



ADOBE MASTER CLASS **ADVANCED COMPOSITING IN** **ADOBE PHOTOSHOP CC** SECOND EDITION

BRINGING THE IMPOSSIBLE TO REALITY—WITH BRET MALLEY



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TIP For times you are looking to copy a selected section of an image or images, try recording another action just for this. Start recording right after you make your selection with a selection tool. Make sure to give this action a new shortcut key and simple name, such as Copy Paste in Composite. Once you do copy and then paste the piece into the composite document or palette, stop recording steps. Now whenever you have an individual selection you want brought in, this should do the trick! There are endless ways you can use actions to expedite a process, which is just awesome.

Organize the Photo Palette

After you bring all the fire and smoke images into your palette, it's time to do a little housekeeping and optimizing for easier image selection. If you've already distributed all of the fire and smoke images across the entire palette, then you are off to a good start. Now it's time to do some layer management so the palette is useful as an artistic tool.

1. First, select all the smoke layers in the Layers panel. (Click the first smoke layer, hold Shift, and then click the last smoke layer to select everything between the two).
2. Put the layers into a group by pressing Ctrl+G/ Cmd+G, and name it Smoke (it will look like a folder on the Layers panel).

3. Repeat step 2 for the fire layers, housing them in a group called Fire (**FIGURE 6.9**).

Clearly labeled groups can help you more easily find the type of image you need. When evaluating the layers, isolate individual layers by Alt-clicking/ Opt-clicking the layer's Visibility icon. This will allow you to see just one layer at a time as a solo feature. The advantage is that no other layers clutter what you are looking at within that one layer. The downside is that you must again Alt/Opt-click the Visibility icon to make the rest of the layers visible.

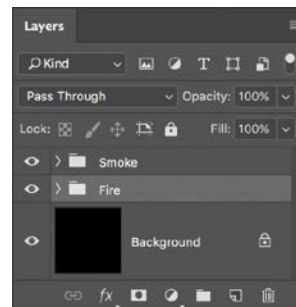



FIGURE 6.9 Organize your photo palette by putting your images into groups.

TIP To see thumbnails filled with the pixel content of a layer rather than thumbnails showing the entire layer (in which the pixel content may be only a small portion), change the Layer Panel Options. Open the Layers panel menu  and choose Panel Options. In the resulting dialog box, you can choose the size of each layer's thumbnail. Select Layer Bounds to fill each thumbnail with the layer's pixel content. This will, in the case of the fire photo palette, fill each thumbnail with a flame image.


TIP Photo palettes can be helpful but also chaotic. Try this for selecting specific layers when there is a bit of overlap: Right-click an image to open a context menu listing the layers overlapping that single point. If you, on the other hand, have a clear view of the layer without overlapping imagery, you can use the Move tool (V) and Alt/Opt-click the content to select the layer as if you had selected Auto-Select (found in the options bar).

Prep a New Document for Compositing

With the palette all ready to go, the next step is getting a new file document ready for your actual composite work. Although it's tempting to simply press Ctrl+N/Cmd+N and dive in, a little prep work will save you big headaches later. Your main composite document can benefit from the same attention you paid to organization and visibility in your photo palette. Try setting up the composite document for the project in Chapter 8 using the following steps to see what I mean.

1. Create a new Photoshop document (Ctrl+N/Cmd+N), and name it *Fire_Play*. Set Width to 4000 pixels, Height to 5000 pixels, and Resolution to 300 Pixels/Inch. Choose Black for the Background Contents setting and then click Create (**FIGURE 6.10**). Having a black background enables you to later play around with various opacities within the composite and not have to worry about white showing through.

TIP If you ever forget to set the background within the new document to black when you want white, or vice versa, when you create a new document, give this a try: Select the background layer over in the Layers panel and press Ctrl+I/Cmd+I to invert the colors

2. Next, set up layer groups or folders to organize the elements of your composite and help you find your layers when the project grows complex. Click the Create A New Group button  at the bottom of the Layers panel to add a group to the document.
3. Double-click the layer group title to rename it something a bit more helpful, like Background.

