

Nik Software Viveza 2

By Dennis Goulet

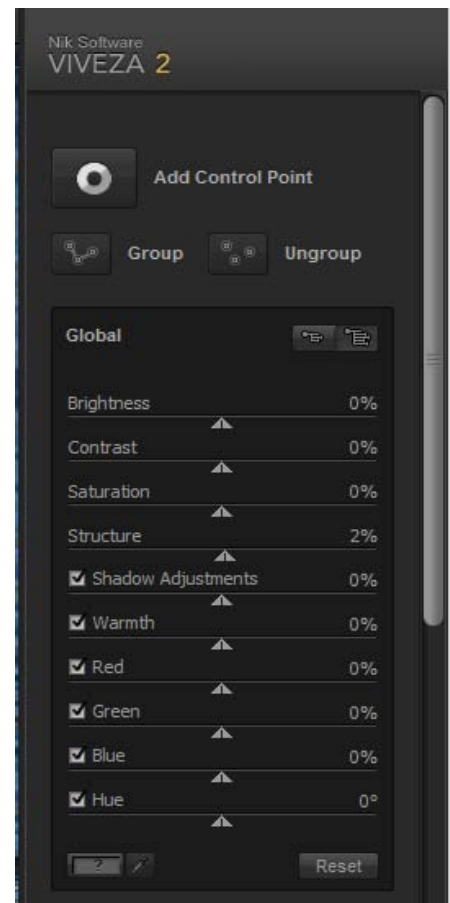
Photoshop, Lightroom, and Aperture are powerful tools for the photographer; there's likely nothing that can't be done to a photograph if you make the time to learn all the tools, techniques, and how they interact, and then spend the time to use them on an image. I like easy, and that's where Nik Software's Viveza 2 comes in. There are many plug-ins available and choosing the ones to add to your tool box can be challenging. Viveza 2 provides a quick and easy means to selectively adjust parts of your image based on the color of the point marked, and allows adjustments of many parameters for that control point as well as for the overall image.

User Interface

Installation of the plug-in is as simple as it gets, and it will add the plug in into all programs with which it is compatible. As with most plug-ins, once an image is opened in Photoshop, the plug-in filter can be accessed from the Filter pull down menu. The interface opens very quickly even with the 80 MB PSD files I used.

The control panel offers several adjustments, and without selection of a control point, the adjustments will affect the entire image. In addition to the color adjustments (brightness, contrast, saturation, hue, warmth and red/green/blue adjustments, some helpful adjustments new to Viveza are now offered; Structure Adjustment (sharpening) and Shadow Adjustments. All these adjustments are applied globally if no control point has been selected. Below the adjustment controls are a list of control points, with the percent area affected and a curves adjustment tool. Be aware that the curves tool only applies to the entire image, and not the selected (masked) areas.

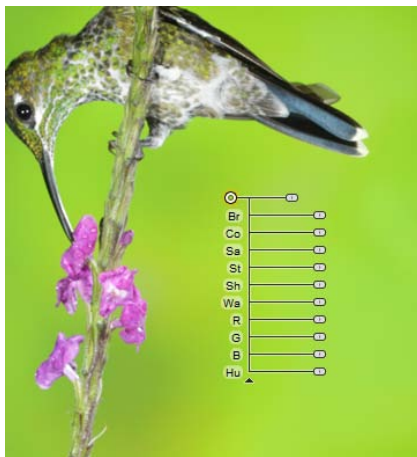
The tool bar at the top of the plug-in allows changing the cursor to the hand, + and - zoom tools, as well as the ability to change the background color for better viewing, and to hide the control panel, although the usefulness of doing so is a mystery.



For this review we'll concentrate on the selective adjustments. The loupe panel in the lower right shows the image detail at 100% centered on the select tool, and helps pick the color to be adjusted with some precision. If a particular part of the image is critical, the loupe view can be "pinned" to that point by selecting the pin below the loupe, and clicking it on the point in the image to monitor. The pin can be removed simply by clicking on the pin icon.

