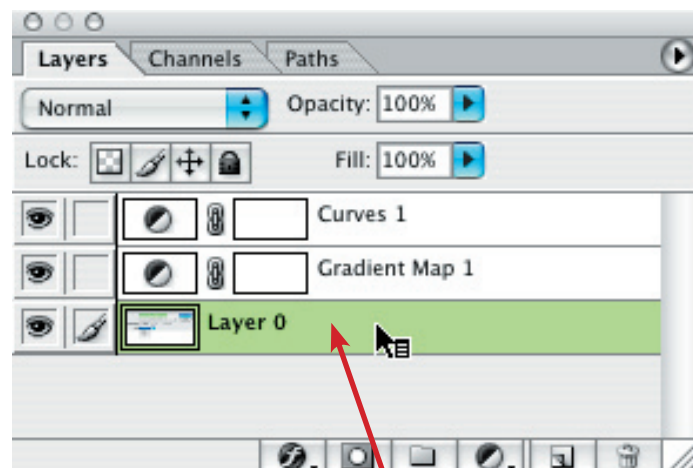
Actions in detail

Action: Play first - about these actions!
Be sure to play this first, it's helpful, like the name says.

Action: Retouch Set'r Up
Automatically prepares the necessary layers for retouching portraits. Instructions for what to do with the layers are displayed as a sticky note. Use the previous action to hide this note while you work.

Action: Digital Fill Flash
This is another everyday handy tool. Use it to lighten key areas of your image without washing out the shadows or blowing highlights. Simply run the action, then paint where you need light. Great for bringing attention to faces, lightening shadows on faces, or add depth to otherwise flatly lit images. You'll wonder how you ever lived without it!

Action: BW
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 with open shadows
 B&W open shadows is a B&W that also lightens the shadow areas revealing more detail in under-exposed areas.

Action: Blue Tone
Cool blue monochromatic toning.

Action: Soft Glow
Beautiful romantic effects. Try the variations to see what you like best for each image.

Action: Curve Layer Bump
A very useful midtone brightener.

Action: Clarify lite
Cuts the "haze" in some digital images. Adds a bit of localized contrast and gives images just a little snap.

Action: Clarify med
Heavier version of above.

Action: USM Normal Res
A nice general sharpening setting for images 200-300 dpi.

Action: USM Low Res
Sharpening setting for low resolution images.

Action: Landscape Radiance with Clarify
Color boosting and vividness.

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

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Action: Canvas Horizontal w/ keyline
Increases the canvas size proportionately for adding borders. Use on horizontal images. Also adds a thin black keyline around the image area. The keyline size and color can be easily edited.

Action: Canvas Vertical w/ keyline
Increases the canvas size proportionately for adding borders. Use on vertical images. Also adds a thin black keyline around the image area. The keyline size and color can be easily edited.

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

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