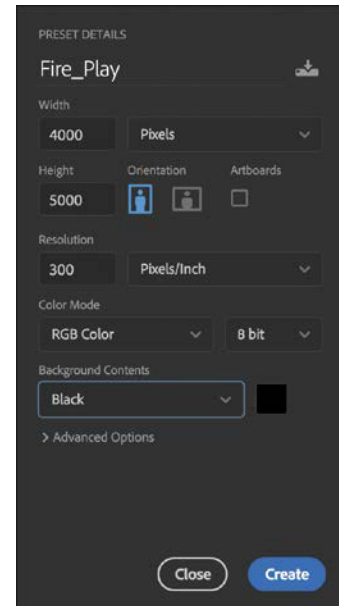


FIGURE 6.10 When you create your main composite document, choose a size that leaves plenty of room for bringing in your high-resolution images.

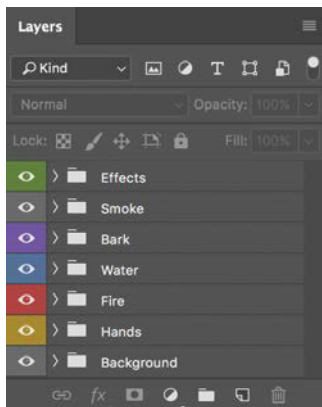



FIGURE 6.11 Group your layers into folders with clearly identifiable names and colors.

4. Repeat steps 3 and 4 to create additional groups for Hands, Fire, Water, Bark, Smoke, and Effects.
 5. Color code your groups, as well: Right-click near the layer's Visibility icon . From the context menu that opens, select a color for each group. When you're finished, your Layers panel will look like **FIGURE 6.11**.
- Color coding helps you find things just a little more efficiently and can keep you from putting something where it doesn't belong.
6. Save your file to the Chapter8_Resources folder; you'll need to whip out these fiery documents in Chapter 8.

Your photo palette and composite document are now prepped and ready for Chapter 8. When you get there, you'll see how this somewhat tedious work pays off huge dividends by the end. In addition, you can apply these same methods of building a palette to a wide range of composites with similar requirements of vastly different and numerous source material.

Rating and Filtering Images in Adobe Bridge

When working on a project in which nearly all the components are shot in one single location from one point of view (POV), with the same lighting set up, and so on, compositing becomes less about if images will fit in the same composite scene and more about which images fit the best for the desired composition. Chapter 7 is a good example of this kind of in-frame composite—plus there were more toys that were shot than used. You no longer need to create an entire palette to visualize and test out elements, because technically they all should work in some capacity. Because the images have so much in common, it then boils down to making yes-or-no decisions on individual shots within the series. Accordingly, the prep work for this type of composite involves rating images for the best composition options and filtering out the ones that don't work as well.

Adobe Bridge offers great tools for comparing and rating images and then loading the best into Photoshop (and the appropriate composite group) one at a time. Think of this as drawing from a loaded deck that's filled with all aces

and face cards. Play the right combination, and you'll do well. To demonstrate this preparatory process, I'll walk you through rating the image elements for the composite in Chapter 7 (FIGURE 6.12). This section shows the method



FIGURE 6.12 The image elements for the *Good Kitty* composite (which you'll re-create in Chapter 7) were all shot in one session, so the prep work will mostly use Adobe Bridge.

I used for this project, but I've already done it for you, so grab a refreshing beverage, sit back, and watch. You'll then prepare the composite file with the appropriate groups, names, and ordering hierarchy so you'll be all set to jump right in and play a killer hand in Chapter 7.

Download and Filter

Assuming you're following the photography advice from Chapter 5 and shooting your own images in raw with JPEG backups just in case, you'll need to do a bit of "pre-prep" before the main event in Adobe Bridge when preparing for your own projects.

Specifically, after shooting the elements for your composite, transfer the images from your camera's card into a descriptively named folder on your computer. If you start a naming scheme from the beginning, it will be easier to keep your composite organized.

Next, open Adobe Bridge, find the new folder, and filter out the JPEG images to leave only the raw files visible (FIGURE 6.13). Click the Filter tab, choose File Type, select Camera Raw Image so that only the raw images show up while browsing.

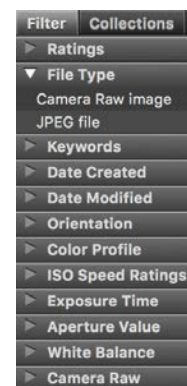


FIGURE 6.13 Filter out any JPEGs that made it into your folder as you want just the raw files; in this case they are my Canon's CR2 files.

