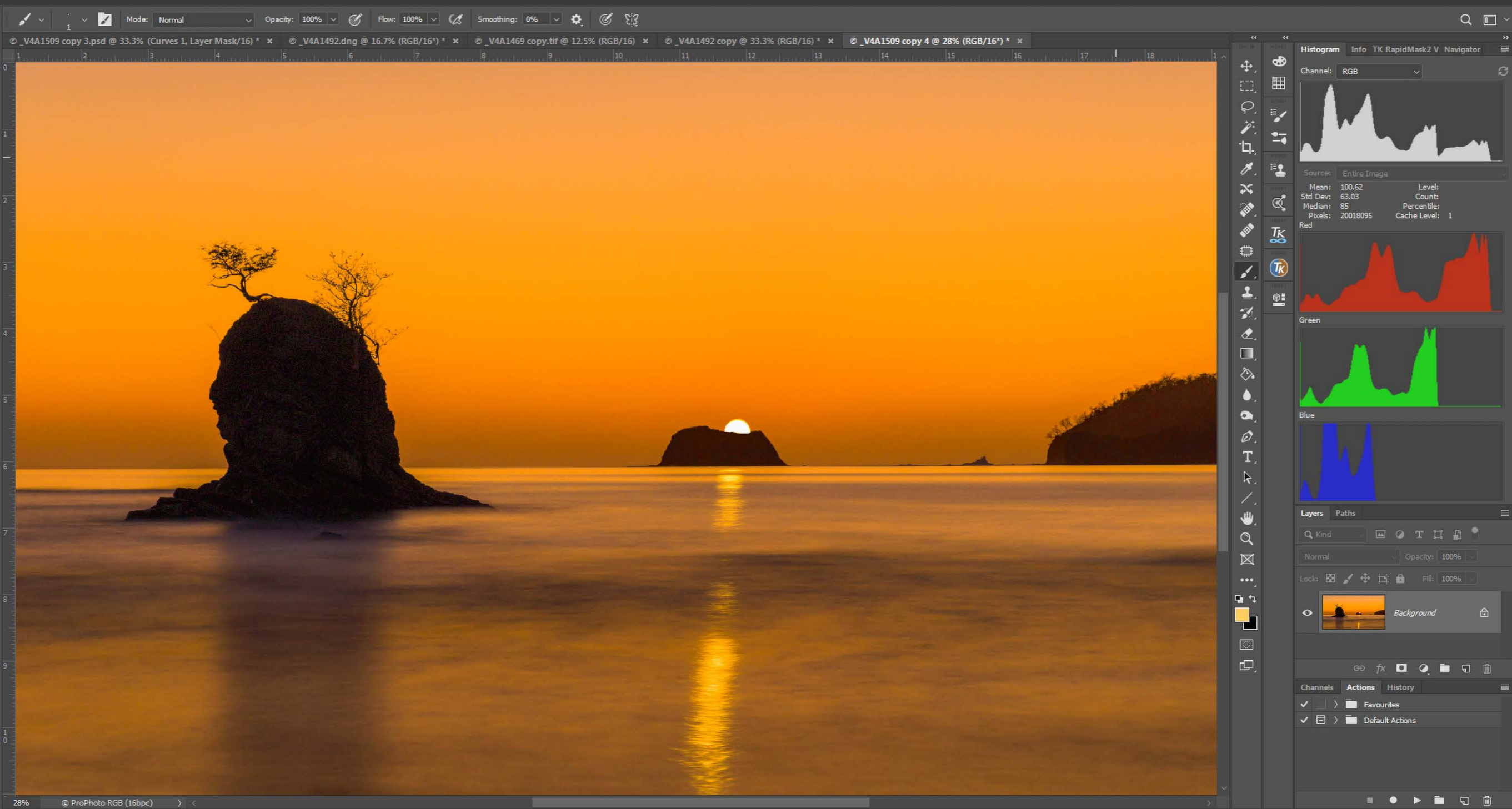




NAVIGATING THE TRICKY PATH OF LIGHTROOM PRESETS AND PHOTOSHOP ACTIONS

Quick Guide
Written by Rob Eyers



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Before automation, many repetitive things in life occupied the majority of a day's activities. Not only was this tedious, it also got in the way of more productive and creative tasks. Although there's something to be said for repetition in the learning process, once comprehension is complete, repeating a process over and over can be a waste of time.

Many of the things done in Lightroom (LR) and Photoshop (PS) during the post-processing workflow are repetitive. Many photos require the same or similar processing considerations. This is where Lightroom Presets and Photoshop Actions can alleviate the drudgery of repetition, and even inspire creativity. Instead of toiling away doing what you've done before, wouldn't it be more productive to have the software do it for you?

In this guide we'll look at how post-processing in LR and PS can be automated to free up time for more creative things. From the point digital images are imported into a computer, to the point where an image is completed, Presets and Actions can be extremely useful.


The precise nature of Presets and Actions, how to use them, and ultimately how to create your own

