

Photo Mechanic and Photoshop Droplets

Photo Mechanic is great for Sports Shooters, but...

... if you have taken an image which, for example, is a little on the dark side, (if only those floodlights were brighter!) you may have to spend a couple of minutes moving the image into Photoshop, brightening it, tweaking the shadows, and saving it before uploading it to your photo agency.

Well, Photoshop's Droplets could be the thing you are looking for!

What On Earth is a Droplet? An Overview

Before talking about Droplets, we'll need to talk about Actions in Photoshop first. These instructions refer to Apple Mac software, but it will be almost identical for Windows users.

In Adobe Photoshop CC (but not in Photoshop Elements – sorry!) it is possible to create an **Action**. An Action is simply a list of a sequence of steps that you'll do when editing a photo but recorded as though you were using a tape recorder.

You can turn the Action recorder on, edit your photo, then turn the recorder off – and you can replay the action over and over again on the images you edit in Photoshop. There's no need to save an Action, it will remain in Photoshop for you to use until you delete it.

Now, here comes the clever bit – Photoshop can save an Action as a small executable program onto your computer. This is a Droplet!

In Photo Mechanic you can send an image to a droplet, which performs the editing actions you recorded, and the image is ready to syndicate. It really is that quick. It is even possible to have the Photoshop dialogue boxes complete with the sliders appear for you to adjust as you need!

As with all editing in Photoshop it is a destructive process – if you screw things up, then you've screwed things up! (But we can take care of that too.)

The Process

So, what are we going to do here?

1. Create an Action
2. Save it as a Droplet
3. Tell Photo Mechanic where it can find the droplet

Once these steps have been done, we can get Photo Mechanic to use the droplet whenever we need.

Let's Create an Action

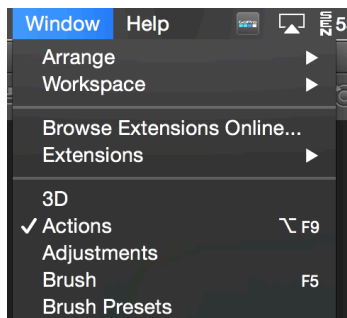
Now, when you pick up a microphone in a recording studio, it helps if you know what you are going to sing, and it also helps if you practice singing it before you record. It's the same with Actions. Decide what steps you want to perform eg. [Image > Adjustments > Brightness/Contrast > 20] or [Image > Adjustments > Shadows/Highlights > Amount 20%]

First, open an image – an image you don't mind experimenting with, not one of your 'keepers'.

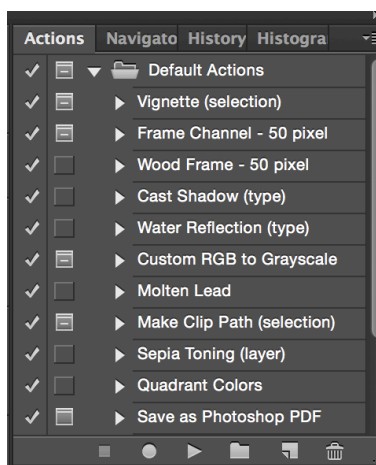
Let's start with a simple Action. What we will do is:

- whack up the Brightness to a value of 20,
- slide the Shadows up to 20%.
- Save our document, and
- Close it.

First, with Photoshop open, display the Actions panel. Use [Window > Actions] or press Alt+F9



You'll then see the list of default Actions. (Try them sometime!)

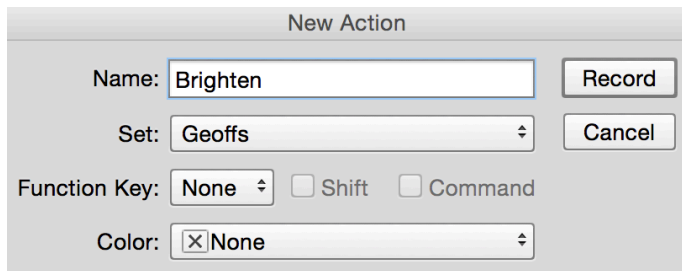


Notice the recorder controls on the first three buttons at the bottom?

Stop recording (square), Start recording (circle) and Play recording (triangle). Don't use them just yet!

The next two buttons are Create New Set (a folder for your actions) and Create New Action.

