

Cool edges using a layer mask

One of my yearbook staffs is working on a design for their cover, endsheets and theme pages that uses a big, impressive photo but they were looking for a way to create a cool edge effect. I went out and found a superb tutorial by the best in the Photoshop business—Dave Cross and turned it into this step-by-step for them. Then I thought it might work for others. So give it a try. It's a new method for me and I love it.

Start with a great photo. Since it's almost summer, I used this beach shot. (Figure A)

Step 1: With the Marquee tool, select an area to mask. I decided to remove a little of the sky and a little of the beach. If you look closely, you will see my marching ants. (Figure B)

Step 2: Click the Add a Mask button at the bottom of the Layers panel. (Figure C)

Step 3: Since we will be printing this on a white page, create another layer below your photo by holding down the Command (Control on a PC) key while clicking the New Layer button at the bottom of the Layers panel. This will give you a new, empty layer BELOW the photo.

Step 4: Press the D key to make white your background color and then fill that layer with white by pressing Command (Control on a PC) Delete. (Your Layers panel should look like Figure D)

Step 5: Double-click on the Layer Mask (Figure E) to open the Mask Properties panel. (Figure F)

Step 6: Click on the Mask Edge button (Figure G) to open the Refine Mask dialog box. (Figure H)

Step 7: Then click the Smart Radius button (Figure I) and drag the Radius slider to the right. At this point (depending on the size of the photo and the speed of your computer, you may have to wait to see the preview of what you are doing.

Step 8: If you want to refine the edge even more, choose the brush to the right of the Edge Detection box (Figure J) and drag it around the edge of the photo. Don't freak out when it looks as if it is painting white, it will take the screen a few moments to redraw. If you do something you don't like, press Command (Control on a PC) Z to undo it.

Step 9: You can also change the Smooth, Feather and Contrast sliders to try different effects.

It is important to note that this technique will work differently with just about every photo as they all will have different edges as part of the image but this is such an easy technique that you can experiment a bunch and it won't take too much time.

One other thing to remember is that this is a Layer Mask so you can click OK and return to the main Photoshop screen, click on the Mask in the Layers panel and then using your paint brush, you can add or subtract from the mask you made just like with any other layer mask.

When you have the edge the way you want it, save the file as a Photoshop document (PSD) so you can come back to edit it if you need to. Then save a copy of the file as a PNG (so it is transparent) and upload that to Yearbook Aveune or use the original PSD in InDesign. ☐