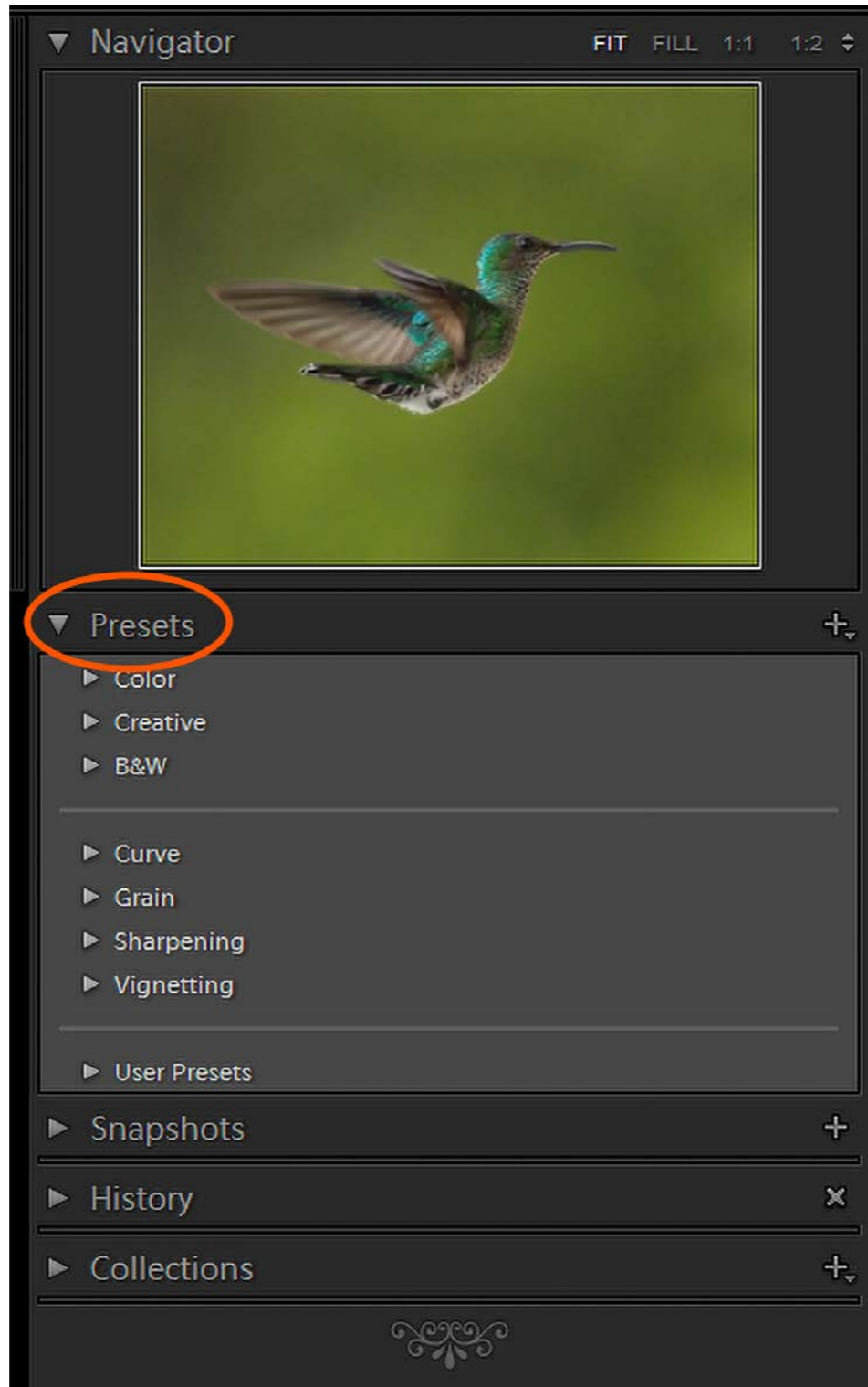
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is the goal of this brief guide. After you've finished this guide, you'll be able to confidently employ pre-made ones and create your own. This will streamline your workflow and save you time for more creative and fun post-processing. It's this guide's goal to get you comfortable with these powerful automation functions that Adobe has included in this software. Along the way there will be some examples that will introduce you to the many possibilities of these powerful tools.

In this guide you'll learn the following:

- What a Lightroom Preset is
- Where Presets are found
- What Presets can do
- How to create a Preset
- What a Photoshop Action is
- Where Actions are found
- What Actions can do
- How to create an Action

 **Recommended Reading:** If you want to learn how to enhance your photos and create better images, grab a copy of Photzy's premium guide: [Ultimate Guide to Fundamental Editing](#).

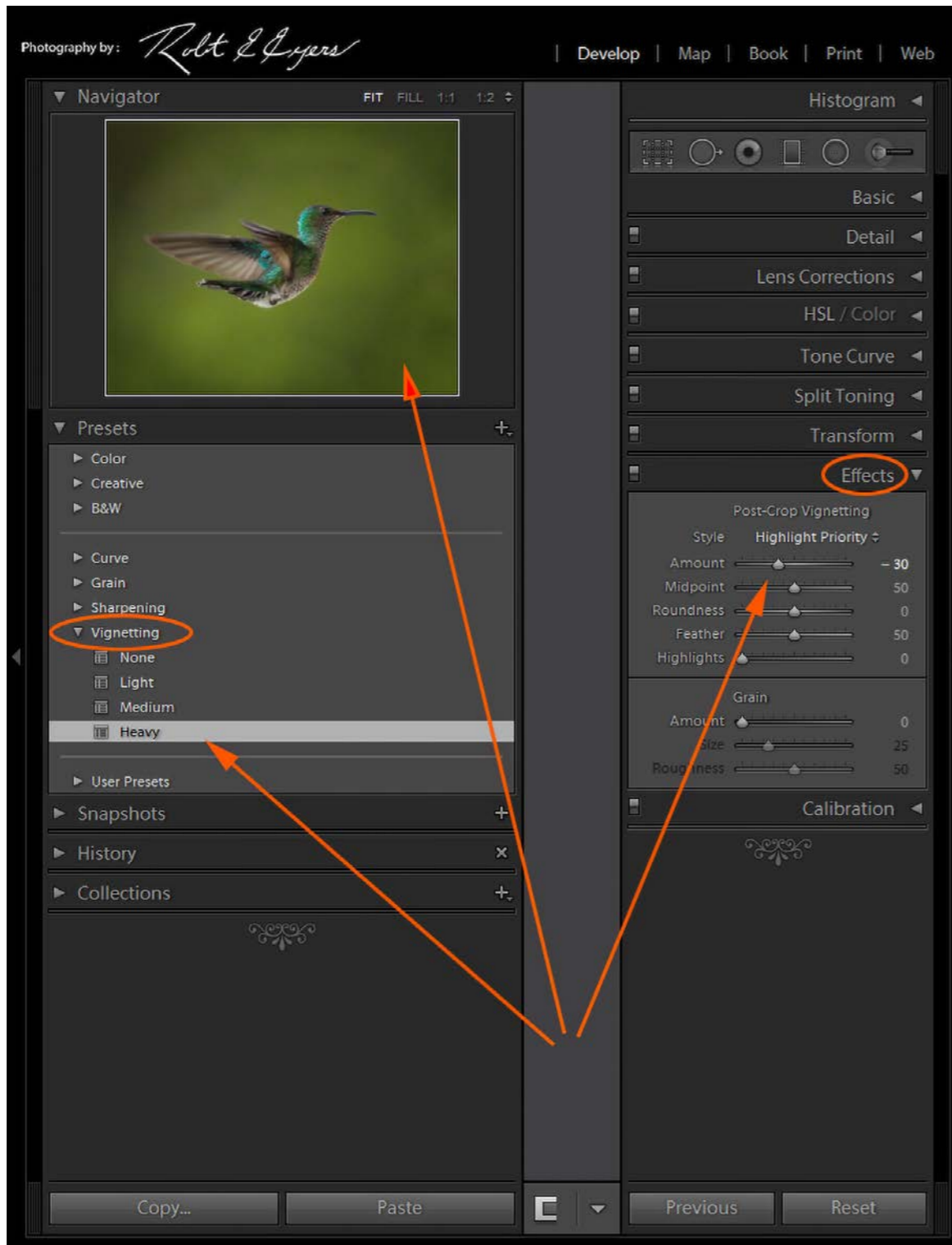


WHAT IS A LIGHTROOM PRESET?

