Nik Silver Efex^3 for Monochrome

A brief history of Silver Efex

June 2021 Nik Collection^4 and Silver Efex changes

Silver Efex v lightroom

Dynamic Brightness and Soft Contrast

Film Simulations and grain

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Further Information

Dean Sephton
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A brief history of Silver Efex

- Part of the Nik Collection of tools developed by Nik Software (also developed Snapseed)
- Upoint Technology developed with Nikon (local adjustments)
- Purchased by Google in 2012
- 2016 Google stopped development made it free and then sold the rights to Dxo in 2017
- Dxo labelled the google version Nik Collection 2012 and their new (paid for) version Nik Collection 2018 but little changed mainly bug fixes
- Latest version is the Nik Collection[4] £133 (£88.99 until the end of July) upgrade £69/£54.99 (if you previously purchased from DXO)
- 30 day free trial version available but be aware it will remove any older versions (including the free one so you may need to reinstall that if you choose not to buy)
- 2018 and newer version versions can still be downloaded from the DXO website but the free 2012 version appears to have been removed recently

Nik Collection[4]

- Can only buy the complete collection which includes in addition to Silver Efex 3
  - Vivezia 3 ("*take control of colour*")
  - Analog Efex 2 ("*Relive the golden age of vintage photography*")
  - Colour Efex 4 ("*filters for color correcting, retouching, and applying stunning photographic effects*")
  - HDR Efex ("*convincing and natural-looking HDR images*")
  - Sharpener ("*extracting the perfect level of sharpness from your images*")
  - Dfine ("*all the tools you need to remove noise from your photos without softening or spoiling your images*")
  - Perspective Efex ("*Fix Optical Distortions With One Click*")
- Can use as plugins from other editing packages (eg lightroom, photoshop, affinity)
- Or launch as standalone programs

Changes in Silver Efex in Nik Collection[4]

- New interface (only for Silver Efex and Vivezia)
- New Grain control with 39 film listed confusingly separate to the original film simulations which remain
- More control point options:
  - additional sliders
  - increased precision restricting impact by Luminance or Chrominance (similar to range masks in LR)
  - Pre sets can now save control points
  - Can name control points

Silver Efex Pro
Key differences v Lightroom

- Nik Collection can't read raw files therefore
  - need to make raw edits eg adjust white balance and recovering highlights before moving into Nik Collection
  - You need to a TIF or JPG file taking up more disk space than In lightroom where you could use a virtual copy of your raw file to create a b&w version
- Until Nik Collection[3] changes were destructive – you could not go back and tweak- you had to start again (or use nik collection as a smart layer in photoshop and save as psd file)
- From Nik Collection[3] if a TIF file is used "with non-destructive edits" ticked you can re-edit (doubles TIF file size and only stores the adjustments from the last Nik module used)
- Key Silver Efex features
  - 58 Presets
  - Bespoke sliders eg soft contrast , dynamic brightness, structure (can be applied differentially to tonal ranges)
  - Toning – 23 darkroom styled presets - all user adjustable
  - Control Points for local adjustments –can group control points and adjust them together
  - 20 Film Simulations and 39 Grain options – all user adjustable
  - Borders – 14 styles infinitely variable by Size, Spread, Roughness plus random variations
  - Vignette – can change shape between circle and rectangle
  - Burn Edges – adjustable for each edge by strength, size and transition

Impact of Brightness v Dynamic Brightness Slider

Dynamic Brightness gives finer changes in brightness, ensuring the image retains a good range of detail, preserves contrast and intelligently applies brightness values to different areas of the image.

Move the slider to the left to darken the image while retaining detail in the highlights.

Moving the slider to the right will lighten the image while retaining contrast with the shadows.

Neutral

Brightness -50%

Brightness +50%

Dynamic Brightness -50%

Dynamic Brightness +50%

Impact of Contrast v Soft Contrast Slider

Soft contrast is less aggressive:
+ve values are less likely to block the shadows
-ve opens up the mid tones without rendering
the image as flat

