How to do Cut–Outs using Channels

1. Open main image

2. Open Sky image

3. Select the Move Tool from the Toolbox. Holding down the left mouse button, drag the sky image over and into the main image (*you should see the cursor change shape as you move over from one image to the next*) and release mouse button. You should now have the sky layer sitting over the top of the main image.

4. Go back to the original sky image and close this one, as it is no longer needed.

5. Make sure that the top sky image layer is active. Hold down the "Cntl" key and press "T", which is the keyboard shortcut for Free Transform (*It's a lot quicker than going to Edit > Transform > Free Transform via the top Menu Bar*) and drag the sky layer into the position required and press the Enter key to set this change.

6. Turn off the Sky layer and make the main image layer active

7. Open the Channels palette and review each of the Red, Green and Blue channels in turn to determine which channel has the best contrast *(usually with skies and landscapes it will be the Blue Channel).*

8. Holding down the "Cntl" key, click onto the selected channel to load it.

9. Now click the RGB Channel at the top of the Channels stack.

10. Go back to the Layers palette and turn on the Sky layer to make it active.

11. Click the Make Layer Mask symbol at the bottom of the Layers palette *(it looks like a white circle in a box).*

12. Zoom in close and review quality of mask to determine extent and location of fringing, etc.

13. Hold down the "Cntl" key and press "L" to bring up the Levels dialogue box (*It's a lot quicker than going to Image > Adjustments > Levels via the top Menu Bar*). Drag in the black triangle towards to right to increase the density of the blacks, thus removing some of the unwanted problem areas.

14. Hold down the "Alt" key and click on the sky mask. Zoom in and using the "Paint brush" from the Tool Box, with the opacity set to 100% and the foreground set to black, paint out unwanted elements from the mask.

15. ***Roy's additional note not previously mentioned:*** *In practice the above works better if the area of the sky which is overlapping the leaves of tree's or similar "darker" colours are as light as possible, which thereby results in less halo's around the cut out. If this is proving a little problem click the "Add Layer Style" icon at the bottom left of the Layers palette (it is denoted by the letters "fx") and select Blending Options. From the "General Blending > Blending Mode drop down menu select "Multiply". This brings out the missing detail in the twigs and around the leaves and gets rid of the halo's. If needs be, you can also adjust the Blending sliding bars at the bottom to tweak.*

Roy Essery – DPAGB 25/02/2011

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NOW TO DO ANY REFLECTIONS IN WATER, etc

16. Click on the Sky layer and drag down onto the Make Copy Layer icon in the Layers palette.

17. Make the duplicate layer active and rename it to "Reflection"

18. Working on the newly created "Reflection " layer active, unclick the link between the sky and its mask

19. Hold down the "Cntl" key and hit "T" on the keyboard. As before, this brings up the Free Transform dialogue.

20. Drag the top of this layer downwards to show a reflection and position to suit.

21. Reduce the opacity of this layer to suit.

JOB DONE!!

Roy Essery – DPAGB 25/02/2011