

September 2026 ACR LRC PS Beta Updates

In this lesson I'll walk you through the changes Adobe made in September 2026 to Lightroom Classic, Adobe Camera Raw and Photoshop Beta. Lightroom Classic only got a small update, Camera Raw picked up a new Photo Grid with sorting and filtering, Match Exposure and a floating histogram and vectorscope, and Photoshop Beta added a big new feature: Relight Layers.

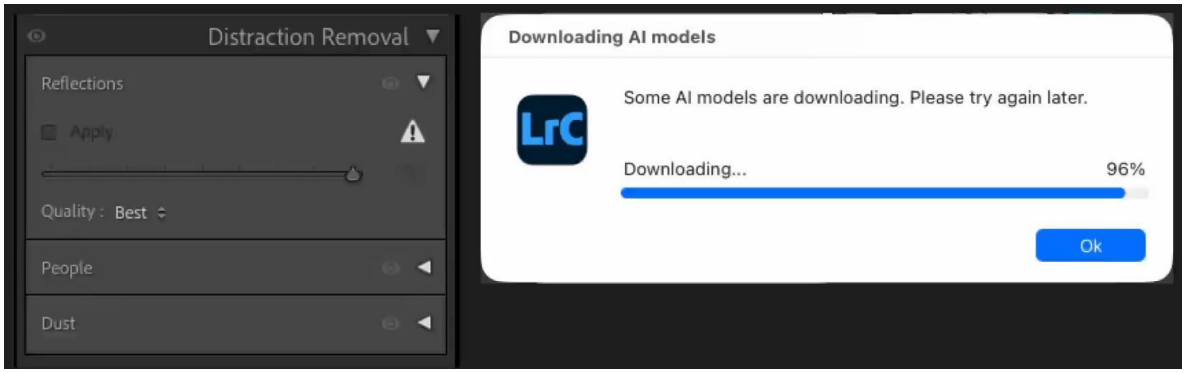
Key Concepts

1. **Lightroom Classic 15.6: Improved Reflection Removal** (00:33)
2. **Camera Raw 18.7: Photo Grid** (03:15)
3. **Sorting and Filtering in Camera Raw** (05:25)
4. **Match Exposure** (09:04)
5. **Floating Histogram and Vectorscope** (11:45)
6. **Photoshop Beta: Relight Layer** (13:52)
7. **Combining Relight Layers** (21:16)
8. **More Relight Examples** (24:33)
9. **What I'd Like to See Improved** (30:31)

Lightroom Classic 15.6: Improved Reflection Removal (00:33)

Lightroom Classic didn't change much. The main claim is that Reflection Removal now gives higher quality results. You'll find it in the same place as before: in the Develop module, choose the **Remove** tool and look for the **Reflections** option in the Distraction Removal section. It needs an internet connection, so I haven't been able to test it much on a ship.

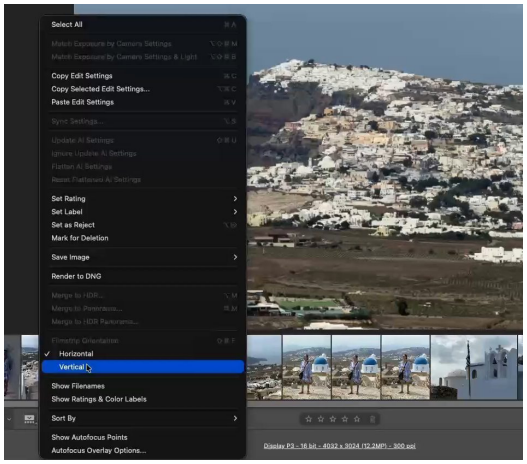
The first time you try it you may see a small warning triangle on the right side of the panel. Click it and Lightroom downloads some additional AI models before the feature will work.



I've noticed a trend: Adobe doesn't seem to add features to Lightroom Classic that require generative AI credits, while Photoshop, Lightroom (the non-Classic version) and Camera Raw get them. That means I'm not sure we'll see things like expanding the crop beyond the original framing in Classic. The only exception is sending images to Adobe Firefly, which simply loads them into the Firefly website.

