

From Capture to Vision



Episode Two, Nick Melidonis continues his investigation in Lightroom 5 and how it makes our photography that much more creative!

To me, the very essence of what we see and shoot has to be translated through our skills in interpreting the image to realise the vision we had at the point of image capture. This can often be very different to the raw file.

Many professional photographers I know often go back to their hero images and tweak them further to express something new that reflects the creative period they are going through, perhaps putting into practice some new techniques in image enhancing.

Lightroom 5 has some extra tools which you can apply when you revisit some of your hero images. The change from Lightroom

3 to 4 was quite significant and provided a milestone in the progression of the software. Lightroom 4 to 5 is only minor in comparison, but certainly it has some new and interesting tools that you will find fun to play with.

As always, if you start with a good raw image containing the maximum information, the end result will hold up well and produce a crisp image with a good range of tonal values.

New Lens Correction Tool Additions

The new Lens Correction Tab has several options, including **Basic** (you will probably spend more time in here), **Profile** (Lightroom

reads the EXIF data to apply a lens profile), **Colour** (chromatic aberration and fringing can be removed), and **Manual** (all the distortion corrections can be applied manually here, including lens vignetting and a new Aspect slider).

The Basic option allows you to select one, two or three options: Profile Corrections, Chromatic Aberration and Constrain Crop boxes, and then you press a button to apply the correction automatically, horizontally (level), vertically or 'fully'.

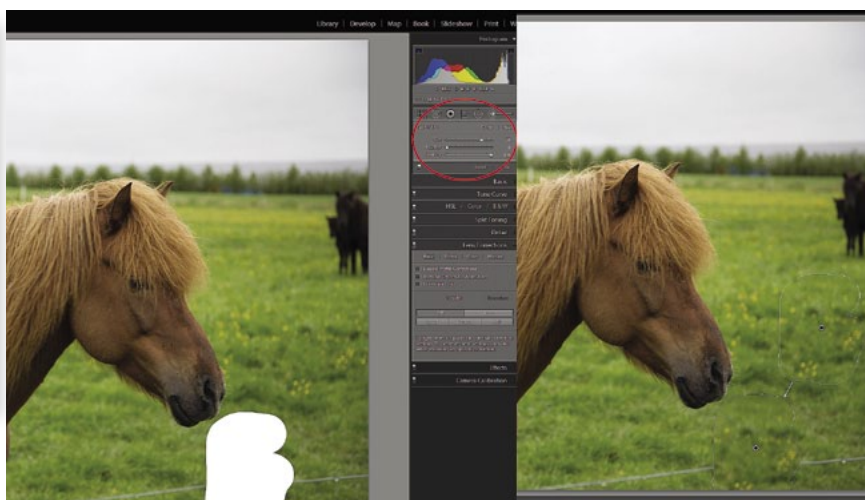
By clicking the 'Enable Profile Corrections' box, Lightroom 5 will use information about the lens and camera you used (obtained from the EXIF data) and apply the corrections that Adobe has worked out for the lens.

To start, I suggest you click the 'Basic' lens correction tab and tick all three boxes: 'Enable Profile Corrections', 'Remove Chromatic Aberration' and 'Constrain Crop'. The latter will re-crop the image to remove areas that don't fit inside a neat rectangle, but you will lose part of the image.



Above: The photo of an Icelandic pony has a white fence post (circled) on the bottom edge, pulling the eye out of the image and distracting the viewer from the main subject.

In previous versions of Lightroom, the clone and heal tools were circles only, which in this case would have been difficult to use. Lightroom 5 allows you to paint a shape to clone and heal, similar to the amazing Photoshop 'Content Aware' tools.



Above right: The Healing brush was selected (tab area circled in red) and the fencepost painted over quite precisely. Lightroom then replaced the post with pixels copied from elsewhere in the image, as shown faintly as an outline above and to the right. You can click on this outline shape and move it around for a better match if you are not satisfied with Lightroom's choice. You can see that the wire from the fence is still in the image, so I apply the Healing brush again, running it the length of the wire and removing it as well.