Neutral
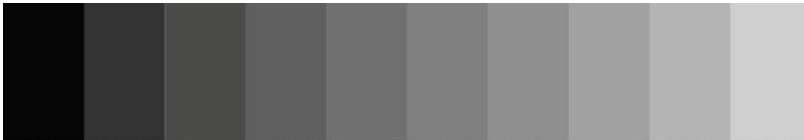
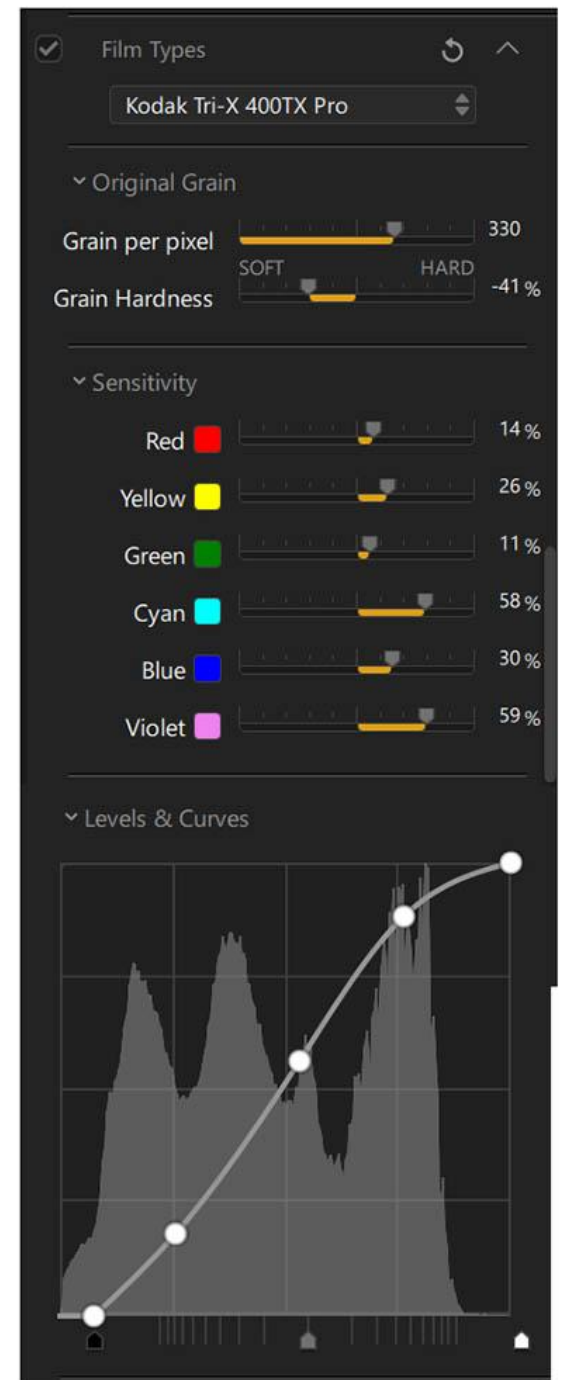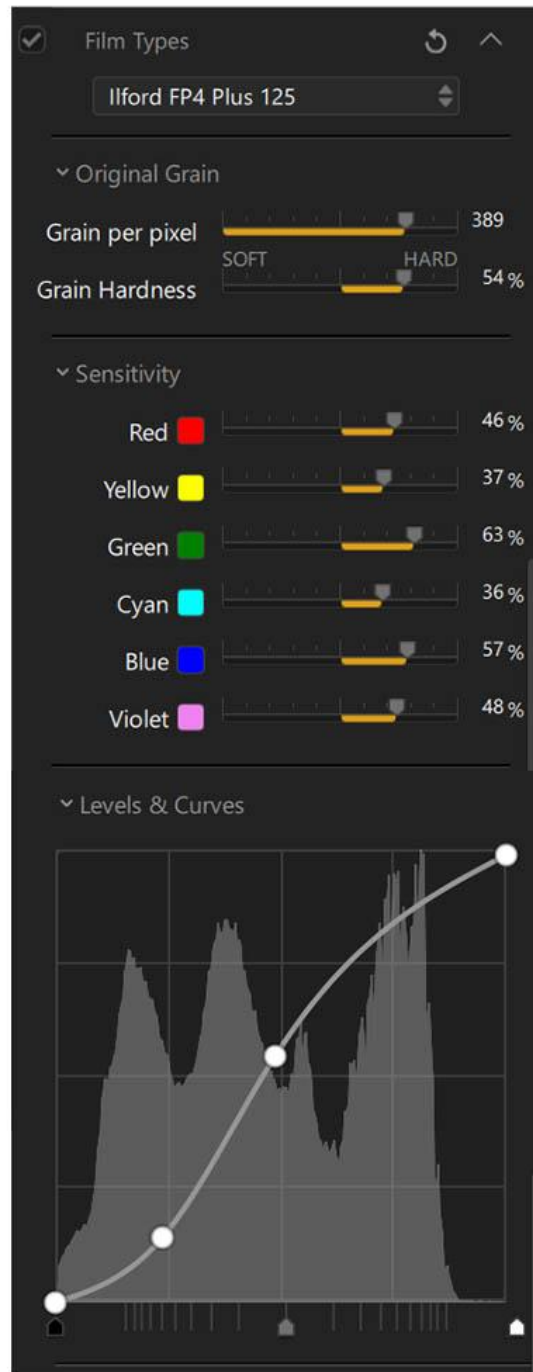Contrast -50%

Contrast +50%

Soft Contrast -50%

Soft Contrast +50%

Film Simulations

- These typically:
  - Add Grain
  - Change Colour Sensitivity
  - Add a Curve

Film Simulation examples

Neutral (all versions are with a red filter)