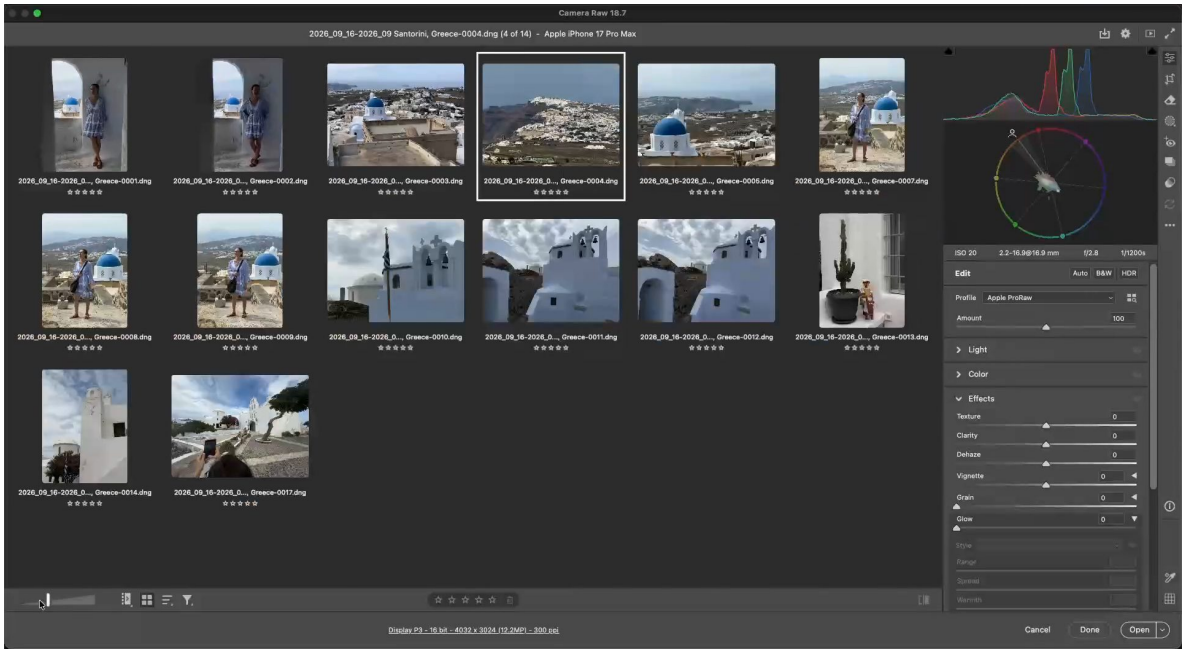
Camera Raw 18.7: Photo Grid (03:15)

Camera Raw also gets the improved Reflection Removal, plus a new Photo Grid. When you open several raw files at once (I selected a batch and dragged them onto the Photoshop icon), Camera Raw shows them in the Filmstrip so you can click between images. You've always been able to right-click the Filmstrip icon to switch between a **Horizontal** and a **Vertical** layout.



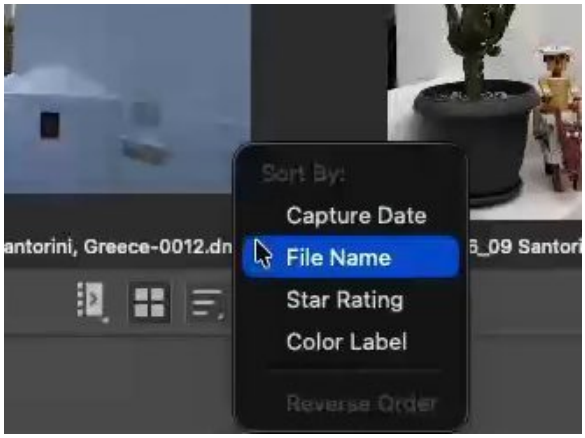
With a large number of images, the Filmstrip gets inconvenient, so there's a new **Grid View** icon next to it. It uses the same keyboard shortcut as Lightroom Classic: type **G**. Now your images look more like they do in Lightroom Classic or Bridge.

1. **Change the Thumbnail Size:** Drag the slider in the lower left, or press the minus and plus keys. (Adobe's documentation says you may need to hold Shift or Option, but I don't find that necessary.) Double-click the slider to reset it to the default size.
2. **Change the Info Below Each Thumbnail:** Press the period or comma keys (the same keys as greater than and less than) to cycle between file name and rating, rating only, or no text.

