

The Making of the Roches Stores Aliens

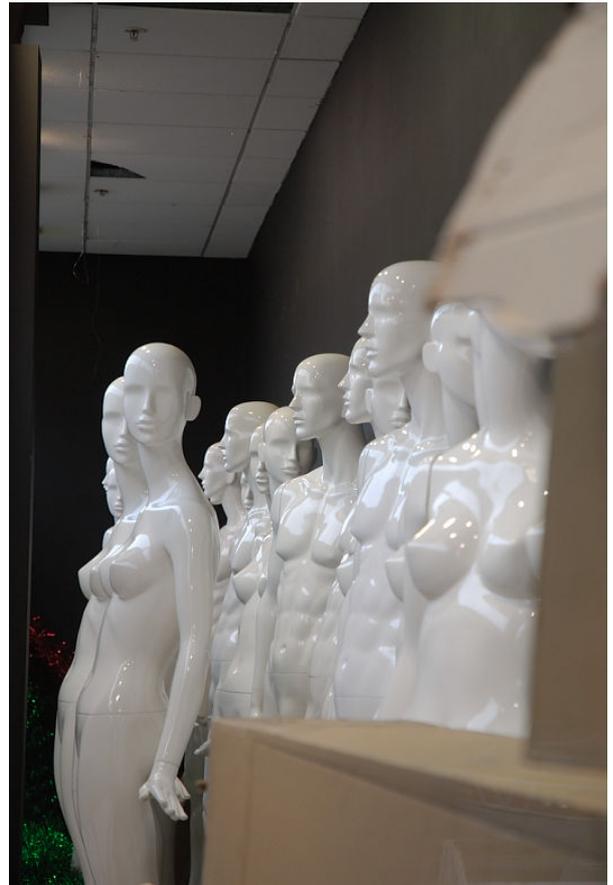
First off for this demonstraton I am using Nikon Capture (NC) program and Photoshop. I tend to shoot raw files most of the time and NC produces the best conversion for normal shots. It is stellar at dealing with underexposed images, crap at highlight recovery if you overexpose, and worse at noise reduction, and a total and unmittigated disaster in terms of speed. But for processing one or two images its ok:.

Secondly the orignial image was slightly underexposed as I planned to use this aggressive alteration.

1: Fig one is the converted raw file without anymodification. We can see that there is a white balance issue (the whites are green). This is caused by:

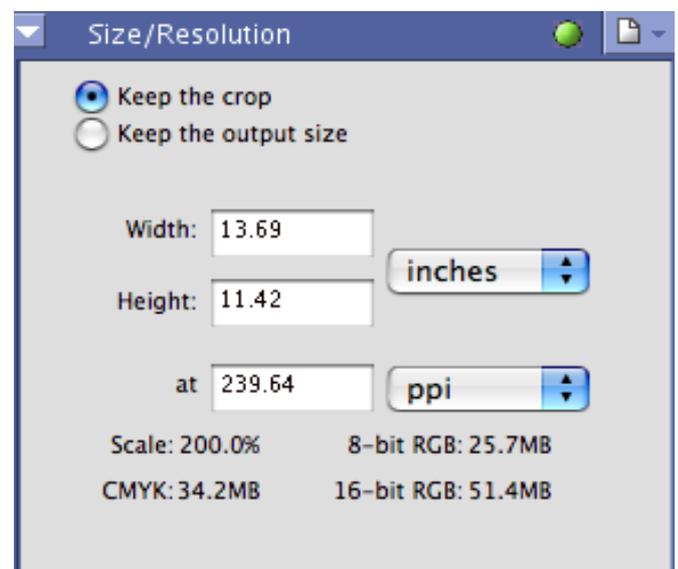
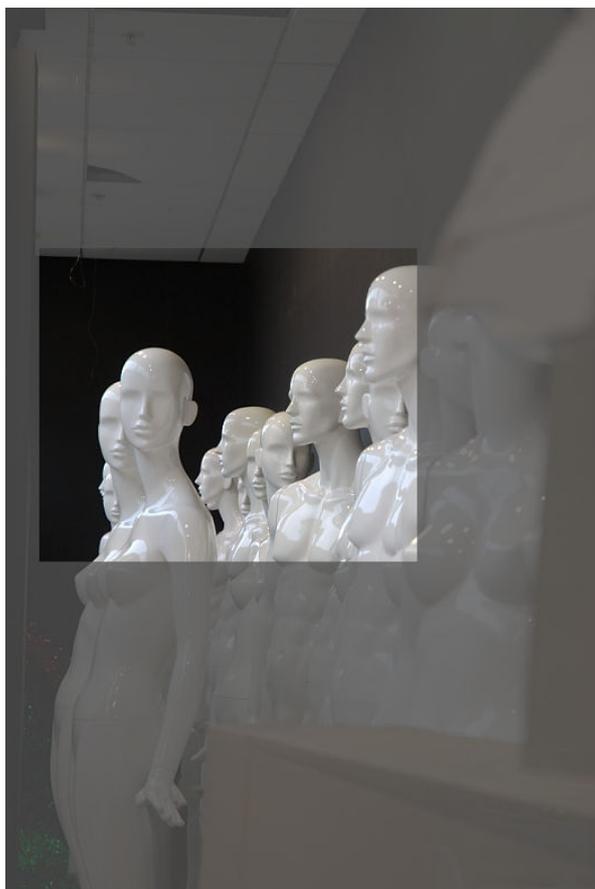
- a: Two light sources with different color temps i.e halogen spots and the sun.
- b: A predominance of two tones whites and balcks, makes it hard for the AWB system to make a judgement.