To straighten an image in Lightroom 4, we used to use the straightening tool in the crop overlay. With Lightroom 5, just select the 'Level' box and it will automatically straighten the image as if by magic. If you wanted to also correct converging verticals or key stoning (which happens when pointing a camera up at a building), just click the 'Vertical' box and Lightroom will automatically correct this for you.

Key stoning is a very common problem and Lightroom 5 now makes it very easy to correct. As a tip, if you are going to take a photo of a building and you know there will be key stoning because you are pointing the camera up to include the top of the building, then step back or zoom out and leave plenty of space on either side of the building and at the bottom of your photo. This way, when you apply the corrections in Lightroom and the image is cropped, you will still have some space around your subject.

Sometimes the geometrically correct key stoning produced when using the 'Vertical' control doesn't quite look right, so try clicking the 'Auto' control and Lightroom will re-correct the key stoning, but leave a tad of slope in the result. This often makes the image correction look more believable.

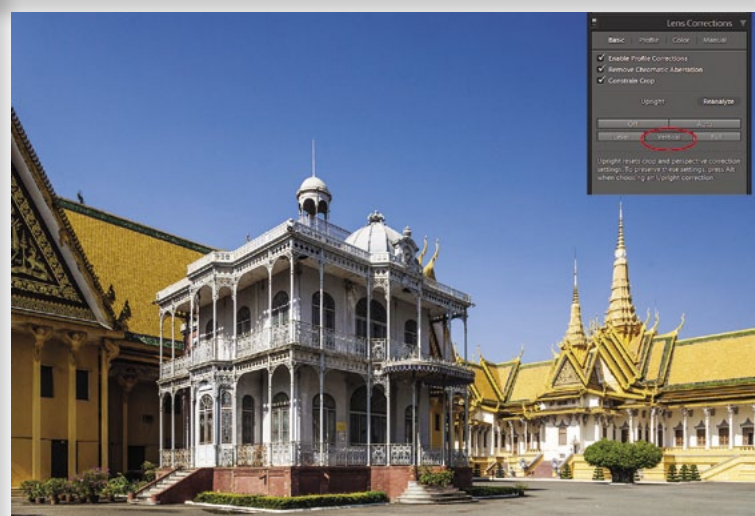
The 'Full' button is great when you wish to correct both vertical and horizontal lines to produce a perfectly parallel correction. However, be careful because if you have people in the image, they can also be corrected, except that the result can look distorted!

If there are issues with the automatic corrections applied under the Basic tab, switch over to the Manual tab and all the controls can be adjusted manually using a series of sliders. You will also see the new 'Aspect' slider. Moving it to the left will make the image shorter and wider, while moving it to the right will make it taller and longer. This control can be applied to a building after correcting it for key stoning, making it a little taller so it looks more realistic.

Advanced Healing/ Cloning Brush

The new additions to the healing and cloning brushes in Lightroom 5 are very useful and even though this is non-destructive parametric editing, Lightroom is providing a healing and clone brush effect similar to what Photoshop uses on real pixels.

In previous versions of Lightroom, you could only have a circular spot when applying the healing or cloning brush. Now



Top: Key stoning or converging verticals are common in architectural and travel photography whenever we point the camera up to capture buildings, as can be seen in these palace buildings in Phnom Penh.

Above left: By ticking the 'Enable Profile Corrections' box in the Basic tab in Lens Corrections panel, Lightroom will apply the Adobe corrections to your image by noting the lens and focal length from the EXIF data. I also tick the 'Remove Chromatic Aberration' and the 'Constrain Crop' boxes.

Above right: By selecting the 'Level' button, Lightroom will automatically level any image, a very useful tool indeed. Selecting the 'Vertical' button (outlined in red) will correct any key stoning in the image. However, sometimes the result looks a little over corrected and, in this case, the image has been cropped too close to the bottom of the image.