FP4+

Tri X

Ilford Delta 3200

Film Simulation example 2

Image taken on Fuji Camera
- Left Colour version
- Below left: Fuji Acros in camera conversion
- Below Right: Silver Efex version with the Fuji Acros film simulation applied
- To match the in camera version more contrast would have to be applied
- Viewed at 200% there is more grain in the Silver Efex version

Image © Andy Jones

Comparison of Silver Efex Film Simulation Grain and new Grain Tool
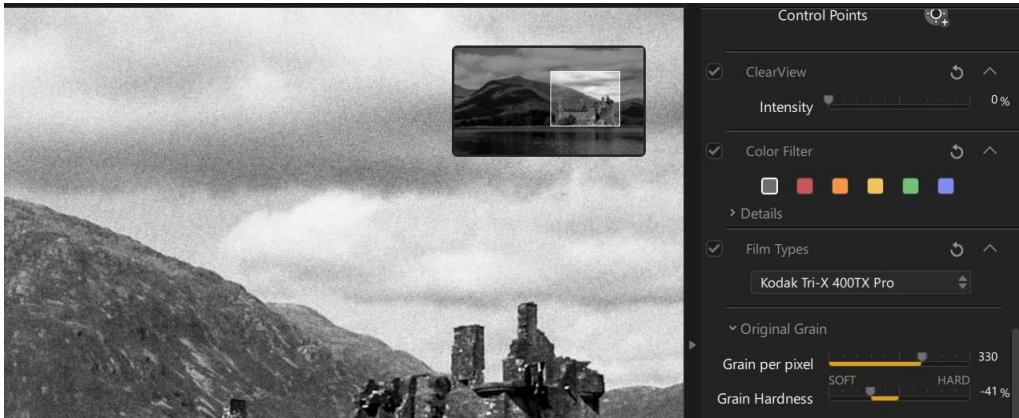
TriX Film Simulation applied

Tri X Film Simulation grain removed by adjusting grain to 500

New Grain Tool set to KodakTriX400
The resulting grain is much more subtle

SAMPLE EDIT

Goal of Editing
Give the image a gritty "film noire" look
Increase the contrast and texture in the buildings
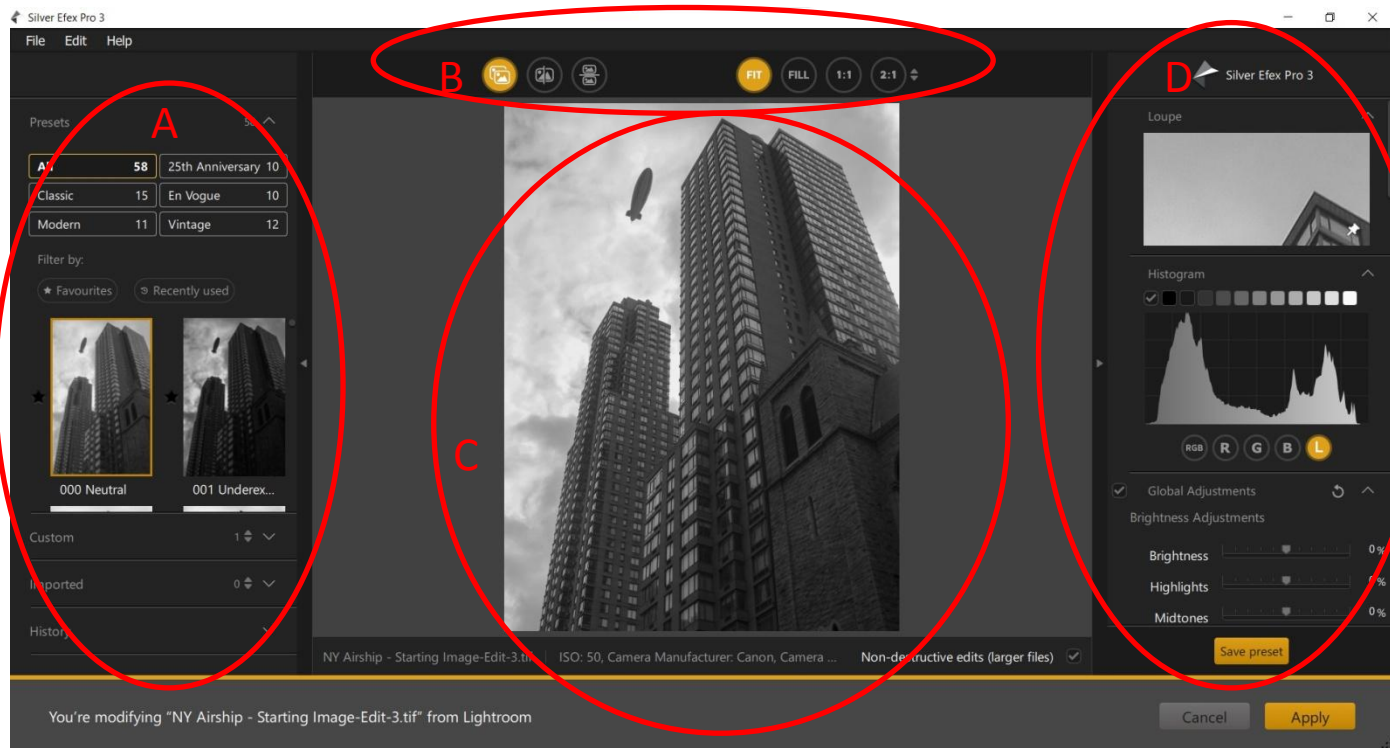Darken the sky whilst retaining the bright clouds
Darken the edges of the image to help draw the eye in
Apply a thin black frame

