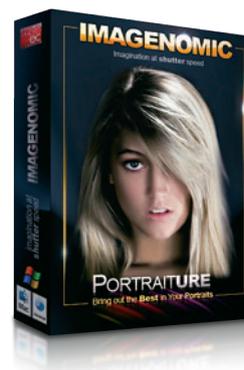


# Using Imagenomic Plug-Ins to Streamline Printmaking Workflows

By Eric Neilsen



www.ericneilsenphotography.com

Eric Neilsen, owner of Eric Neilsen Photography of Dallas, Texas, has been shooting since 1978. His fine art hangs in many private collections. A portrait photographer by background, he has taught workshops in platinum/palladium printing since 1992 and his writing has appeared in *Photo Vision* magazine, *Studio Photography*, *Digital Camera Buyers Guide* and *The Journal of Post Factory Photography*. Online his writings are posted on the Alternative Photography site ([www.alternativephotography.com](http://www.alternativephotography.com)). Neilsen shoots in both film and digital, and produces black-and-white silver gelatin and platinum/palladium prints, as well as inkjet output on canvas and fiber-based papers, and contact digital negatives.

I am one of those photographers who not only like to capture great images, but also to print them. And I gladly provide printmaking services to other photographers. Today, I am involved not only in silver-gelatin and platinum printing, but also in making inkjet prints and negatives for contact printing. My customer base includes portrait studios as well as commercial and architectural photographers.

Although the way work gets done has changed, the basic goals of printmaking remain the same: Take a customer original and make the best print possible within the price structure and quality level that the customer expects. Typically, this means maintaining my equipment in a way so that I can consistently and efficiently output high-quality color and black-and-white prints from files that come from sources other than my own cameras or scanners.

Anyone who prints for other photographers and artists will quickly find that few people use the same type or version of software or have the same level of skill. So, another critical challenge in delivering high-quality prints at an acceptable price is to streamline your image-editing workflow. Photoshop proficiency is a must. But you can streamline your pre-print workflow even more by choosing plug-ins that customize your workflow based on the type of work you do most often.

My Photoshop toolbox includes many plug-ins to help make retouching as fast and as productive as possible. One set that is a mainstay of my workflow is the Professional Suite from Imagenomic, LLC. The suite includes Noiseware Professional, RealGrain and Portraiture.

**Noiseware Professional:** helps me quickly tame noise in files that come to me from scanned images, images produced by older digital cameras, and images shot with challenging lighting setups such as the theater or Friday-night football.

**Real Grain:** is useful for additional image enhancements such as contrast, vibrancy, hue and saturation as well as controlling grain. While some may see the digital age as a reprieve from grainy images, others still like the feel of silver-halide grain found in both color and B&W images from years gone by. Choices of film and developers made years ago can be approximated using many of the presets found in RealGrain. I use it in digital negatives that I output to get the feel of the old films commonly used to make contact prints.

**Portraiture:** is an excellent tool for quickly and accurately perfecting all types of portraits, including glamour shoots and family group shots that ordinarily might require hours of pixel pushing to retouch in Photoshop. In addition to the high-dollar make-up jobs already evident on many of the portraits, the retouching performed with Portraiture puts my customers in a class by themselves.

If I specialized in school or event portraits and wanted to make money by selling high volumes of prints, I could set Portraiture to run in batch mode from within Photoshop or Lightroom. But

because I sell high-end, custom printmaking, I prefer to use Portraiture to individually control each image and optimize each file so my clients will be proud to display my prints on their walls.

Portraiture not only works on skin, but it can also be used to apply image enhancements to an entire image. And, Portraiture provides me with editable layers in just one click. Because Portraiture 2.0 is compliant with Photoshop CS4 and Lightroom 2.3, I can continue my current workflow without any hesitation. I have written actions specific to my needs, and Imagenomic's website has actions that can be downloaded for all of its plug-ins.