Fortunately this is easily corrected simple by selecting the white balance tool and clicking on an area of one of the manakins that should be neutral i.e white grey or black. The result is the wamer picture on the right.



2: The image now has a better white balance (but not technically correct). Normally the next stage would be to address the contrast in the image which is pretty flat, followed by a crop and print. However I need to do a significant crop on this image to get the “faces” only. The contrast adjustment I plan is quite aggressive and in effect damages the image. To crop after the contrast is applied would in effect magnify this damage due to the interpolation required to get a reasonable print size. However if I crop the original image then I am working on “undamaged” data so the crop will work out quite well.

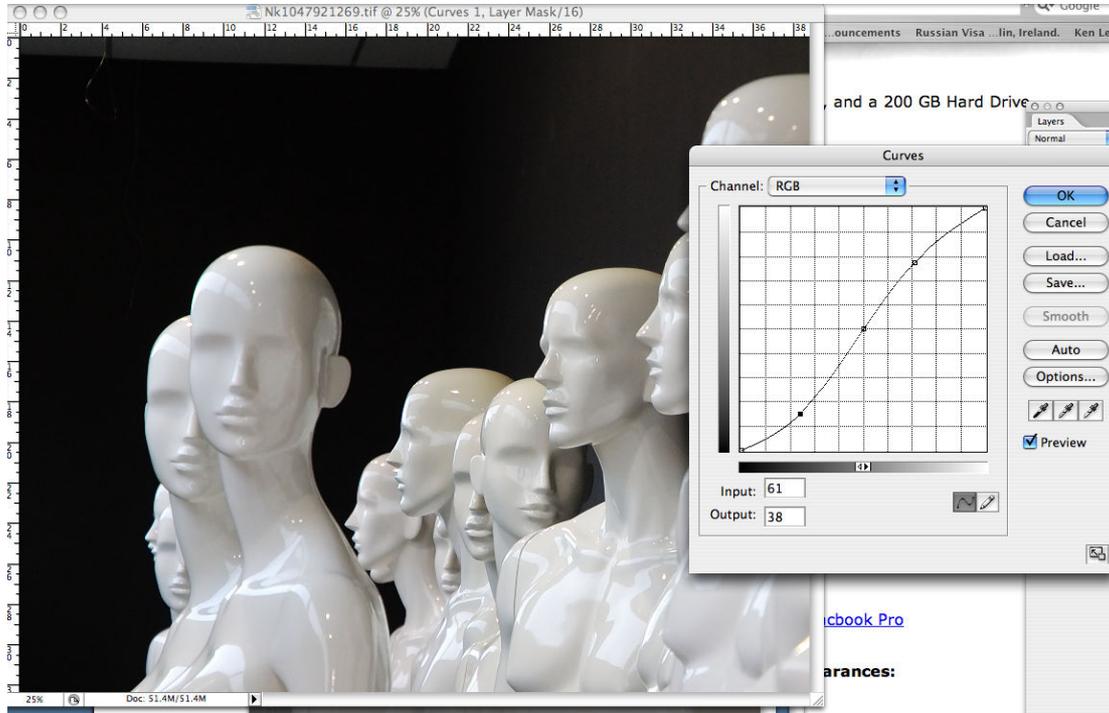
The screen grab below shows the area to be cropped and dialog box that shows how I told NC to interpolate the crop in to a print of 11*13. While this is a strange size it was chosen so as to give the best composition. The cropped image is then sent to Photoshop.