(1) Image in lightroom with basic raw adjustments applied plus cloning to disguise burnt out sky below airship

(2) In Lightroom go to: Photo->Edit in Then select Silver Efex Pro. Make you sure select edit copy with lightroom adjustments AND if you want to be able to redit your Silver Efex version pick TIF file format
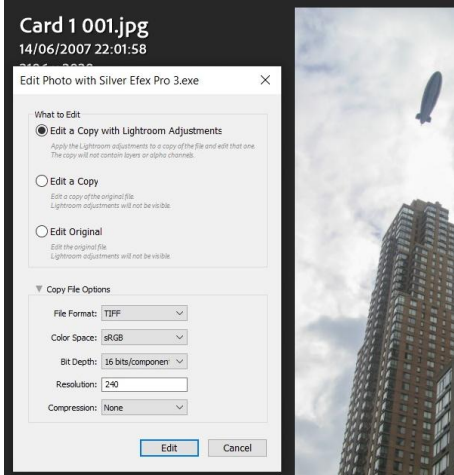

(3) Image opens in silver efex pro with the Neutral Preset applied – this sets all the sliders to a neutral position and normally gives quite a flat image

A – Presets panel – includes the standard presets included with Silver Efex plus any custom one you have created and also allows you to import other peoples presets
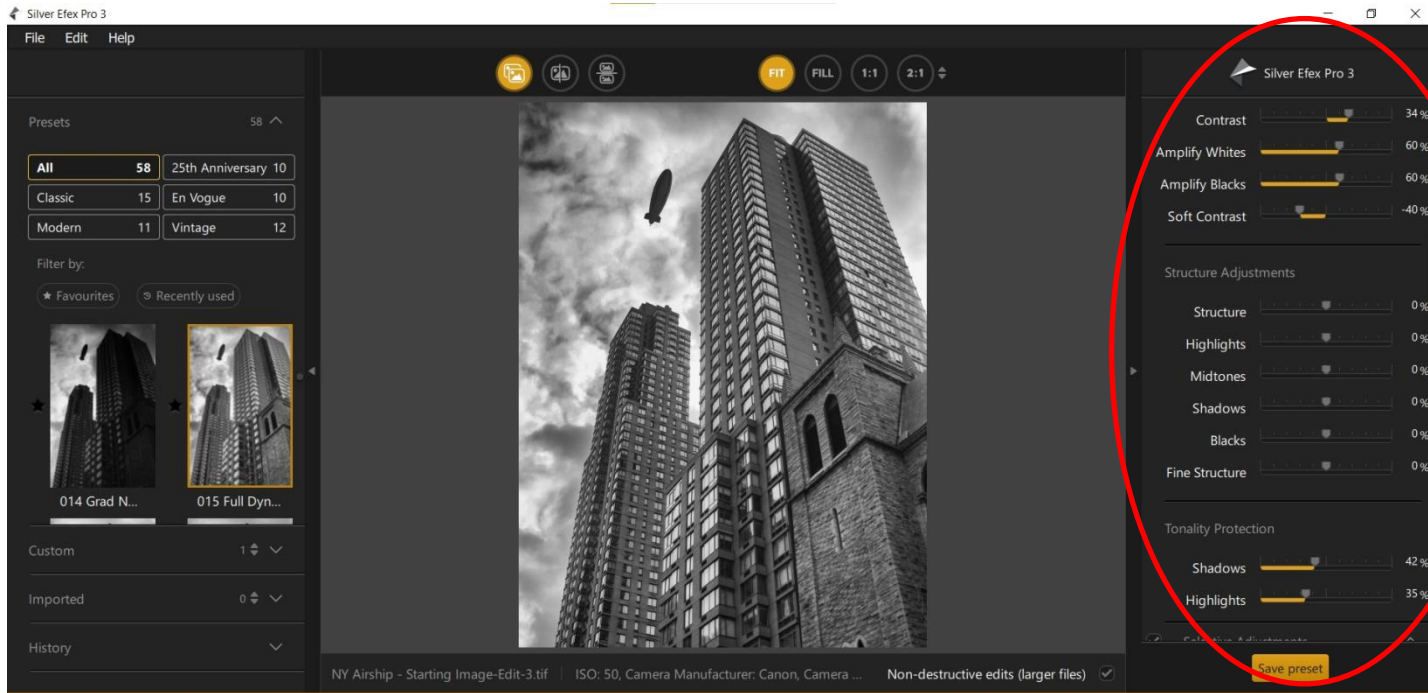
B – Button to show unadjusted image and side by side comparisons plus change zoom levels similar to the features in Lightroom