Rating and Sorting

Adobe Bridge is made for browsing, rating, and sorting images (among some other pretty cool things, such as batch processing), plus it gives you quick access to editing them directly within Photoshop as you simply double-click an image to open it. When I first get a new batch of images straight from a shoot, I need to begin browsing through them to sort out the good from the bad. The star-rating feature of Bridge is all too perfect for this stage. The method I use to rate and choose the best images for a project is:

1. In Adobe Bridge, browse to the folder where you've stored your freshly captured images.
2. Choose Filmstrip from the menu of workspaces at the right end of the application bar (**FIGURE 6.14**). Setting your workspace to Filmstrip provides a nice horizontally scrollable series of the images in the selected folder, as well as large previews of selected images for better assessing and comparisons.
3. Go through your images, looking for those that have potential to work in your composite and those that just don't. You'll also find the inevitable on-the-fence images that have to be tested in certain image combinations. Rate all these images by clicking a one- through five-star ranking beneath the image thumbnail or by pressing Ctrl+1/Cmd+1 through Ctrl+5/Cmd+5 while a thumbnail is selected (**FIGURE 6.15**).
4. Filter the images to show only the best results. For example, press Ctrl+Alt+3/Cmd+Opt+3 to show all images rated three stars or better. Alternatively, you can choose a rating from the Filter Items By Rating menu, marked by the star near the right end of the path bar.

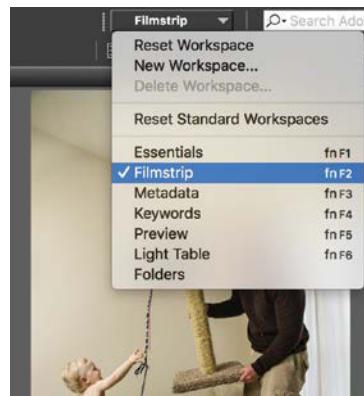


FIGURE 6.14 Change your workspace to Filmstrip for helpful side-scrolling lists and large image previews.



FIGURE 6.15 Rate the images in Adobe Bridge for better sorting and filtering abilities.

5. With only the best of the photo-shoot showing from the star rating filter, you can also do some early grouping by category (good cat shots, toys, and so on) with stacks, even keeping within Bridge. For the example, I selected all of the potential cat shots for *Good Kitty* by Ctrl/Cmd-clicking and then grouped them into a single stack by pressing Ctrl+G/Cmd+G. This does not bring them together in a new folder like grouping in Photoshop; instead, it produces a stack like in **FIGURE 6.16**. The number 3 in the upper left refers to the number of stacked files within the group. Notice how the files condense once stacked. To expand them within a stack, click the small upper-left number.

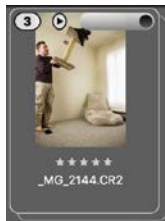



FIGURE 6.16 Group your similar images into stacks while working in Adobe Bridge. Here I stacked three potential cat shots together for later editing.

TIP Use the Collections feature in Adobe Bridge to gather files that share common traits into a virtual folder. This lets you view the images together in one location without actually moving them on your hard disk. To create a collection, select some files in Bridge and click the Collections tab. Click the Create A New Collection icon , and click Yes in the confirmation dialog box. While the new collection's Name field is still selected on the Collections tab, type a name for the collection. Add more files to a collection by dragging them onto the collection's icon.

To expedite the process of re-creating *Good Kitty*, I previously rated and sorted the necessary images (found in the Chapter7_Resources folder). To be thoroughly ready for the tutorial in Chapter 7, however, you will need to load these into a composite document.

Prepare the Composite

Preparing the composite document for a project that will rely on Adobe Bridge rather than a photo palette is similar but a bit simpler. To practice, you can create the composite shell you'll need to complete the Chapter 7 tutorial.

1. Open Photoshop, create a new document (Ctrl+N/ Cmd+N), and name it *Super-Person*. Set Width to 3456 Pixels and Height to 5184 and then click Create. Although this number may seem somewhat random, it is the full resolution of the original files. (An alternative is to simply open your intended background image and begin just as easily from there.)
2. In the Layers panel, click the Create New Group icon five times to create five groups.
3. Double-click each folder's name to rename that group for the category of image it will hold: Reader, Super Person, Toys, Cat, and Effects (**FIGURE 6.17**).
4. Save the file in Chapter7_Resources, so you can be ready to pull it open again during Chapter 7.



FIGURE 6.17 Always set up groups to keep your image elements organized. You'll need these folders for Chapter 7.