Selections

Select an area to adjust by clicking the select tool (arrow) on Add Control Point and applying the control point to the image in an area that adjustments are to be made. Initial placement of the control point is not critical as it can be moved as needed even after

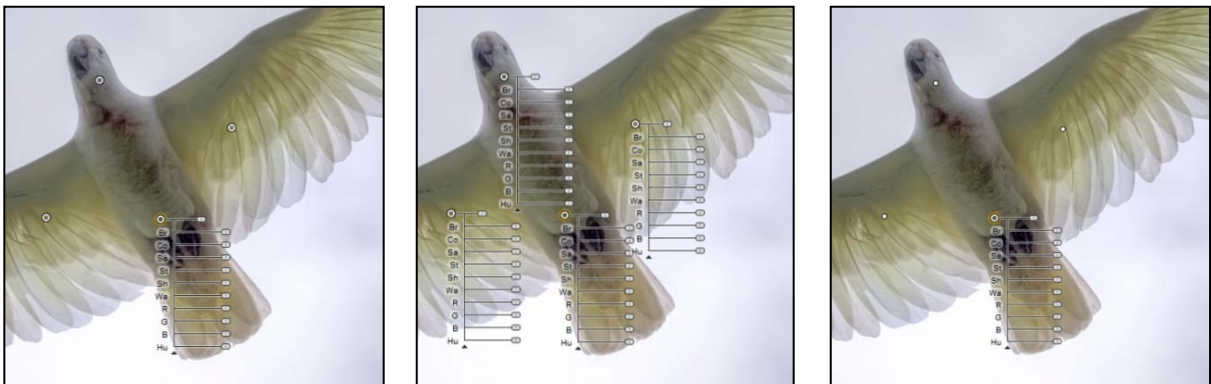


adjustments are made. An array of adjustment controls associated with the control point will be attached to the point. The array will have sliders and be arranged to accommodate the space available and the sliders may be oriented with the maximum effect either right of left, depending on the location of the control point. The array of sliders is displayed if the control point is active, and if not active, only the control point is displayed. The slider closest to the control point is the radius control and this adjustment selects the portion of the image to be affected by any of the adjustments made to that control point.

Before making the color adjustments, the area to be affected must be selected. One inconvenience is that the adjusted area is always a circle, and has a considerable "feather" which cannot be controlled. While at first this seemed inconvenient, there are ways to work with it to good effect by combining controls points into groups.

Control points can be grouped to select portions of an image that require the same corrections. In this image of a cockatoo, I wanted to adjust the body and the portion of the wings without affecting the sky. Adjustments affect all control point in the group, with the exception of the area selection for each control point; the size of each circle tied to a control point affected remains independent to that point. Place several control points on the images to be grouped. You will notice that only one control point will be active at a time. In the case of the cockatoo image, there is a large circle in the center of the body, a small circle covering the head, and two mid size circles covering the wings near the body.

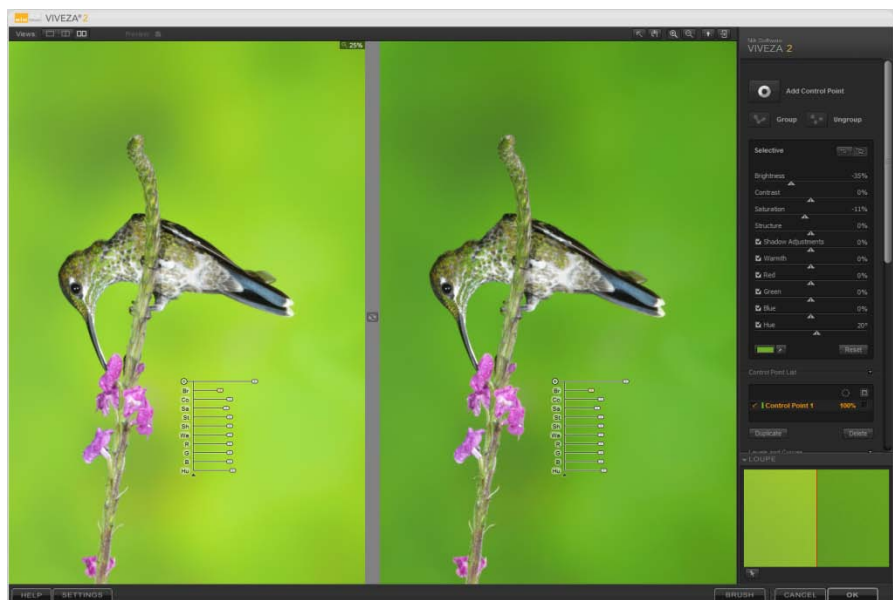
To group control points, select each point using the SHIFT- left click so that each control point has its sliders displayed, and click on the Group button. You can also select several points by drawing a selection box around them with the select tool. The group will now appear as a larger control point when not active, and all the points will show when the group point is active. Additional control points can be added to the group as needed. The Ungroup button separates the control points from the group.