C – View of image with edits applies – use buttons above to compare with unedited image
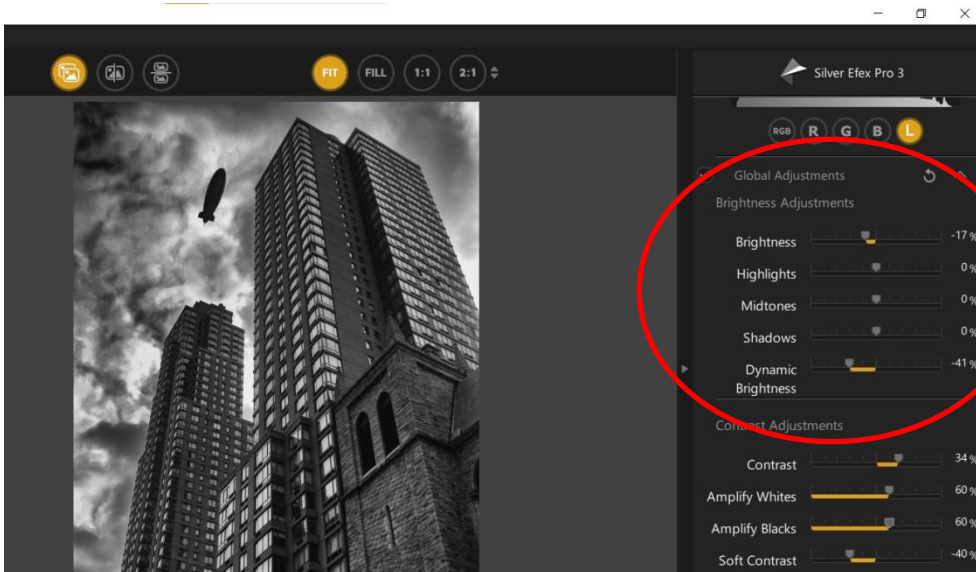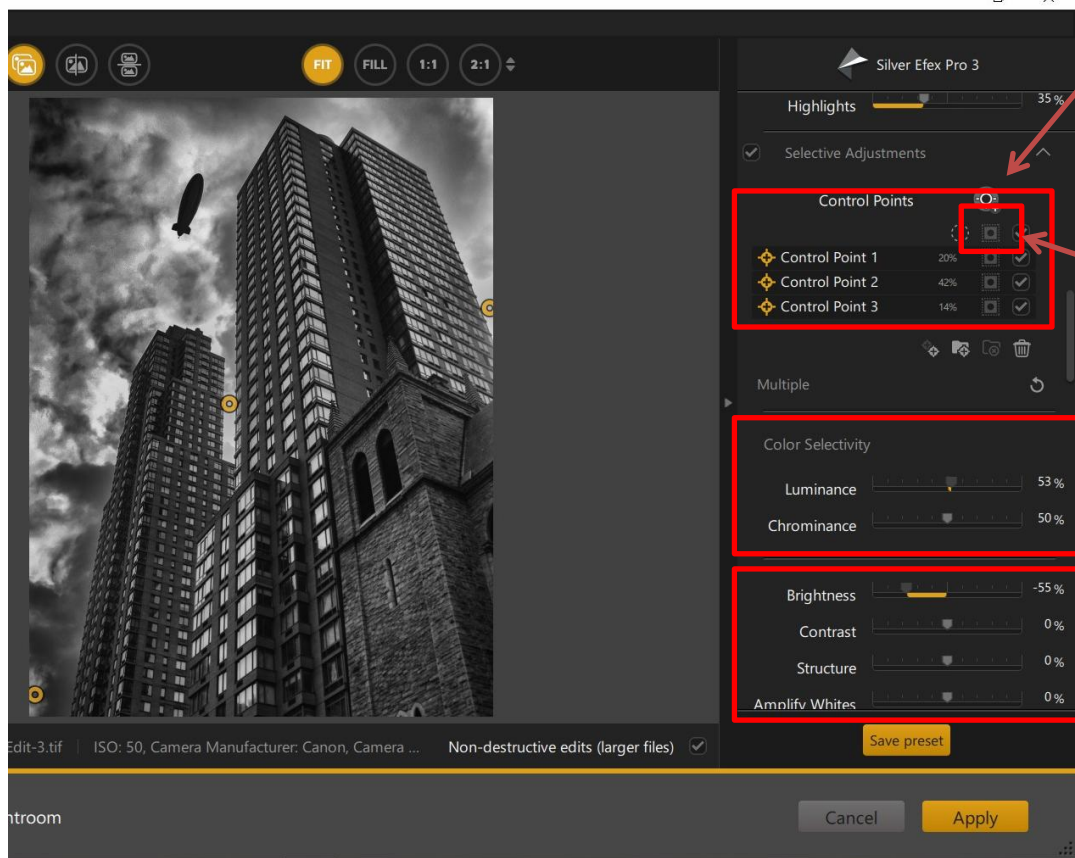
D – Loupe view, histogram and "zones" plus below the adjustment options

