Notes on post production techniques - 27 November 2019

Session 1

I started by showing the effectiveness of 'content aware fill' in Photoshop (PS). I'm not sure if this is in PS Elements - I suspect it is in the latest version as its been around for a few years now and gets better and better each time they update PS.
To use it you have to select the area that contains the offending object you want rid of. Any of the selection tools will do the job (make sure the tool you use doesn't have a huge 'feather' or PS will throw up an error box - can't remember what it says but it means no pixels with more than 50% opacity were selected - so the fill won't work as you expect). Then in PS under the edit menu you'll find the fill command. Inside here you have several choices, one of which is content aware fill. Once its done its stuff you have to turn off the selection - command or control D key or go to the menu at the top and go 'Select' - 'deselect'.
Sometimes its not too clever and fills the area with something from a part of the image that you don't want. For example if you have a car in front of a wall and there's a gutter running down the wall. You select the gutter and content aware fills it with bits of car and not bricks. The fix is to use a mask but give me a shout as its a bit in depth for this session.

Next I showed how to fix the corner of the wall by first selecting and copy/paste a bit of black edge material for use later. Lets call this the 'Corner' layer. Then I removed the old edge using using content aware fill and the stamp tool, before warping and masking the Corner layer.

Finally I dropped a screen onto the monitor to give the appearance it was switched on. This was done by drag/dropping the screen image onto the open image. Then by using the distort function (Edit-Transform - Distort) I just dragged the corners to there place on the monitor. As a flourish I applied a gradient blur to give the appearance of depth of field to the image on the screen.

Sorry but I can't post the images as technically they're Crown Copyright - so best not go there.

Session 2

Night shots with a starry sky.

When doing this you need to keep in mind its a two stage process - the photography and the post production. The photographs alone will look rubbish, but once in Photoshop it comes to life. For Youtube fans its all explained here:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-KNiVo4X76cJIMphH1lEdA

1. Photograph on a starry night (and preferably not freezing too).
2. Use a solid tripod - all pictures need to be in perfect registration so don't nudge the tripod at any time once you're set up and taking a series of shots.
3. Place you subject in the foreground but shoot from low down so you include a lot of sky.
4. First exposure is for the starry sky. It's best with a wide angle lens and you might get 10 seconds before the rotation of the earth makes your stars start to elongate. With a more telephoto lens you get even less time. So you have about 10 seconds max to capture those weak pinpricks of light (or a bit longer if you're shooting with a super wide angle lens). That means lens wide open (f3.5 or wider) and a high ISO. I use a full frame sensor and find ISO1600 is enough.
The only tricky bit is focusing as in the dark your auto focus wont work. If your lens has a focus scale you can set it to infinity but if not shine your torch on a subject about 12 metres away and focus on that. Then turn off autofocus, you should be somewhere near.
Light pollution can add an orangey glow to the sky. Try setting your white balance to 'Tungsten' as this boosts the blues.
5. The remaining pictures will be light painted. Without nudging you camera at any time, set ISO to a lower value (400 or 500 is good) and use a smaller aperture (f5.6 to f8) to get a sharper image.
6. With exposure anywhere from 10 to 30 seconds (depends on the amount of ambient light around) set the self-timer to 10 seconds, (or use a radio trigger or iPhone app to fire the shutter), and run off and light paint the subject from a place off to the side or even behind the

subject. Don't try and paint the whole thing in one exposure. Take several shots and paint different parts of the scene in each shot.

Now into Photoshop. From Lightroom there's a command 'Open as layers in Photoshop', otherwise you need to open each one and drag them all into one photoshop document (if you hold down the shift key as you drag them in they'll all align with each other). You should then have one document with several layers. Select all the layers (or go to each one in turn) and set its blend mode to "Lighten".
Next you can mask out all the rubbish skies and reveal just the one sky that you deliberately took as a frame of just the sky.
Finally go through each layer turning it on and off and see what effect it has. You must then judge whether to change its opacity or mask parts out to give you an image your happy with.