Control points can be deleted by selecting the control point making it active, and click on the Delete button below the control point list, or by the delete key on the keyboard.

Adjustments

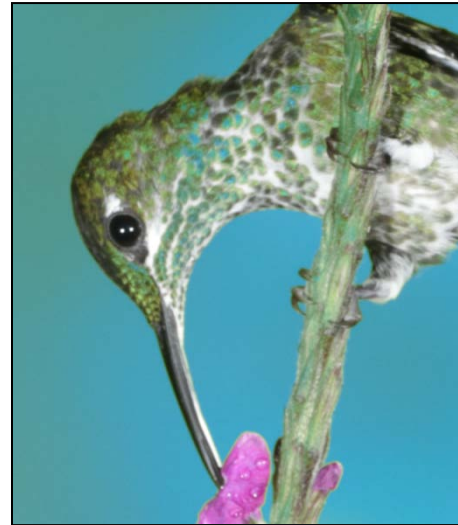
For the image of the hummingbird I wanted to change the color of the background, as it appeared too bright, and the hue seemed too yellow for my sensibilities. The straightforward way to affect the entire background is to select a circle that covers the entire image. The amount of the area selected can be viewed on the Control Point List below the adjustment block of controls on the tool panel. Adjusting the area slider to 100% ensures the adjustments will apply to the entire image. Reducing the brightness, decreasing saturation, and modifying the hue achieved the effect I wanted on the background. I selected the before/after view from the tool panel at the



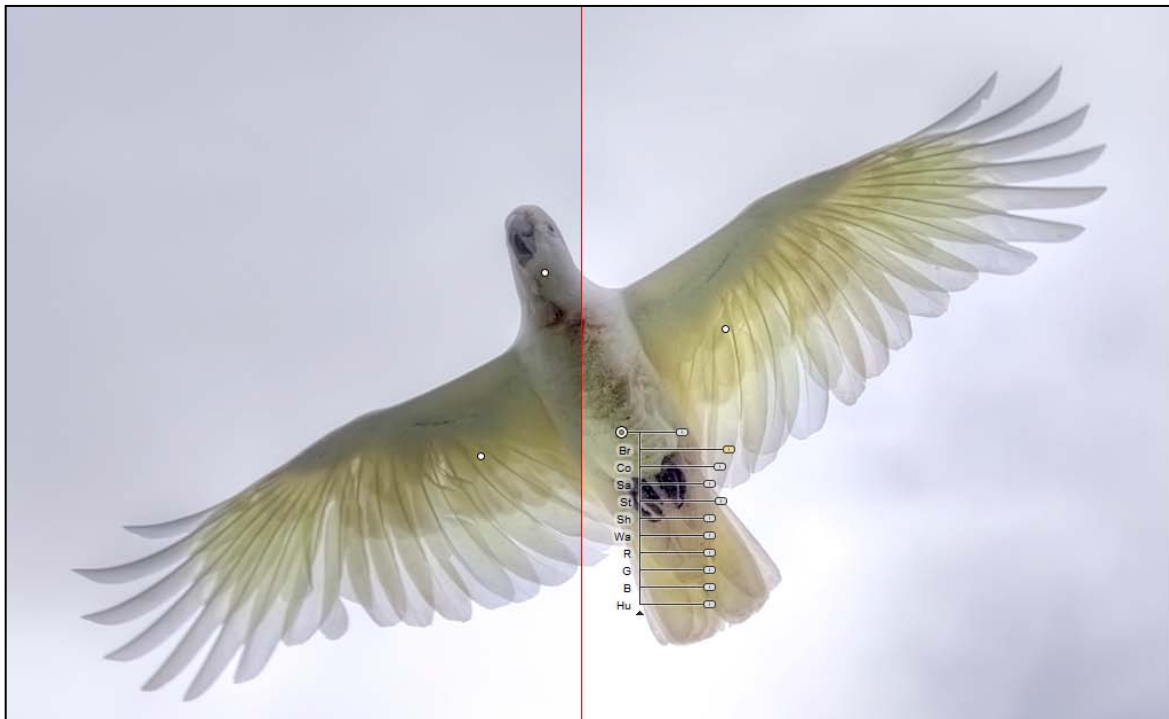
top. There is also a split view available where the dividing line can be switched between vertical and horizontal, and moved across the image.

