video 22

Real-World Image: Vintage Look

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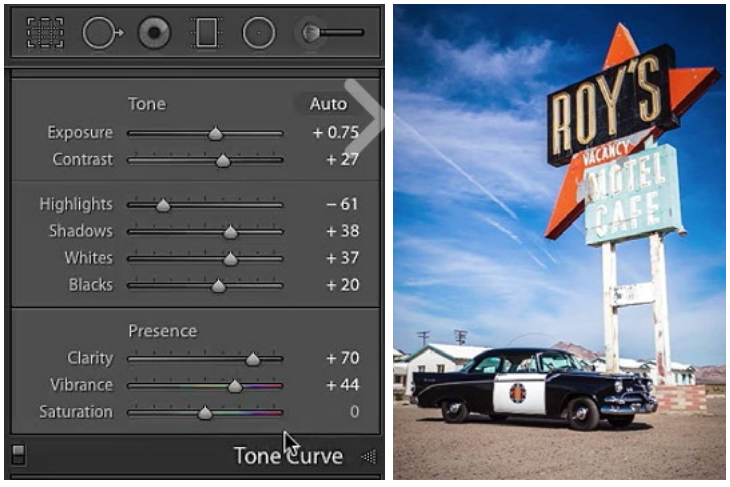
In this lesson, I'm going to show you how I created a unique vintage style, starting with a raw capture of this building on Route 66. We're going to make the image look older, but with more color fidelity than a true old photo would have. To create this look, I started in Lightroom and then moved on to Photoshop. I will be using Lightroom in the lesson, but know that you can follow along in Adobe Camera Raw, as ACR has all of the same adjustments as Lightroom's Develop Module.

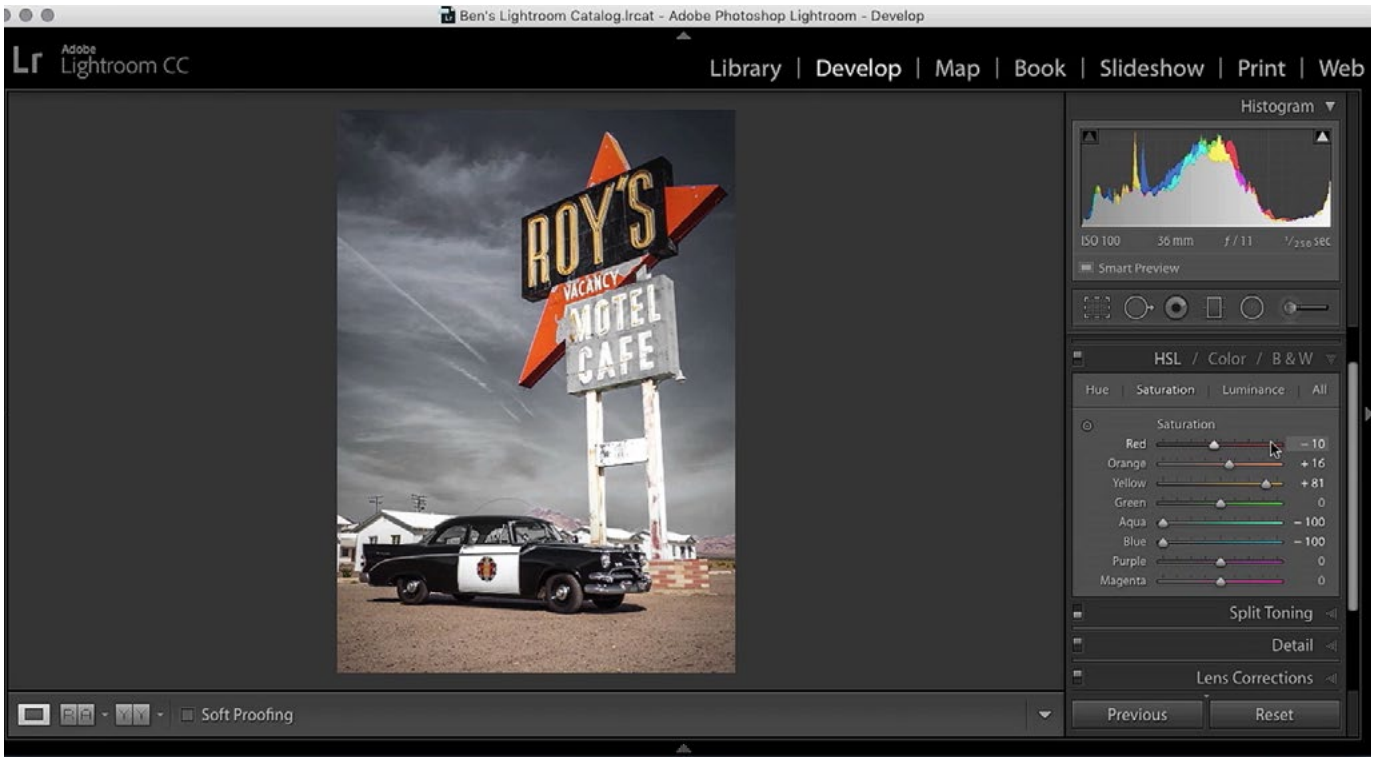
The before and after versions of the example image we're going to use in this lesson.

