

CLEAN UP A SCANNED IMAGE USING PHOTOSHOP

When scanned line art has a dingy gray background instead of pure white, there's a simple way to clean up the background without unduly affecting the rest of the image. To demonstrate this technique, let's clean up the background of the scan shown in Figure A using Adobe Photoshop. As you can see, our scan's background is a tint of gray instead of pure white. To change the tint background to white, use the Levels command to set the background tint as the image's new white point. Doing so remaps pixels with a gray-to-almost-white tonal range to white.

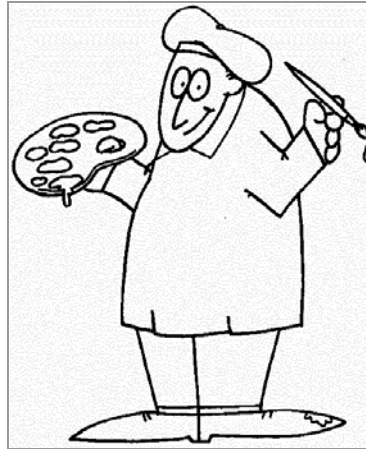


Figure A.

Using The Info Palette

To demonstrate, choose Show Info from the Window menu to display the Info palette. Then choose Levels... from the Adjust menu under the Image menu. Next, in the Levels dialog box, choose the White Point Eyedropper (it's the one on the far left). Now, position the White Point Eyedropper over the gray background of the image. Notice that Photoshop displays two color values in the Info palette, as shown in Figure B. The first number is the color value of the pixel currently under the Eyedropper tool. The second number corresponds to the altered color value. To activate the Levels dialog box from the keyboard, press [command]L on the Macintosh or press [Ctrl]L in Windows.

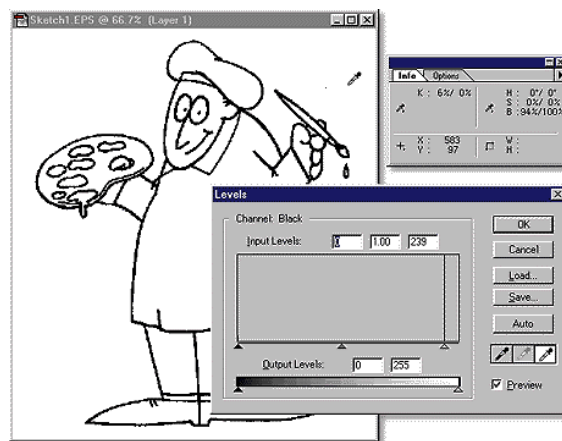


Figure B.

To display the Info palette from the keyboard, press [F8].

To set the new white point for the image, click the White Point Eyedropper tool on the gray background pixel color. Photoshop remaps the image and turns the gray background white. Now, keeping an eye on the color values in the Info palette, move the Eyedropper around the background of the image for any other gray pixels lurking in the background. If you find any, set those pixels as the new white point. Once you've finished, click OK to apply your changes to the Image menu and close the Levels dialog box.

Notes

The technique we outlined in this article works extremely well to clean up dirty backgrounds in grayscale scans. However, keep in mind that setting a new white point remaps the tonal range of the entire image. Remapping the tonal range of a complex image can create more problems than the technique solves. Therefore, use the technique only on low tonal range images, such as black-and-white line art.

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