I noticed that the green feathers on the throat of the hummingbird and some green areas of the plant were also darkened. This should be expected as the selection is based on color, and everything of that color, within a certain bandwidth (range of color), will be affected by the adjustment.

To demonstrate the effect of adjustment, I adjusted hue to an unnatural color. The change to the feathers and plant stem are noticeable. It can also be clearly seen that the pink flowers are in no way affected. Correcting the problem was relatively easy by adding a layer mask to the Viveza 2 layer in Photoshop and masking out the adversely affected areas of the bird and plant. The mask did not require precision as only the areas affected were masked, not the entire bird and flower. As with the amount of feathering in the selection tool, the bandwidth of the color selection is not adjustable.

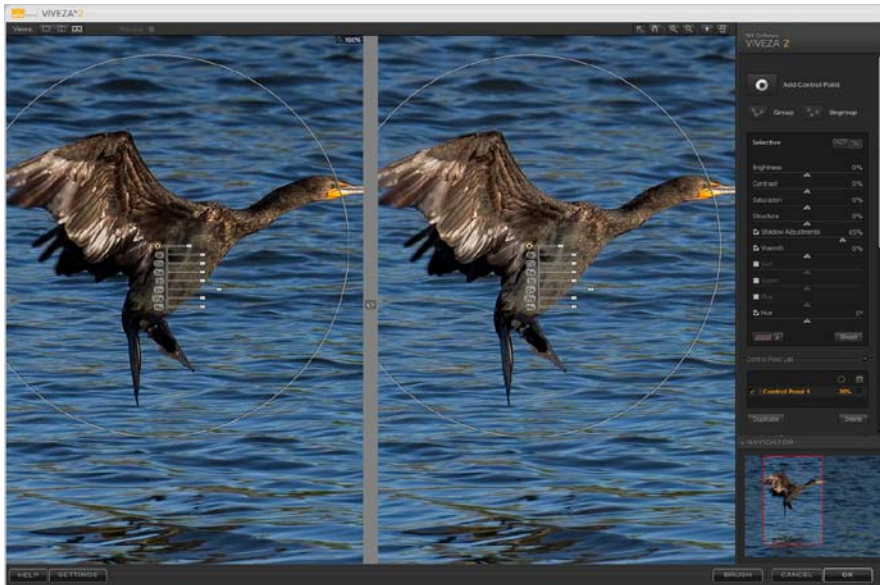


I chose the image of the cockatoo to try multiple adjustments on a group of control points. I increased brightness, increased saturation, and added a little sharpening with the Structure control. The results were quick to obtain, and accomplished what I needed; to brighten the



underside of the bird without affecting the sky or areas of the wings excluded from the selection. The view shows the split before/after view.