Lightroom Adjustments

In Lightroom, I started with the very basic tonal adjustments. These are things that I've covered in more basic classes so we won't go into detail about them here. These initial adjustments included slight tweaks to the exposure and contrast. I brought the highlights down to bring more detail into the sky and fine-tuned the whites and blacks. The adjustment I really want to point out is Vibrance. I brought up the Vibrance slider and liked what it did to the image in general, but did NOT like what it did to the sky (far too saturated). To compensate for that, I went to the HSL panel and worked with the Saturation sliders.

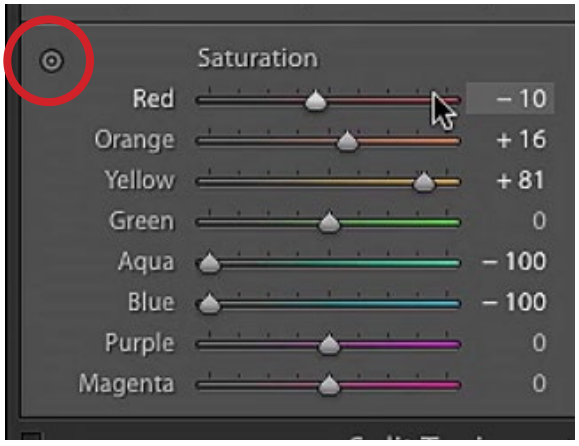


The initial settings used on the image in Lightroom's Basic panel.



The Saturation sliders are being used to desaturate the sky and make the sign more vibrant.

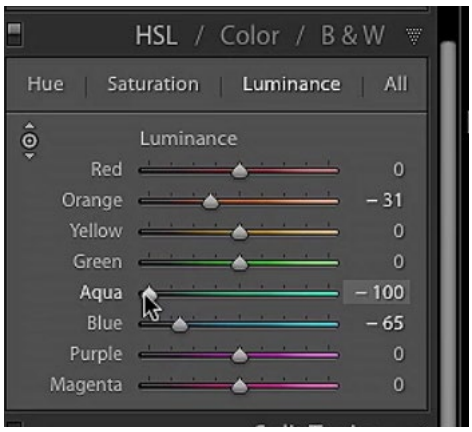
The HSL Adjustments In the HSL panel, I moved the Blue and Aqua sliders all the way to the left. This made the sky completely black and white. Then I moved the Orange and Yellow sliders up, which made the sign more colorful. Note that when making color adjustments in the HSL panel, you can use the Targeted Adjustment Tool instead of the sliders. Activate the Targeted Adjustment Tool by clicking the little round icon above and to the left of the color sliders. Then click and drag on a specific color in your image. If you're using the Saturation sliders, then dragging up will make the color more saturated and dragging down will make the color less saturated. When you adjust your colors like this, the corresponding sliders in the HSL panel will be moved automatically.



The Targeted Adjustment Tool is in the top left corner of the HSL panel.

When you move the sliders under the Hue tab in the HSL panel, you will actually be shifting individual colors (making a blue hue more green, for example). I didn't use any of these sliders in this image.

