Tutorial 7

The History Brush - Dust and Scratch Removal

By Ian Lyons © 2002

For many new Photoshop users the removal of dust and scratches from a scanned image involves the use of the Rubber Stamp tool, however alternative methods do exist. This short tutorial demonstrates one such method and makes use of the Photoshop History Brush feature.

Step 1

Although not always essential it is good practice to activate the Allow Non-linear history function. This can be selected from the History Palette menu.

History Options

Open the History Palette and choose New Snapshot.
A snapshot is simply a temporary copy of the image in a particular state. Actually Photoshop automatically creates the first snapshot (shown as Leaves.PSD in example below) and so this step isn't always required. Typically an image will have undergone some other edits before the user decides to clean it up and it is in these circumstances that using the original snapshot would have been a bad choice. Tip - be safe; just create the new snapshot!
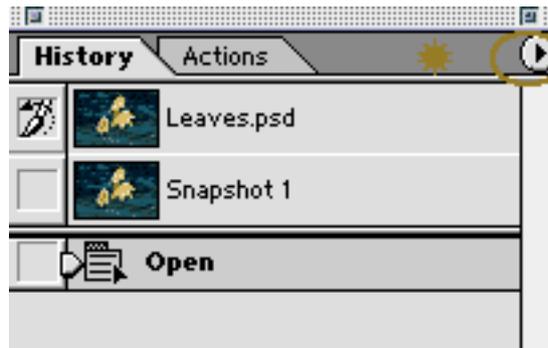
Creating the first Snapshot

Step 2

From the Filter menu choose Noise > Dust & Scratches.

Adjusting Dust & Scratches Filter

Set Threshold to 0.
Increase the Radius value until the dust and scratches disappear.
Click OK when satisfied that the dust, etc. has been blurred out.

Step 3

Open the Noise Filter and choose Add Noise.
Select Uniform and Monochromatic.
Set the Amount to a small value (say 2 or 3 %).!
The noise ensures that the filtered area doesn't appear unnaturally smooth in the final image.
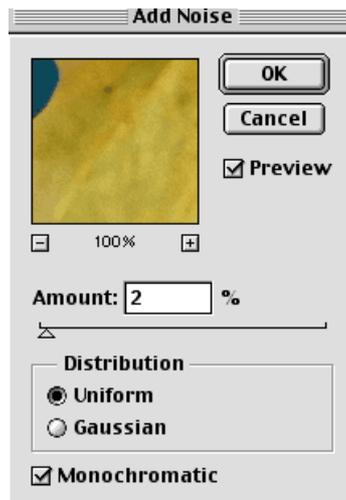
Add Noise Filter

Step 4

Create a New Snapshot (Snapshot 2).
Choose Merged Layers.!
Merged Layers ensures that all the layers within the image are included within the snapshot. Current Layer makes the snapshot of only the currently selected layer.

Create Snapshot 2

Target the snapshot created in Step 1 (Snapshot 1).
Select the History Brush from Tool Palette.
Set the source (History Brush) to the last snapshot (Snapshot 2).

Preparing the History States

Step 5

Choose a small soft brush and set to lighten/darken mode to eliminate dark/light dust marks

Brushes Palette

Zoom into an area of the image and begin painting out the dust and scratches. It's probably better to remove the dark spots first and then begin on the light spots since the typical scan will contain more dark spots.

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