3: The penultimate stage is to apply the contrast curve in photoshop. (this could have been done in NC as well but I prefer to print from photoshop).

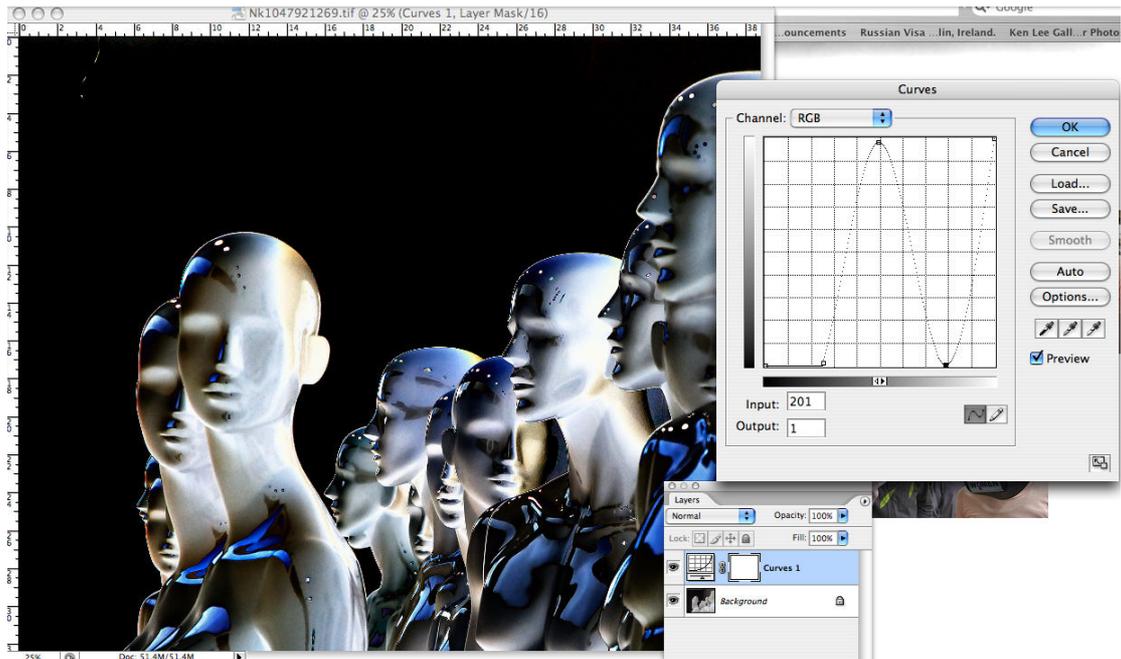
For those of you unfamiliar with contrast curves: Almost all Digital shots require some contrast enhancement. If you shoot JPEG, or use a point and shoot, this is done for you automatically. RAW files when opened in your favorite editor also have a

level of contrast enhancement applied but often require fine tuning. Photoshop provides a tool called the curve which allows the photographer lighten and darken certain tones to enhance the contrast. The standard way to do this is to apply an S shaped curve as shown below – essentially the valley of the S darkens the dark bits and the peak of the S brightens the bright bits thus enhancing the contrast.



The technique I used is different to this, and is borrowed from the film darkroom. It was designed for B&W images. The photoshop equivalent works on images that have at most two or three primary colours. Essentially what I did was to use the curve to make the following changes:

1. The Shaddows i.e the really dark bits stay dark
2. Midtones (greys) become the highlights.
3. Light tones (half way between mid and highlights) become shaddows.
4. Highlights left unchanged.



The result is shown above. Note this only works if you apply this curve to the RGB composite channel. In RGB mode when you adjust the brightness using any shaped curve you also change the colour and this is what causes the blues and golds and other odd colours in the picture. If you convert the image to lab mode and apply this curve to the lightness channel you will get a different result.

5. Final stage = normal photoshop print.

Hope you found this helpful.
George Greenlee