When you move the sliders under the Luminance tab in the HSL panel, you will be making the individual colors lighter or darker. With this image I brought the Aqua and Blue Luminance sliders way down, which darkened the sky. Then I moved the orange slider down a bit, which darkened the triangular portion of the sign.



The Luminance sliders allow you to adjust the brightness of individual colors.

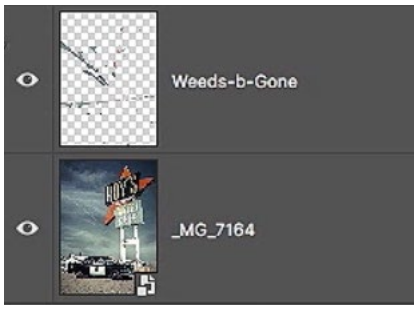
Split Toning When you use the split toning technique, you are putting color into the bright and dark areas of your picture. Lightroom has a Split Toning panel just for this purpose. The Split Toning panel contains individual sliders for the highlights and the shadows. Each has a Hue slider and a Saturation slider. When you initially move the Hue slider, nothing will happen in your picture and that's because the Saturation slider is set to 0 by default. The Saturation slider controls the strength of the change you're making. In order for you to see a change in the hue, you'll have to move the Saturation slider up. If you hold down the Option key (Alt on Win) and move the Hue slider, it acts as if the Saturation slider is set to its maximum setting and this will give you a preview of the color you're choosing. When you release the Option key, it goes back to normal.

After you've chosen the individual hues to introduce into the shadows and the highlights, you can use the Balance slider to determine how much of the brightness range in the image is considered a highlight and how much is considered a shadow.

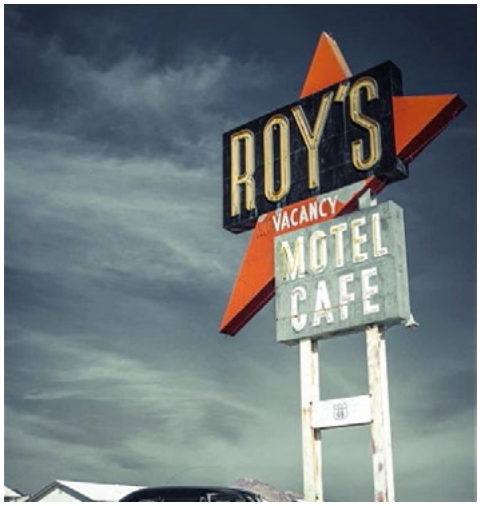
At left you can see the versions of the image before and after I applied the split tone effect. You can also see the settings I used to achieve these results inside the Split Toning panel of Lightroom.

Photoshop Adjustments

Weeds be Gone Layer In Photoshop, the first thing I did was some simple retouching, and I did this on a new, empty layer called "Weeds Be Gone." We've covered the retouching techniques in previous lessons, but you can see screen shots of the before and after versions below. I removed the plane streaks in the sky as well as some unwanted spots on the sign.

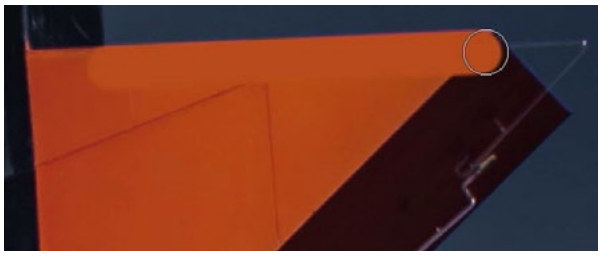


I did my retouching on an empty layer and removed the streaks in the sky, spots on the sign, telephone poles, etc.