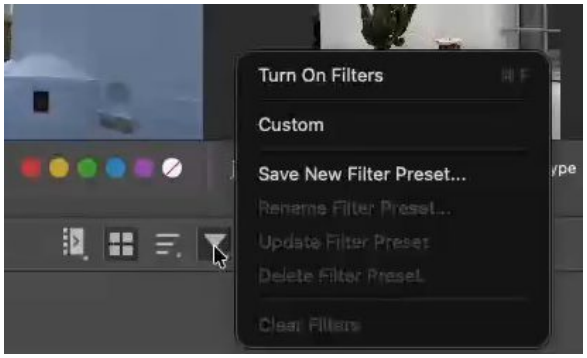


Sorting and Filtering in Camera Raw (05:25)

Right next to the Grid icon are new icons for sorting and filtering your images.

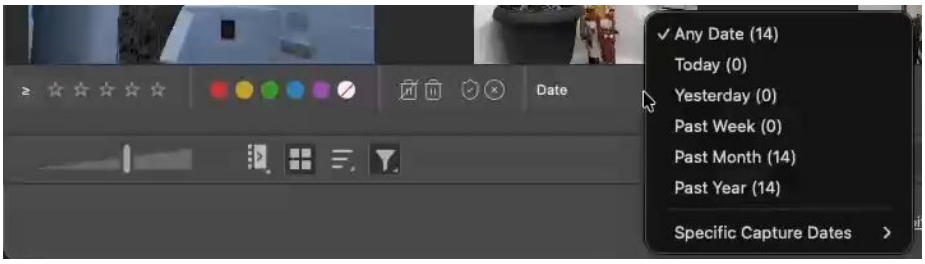


The Sort menu



Click and hold the Filter icon

1. **Sort Your Images:** Click the Sort icon and choose **Capture Date**, **File Name**, **Star Rating** or **Color Label**. Once you've chosen one, you can reverse the order.
2. **Show the Filter Bar:** Click the Filter icon to show a bar of filtering options. The small triangle in the lower right of the icon means there's also a menu: click and hold to save the current setup as a filter preset, and later rename, update or delete it. Saved presets appear in the menu that says **Custom**.
3. **Choose What to Filter By:** You can filter by star rating (with greater than or equal to and similar options), color label, images marked as rejects or for deletion, date, file type, camera and lens.



Filtering by Type (06:58)

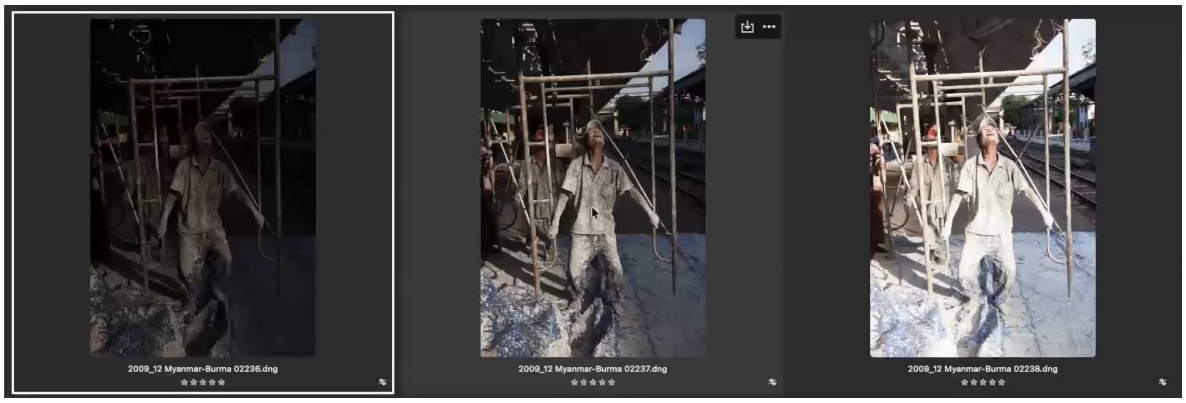
If your files are DNGs, the **Type** menu has a submenu that separates the different kinds of DNG files:

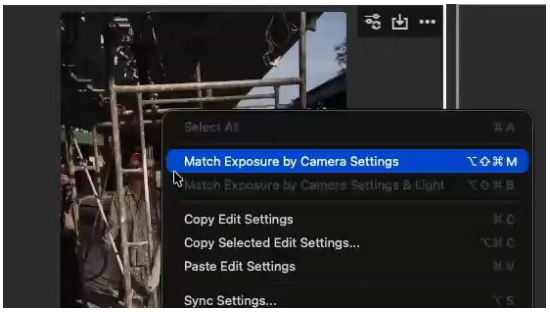
1. **Linear Raw:** Images from an iPhone, or images saved as a lossy DNG file.
2. **Mosaic Raw:** A raw image from a regular digital camera that hasn't been demosaiced yet.
3. **Rendered DNG:** Really a TIFF file in a DNG wrapper. You get one when you tell the Crop tool to render a finalized image, which throws away the information beyond the cropping rectangle.

You can also limit what you see to a particular camera or lens; in this case I used three different lenses. To me, this blurs the line between Camera Raw and Bridge. I usually use Bridge to sort through thumbnails, and Bridge hasn't received all of these features, which makes me wonder whether the two teams are coordinating.

Match Exposure (09:04)

Match Exposure only works with raw files, because only raw files hold enough unprocessed information. Here I have three images where the only difference is the aperture and shutter speed, and I'd like them to look consistent.





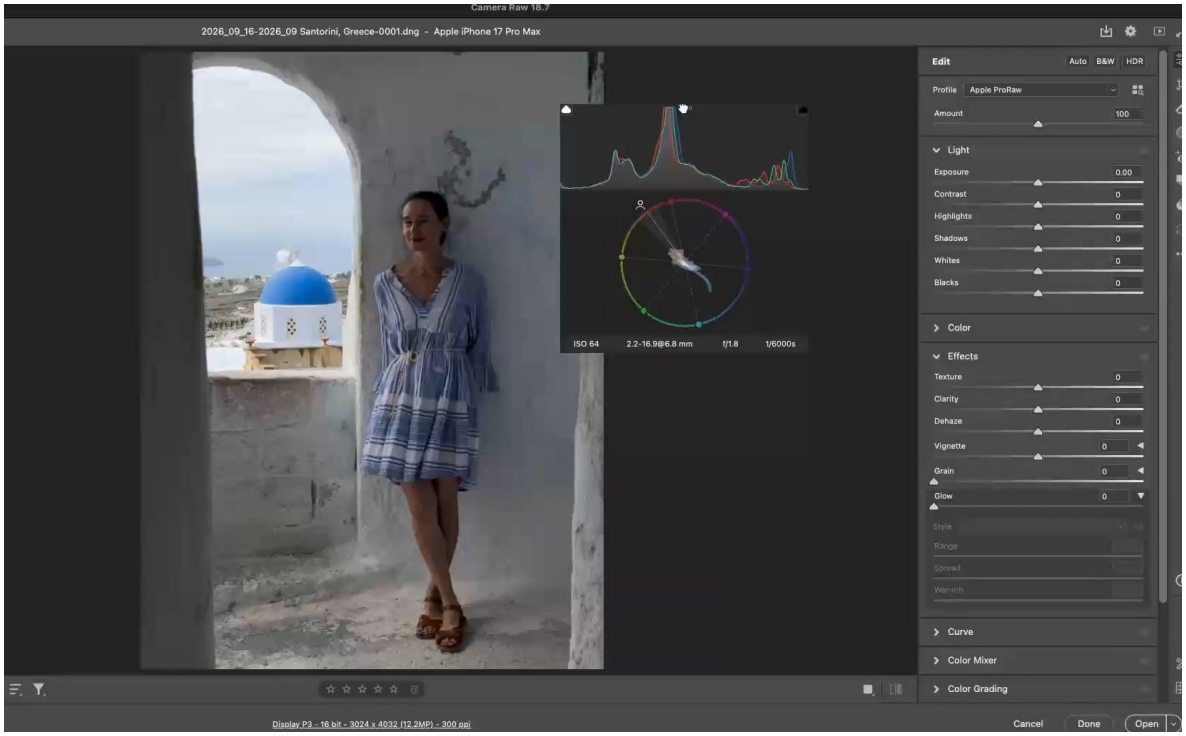
1. **Select the Images:** Click the first image and Shift-click the last one.
2. **Pick the Image to Match:** One image has a brighter border; that's the most selected image, and it's the one the others will match. Click the image whose brightness you like, then Command-click (Ctrl-click in Windows) the others to add them back.
3. **Match the Exposure:** Right-click one of the images and choose **Match Exposure by Camera Settings**. Camera Raw looks at the shutter speed, aperture and ISO and adjusts the **Exposure** setting of the other images: one ends up negative, one positive, and the image you matched stays unchanged.