(4) "015 Full Dynamic" Preset applied bring out the detail in the sky on the right you can see the sliders which have been adjusted by this preset. Each preset adjusts different sliders

(5) Reduced Brightness and Dynamic Brightness to make the image more moody and dark

(6) Added 3 control points to selectively darken parts of the sky – centre of control points is shown by the yellow circles on the image.

This button lets you reveal the mask which shows the area of the image affected by the control point – each control point automatically has a mask

NEW Feature – you can customise the extent of the mask by luminence or chroimance – similar to range masks in Lightroom
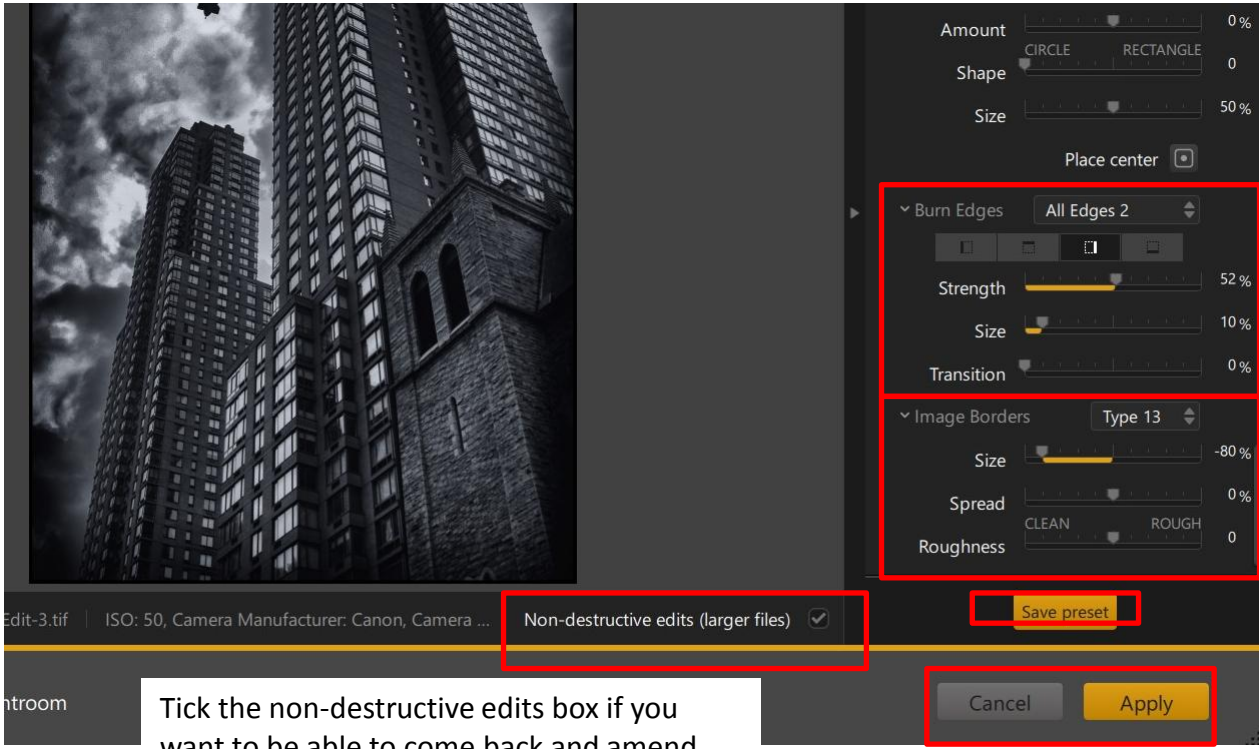
