

The Focal Point



May– June 2007



**This month:
Blackbeard among the Bluebells
Tech Tips from Jeffrey Wolk
Just who is the real Maria Drumm?**

EDITORIAL & CURMUGEONLY **OPINION**

Pictured on our cover (by Steve Harmon), “Blackbeard among the Bluebells” is, in reality, our own Lewis Katz. A few words about Mr. Katz’s wardrobe and accessories: The astute reader will notice that Mr. Katz has deftly coordinated his pants and cable release. We find his choice of caps (a regressive shade which does not compete with the photo’s center of interest, the cable release.) Note also that Lewis has chosen a huge Freudian tripod (which is the current fashion among members). It is worth noting that this trend began when Karen Messick had a local blacksmith fashion a very sturdy tripod out of an abandoned bridge which was formerly spanning Loch Raven Reservoir. Personally, your Editor finds it a bit baffling that the same people who are using these gargantuan tripods are some of the same photographers who are making beautiful images by employing controlled blur.

If your Editor may make another observation: Thank God the mini ice age has receded. As we all know there are trends which sweep through all camera clubs like the rerouted river in The Cleansing of the Aegean Stables. Let us catalog a few from long ago and recent memory some of which should persevere, some of which should be abandoned:



Bar Harbor Maine in the morning fog, the Amish people and countryside, Dolly Sods, peeling paint and abandoned motels in Nebraska, Cylburn Mansion, the Pagoda at Patterson Park, the Inner Harbor, Bryce Canyon, waterfalls in motion, rusty trucks, speeding cars, grapes, blur in general and morning fog all over the world (the pictorialist’s best friend) and any image created prior to 2002. The object of competition is to learn not just win. 20 year old images do not contribute to the photographer’s learning process.

Then, there are the Mitch Epsteins of the world. Those of you who made the trek to the Baltimore Museum of Art recently were exposed to the images of Mr. Epstein who proved that one only need to take out one’s camera periodically, push the shutter release and then think up a pointless justification for the image. At one point during Mr. Epstein’s talk he compared himself to Walker Evans. We have gathered both images for this editorial. You be the judge.

ED—

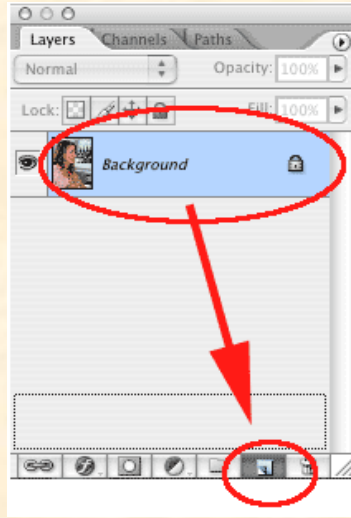


Jeffrey Wolk's simple Photoshop tip: Soft Focus

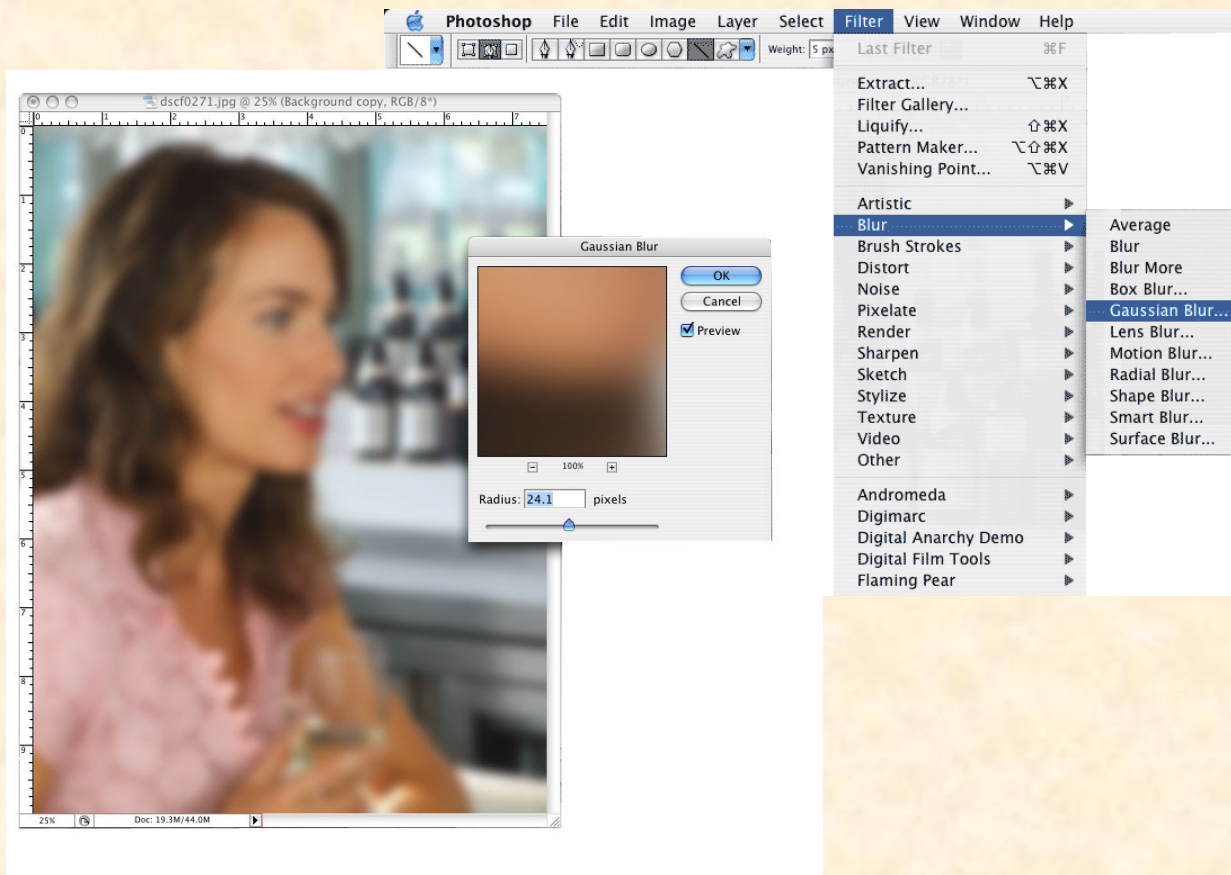
It surprises me how overlooked this simple process is. At one time photographers would spend over \$1,000 dollars for a soft focus lens, or have a collection of diffusion filters to get the same effect you now get for free. I've seen this technique amaze crowds at Photoshop Seminars.