There's also **Match Exposure by Camera Settings & Light**, but it's only available if your camera stores a general brightness measurement of the scene (the Canon I used here doesn't). It's mainly useful for a time lapse where your settings stay the same while the sun rises or sets: select all the frames, make the one you like the most selected, and match by both camera settings and light.

Floating Histogram and Vectorscope (11:45)

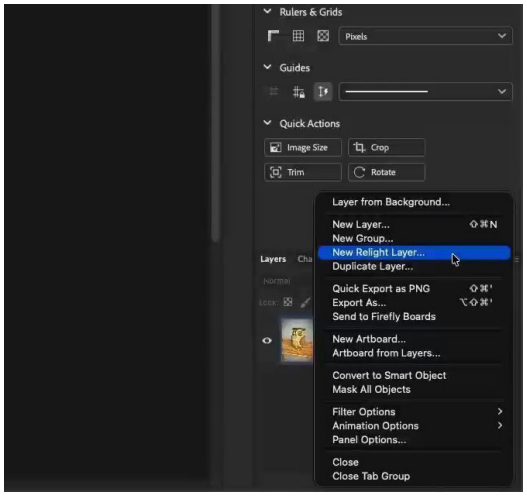
If you don't see the histogram or vectorscope, right-click that area and choose which ones are visible. What's new is a small bar at the top of the area. Click and drag it to pull the histogram and vectorscope out into a floating panel, which you could even move to a second display. To put it back, drag the bar to the right until a blue rectangle appears, then release to dock it.



What I really wish is that I could make the vectorscope smaller. It takes up more vertical space than the histogram, with empty space on either side. I'd like to put it beside the histogram to free up room for the sliders, especially on a 14-inch laptop.

Photoshop Beta: Relight Layer (13:52)

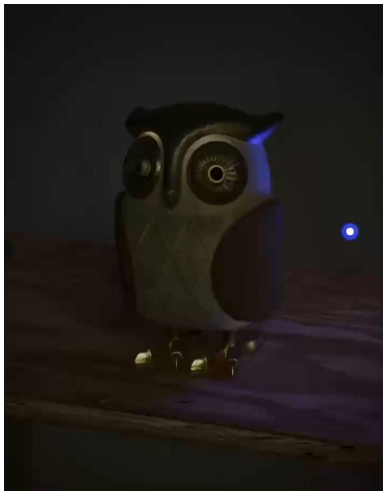
Photoshop Beta has one major new feature, and I'll like it once it's in the main version: a new kind of layer called a **Relight Layer**. It uses generative AI and costs 30 credits each time you apply it.



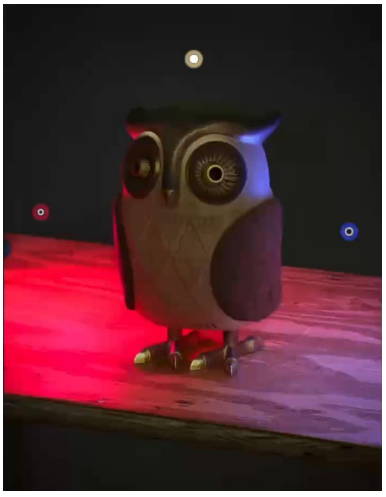
1. **Create a Relight Layer:** Choose **New Relight Layer** from the Layers panel side menu, or choose `Layer > New Relight Layer`. Photoshop builds a rough 3D model of the scene and lets you add up to three lights. It needs the internet.
2. **Position the Light:** A small circle represents the light source. Drag it, and after a moment the lighting updates. The **Left/Right** and **Low/High** sliders just track where you drag the circle.
3. **Set the Intensity and Color: Intensity** controls how bright the light is. Click the **Color** menu at the top to choose a preset (such as 3200 K for a warm light) or a custom color.
4. **Turn Down the Original Lighting:** At 100%, all the original light remains and your new light doesn't do much. I usually bring **Original Lighting** way down (to about 10%) so the scene goes dark and the new light really makes a difference.
5. **Set Close/Far:** This slider controls how far the light is from the camera. Move it toward **Far** to put the light behind your subject for edge lighting, or toward Close to light the front.