A Preset is a saved copy of all the sliders in the Develop Module of Lightroom, including the Graduated and Radial Filters. After all of the image adjustments are done to your liking, the slider positions can be saved to a Preset for application to another image at a later date.

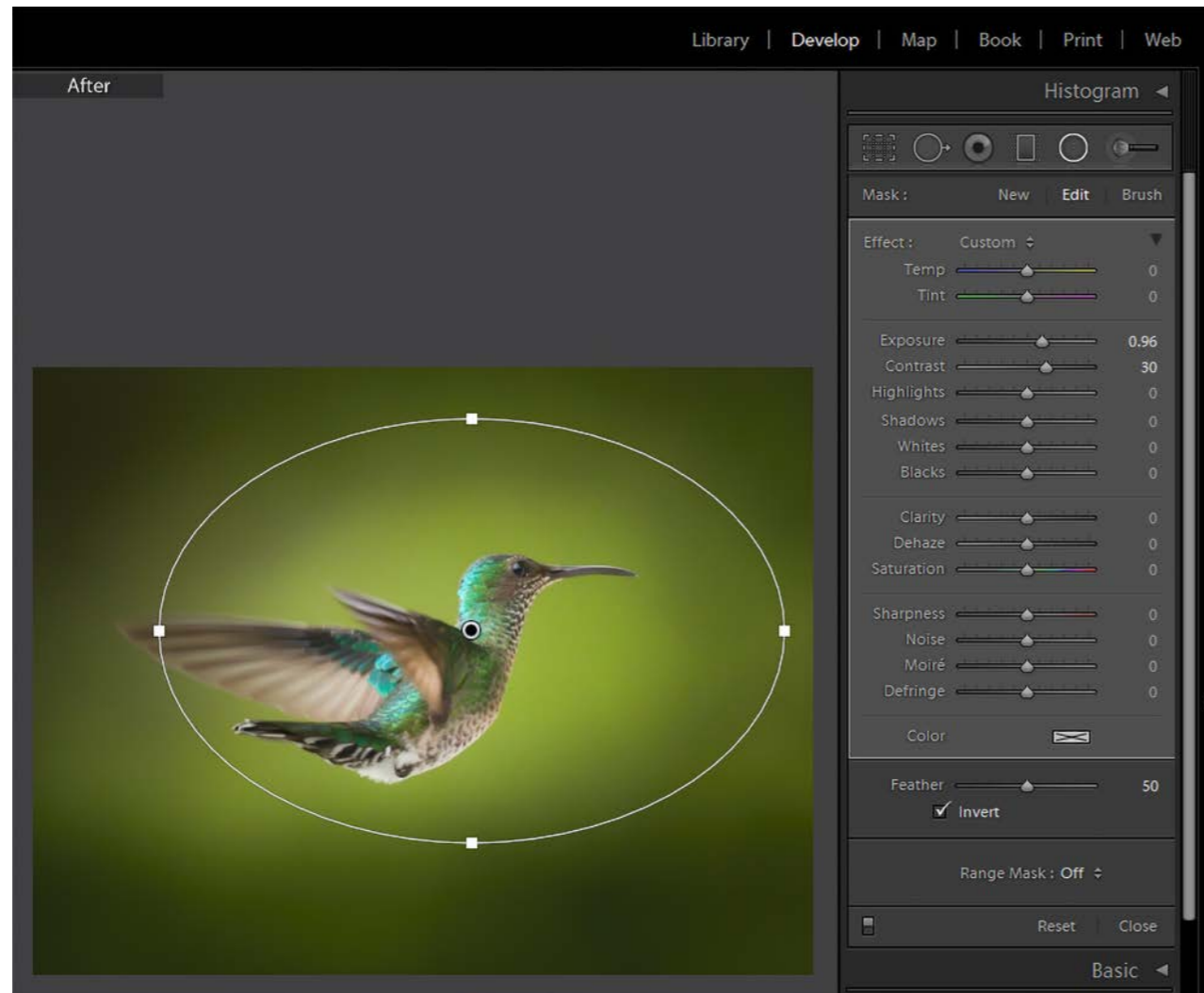
WHERE ARE PRESETS FOUND?

The Presets panel is found on the left side of the Develop Module, below the Navigator. The Presets panel holds folders where the Presets are saved. LR comes with some Presets already included for you to try.