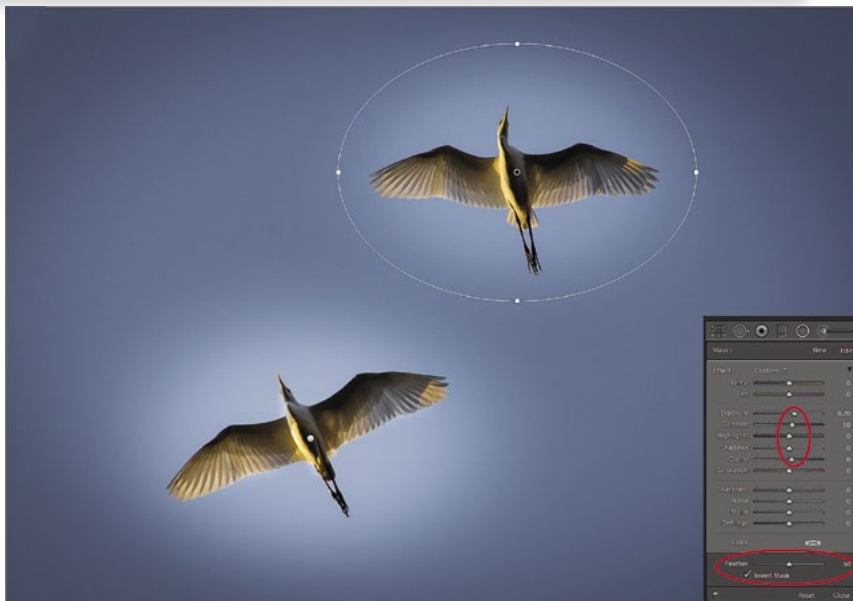
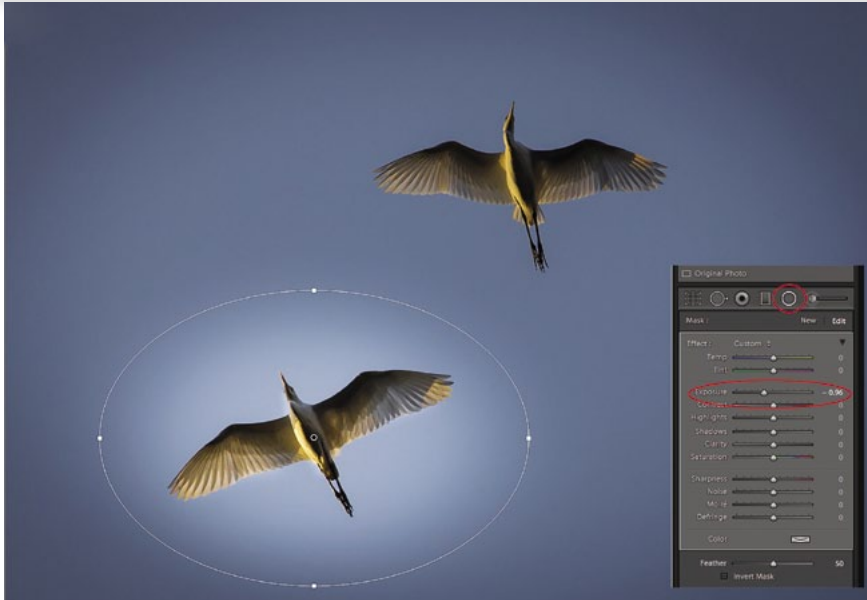
Bottom: Another option is the 'Auto' button. It makes the same basic corrections, but leaves just enough convergence to make it believable. I also find when the verticals are corrected that buildings tend to look a little short. Go to the 'Manual' tab (outlined in red) and tweak the 'Aspect' slider (also outlined in red) a little to the right and the building will now stretch up a little, providing a more realistic correction all round.



Top: The new Radial Filter tool in Lightroom 5 can be very useful when you want to highlight parts of an image to make them stand out. In this photograph, I found the sky was very bright.

Middle: The Radial Tool (outlined in red) was chosen and an ellipse drawn around the bottom bird, as described in the article. The changes by default take place outside the selected ellipse (see red outline). I turned the exposure down a bit, highlighting the bird.