To start....

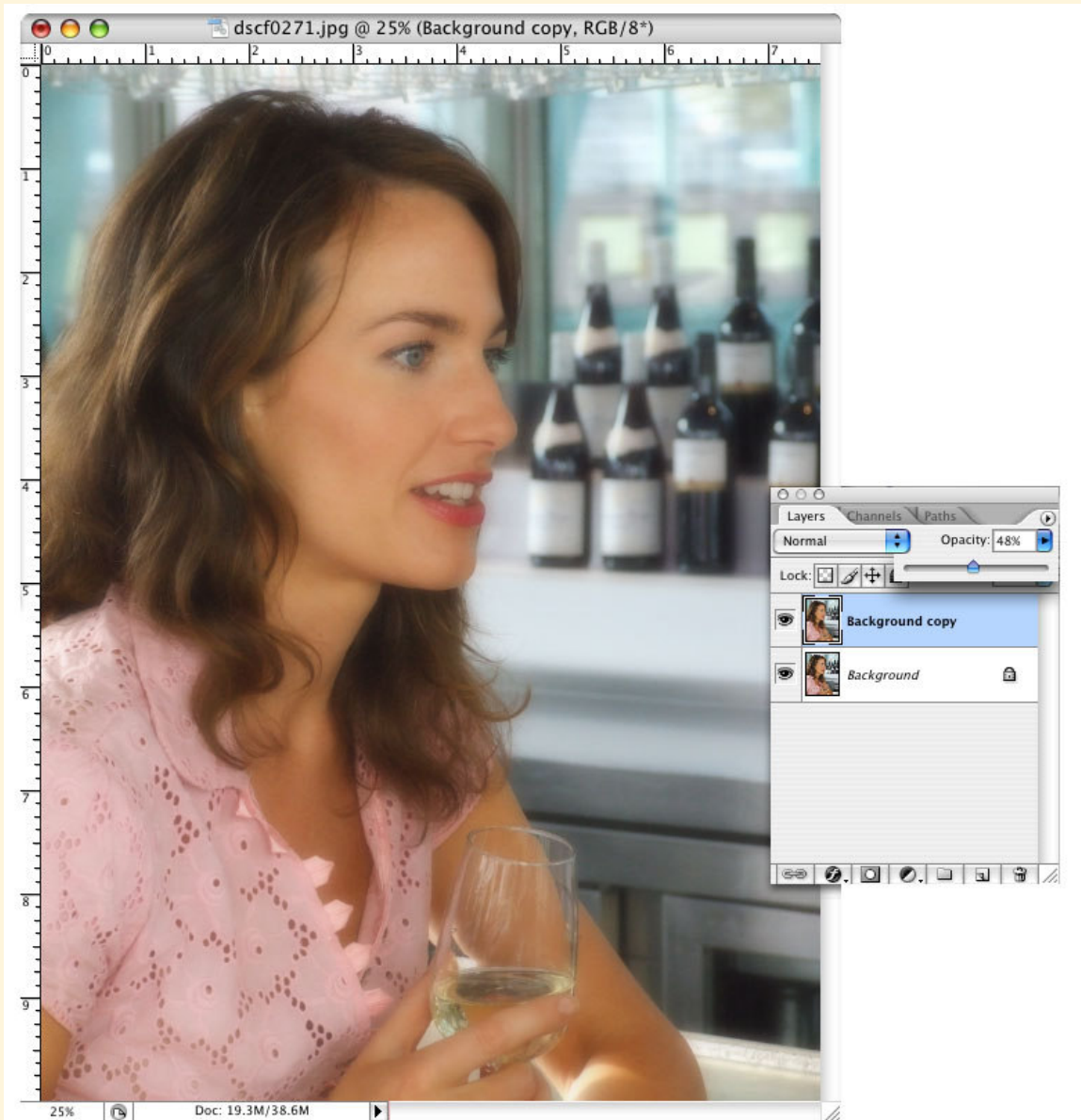
1.) Duplicate the background layer by dragging it to the new layer in the layer pallet.