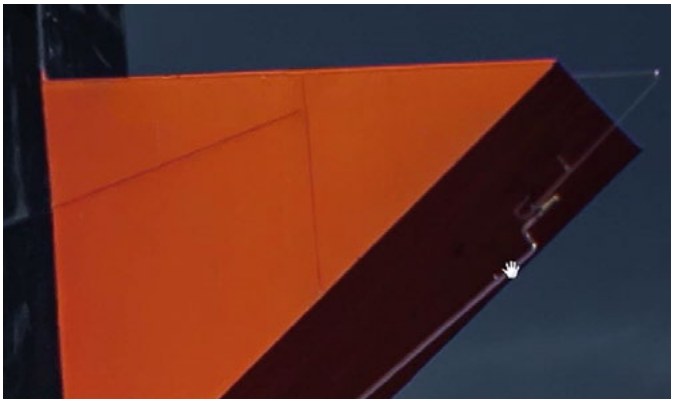
Fix Purple Fringe The edge of the sign had a pinkish-purple outline in areas, and this could be due to chromatic aberrations or simply because of the way the sign was painted or fading. To correct for this, I used the Brush Tool on a new, empty layer. I set my brush so that it was about one click away from being hard-edged and I sampled the orange color by holding down the Option key (Alt on Win) and clicking on the orange part of the sign. This made that orange the foreground color, the color that the Brush Tool will paint with. Then I clicked on the edge of the sign where the purple cast started, held down the Shift key and then clicked again on the edge of the sign where the purple cast ended. Holding down the Shift key constrains the brush to creating a straight line.

You can see the pink/purple hue at the top of the sign.



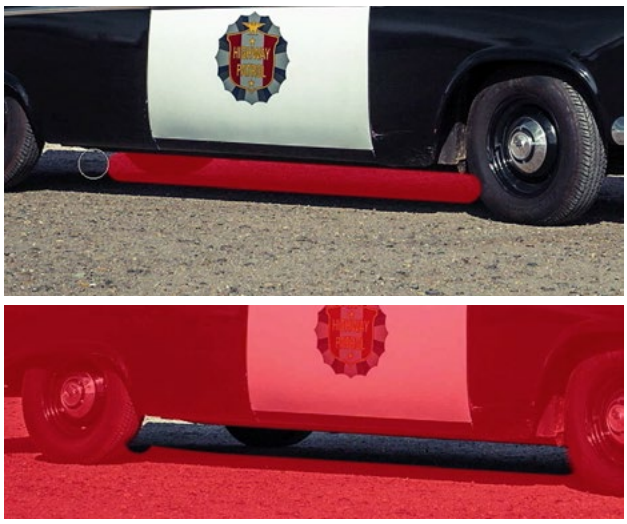
An orange line is being painted over the problem area on a new, empty layer.

The next thing I did was use the Eraser Tool to erase the orange paint off of the sky and the dark part of the sign. To make the layer we just painted blend in to the rest of the sign, we'll set the blending mode to Color. When you set a layer to the Color blending mode, it will apply the color of the active layer to the brightness of what's underneath. I also had to use a soft-edged eraser over some of the paint stroke edges in order to make them blend in better.



The blending mode of the layer I painted on was set to Color so that it blended in with the sign.

Adjustment layers for fine tuning I used a series of adjustment layers to fine tune different areas of this image. One of the things I wanted to fix was the blue color cast to the shadow underneath the car. I just felt that this drew unnecessary attention to itself. I first created a selection of this area by using the Brush Tool, painting on the image in Quick Mask Mode. I hit the Q key to enter Quick Mask Mode and then painted on the area beneath the car, creating a red overlay. With Quick Mask Mode, the area that is not covered in red is the area that is selected and the area covered in red is NOT selected. Because we want the area under the car to be selected, we'll have to invert the quick mask by going to the main menu and choosing Image > Adjustments > Invert. I exited Quick Mask Mode by hitting the Q key again.



I am creating a selection of the area under the car by painting on the area in Quick Mask Mode and then inverting the mask.