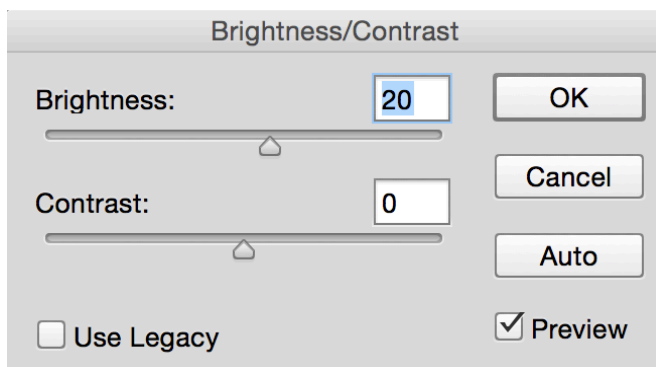
Go ahead – create a new folder for your Actions (I’ll call mine Geoffs), select it, and now click the Create New Action button, and call your Action ‘Brighten’. Put it in your set (folder).



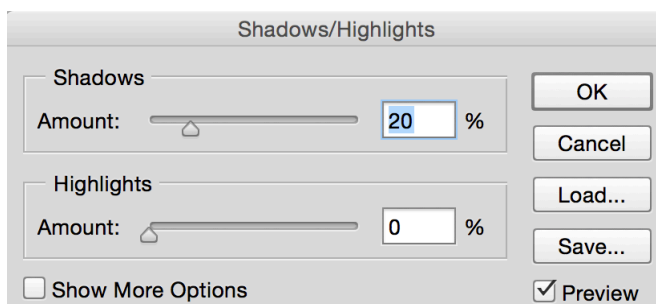
Here we go then. Click the Record button to start.

Notice the Record button has turned red to show you it is now recording everything you do. Even your mistakes!

So, try [Image > Adjustments > Brightness/Contrast > 20]



And then [Image > Adjustments > Shadows/Highlights > Amount 20%]

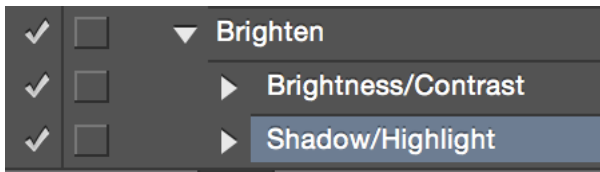


Don't stop the recorder just yet.

If you do nothing else, this is what you'll get - Brightness to 20 and Shadows to 20%. Your Action will run and give you the same result every time.

But, what if you wanted the Brightness to be 30, and the Shadows to be 15%?

Notice that there is a square box between the tick and each command step?
This bit is is magic!



If you click these, a little dialogue box icon will appear in the box.



This will tell your Action (and also your Droplet) to open the Brightness/Contrast and the Shadow/Highlight dialogue boxes (yes - those above) so that you can adjust accordingly! (Of course, you may not wish to.)

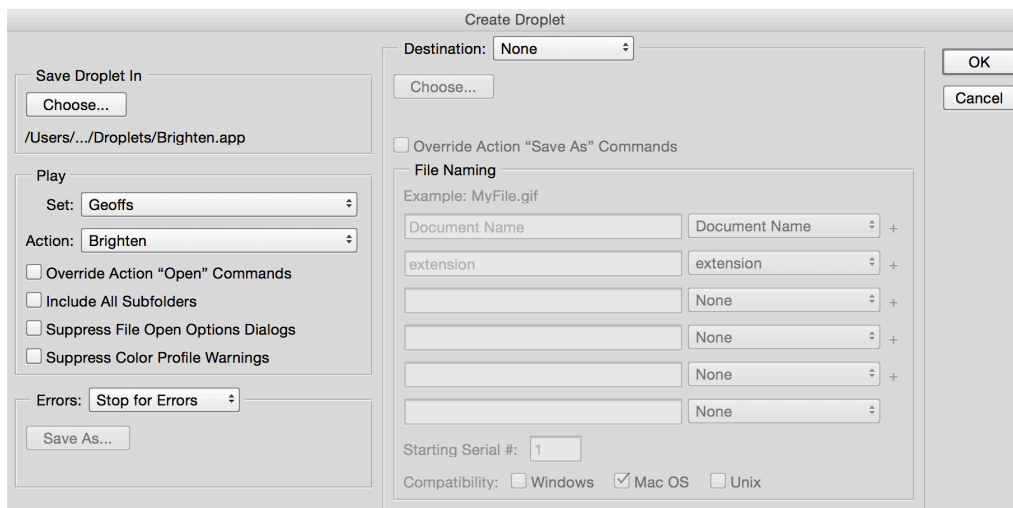
We need to finish off by Saving our document – select [File > Save] – choose Maximum Level 12 and then Close it [File > Close]

Now turn off the recorder by clicking the square Stop button. And voila! There is your action! Click the Action button and see it work. Try it on another image. Good, eh?

