



# Lets talk Photoshop

## *Increasing Dynamic Range*

**T**here are times when you have great difficulty getting the exposure right for the light & dark areas of a photograph. This is particularly the case when there is a strong background light for example when shooting indoors with a window in the background. Here is a technique which will enable you to achieve a better range of exposure.

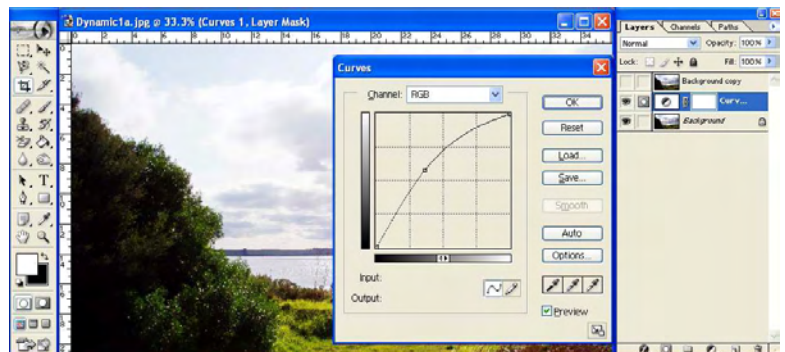
**H**ere is my original photo, it lacks any impact, the sky is over exposed and the foreground area is under exposed.

**F**or this technique we need two photos, one exposed for the highlights & the other for the shadows. Of course most of us don't normally take two (unless you bracket them) so I will cheat by using the same image and have Photoshop create the two images. If you have the two images then you can skip the first 6 steps or if you shoot in RAW format then you can create the two images when you convert the file.



1. Open the image and create a layer copy. Click the eye to temporarily hide this layer.

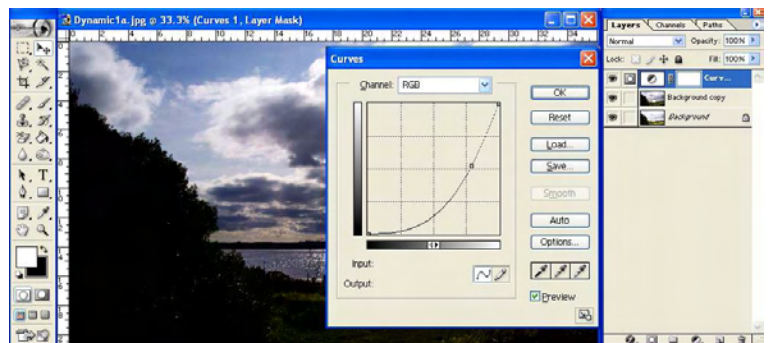
2. Select the Background layer and add an Adjustment layer ( I use curves but you can also use Brightness/Contrast).



3. Brighten the image so the foreground becomes correctly exposed (ie raise the curve). When you are happy save and Merge Down the layer

4. Next select the Background copy and again add an Adjustment layer.

5. This time darken the image so the highlights are correctly exposed.



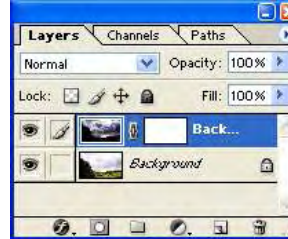
6. When you are happy with the exposure save and Merge Down the layer.



7. You now have two images ready to combine.



8. Add a layer mask to the Background Copy Layer



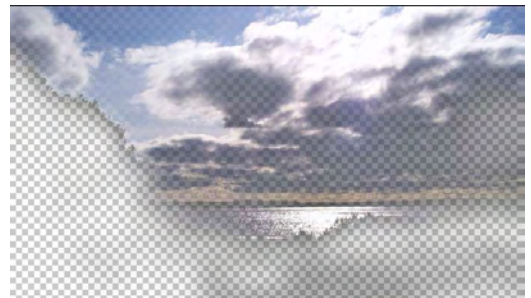
9. Select the Background layer and press Alt-A (to select all) then Ctrl-C (to copy).

10. Press Alt and click on the white square (layer mask) of the Background Copy. Your image should turn white.

11. Press Ctrl-V to paste the image you copied in step 10. Your image will now appear in black & white. To fix this just click on the eye.

12. Almost finished... the last thing you need to do is blur the layer.  
Go to Filters > Blur > Gaussian Blur and set the radius to around 40.

Here is the mask that has been added to the lightened image. You can see that the cloud area has been enhanced while the foreground has little or no change.



Here are the two images with the original at the left. The adjusted image has much better definition of the foreground, the sky has come to life and the reflection of the sun is enhanced. This is more like I remember the scene when I was enticed to photograph it.