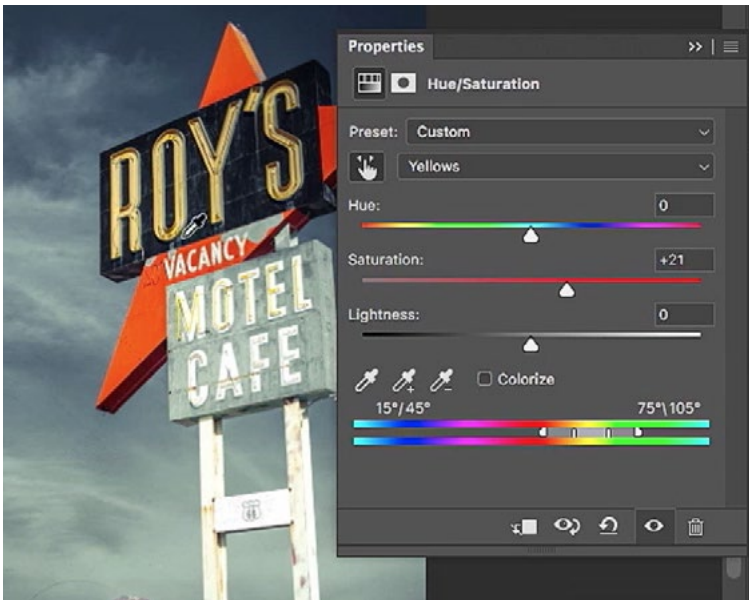
A Hue/Saturation adjustment layer was created and the active selection was automatically turned into a mask.

With the selection active, I used the Layer Mask menu at the bottom of the Layers panel to create a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer. The selection was automatically applied to the layer mask.

The Saturation slider was moved to the left to remove the blue cast from under the car. You can see the before and after version above.

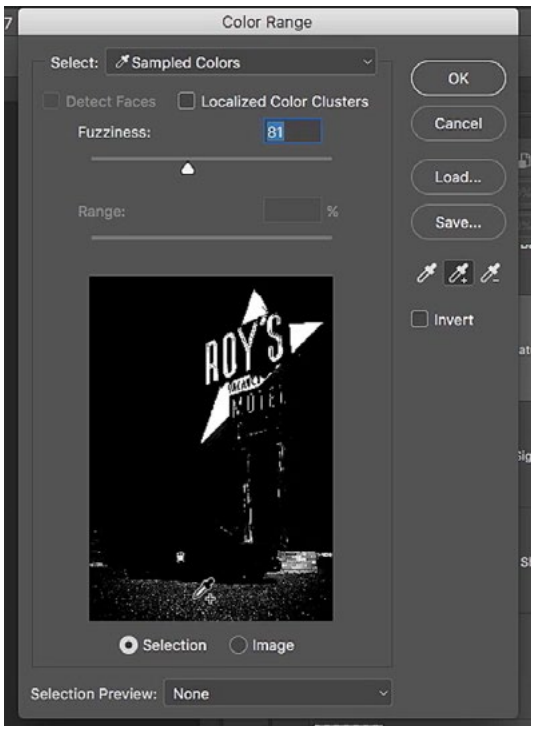
In the Properties panel for the Hue/Saturation adjustment layer, I dragged down the Saturation slider until the blue color cast was removed from the shadow.

Next, I used an adjustment layer to make the sign pop out a little more. From the Adjustment Layer menu at the bottom of the Layers panel, I chose to create a Hue/Saturation Adjustment Layer. In the Properties panel, I clicked on the Targeted Adjustment Tool (the little hand icon) to activate it. Then, I clicked on the orange in the sign and dragged to the right, which made all of the orange hues more colorful. Then, I clicked on the yellow in the sign and did the same thing. When you click and drag on a color, Photoshop will automatically select the color in the Properties panel and move the sliders accordingly.

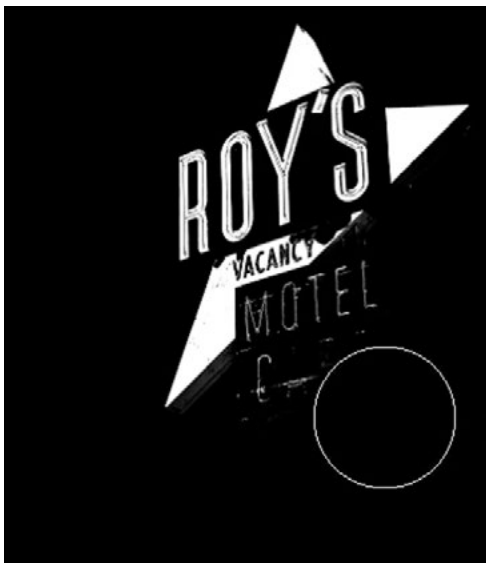


A Hue/Saturation adjustment layer is being used to make the colors in the sign pop out more.