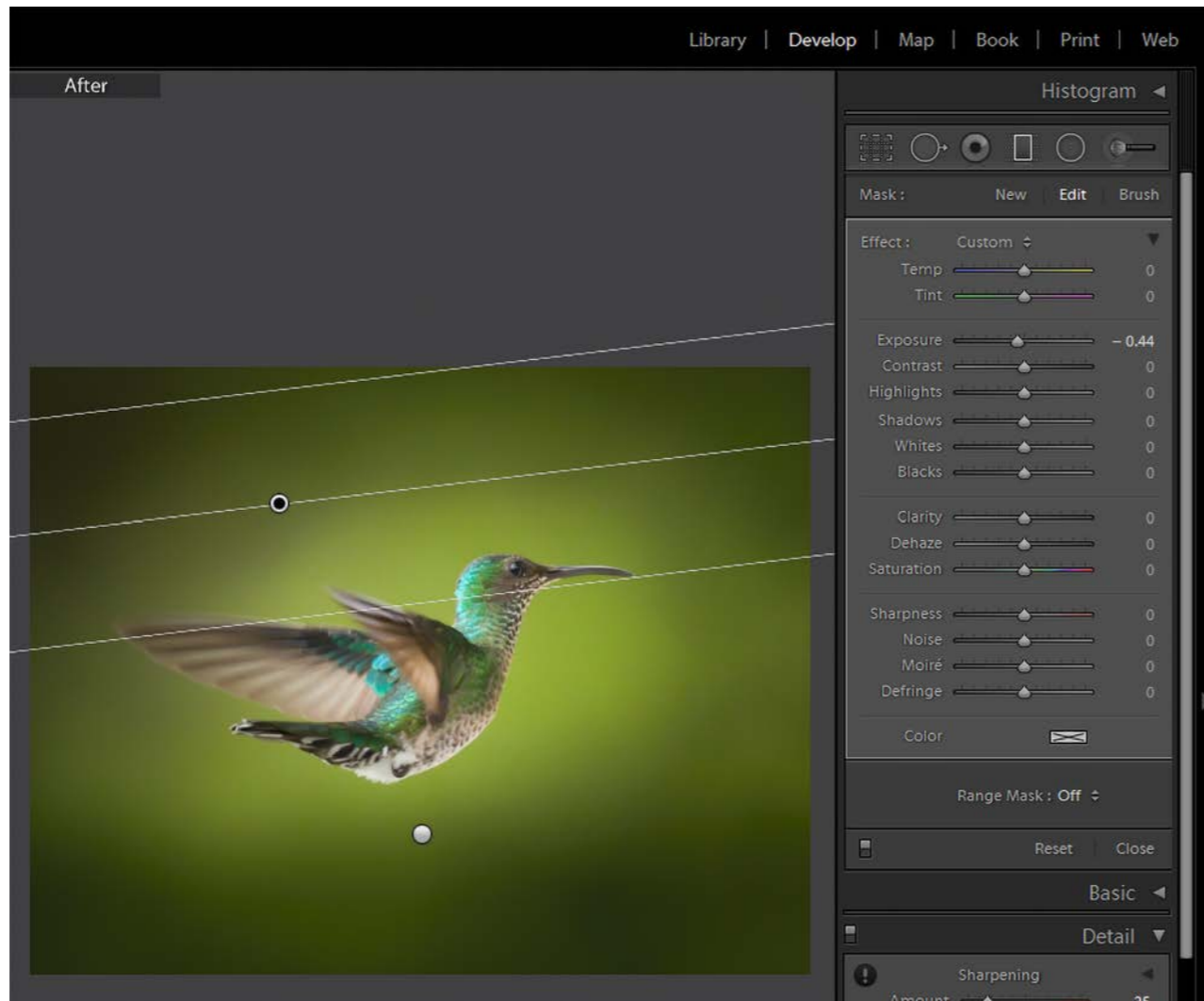


WHAT CAN PRESETS DO?

Anything that can be done in the adjustment panels of the Develop Module can be saved as a Preset. In the image on the left, a heavy vignette has been applied to the selected image, which is previewed in the Navigator. This is a very simple use of a Preset, but it demonstrates that a single click of a Preset can apply a previously saved adjustment of a specific value.



In the example on the left, a Radial Filter has been applied.




Two Gradient Filters are then added to the Radial Filter. All of these adjustments can then be saved as a single Preset, ready for use with other images. To apply them to another image, a simple click on the Preset will put them in place. These filters can then be repositioned and adjusted for the new image.

Key Lesson: There are no limits to how many adjustments can be saved in a single preset.

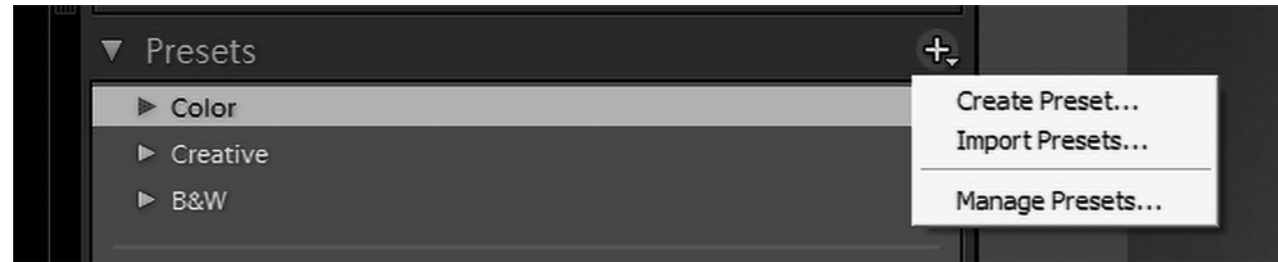
Examine the post-processing steps that you take in your workflow. There will undoubtedly be preferences or adjustments that are repeated over and over with each image developed. Creating a Preset to apply these repeated adjustments can save a lot of drudgery, leaving you more time to exercise creativity in your processing.

For example, let's say that for every single image processed there's Chromatic Aberration and Lens Profile Correction applied. You may prefer a specific base amount of sharpening as well. There might also be a camera color profile from a Color Checker Camera Calibration you apply. All of these adjustments, and others, can be saved as a single Preset, which can be applied with a single click.

 **Key Lesson:** Presets can be used when importing images into Lightroom. Use one to apply any universally preferred processing when importing images. Having base processing applied to all images at import saves a lot of time.

There are many pre-made Presets available online. They can be a great way to kick-start the creative process and inspire new outcomes.

There is one important facet of Presets that needs to be understood when testing different ones on a photo. Some Preset adjustments are sticky. In other words, some of the adjustments can remain after they're applied even after another Preset is applied. For this reason, it's good practice to undo any Preset that's applied before testing a different one. Some adjustments can end up being accumulative if this rule is not followed.

