

Editing the Sky for the Milky Way in Adobe Photoshop

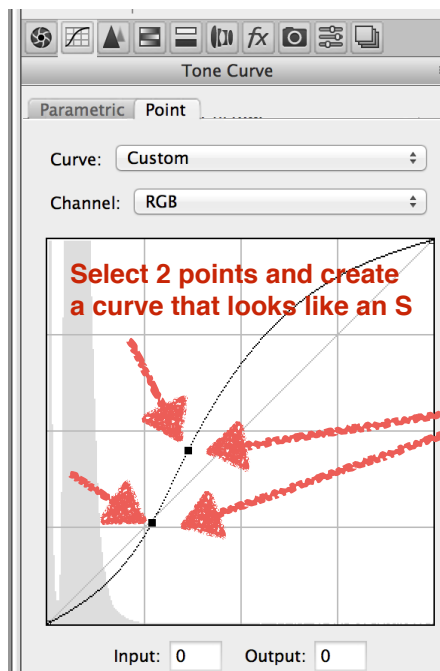
by John "Snake" Barrett - This guide is NOT for editing the foreground!

1. Open your image in Photoshop as a Smart Object
2. Edit The Smart Object in Camera Raw



Double Click Here

1. *Under Basic panel* - Increase the Exposure (+.7 / to taste)
2. *Under Tone Curve* - create high contrast tone curve

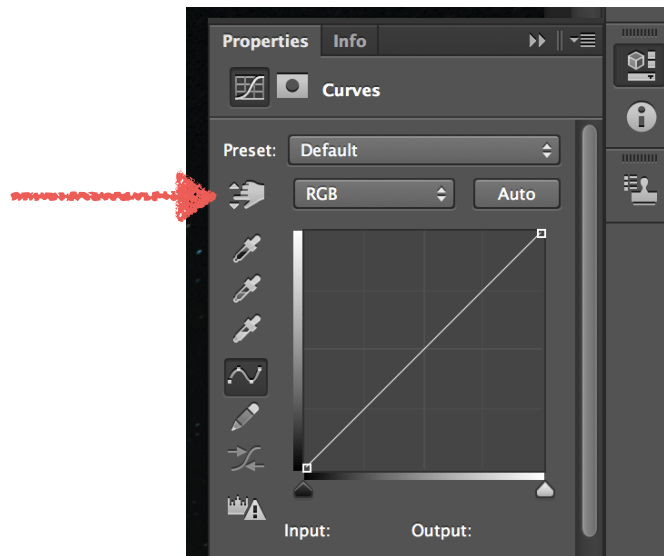


Press and hold Shift to select both points and move them both up and down to find your best contrast

3. *Under Basic panel* - adjust White Balance to between 3500 & 4000 K (to taste)
4. Adjust Tint to add magenta or green
5. *Under Detail panel* - Adjust Luminance between 50 and 75
6. Adjust Luminance Detail around 50
7. Add Sharpening around 40
8. *Under Basic panel* - Light amount of Clarity (+15)
9. Adjust other settings like Vibrance, Saturation, Whites and Blacks to taste
10. Click OK to get out of Camera RAW and go back into Photoshop
3. Create a new Curve adjustment layer (Layer -> New Adjustment Layer -> Curves)
4. Invert the curve layer mask (CMD I {Mac} / CTRL I {PC}) (makes the mask Black)



5. Using White as your color, using the Paint Brush (B) paint over the sections of the Milky Way
6. Apply a Gaussian Blur (Filter -> Blur -> Gaussian Blur) with a Radius of around 300
7. In the curve Properties click the Hand with the Arrows



8. In your image click on the darkest area of the Milky Way and the lightest area of the Milky Way
9. Create a High Contrast S curve (like step 2 in Raw processing)
10. Adjust your Red, Green & Blue channels to taste (if needed to reduce a color cast)
11. Select the bottom Layer and Duplicate it (Layer -> Duplicate Layer)
12. Apply Unsharp Mask filter (Filter -> Sharpen -> Unsharp Mask) with Amount: 90, Radius: 50
13. Add a Layer Mask



14. Invert the layer mask (CMD I {Mac} / CTRL I {PC}) (makes the mask Black)
15. Using White as your color, using the Paint Brush (B) paint over the sections of the Milky Way
16. Apply a Gaussian Blur (Filter -> Blur -> Gaussian Blur) with a Radius of around 300
17. Adjust the Opacity to taste
18. Sometimes the Horizon gets hazy / discolored ...
 1. Create a new Curve adjustment layer (Layer -> New Adjustment Layer -> Curves)
 2. Invert the curve layer mask (CMD I {Mac} / CTRL I {PC}) (makes the mask Black)
 3. Using White as your color, using the Paint Brush (B) paint over the sections of the sky closest to the horizon (hazy portions)
 4. Apply a Gaussian Blur (Filter -> Blur -> Gaussian Blur) with a Radius of around 300
 5. Darken the curve and adjust your Red, Green & Blue channels to taste
19. If desired use Nik Color Efex Pro (Tonal Contrast & Darken / Lighten Center)
20. Finish with Nik Define / Topaz DeNoise or some other noise reduction program