

CONVERTING TO MONOCHROME

There are several ways of doing this e.g. Greyscale, Hue & Saturation, Channel Mixer, Lab Colour, Black & White Adjustment Layer or in Camera Raw. The two I favour are 'Black and White' adjustment layer or 'Grayscale' in Camera Raw.

1) Black & White Adjustment Layer

After opening your image, it is sensible to make a Duplicate Layer - c/o Layer on the top tool bar, then Duplicate Layer. This preserves your original image and you don't lose it if you mess things up. It does double your file size though and to be honest, I don't always do it - the worst that can happen is that you have to start again! - but that isn't considered good practice!. To find a 'Black and White Adjustment Layer, Click on (c/o) **Layers**, found on the tool bar at the top of your screen. This brings up several options - c/o '**New Adjustment Layer**'. This brings up loads more options - c/o the one that says '**Black and White**'. This brings up a window with several boxes - ignore them all and c/o 'OK'. (NB, it is much quicker to use the 'Adjustments' tool bar on the right of your screen – if it isn't there, go to 'Window' on the top menu bar, c/o that and you will see a host of options. You don't want to clutter up your screen though, so just c/o the, ones you need – I use History, Adjustments, Info and Layers). The circular symbol half black and half white is the Black & White adjustment layer – c/o that and the window will come up.

Your picture will immediately change to mono and it brings up a window with colour sliders. Try each of these and you will find that the tonality and/or contrast of your picture will change, although not necessarily with every colour, as this depends on the mix of colours in your image. Sometimes the change will be very subtle, other times much more obvious. When you have the tonality that works best, c/o 'OK' and close the layer. You then have a basic mono image which is your starting point and you can manipulate this by using contrast and tonal adjustments.

2) Grayscale in Camera Raw

This is now my preferred method as it can be done before opening the image in Photoshop proper and is very flexible. Open your image in Camera Raw - I open mine through Bridge - right click the image in Bridge which then brings up the option for you to open in CR. On the tool panel on the right, at the top, the 4th box from the left is the Grayscale box. C/o that and a window will open with the same sliders as in the B&W Adjustment layer method described above. C/o the small square which says 'Convert to Grayscale' and your image will change to monochrome. Then work the sliders as above.

There are many other options in Camera Raw for manipulating your image and I would recommend doing these in CR before opening in Photoshop. However, some earlier versions of Photoshop do not have the Camera Raw software.

When you have completed work in Camera Raw, open your image in Photoshop for final adjustments.

To maximise the quality of the blacks in an image, I use a levels adjustment layer and move the left hand slider into the histogram. This will 'clip' some blacks i.e. block them, but as long as there isn't a large area, it should be fine. This technique adds a richness to the blacks and help to make your images 'sing'. You may want to bring any larger area back slightly by lightening as in the 'dodge & burn' technique, just to add a *suggestion* of detail. How far you go is a matter of taste and discretion!

Colin Westgate, January 2015 (amended December 2016)