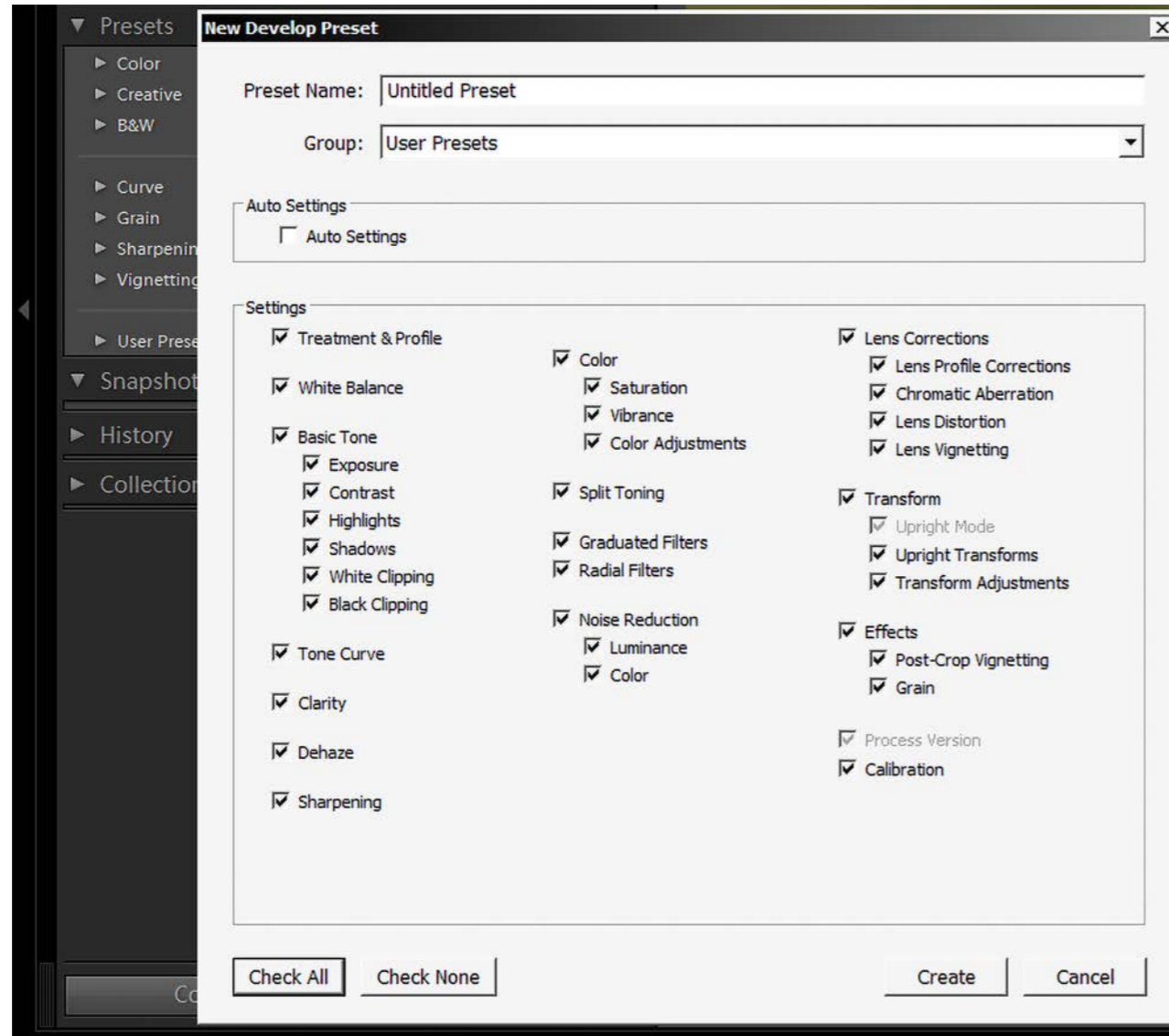


HOW TO CREATE A PRESET


After any adjustments are done in the Develop Module, they can be saved as a Preset.

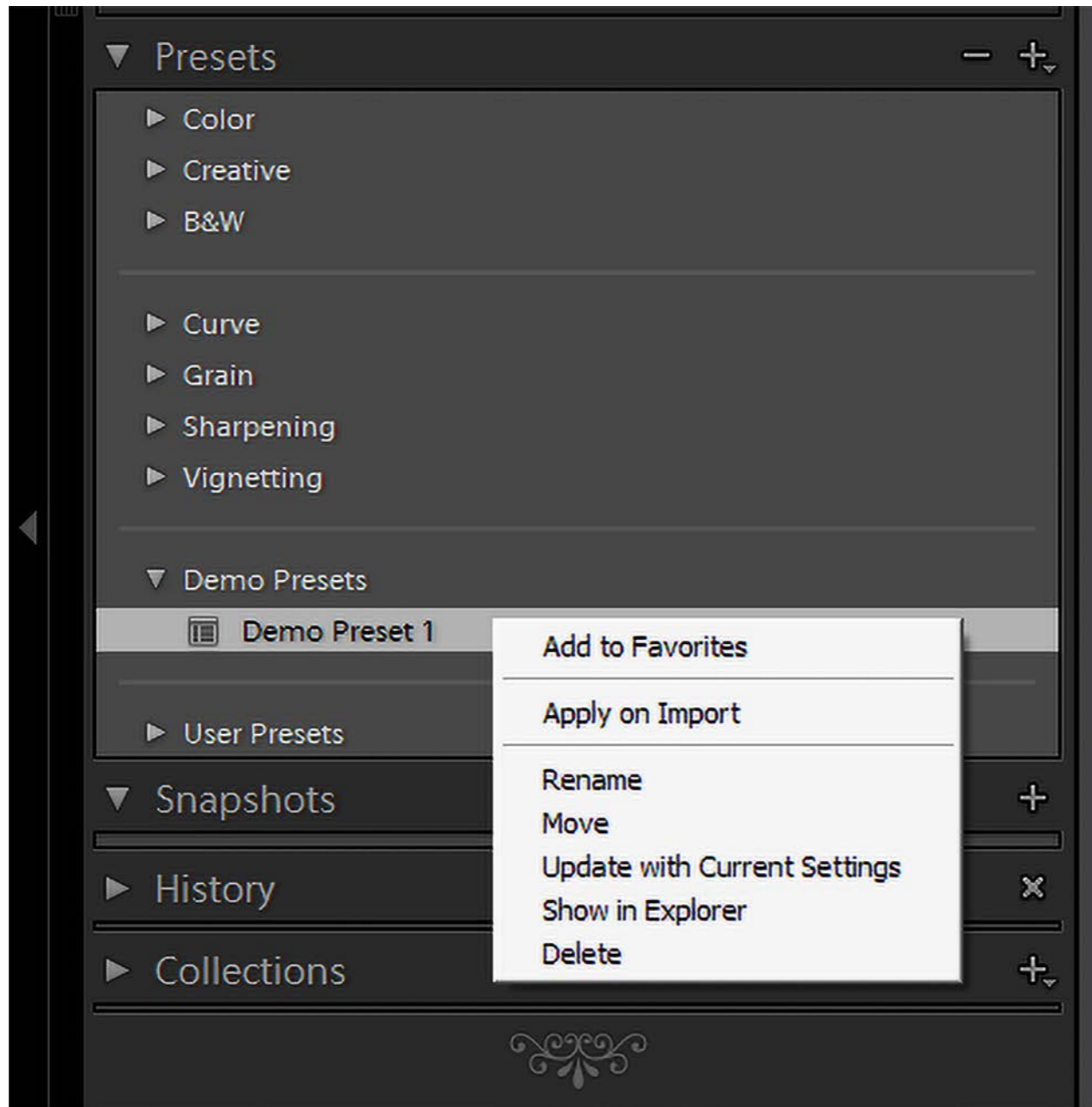
To save a Preset, click on the plus sign in the Preset Panel and choose "Create Preset."