Sliders adjusted for this control point in this case negative brightness applied
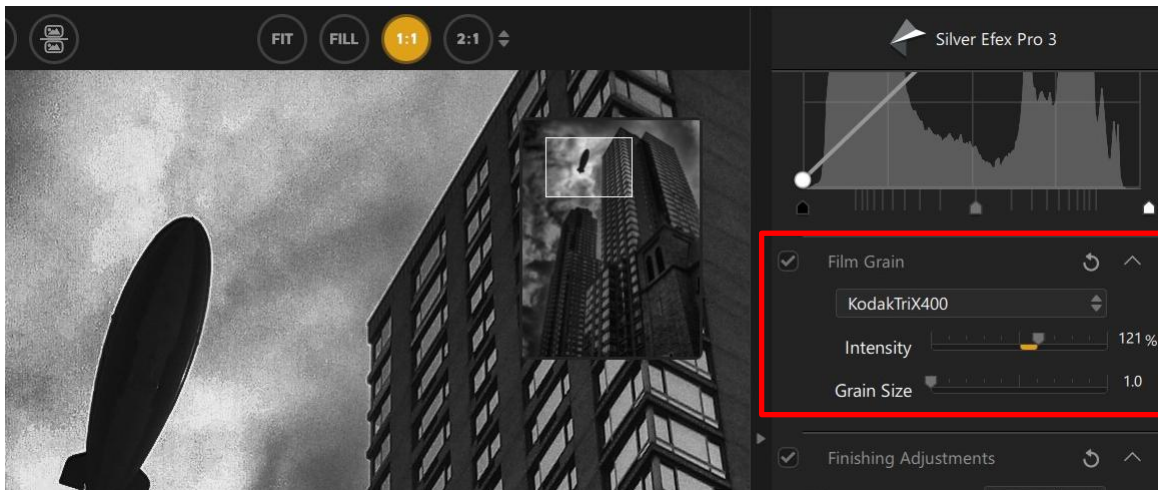
(7) Kodak TriX film grain applied – Image being viewed at 100% 1:1
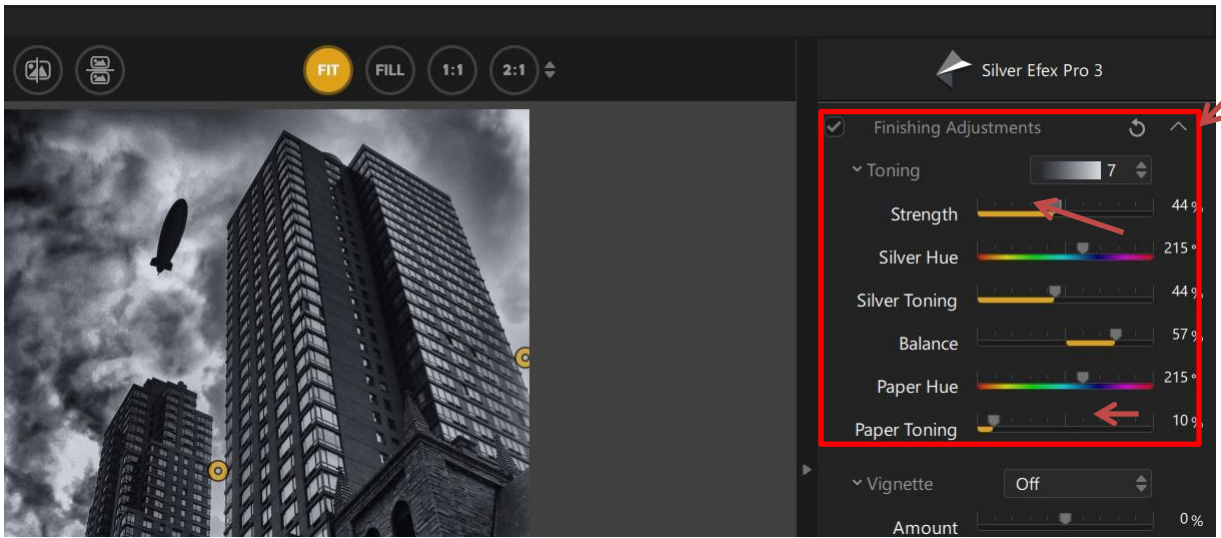
(8) To further cool the image a cold tone (blue) has been applied in this case tone preset number 7 but this can be completely customised using the controls below

(9) Edges of image burnt darkened – the extent of the burning can be controlled for each edge (I could equally have applied a vignette using the sliders above)

A border applied type 13 is a plain black border which has been reduced in size by 80% to give a thin keyline

Use save preset button is you want to save these edits as a preset to use for future images