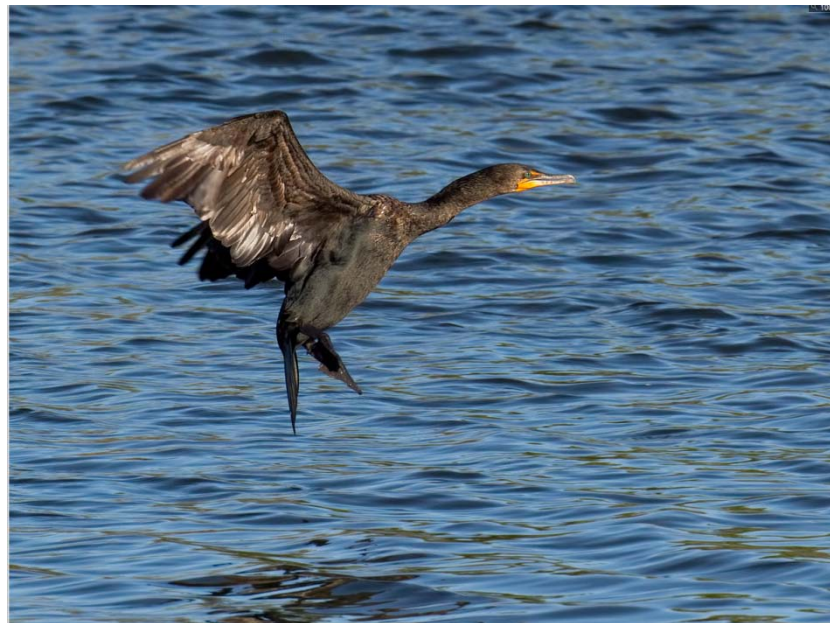
The image of a cormorant landing required an increase in the shadow detail, and I wanted to explore some color adjustment to the deep blue of the water. Since the color difference between the brown bird and the blue water is significant, I had no problem making the shadow adjustment selection cover the entire bird, even though it included a good portion



of the water. It's clear that the water is not affected by the adjustment to the bird. This side-by-side before/after view shows the highlighted area of the Navigator panel. The section displayed can be moved by grabbing (click and drag) the highlighted area of the Navigator panel, selecting the hand tool

on the top tool bar, or simply pressing the space bar on the keyboard when using the select tool (arrow).

I further modified the image by selecting the water, area set to 100%, and increasing brightness 23%, and decreasing saturation 22%. This improved the separation of the bird from the background, and reflected the scene as I remembered it.



Conclusions

Overall, Nik Software Viveza 2 is a powerful tool to selectively edit images in a wide range of circumstances. Using it for a short time, and becoming aware of the effects of unintended adjustments on the selected areas, I find the plug-in a very useful addition to my arsenal. The ability to select adjustment areas based on color, and not on physical area alone, facilitates image editing to a great extent. The image adjustments made for this review were accomplished quickly and without any layer masking, with the exception of the hummingbird image.

Some of the few nits to pick include the lack of a user's manual available from the tool panel. There is a Quick Start manual available from the Nik website; it is relatively brief although it does give an appreciation of what is possible. There are lessons available, but they are identical to the examples given in the quick start. I haven't searched for any third party videos, and there are likely some out there. The HELP button on the plug-in offers some detail on the different features of the tool, but it is not searchable. There is a list of shortcuts; however, it would be nice if it could be printed, for those of us with short memories. Unfortunately, the HELP button is merely a web link, and you are out of luck if you are using your laptop without connection to the internet. I did later find a printable one page PDF of the shortcuts on the Nik Website. These are all minor issues. I strongly recommend that any new user read all the FAQs page on the Nik Website, as many of my questions were answered there.

The NIK website lists the price for Viveza 2 as \$199.99. The upgrade price is \$99.99; however, if you purchased Viveza 1 after September 22, 2009 you can get a free upgrade. It can also be purchased bundled with other Nik software plug-ins at considerable savings over individual prices.

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