After making this adjustment, I liked what happened with the sign, but I did not like that the adjustment affected the rest of the image as well. To fix this, I used the layer mask attached to the Hue/Saturation Adjustment Layer to limit where the adjustment appeared. With the layer mask active, I used the Color Range tool which can be accessed from the Select menu. When the dialog opened, I made sure the Fuzziness slider was set to 0 or close to it. Then I clicked somewhere in the color that I wanted to select. In this case, it was the orange of the sign. Because the color in the sign varies a bit, I activated the eyedropper with the little plus sign next to it and clicked in more areas of the orange, looking at the preview to see if the sign was fully selected. Then I started clicking on the yellow parts of the sign to include those as well. After selecting the colors, I then went to the Fuzziness slider and moved it to the highest setting that isolated much of what wanted. You can see what the preview looked like in the screen shot at right.



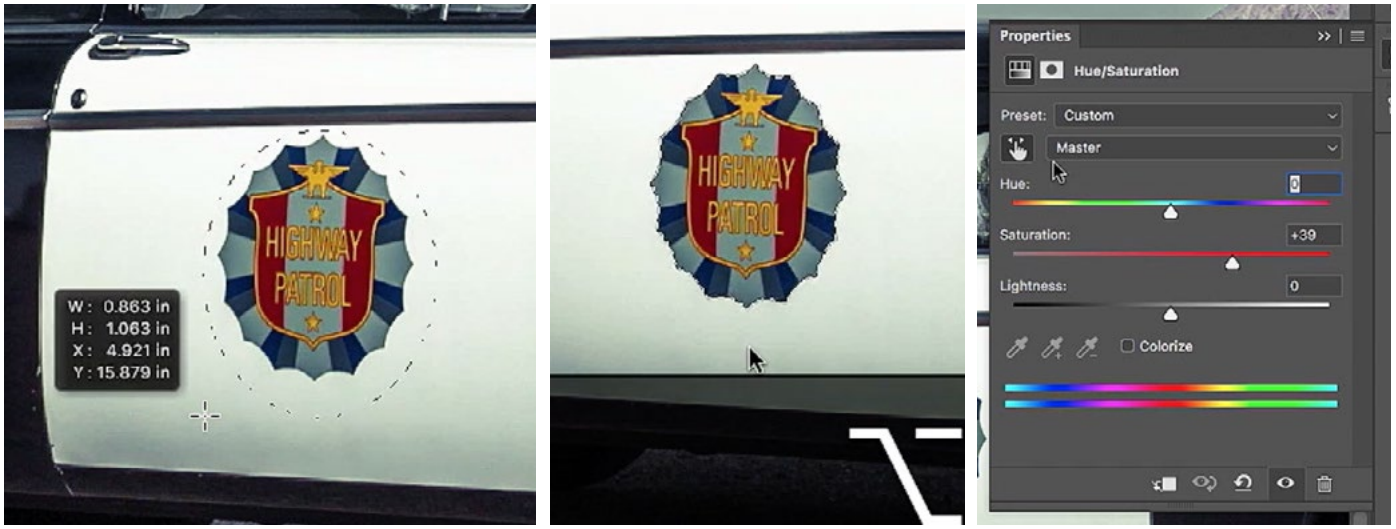
The preview of the selection in the Color Range dialog.



The mask is being cleaned up using the Brush Tool.

After clicking OK, the selection was automatically applied to the layer mask (because the layer mask was active when we used the Select Color Range tool). Finally, I had to clean up the mask a bit. To view the mask in your main image window, you can hold down the Option key (Alt on Win) and click on the thumbnail for the layer mask. The mask will appear in your image window and you can use the Brush Tool to make changes to it. I used a black brush and painted over all the areas that were white outside of the sign. Then I returned to viewing my image by Option+clicking again on the layer mask thumbnail. Now, the Hue/Saturation Adjustment Layer only affects the sign.