Use the Apply button to save the image and return to lightroom

Tick the non-destructive edits box if you want to be able to come back and amend your changes – only available for TIF files
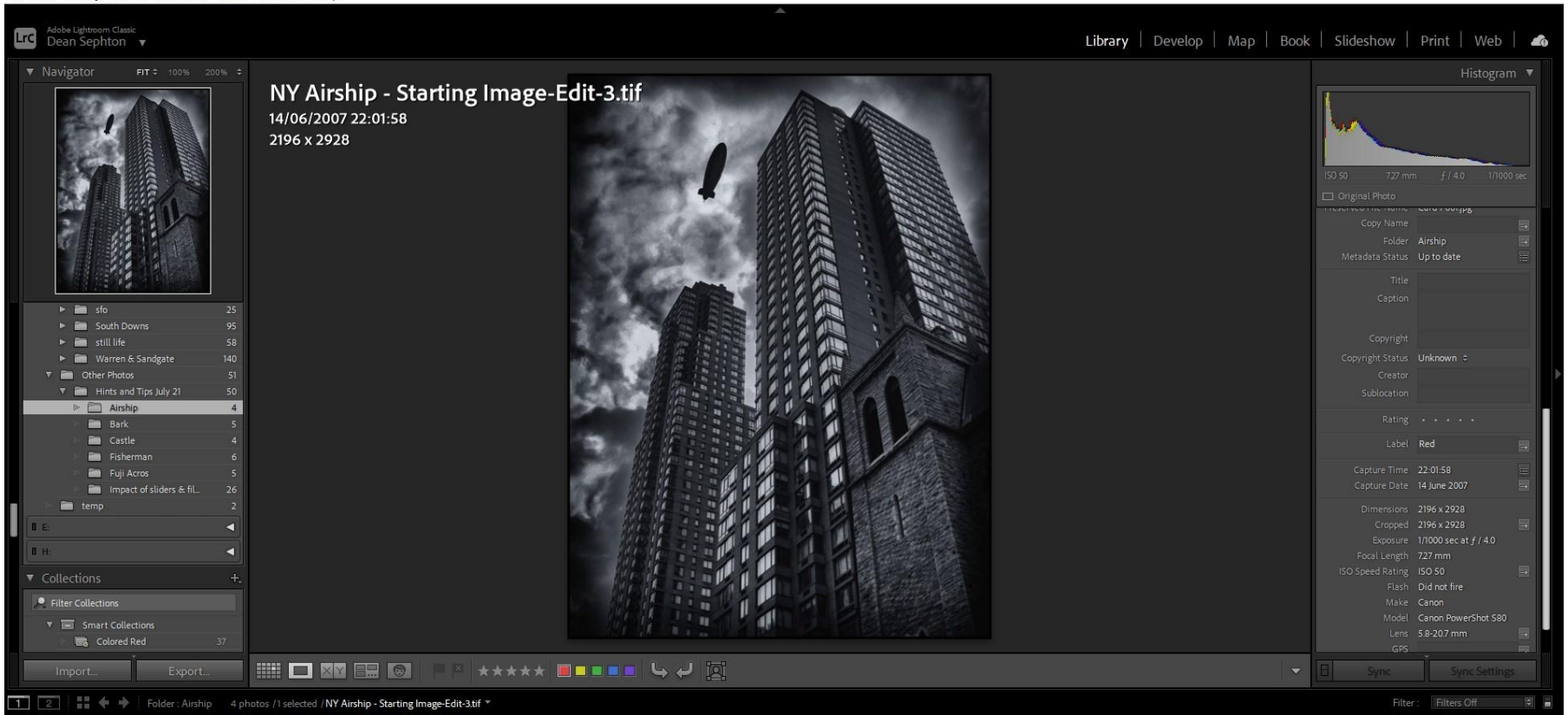
(10) Silver Efex closes and the resulting image is shown in lightroom

If you decide you dont like the image you can reopen the image in Silver Efex and amend it – for example change the tone or border

FURTHER EXAMPLES

Original Colour File   Image © Janet Brown

Neutral Conversion

Antique Plate Preset – adjusts brightness and contrast- adds sepia tone, vignette and a moderate soft grain

Adjusted with: 3 Control Points added (lighten face, darken sail and darken glove) and a border (masks out bright rope on lhs)

Original Colour File

Perspective corrected in Perspective Efex (1 button to fix verticals and/or horizontals and a slider to control adjustment from 0-100%)

1. Applied Full Dynamic Harsh preset to bring out contrast in Sky
2. Added control points to castle wall to left of gatehouse: brightness -29% . Copied this control point 2 x to cover gatehouse and wall at RHS
3. Burned in bottom edge to darken Grass

Original Colour File with auto exposure added in lightroom

Image © Bill Buckland

Neutral B&W Conversion

1. High Structure Smooth Preset
2. added contrast
3. Added border

Or in Colour Efex with two filters applied:
- Pro Contrast
- Bleach Bypass*

* Bleach bypass is a chemical effect which entails either the partial or complete skipping of the bleaching function during the processing of a color film. By doing this, the silver is retained in the emulsion along with the color dyes. The result is a black-and-white image over a color image. The images usually have reduced saturation and exposure latitude, along with increased contrast and graininess.

Further information

- User Manual:
  https://help-nikcollection4.dxo.com/silver-efex-pro3

- Robin Whalley www.lenscraft.co.uk has tutorials, a youtube channel and low cost e books including *Dramatic Black & White Photograhy using Nik Silver Efex Pro 2*