



# Tips and Tricks

*Thanks for using Dancing Icon's Tips & Tricks!*

*For more information visit [www.dancingicon.com](http://www.dancingicon.com)*

# Photoshop 5.5

The hardest colors to get accurate on press are the reds & yellows such as in this award-winning shot of the Balinese Firewalker. It is important when you are managing color to have the client bring a sample with which they are happy. Color is subjective.

Most professional color correctors respond in the first few seconds when analyzing an image. They compare swatches and previous match prints to make sure the color doesn't shift. As someone who has demanding clients including celebrities and cosmetic companies, I recommend a good light-box and a viewing station for proofs.

When I was working on the image shown here for a book cover, there were a few "digital" challenges.

We needed to convert the original negative into a digital file. There is an art to scanning negatives correctly; drum scanners work better with a positive image. As a digital artist, I always prefer a chrome. The original was re-scanned until the color and image detail were close to matching the client's original print. Then I cleaned up missing pixels using standard cloning and airbrushing techniques.

My favorite color correction tool in Photoshop is Adjustment Layers for color corrections. This enables you to shift color as a separate layer, which means at any time in the process you can go back to the original information by turning your layer on or off.

## ANALYZING THE OVERALL IMAGE

Take a look at the original image for the book cover. The drum scanner didn't capture the true color of the fire and it made the image less sharp in the process of scanning it. From experience I know when this goes to press it will look flat. The overall contrast needs to be corrected—common when an image has been scanned. Most drum scanners automatically add sharpness in the process of scanning. I specifically request no sharpening because I like to add unsharp masking

BY HELENE DELILLO



Before and after:  
Balinese Firewalker by Ariel Kane

as the last step.

The sharpening numbers depend on the final size of the image so I will apply different sharpening depending on purpose and size.

## STEPS TO COLOR CORRECT THIS IMAGE

1. Analyze the image.
2. Open original in Photoshop.
3. Go to file menu; save as "fire-working.psd." This file has the layers of corrections. I include the correct file extension so it can be read on Macintosh and Windows machines.
4. Go to the Layer Menu, select New Adjustment Layer. A dialog box will appear, select Levels in the pop-up menu. Adjust the highlight (white triangle), midtone (gray triangle), and shadow (black triangle) slider until the contrast is acceptable to you. On most images you will only need to slide the highlight & shadow slider to adjust contrast.
5. Go to the Layer Menu—select New Adjustment Layer. Select Curves from the pop-up menu. Curves are for more specific color corrections and take a little practice to get used to. I adjusted the highlight area in the curve (upper right corner) to brighten the light areas and keep the detail. Then I added a quarter tone point by clicking in between the middle point and the shadow point (lower left corner) in the curve. I then adjusted this point so that we could see more detail in some of the darker areas without changing the black point. When it is acceptable click OK. You click on the eye in your layer palette to see the before and after of your corrections.
6. Last, click on the Image Layer, usually called Background in your Layer Palette unless you have changed the name. Make sure it is the active layer.
7. Go to the Filter menu. Select Sharpen and the submenu Unsharp Mask. I used an amount of 120, radius of 2 pixels, and a threshold of 0.

8. Now Save & Print to check the color. If you are unhappy with the color, you can double click on the adjustment layer and change the value until you are satisfied. On the Firewalker after receiving the proof I created one more adjustment layer using Color Balance to make the reds just perfect.

I recommend you go on press, you will learn a lot (even you experts)! I went with my clients with this book cover, "Working on Yourself Doesn't Work, A Book About Instantaneous Transformation" published by Ask Productions Inc. For more information about goto <http://www.ask-inc.com>.

Email your questions, suggestions for tips or articles, and comments to [helene@dancingicon.com](mailto:helene@dancingicon.com).

