

Split-Toning in Photoshop Elements

You've probably seen the controls in both Lightroom and (full) Photoshop that can give you Split-tone in your images. In fact if you search YouTube for a video about split-toning you will only find how to do it using Lightroom, full Photoshop and Adobe Camera Raw (but only the ACR found in Elements). You may not have found how to do the same (more or less) in Photoshop Elements. So here goes....

Often called monochrome but really it's duotone.

This is something I've picked up from a variety of sources and my own experimentation – I've just checked that it works for PS Elements 14. Older versions required a slightly different technique (I first tried this on Elements 4). And it's simple!

Split toning is often used to simulate the quality and colour cast of old photographic paper - platinum, palladium, sepia, selenium and blue. Instead of using just one colour, (as in the Sepia version where you hit "Colorize" in a Hue/Saturation adjustment and go for a sepia colour at an appropriate saturation) the split-tone process on Elements (and full PS if you like) just requires the use of the **Gradient Map** adjustment layer. You can set your two colours up in the foreground/background paint swatches and run a gradient map using "Foreground to Background", or you can make the gradients and save them for future use.

So, here goes..... have a black and white image prepared (whichever way you like to make a b&w except via "Image > Mode > Grayscale") and given a little contrast boost. Make sure you can see 'Layers' (in Windows Menu or hit F11).

Click on the 'New Adjustment Layer' icon (the half black/half white circle at the top of the Layers panel) or find it in the Layer Menu. Select 'Gradient Map' from the options.

Double click on the 'Layer Thumbnail' image (looks like two mountains and the sun). This will open the Gradient Map control – which looks a little sparse, with just 'Dither' and 'Reverse' and a panel showing the currently set gradient (which is what's now making your image look rubbish).

Click in that wide rectangle. You will now see a window that shows the program's installed 'presets'..... some pretty colours that, frankly, are 99% useless.

Below the presets, you will see a slider bar with some shapes at each

end. The squares below the bar will be showing the existing colours of the current gradient..... and they can be changed! They are called the 'Color Stops'.... one is the Foreground colour (on the left) and the other is the Background colour (on the right).

Just click on the bottom left square and you will see that the 'Color' box below has the same colour – so click on the 'Color' box and you will be presented with the Color Picker.

From there, you can choose any colour you like.

Now – you will be looking for a dark colour which will be the 'foreground' colour. You need to choose your two different toning colours . Set foreground colour to set the tone for shadows.

The background colour (for your highlights) is at the right end of the gradient bar.

Obviously, if you set black and white that's exactly what you'd get, but we want something different.

Ok, so what colours work well? I like all of these so it's not easy to tell you which to use, but.....(set the hex numbers in the colour palette - Foreground is the first number, Background the second number)....

Copper-Blue..... Dusky Blue (#4A616F) Muted Orange (#E6CFAA)
Rich Sepia..... Chocolate (#63441C) Cream (#FFF5D8)
Neutral..... Muted brown (#45392B) White (#FFFFFF)
Blue Tone..... Midnight blue (#2A4468) Muted cyan (#A9C6C6)

Click OK. You will see a disappointing looking image that's not what you wanted. Now all you need to do is change the Blend Mode to "Color" and Viola! Alter Layer Opacity as required.

If you're still not perfectly happy, you can make small adjustments to the two colours used – that's the beauty of using adjustment layers, you can go back time and time again to adjust your colours. You can also add a 'middle' colour – you can add several 'Color Stops' and have a colour in the middle, so the image colours might go from deep blue to something green to something yellow. Not something you'd normally want to do with a 'straight image', but it's there if you want, and there are already some 'three-tone' gradients pre-installed.

Now, the best bit of all.....

You can make as many Gradient Maps as you like ahead of time and save them as presets. There's an 'Add to Presets' button in the Gradient Map editing dialogue box, and you can save them for use at any time.

You can make new gradients easily by just clicking on the Gradient button (in the 'Draw' tools) and then hitting 'Edit'. Then you just 'Add to Presets' and then make a new one, and so on. Cool, eh?

You might even find some more hints and colours online, or you could just find a toned picture online, bring it into PSE and use the eye-dropper tool to sample the darkest and lightest areas to use as your tone range for the gradient.

Happy toning!

Geoff

Sample