Original



One blue light, Original Lighting lowered



Three lights: blue, red and warm

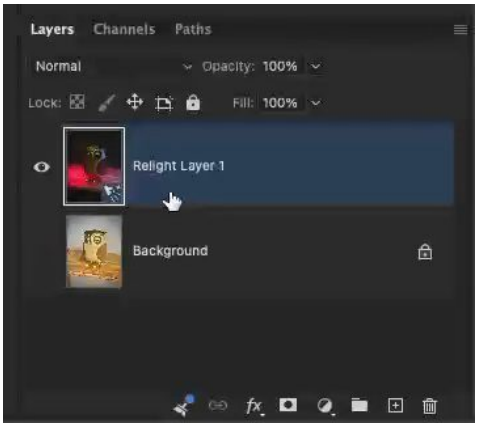
Adding More Lights (17:01)

Click **Add Light** at the top of the Properties panel or in the Contextual Task Bar to add another circle. I added a red light on the left and a warm one above, each pushed far from the camera. Lights don't have to stay within the bounds of the picture; moving one outside the image can create a nice effect too.

1. **Diffusion:** Lower it to act like a tiny point light with harsh shadows and abrupt transitions. Raise it to act like a larger light with softer shadows and more gradual transitions.
2. **Intensity:** If the light is too bright or not bright enough, this is the slider to change.
3. **Apply It:** Click the checkmark in the options bar or **Done** in the Contextual Task Bar. Each time you click Done it uses 30 generative credits. What you see before that is a low-resolution preview, so the final high-resolution result may look slightly different.



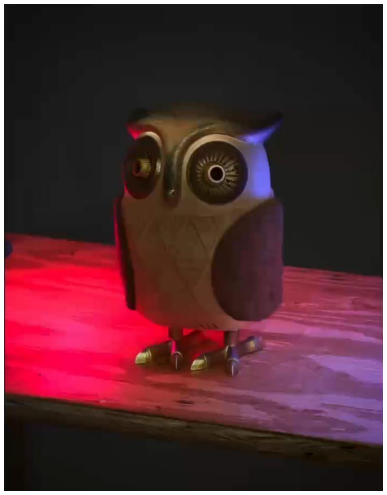
You end up with a new layer with a special icon in the lower right of its thumbnail, and the original image is hidden underneath. Double-click the layer thumbnail to bring the light circles back and readjust them. Just know that clicking Done again costs another 30 credits; click **Cancel** in the options bar if you only wanted to look.



Combining Relight Layers (21:16)

On my first try with the owl radio, I liked the three lights on the owl but not the red blotch they put on the wood underneath. So I relit the owl and the background separately and combined them with a mask.

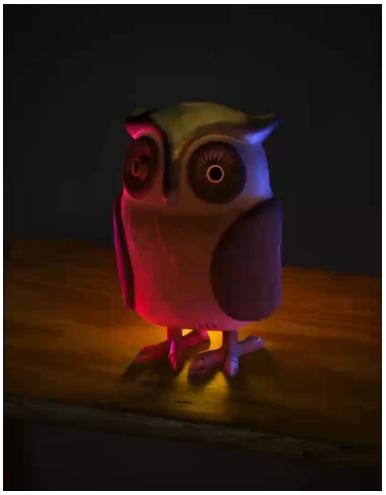
1. **Select the Subject:** Hide the relight layer, turn on the original, and click the owl with the **Object Selection** tool. Hold **Shift** and draw across anything it missed (the feet), and hold **Option** (Alt in Windows) and trace around anything that shouldn't be included.
2. **Mask the Lighting:** Go back to the relight layer and add a layer mask so the lighting only affects the owl.
3. **Relight the Background:** Hide that layer, return to the original layer, and choose `Layer > New Relight Layer` again. This time I added a single light far behind the owl and turned **Original Lighting** down to only 7%, leaving a slight hint of the original colors as a backdrop.
4. **Combine Them:** Turn the masked owl layer back on above the background version.