- Choosing "Import Presets" will allow for the importation of any acquired Presets.
- Selecting "Manage Presets" will determine which groups of Presets will be displayed.




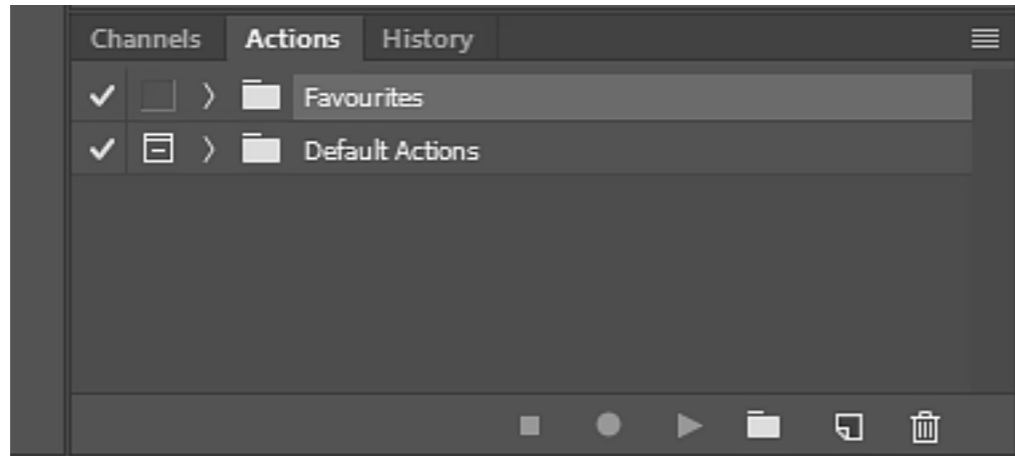
Give the Preset a name that clearly states what it does. If a new group is required, click on the Group input box and create a new one.

 **Key Lesson:** Best practice is to select only the Settings that have been adjusted to make the Preset. By only selecting those items, there's less chance of inadvertently making unintended changes while using the Preset later.



If it becomes necessary to make changes to any Preset, simply right-click on it. The menu in the image on the left will appear, allowing for the listed changes. Feel free to experiment because Presets aren't permanent. It's easy to clean up what isn't working later.

 **Recommended Reading:** If you want to learn how to enhance your photos and create better images, grab a copy of Photzy's premium guide: [Ultimate Guide to Fundamental Editing](#).



WHAT IS A PHOTOSHOP ACTION?

Much like Lightroom, Photoshop also has a tool to automate processing steps. In PS these automated processes are called Actions. An Action is simply a recording of any steps that have been taken in PS. The recording can then be replayed to replicate those steps. This is an extremely powerful tool because it frees you from repeating procedures that have tens or hundreds of steps.


WHERE ARE ACTIONS FOUND?

The Actions Panel is found on the right side of PS. It normally shares space with the Channels Panel and the History Panel. If it's not there, it can be turned on by selecting Windows/Actions in the menu at the top. In the Actions Panel there are some Actions that come with Photoshop in a folder named Default Actions. They are examples of what an action can be. Like Presets for Lightroom, Actions can be found online from many sources. You may find, however, that the most useful actions are the ones you create yourself to automate the things that you do repeatedly.

WHAT CAN ACTIONS DO?

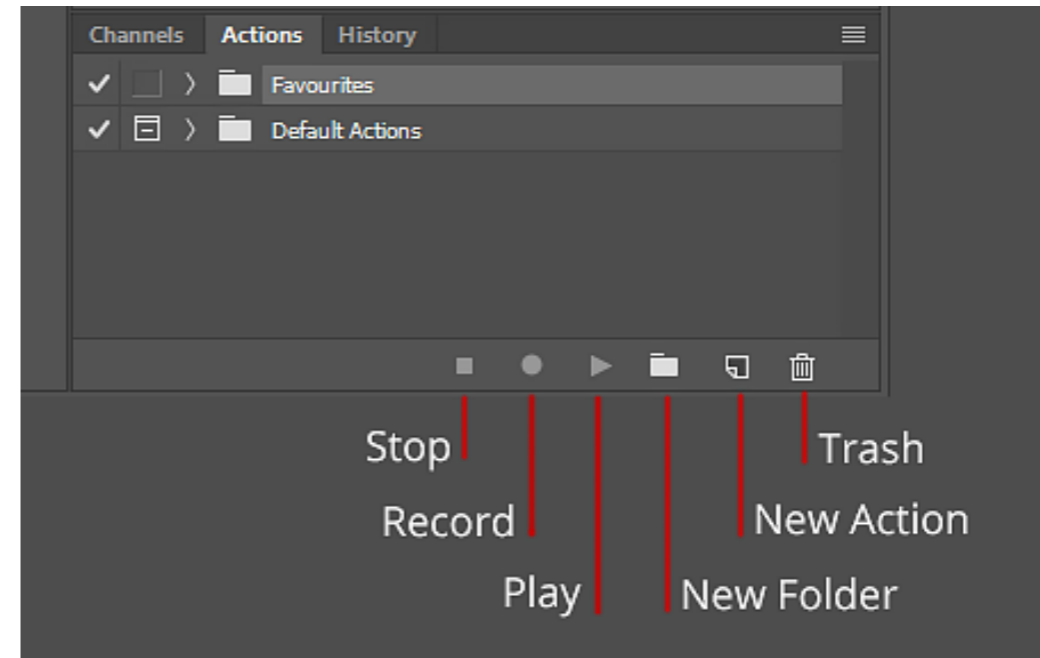
Actions can do pretty much anything that is done in PS with the exception of manual manipulations, such as drawing or using the clone stamp for instance.