2.) Blur the top layer using the Gaussian blur filter. A value between 7 to 24 usually works.



3.) Reduce the opacity of the *blur layer* by 50% to 25%



The values can be changed to get different effects just like using different settings on a soft focus lens. The larger the value of the Gaussian blur the lower the opacity setting should be. For example, with a Gaussian blur value of 8, an opacity setting of 50% should work; for a Gaussian blur value of 24 an opacity setting of 25% would be good.

To add effects to a portion of an image (like someone's eyes), you can erase parts of the blurred layer with the erase tool to make those areas extra sharp.

Note: If you prefer you can create a layer mask of the blurred layer and erase on that so that you may, for example, blur only the background. This is very handy when the background is too distracting and you made the image at a small aperture.

THIS BIOGRAPHY OF MARIA DRUMM WAS SUPPOSED TO RUN LAST MONTH WITH HER PICTURES BUT YOUR EDITOR DID NOT HAVE IT AT "PRESS TIME." AS PROMISED ON OUR COVER

MEET THE REAL MARIA DRUMM

Born in Rochester NY. Maria's father was an Italian immigrant who made good. "Papa" as he was called always loved to take photos. Maria remembers how proud he was of his new Lieca in 1957. She received a Brownie for her 10th Birthday but later became interested in portrait painting. Maria: "In college I did drawings and lots of oil portraits to make extra money. I have even thought of going back to it now but it is just too slow. I love the instant changes and image manipulation that can be done on the computer."

After marrying in 1962 and having six little ones by 1972 there was little time for photography or any kind of art except for cub-scout and girl-scout projects. Maria started a baking business from my home and later expanded. to supply 13 restaurants in Rochester NY with special desserts. She sold her baking business ended up going to Law School in 1977. After her 1985 divorce it was time for a change. 1987 found our Maria in Ft. Myers Fl. where she opened a law office. With three kids in college, one in prep school and two at home in high school Maria really had to keep her nose to the grind stone. In 1991 she married Robert Drumm who sadly died a scant five years later.

By 2000 Maria sold her Law Practice in Florida and went to computer school to learn how to turn on a computer and other basics. She fell in love with Photoshop. Chinese art and Photoshop became her passion.

Maria says, "I was introduced to Chinese art in 1985 when I went to China as a member of the First Delegation of Women Attorneys. While planning my second trip to China in 2002 I met some people who were

teaching there. With my legal background, I qualified to teach third year University students."

From 2002-2005 she taught International Marketing, Cross Cultural Communication, International law and other related subjects. In her own words, "I became the Grandmother of the Campus (15,000 students). Everyone knew me and my nickname was "The Old One"(which in China is an honor!) The University was in a small city of about one million called Bengbu. There was no airport so I had to take a train for 7 hours going west from Shanghai to get there. Since it was not an important city, there were very few foreigners around. I was the only Caucasian woman over 30 out of the 60 million in the province. I was really treated as an honored guest wherever I went.

"I started taking photos as I traveled around China. I also made several documentary slide shows of my classes. At the end of every Semester each student received a CD with photos set to music. They always cried when I showed it on the last day of class."

Maria bought her first digital camera, an Olympus (5 mega pixels) in 2002 and loved it. She never went anywhere without her camera. She used to ride her bike in the Chinese Countryside where she took hundreds of photos.

Chinese people love to see photos of the traveler's home and family. Maria always took a small booklet of family pictures where ever she went. She began each semester of teaching by passing around photos of her family and home. Maria says, "Instantly people feel they know you and can trust you. I think photography is a great ice-breaker!"

THIS IMAGE WAS CONTRIBUTED BY STEVE HARMON TO SHOW THERE ARE OTHER THINGS IN THE BLUEBELLS BESIDES LEWIS KATZ.



DON'T FORGET THE BANQUET. SEE JOHN DAVIS FOR DETAILS