Moving on, I decided that I wanted the badge on the side of the car to pop a bit more as well. I used another Hue/Saturation adjustment layer to do this. The trick was creating a selection around the badge. To do this, I first used the Elliptical Marquee Tool to make a circle around the badge. Then I activated the Magic Wand Tool, held down the Option key (Alt on Win) to make it subtract from the selection and clicked in the white area outside of the badge. This limited the selection to the badge only. Then, when I created the adjustment layer, the selection was automatically applied to the mask. In the Properties panel, I just moved the Saturation slider up a bit, boosting the color of the badge.



Left: A selection was made around the badge. Center: The Magic Wand Tool was used to subtract the white area from the selection. Right: A Hue/Saturation Adjustment Layer was added.

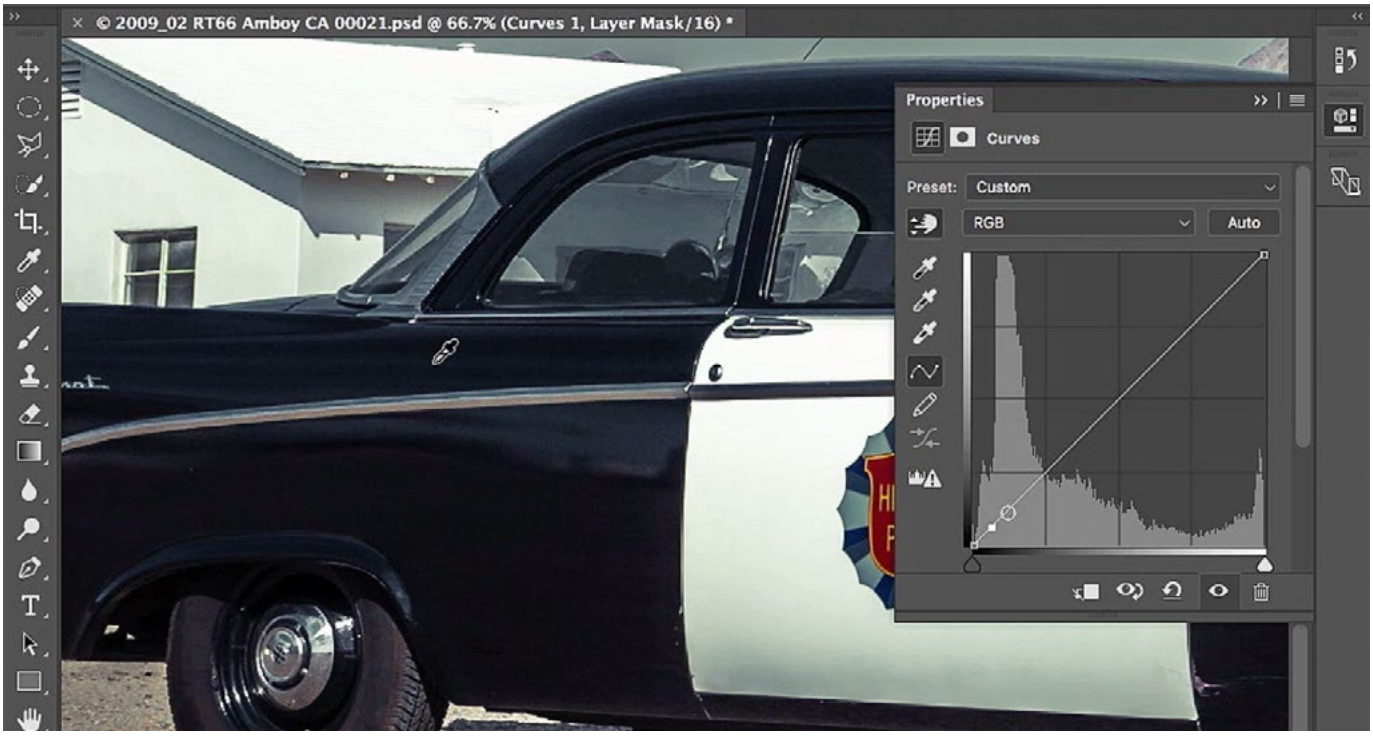
The last adjustment layer in this document was used to bring some shadow detail back into the car. I started by making a selection of the car, using the Quick Selection Tool. When using this tool on a layer other than the one we want to make a selection from, we need to turn on the "Sample All Layers" check box in the Options Bar. I also turned on the "Auto Enhance" check box, which will give me a smoother-looking edge on my selection. I used the Quick Selection Tool to paint over the car, trying to encompass the entire thing. I moved in and