As an example, let's say you want to prepare your photos for the web. Each image needs to be converted to sRGB and resized. After that they need to be saved in JPG format in a specific folder ready for posting. All of these steps could be saved as a single action which might be named "Export for Web." Although this is a simple example, it shows how the use of an action could save a lot of work, especially if there are a lot of images to process.

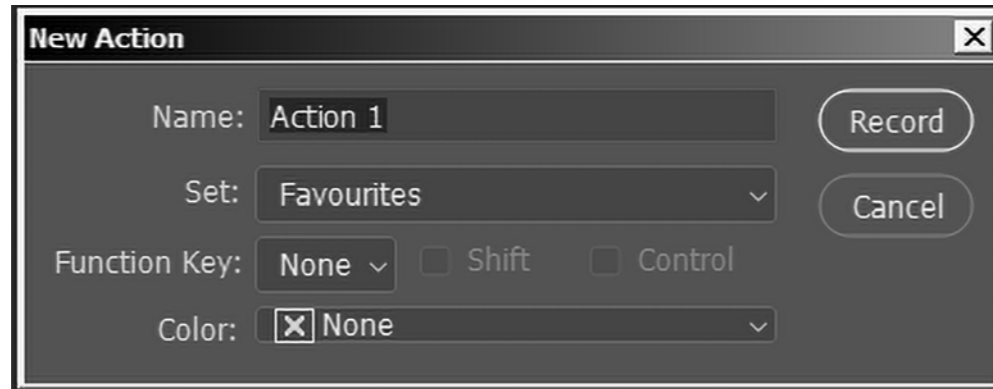
 **Key Lesson:** Actions can save a lot of time by doing laborious repetitive or complex tasks.

HOW TO CREATE AN ACTION

Let's look at the general procedure of recording an Action and discuss a few things that may be holding you back from using these powerful Action tools.




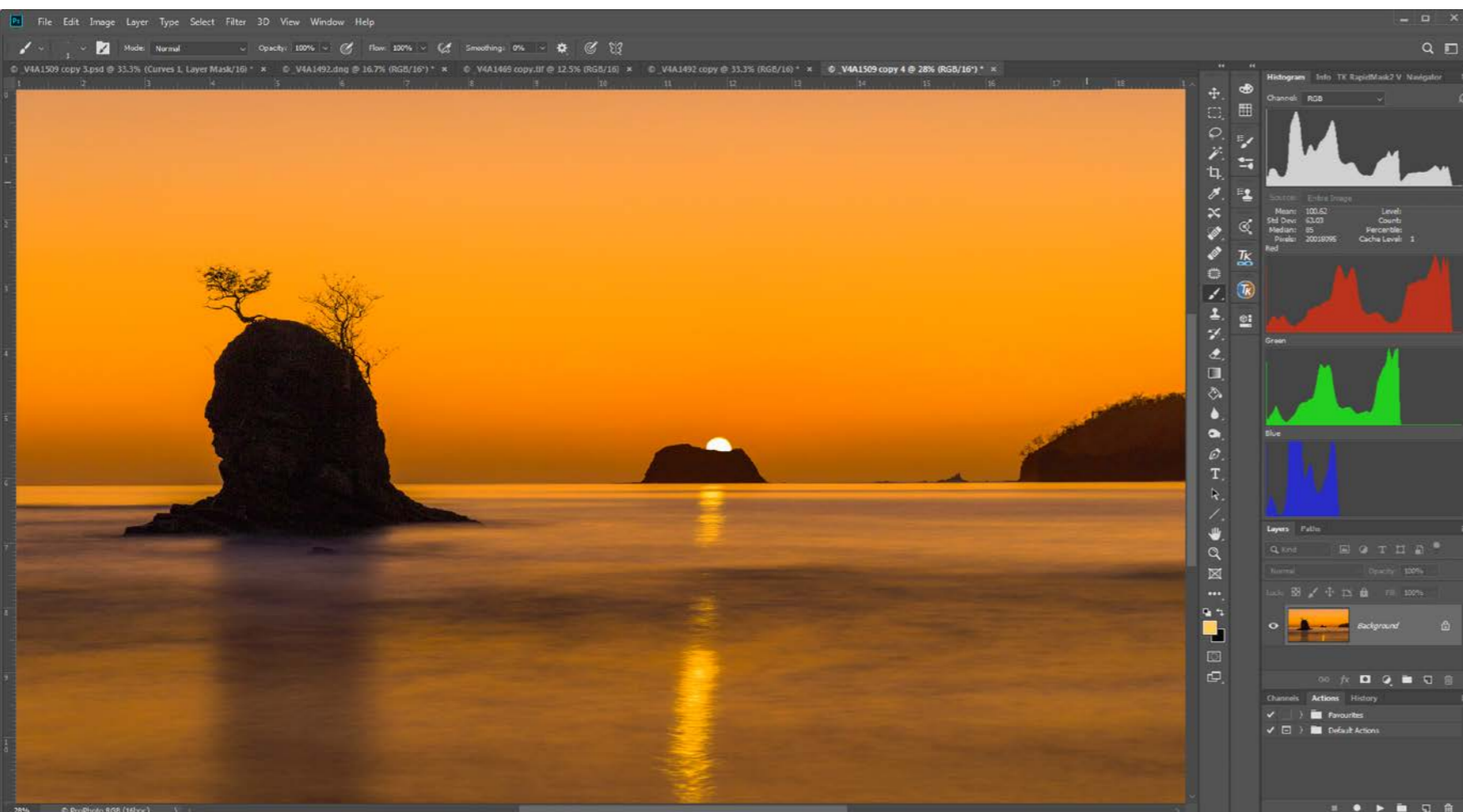
Simply put, the process of recording an Action is much like recording a movie or anything else. First you start recording and when you're done you select "Stop." To play the action you select "Play." Simple, right? It's a very easy process, but there are a couple of things to know.



HERE ARE THE GENERAL STEPS TO RECORDING AN ACTION:

- Actions can be grouped into Sets. Sets are like folders that help you organize your actions.
- If the Action to be recorded should be in a specific Set, that Set should be created first by selecting the New Folder icon.
- Once the Set is created, start recording the action by selecting "New Action."
- A dialog box will pop up in which the Action can be named and an Action Set selected.
- Begin executing the steps that are to be in the Action.
- When all the steps have been completed, select "Stop."