First try (red blotch on the wood)



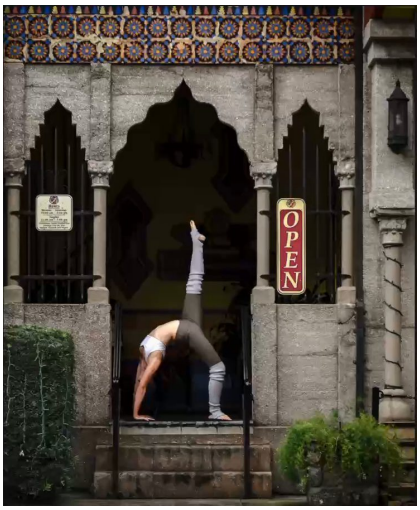
Background relit separately



Masked owl over the new background

More Relight Examples (24:33)

Here I set one light's Close/Far setting far enough away that it lit the inside of the doorway where my wife Karen is, without lighting the outside of the building.



Original



Light placed inside the doorway

For the brick arch, I wanted the background to be less prominent, so I brought **Original Lighting** down to 9%. Then I used three lights at different Close/Far settings: a main light on the arch, one on Karen and one on part of the background.



Original

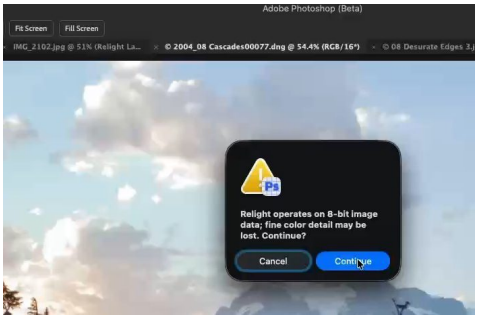


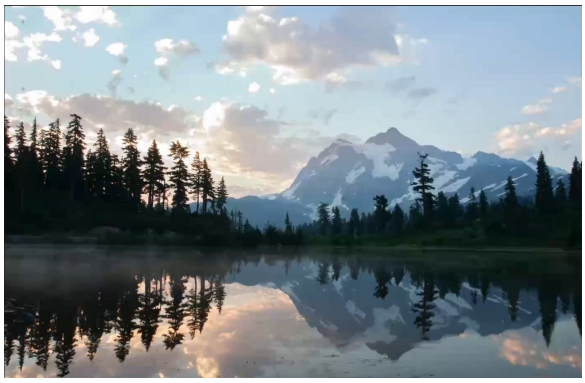
Original Lighting at 9% with three lights

Recovering Highlight Detail (26:39)

I wanted to see whether a negative Original Lighting setting would bring back detail in blown-out clouds. If you're working on a 16-bit image you'll get a warning, because relighting works with 8 bits of data; you don't need to convert the image, but the layer it generates is 8-bit.

1. **Turn Off the Light:** Bring the light's **Intensity** all the way down so you're not adding any light.
2. **Lower the Original Lighting:** This darkens the scene quite a bit, but anything that was solid white stays solid white, so it can't regain detail in highlights that are completely blown out.





Original



Lowered Original Lighting: white stays white

It works much better when the highlights are bright but not quite white. In the slot canyon I set Original Lighting to 33% and added one light in front, and the bright areas got relatively realistic detail. You could use a result like this and mask it into the original where you want more highlight detail.



Original



Relit, Original Lighting at 33%

Lighting Inside an Object (29:59)

Remember that you can push a light so it's not in front of the object. Here the light is inside the Airstream trailer. I could even move it further behind the trailer to get a glow around its edge with no light on the inside.



Original



Light placed inside the trailer

What I'd Like to See Improved (30:31)

In general I like that Adobe added this, but a few things feel odd:

1. **Point Lights Only:** Each light shines in all directions. I'd like a directional light, such as a beam pointing down onto a person.
2. **No Number for Close/Far:** Intensity, Diffusion and Original Lighting have numbers, but Close/Far doesn't. I often want two lights behind my subject, one on each side, at exactly the same distance, and I can't type in a value to make sure they match.
3. **A Hidden Mode:** Editing lights looks like an ordinary panel, but you're in a dedicated mode. Switch to another document tab and Photoshop asks you to accept the lighting (and wait for it to update) or discard it first.

November is usually when you'll see the big changes to Adobe's products, because that's when Adobe holds its Adobe MAX conference, so keep an eye out for future lessons on that.