The Quick Selection Tool is being used to select the car.

out of Quick Mask Mode (by hitting the Q key) to see the red overlay, which gave me a better idea of what was being selected and if I missed anything. If anything outside of the car was accidentally selected, I held down the Option key while using the tool, which will tell Photoshop to subtract from the selection instead of add to it. To further clean up the selection, I used the Brush Tool in Quick Mask Mode.

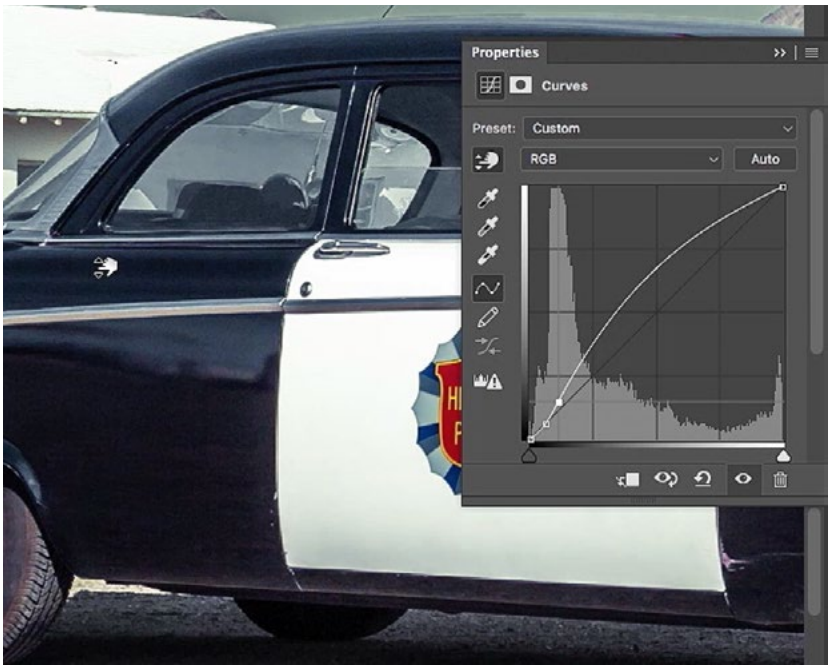
The selection is being refined using the Brush Tool in Quick Mask Mode.

Once the car was selected, I created a Curves Adjustment Layer by using the Adjustment Layer menu at the bottom of the Layers Panel. In the Properties panel, I clicked on the little hand tool on the upper left side of the curve chart. With this tool active, I moved my mouse over one of the darker areas of the car that isn't pure black. When I clicked in that spot, it placed a point on the curve, locking in that level of brightness. Then I looked for the brightest area of the really dark parts of the car and clicked there as well, placing another dot on the curve.



Points are being placed on the curve representing the dark areas of the car.

I needed to move that second dot up in order to brighten that tone, and that could be done in one of two ways. I could drag the actual dot on the curve chart. What I did in this case was click and drag up on the dot right in the image. When I drag up, the targeted brightness range will become brighter, therefore brightening the dark areas of the car. The first dot I placed will lock in the super dark tones, which will ensure that we maintain contrast.



When I click and drag up on the targeted tone in the image, the curve moves to reflect that.

A third dot was placed on the curve and repositioned such that the rest of the curve became straight again.

When I moved that second dot, you can see that the rest of the curve moved up as well. This caused the brighter areas of the image to become brighter, and this is something I didn't want. To fix this, I went to the Curves properties panel and clicked on the curve to create a third dot, slightly above the second. Then I dragged that dot down on the curve, positioning it in a way that makes the rest of the curve become a straight line again. Note that you sometimes have to play around with this technique to get the results you're after.