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Photograph by Rob Eyers

THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT!

The first time you record an Action you may feel like you have to rush through and get it done. Relax; there are no time constraints. Once the process of recording has begun, Photoshop has no idea how long you're taking. In fact, you could start recording an Action, get up in the middle, and take a two-week vacation in the Canadian Rockies. When you return it'll still be waiting for your next step.

It's also good to know that if an error is made during the recording process it can be edited after the fact. In fact, Actions can be rearranged, moved from folder to folder, renamed, added on to, deleted, duplicated, and more. They can even be saved and shared. Actions are very flexible.

 **Key Lesson:** Actions are as easy to write as just doing the steps in the first place.

To help you get started, here is a useful Action that can be used on many of your images. It creates a sharpening process referred to as "Blur Sharpening."

Here are the steps:

- 1) Start a new Action and name it "Blur Sharpening."
- 2) Select a folder to place it in.
- 3) Duplicate any one of your finished images (Image / Duplicate).
- 4) Flatten the duplicated copy using Ctrl+Shift+M (Windows) or Cmd+Shift+M (Mac).
- 5) Create two copy layers using Ctrl+J (Windows) or Cmd+J (Mac).
- 6) Name the bottom copy layer "BASE" and the top copy layer "VIVID."
- 7) Place the BASE and VIVID layers in a group using Ctrl+G (Windows) or Cmd+G (Mac).
- 8) Name the group "BLUR SHARPEN."
- 9) Select the VIVID layer and invert it using Ctrl+I (Windows) or Cmd+I (Mac).

- 10) Convert the VIVID layer to a smart object.
- 11) Apply Surface Blur with Radius 20 and Threshold 10 (Filter/Blur/Surface Blur).
- 12) Set the VIVID layer's blend mode to Vivid Light.
- 13) Set the BLUR SHARPEN group's blend mode to Overlay.
- 14) Stop recording the Action.

Presets and Actions are fantastic tools to use in your post-processing workflow. When you stop and think about all the things you do repeatedly, it will amaze you. All that time can be used for more creative and fun things.

Although Actions and Presets are powerful time savers, they're also great tools for sparking creativity. Applying Presets and Actions from others can open a window to other approaches for post-processing. With only the investment of a single click and seconds of time, many complex post-processing procedures and approaches can be explored. Give them a try and they'll expand your repertoire, while assisting you with the drudgery.

Enjoy the journey...happy editing!

Self-Check Quiz:

- 1) What is a Preset?
- 2) What can Presets do?
- 3) How do you delete an unwanted Preset?
- 4) How is a Preset created?
- 5) How is a Preset edited?
- 6) Are some Presets free?
- 7) Where can Presets be found?
- 8) What is the strength of an Action?
- 9) Where are Actions found?
- 10) Can Actions be edited?
- 11) What can an Action do?
- 12) What can't an Action do?
- 13) How is an Action recording started?
- 14) What are some benefits of using Actions and Presets?



Hey there!

Let's get real for a minute... Learning photography can be super challenging! But we're here to help you every step of the way! Here are 3 of our most useful (*and FREE!*) photography resources:



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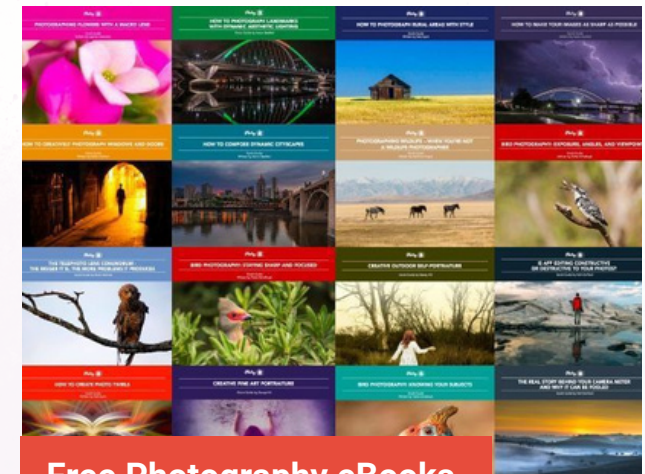
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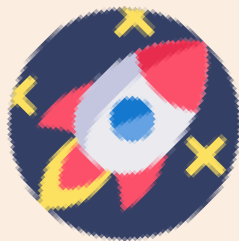
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Rob Eyers is a retired Canadian business owner and musician. These days, photography, music, and travel keep him busy. His interest in photography began in the 1960s. Rob is certified by the Imaging Science Foundation and as such, he is highly interested in color accuracy for both video and photo processing.

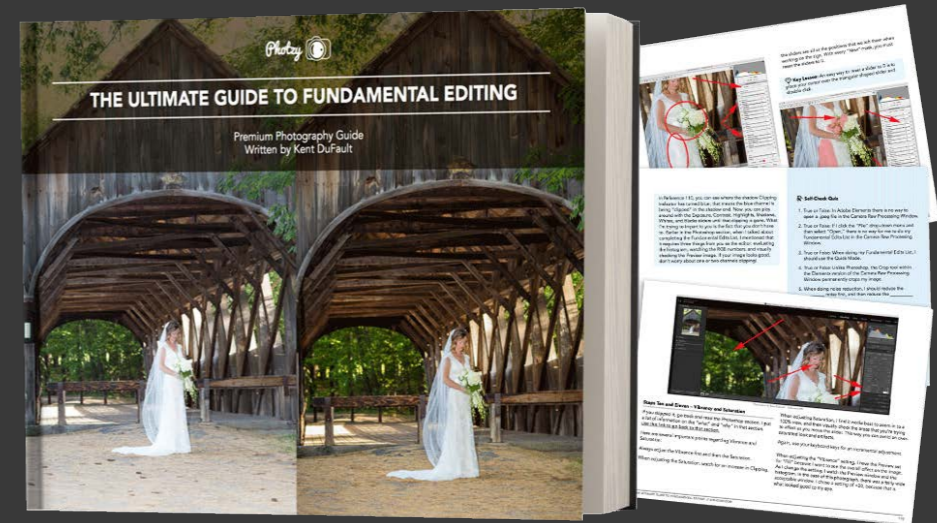
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