Bottom: I wanted to highlight the top bird as well, so I clicked on 'New' and added another ellipse around the second bird. This time I ticked the 'Invert Mask' box (outlined in red) and adjusted the exposure to +0.7, the Contrast to +0.10 and the Clarity to +0.80.



you can paint over an area in any shape you want or run the brush down or across an area. For example, power lines can be easily removed as follows: start the process with the first click at one end of the power line, hold the Shift key and click to the other end of the power line that you want to clone or heal, and Lightroom will work the correction in a straight line.

Another very useful addition is the 'Visualise Spots' tool. When removing sensor dust and spots, it can be easy to miss some of them, especially in light skies. By tapping the 'A' key on your keyboard, you can shortcut your way to the 'Visualise Spots' tool and a black and white version of your image will appear. By using the threshold slider on the bottom of your image, you can more easily detect spots that you may have otherwise missed and remove them.

And if you make a mistake on any one of the corrections, just click on it with the clone tool active and hit 'delete'.

The Radial Feature

Another exciting new filter in Lightroom 5 allows you to apply localised adjustments that highlight an area and bring the viewer's attention to where you want it. The new Radial Filter is found between the Gradient Tool and the Adjustment Brush at the top of the Develop Module, just under the Histogram.

When you open the Radial Filter, it will offer you a series of potential adjustments, similar to the Gradient and Adjustment Brush filters. To create a Radial Filter, click and drag your mouse across the area you want to highlight. This will create an elliptical shape

which you can edit by clicking the grey handles in the elliptical shape and adjust it to taste. If you require a circle instead of an ellipse, just hold Shift down while drawing the shape.

By default, the area that will be affected when you use any of the options available will take place outside the ellipse. The shape can be re-positioned to where you like by clicking and dragging the centre of the filter.

For example, you may wish to highlight a subject by darkening the surrounding area outside the selected ellipse. This is achieved by dragging the Exposure slider to the left. Within the same selection, you can also alter the colour temperature, sharpening, etc., by moving the respective sliders.

If you click in the Invert Mask box, then any changes will take place inside the elliptical selection. This is an excellent way to adjust brightness, shadow detail, colour temperature, sharpness and so on, for your subject.

Let's suppose you wish to highlight one particular flower in a group and make it stand out. Create the elliptical selection around the flower and reduce the exposure outside the

selection. You can also reduce the saturation and the clarity, the latter softening the area outside the selection. Now click the 'New' option and make a new selection around the flower, but this time click the Invert Mask box. Now you can increase the exposure, sharpness and saturation a little to make the flower stand out even more. I find this tool to be very exciting as you can almost paint with light.

The same technique can be used if you wanted to highlight more than one area within an image. Just use separate selections (click New for each separate selection and click Invert Mask).

Another option you may wish to use is to duplicate an adjustment you made and

place it on another part of the image. This is achieved by using the shortcut 'Cmd + Opt' for a Mac and 'Ctrl + Alt' for a PC.

As with all the sliders in Lightroom, double click on the slider to revert it back to zero. If you wish to get rid of a selection, just double click inside it and it will disappear. By pressing the 'H' key, you can get rid of the overlays if you find them distracting while you are making your adjustments, and bring the overlays back by pressing 'H' again.

As always, a good way of seeing what you started with to where you are now is easily achieved by pressing the backslash key (\). I find this useful to see how the image is progressing or if I'm approaching an 'overcooked' look.

Nick Melidonis is a Master of Photography and a triple winner of the AIPP Australian Professional Landscape Photographer of the Year. He was the 2011 runner-up of the Australian Travel Photographer of the Year and a finalist in 2013. Nick leads photo and cultural tours to exciting destinations such as Greece, Cambodia, Borneo and Iceland. Nick is leading some exciting tours in 2014/15, including an exciting new tour combining the best of Turkey and Greece. Please see Nick's website for details and also the new website, www.phototours.com.au. Nick is also available as a speaker. You can contact Nick at nick@nickmelidonis.com or visit his website at www.nickmelidonis.com.



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