Converting the Action to a Droplet

Easy really. First, create a folder somewhere handy to store your droplets. I've called mine 'Droplets'

To make a Droplet in Photoshop, select [File > Automate > Create Droplet...] to display the following dialogue...



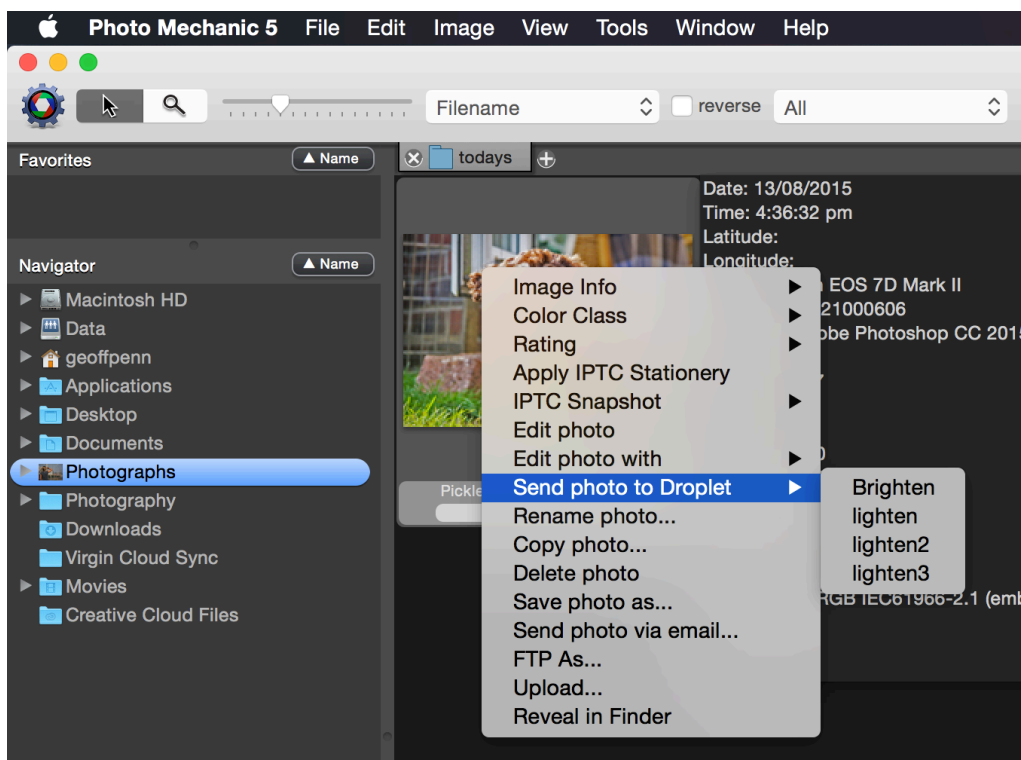
Under 'Save Droplet In' choose your Droplets folder, and name your Droplet – the same name might be useful. Notice it is saved as a .APP file – an executable!

Over to Photo Mechanic

Photo Mechanic needs to be told where it can find your droplets. Use the [Preferences > Launching] dialogue box, and choose your Photoshop Droplets Location at the bottom of the screen.

Let's give it a spin! Keep Photoshop open.

Ingest a few photos into Photo Mechanic, and on the contact sheet, right click an image. From the menu, select 'Send photo to Droplet', and choose your droplet.



Bingo!

Once you have set up your Droplets, and Photo Mechanic knows where to find them, your workflow will be speeded up enormously.

Practice, practice, practice, and you'll be syndicating your action photos even before the action has happened!

What else?

Editing images with Photoshop is a destructive process - once you change your pixels and save them, you may not be able to get the old pixels back again.

Why not include a 'Save As... > Copy' command at the start of your Action, so that if you make a real hash of things, you can reload the copied image. Or you could delete the image from the Photo Mechanic contact sheet, and re-ingest from your CF or SD Card.

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