We all know that people don't come in just one hue, color, or tonal range and I am quite happy with the way that Portraiture provides control over a broad range of skin values. Portraiture is especially useful as we step into non-traditional portrait lighting situations (such as that found in stage productions). Or, if your white balance is way off, the blue light from open daylight shadows can be missed in some configurations. With Portraiture, you can turn off the mask function only and export a new layer with the adjustments applied to the whole layer. You can then come back in and make a standard mask to hide or reveal just those areas that you want. It works great for warming up images, softening backgrounds, and other enhancements.

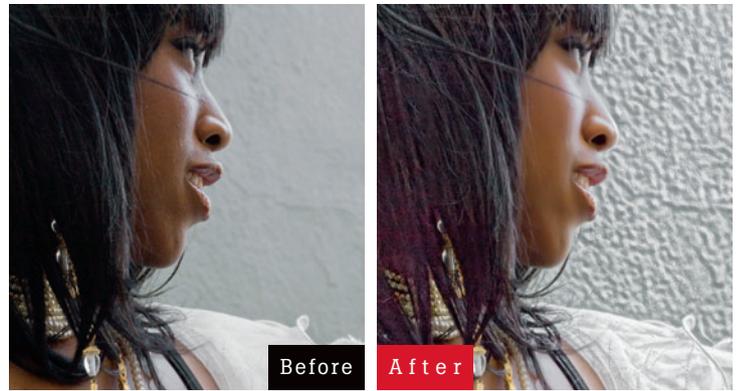
Because I offer retouching services in addition to producing my own work, multiple styles must be part of any plug-in software I use. This is where Portraiture really shines. I can use any of the settings included with the program. Or, I can save my custom settings and apply them later to additional jobs shot under the same lighting conditions, or with a certain style or customer preference in mind. Your presets can be grouped however you choose: by shooting style, customer, layer mask on or off, or a different option.

As with any program that gives you so much flexibility and functionality, you'll quickly find that once you've spent a little time learning its capabilities, your workflow will start speeding up. Minimizing the amount of time editing your images will afford you the time to get back to that other great love of your life: producing Great Output.

The plug-ins are available for download at [www.imagenomic.com](http://www.imagenomic.com) and the trial versions are fully functional. Training opportunities, downloadable actions, and additional support are also available on Imagenomic's website. —*U*

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*(Visit the Great Output blog to see examples of other images that Nielsen enhanced with RealGrain, Portraiture, and a downloadable action from the Imagenomic website. <http://greatoutput.blogspot.com>)*



**Adding Warmth and Detail:** The image on the left started with a digital capture with my Nikon D200 on the streets of San Francisco. It was a nice sunny day between two buildings so we had a lot of open blue fill. Although our model has struck a nice strong pose, the light spilling across her face shows her pore structure. In Lightroom, I made basic white balance and exposure adjustments to suit the feel I wanted to create. Then, using Lightroom's Edit In function, I started working on this image in Photoshop CS4. In Photoshop, I made a duplicate layer, then ran Noiseware on the duplicate layer. While Noiseware does a great job of correcting an image in the default mode, I prefer making noise adjustments based on my eye and knowledge of the shoot conditions. Then, I used Portraiture to smooth the pores and add warmth back into the model's skin.



**Removing Blemishes and Smoothing:** For this D200 capture of a participant at the Mermaid Parade in NYC, I started processing the image in Adobe Photoshop Lightroom. Using the Edit In command in LR, I exported the file to Photoshop for more extensive editing. Even as powerful as Portraiture is, there are some skin and lighting imperfections that it does not smooth over easily. So, I used a quick healing brush on the shadow area of the mermaid's chin. Stray hairs can also be problematic, and without Portraiture, I might have spent quite a bit of time cleaning them up. However, knowing that I would be using Portraiture to apply a layer mask to the file, my pixel pushing didn't have to be quite as precise. Ultimately, wild hairs and pesky pimples were removed with very little effort.

I made a duplicate layer, then ran Noiseware and Portraiture on the same layer. Portraiture will output its results several ways: on the current layer, on a new layer, or on a new document. I prefer to have Portraiture make a new layer. This gives me a fully editable skin layer mask. I combined the two additional layers to the original image to produce the final portrait. Beginning to end, it took about 10 minutes of thinking and 2 minutes of processing time.