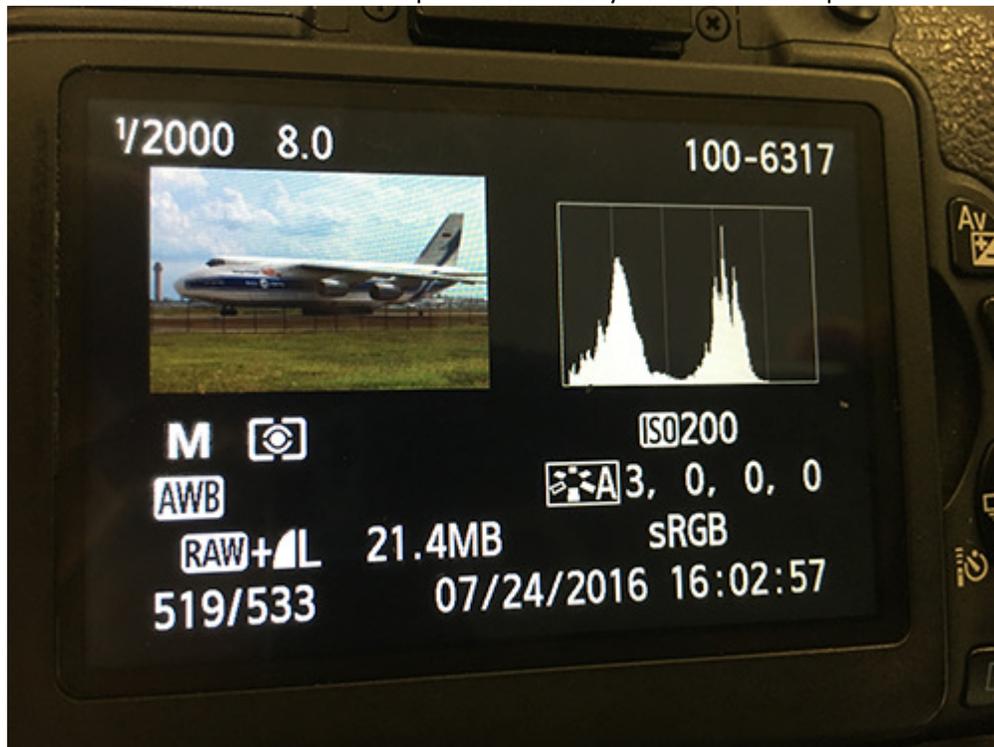


Astro95 Media Aviation Photo Workflow

Created: 31 July 2016

Shooting

1. Current preferred settings for aviation photos are ISO200 and f8.0 with varying shutter speeds based on lighting. Try not to go below 1/800s in daylight, as things will start to wash out and become unsalvageable in the editing process.
2. It's better to underexpose a bit, rather than overexpose (see step 1). A good way to gauge the exposure is to ensure the histogram peaks are a bit to the left of center, rather than to the right. Let's use this shot of an Antonov 124 I captured on 24 July 2016 as an example.



Lightroom Editing

1. Set highlights in the -50 to -75 range and shadows in the +25 to +50 range. This helps level the exposure across the image without flattening it.
2. Set white levels in the 0 to +25 range and black levels in the -50 to -75 range. This will bring out highlights and shadows a bit more and enrich the black and white colors.
3. Adjust the exposure level to your liking in order to make sure you're happy with the above setting inputs. I usually don't need to raise it above +0.75 if I exposed the shot properly but it takes practice and there are plenty of exceptions.
4. Increasing clarity makes the image pop out more, but try not to set this above +5.
5. Adjust vibrance to your liking. I usually prefer the +25 to +50 range.
6. Saturation typically doesn't need to be adjusted, but I try to keep this within the -15 and +15 range. I usually deal with saturation issues in the color level settings.
7. Adjust each color level saturation to your liking. This helps mostly with vegetation (lowering yellow level) and sky (increasing blue level) but can be used to make liveries, buildings, etc. pop a bit more. I can't recommend any standard ranges with these, other than almost never raising

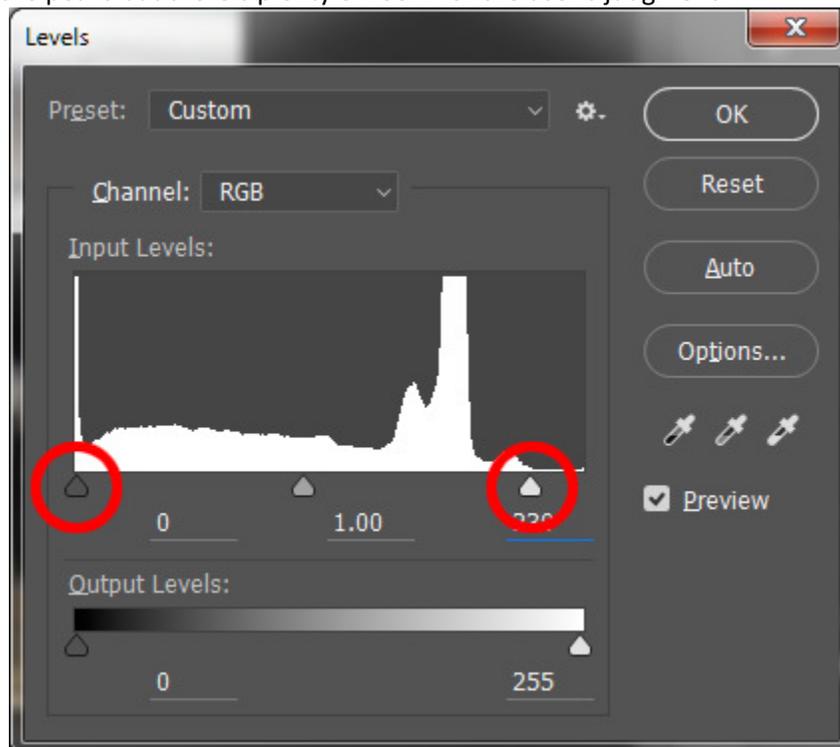
or lowering any saturation level to -100 or +100, but as always, there are exceptions. I almost never touch the hue or luminance levels but they occasionally help when adjusted lightly.

8. Adjust sharpening and noise reduction levels to your liking. If your ISO and f-stop are set properly during shooting, the latter won't matter much. I typically adjust sharpening within the +50 to +75 range (preferably on the lower end) and noise reduction around +25.
9. I rarely adjust the vignette but it can occasionally come in handy if used within the -5 to -10 range.
10. Adjust white balance and contrast to your liking. These will depend on the weather and lighting conditions, usually cooler for night (~3500) and warmer for day (~5750), with highest levels reserved for cloud cover (~7500), so it's all up to the user here! Just find what you think is a sweet spot for each individual photo.



Photoshop Editing

1. Adjust levels (Ctrl+L) to help level the contrast. It's best to make sure the outer markers match the ends of the peaks but there's plenty of room for the user's judgment.



2. Crop and rotate to your heart's content and call it a day! Happy spotting and editing!

Future Work

1. If you really love the way a shot turns out, save the preset so you can use it later. I usually make different presets for each aircraft because they all use different liveries and show up in different weather/lighting conditions (Antonov Daylight, United Overcast, Cathay Pacific Night, etc.). Saving and re-using presets with minor tweaks each time helps bring consistency to your work, even if they evolve over time as you discover what works best for you.

- Nathan Moeller
Lead Photographer, Astro95 Media
www.astro95media.com