

The Digital Coach™

Easy-to-understand training in Digital Imaging & Color Management



FlexColor Sharpening Tutorial

Once we have verified that our scanner is sharply in focus, we can decide on how much if any sharpening we want to apply. Sharpening an image is a much debated topic. Many prefer to not do any sharpening when scanning. FlexColor has a very good sharpening process which only sharpens the luminance channel. In my opinion, it does every bit as good a job as Photoshop.

By nature of digital capture, whether it is a scan or a digital camera capture, the process softens the image. Most scanners have built in sharpening that happens even when the software is set to zero sharpening. They do this so that the image does not look soft when you are testing out the device. Digital cameras are made the same way. However, the more professional models have some adjustment available.

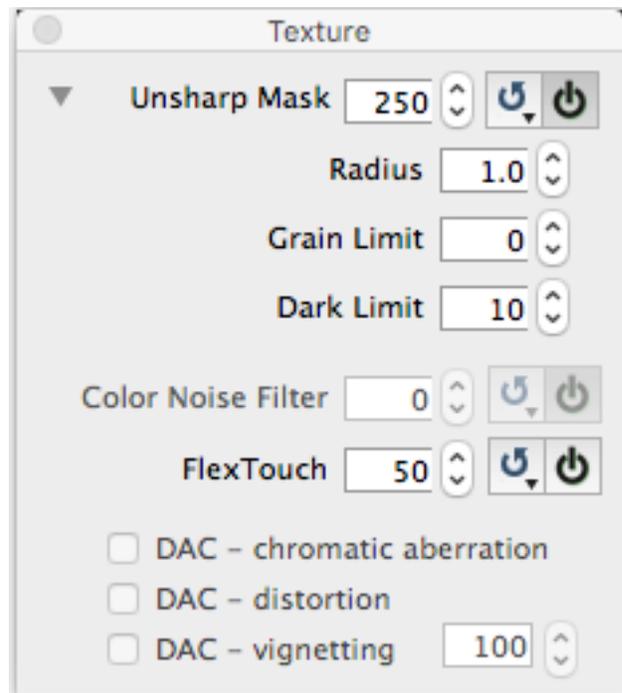
FlexColor is no different. If you set the amount of sharpening to zero or you uncheck the apply button, you will get a value of 120 of sharpening applied. If it is your intent to scan with absolutely no sharpening applied in the scanning process, set the amount to -120 and click the apply button.

My opinion is that you should use FlexColor to return the image to the sharpness of the original film. Any additional sharpening should be performed in the software creating the final output. The amount will depend on the final use of the image.

Let's look at the control panel.

It is called the Texture Window and is the triangle symbol on the Tool panel. It is shown here with the Unsharp Mask section expanded. Your panel may be slightly different depending on which version of FlexColor you are using. In this version you apply by clicking the top right hand button which is labeled Active when you roll over it. Older versions had a button called Apply.

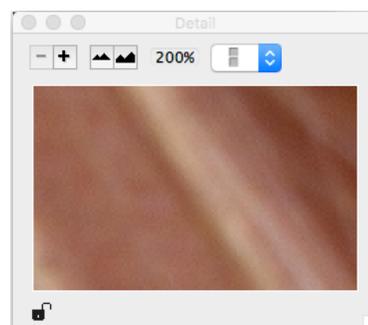
This sample has a value of 250 and the Active button is on. This is the default value for most factory Setups for positive film. Negative films will have dif-



ferent factory settings depending on the film type. You should only consider these as starting points and create you own values and Setups.

One way we can test our sharpening would be to scan a small section of the image and open it in an application such as Photoshop. However, this is very time consuming.

Fortunately FlexColor provides a tool to achieve the same results. The tool that makes this easy to do is the Detail Window. It's the magnifying glass on the



Tool Panel. Click on it and the window above opens.

By clicking on the +/- buttons you can create up to 4 windows to look at different areas of the image such as details like hair or eyes, highlights or shadows. The buttons that look like mountains adjust the zoom, 100% or 200%. Here we are set to 200%. The far right button allows for how the windows are arranged. In a row or 2 x 2.

By clicking on the window then clicking in the image it will select the area of the image to be viewed. Each window can select a different area of the image. You can click and drag on the bottom right corner to adjust the size of the windows, which will adjust the size of the image area shown.

Once you have the Detail Window set up the way you want and a sample image in place. Select the default Setup for you film type, such as RGB Standard or any custom setup you have created for your film type.

Pick a starting point and enter that number in the Texture Control Panel. Then cycle off and on the Apply button. If you watch the area in your Tool Panel right below the Detail button as you hit the Apply button, you will see a little spinning circle that tells you the setting is being applied. It only takes a fraction of a second so you have to be looking at it as you hit the button.

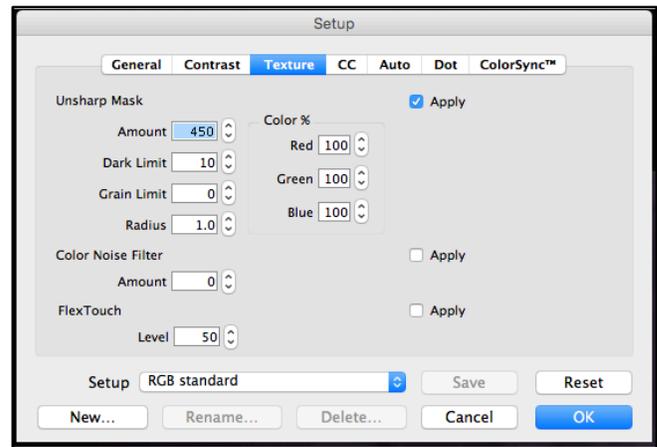


FlexColor will update the Detail windows to show the effect of the sharpening. It will also update the main preview window.

Here is a screen grab showing the Texture Window and the Detail Window. I have set the sharpening to 450. I set up the detail windows to show hair detail and a deep shadow.

The radius amount works like most software. The grain limit allows you to set a threshold value to limit the grain. Dark Limit allows you to set a value where sharpening stops in the shadows. You can experiment with these settings to fine tune your sharpening.

FlexTouch was added as a dust and dirt remover. It works well to a degree but is not a sep-



arate IR channel. You can try it, but I wouldn't go past a value of 50.

Once you have determined the values you want to use, open the Setup Control Panel, Select Texture and enter your settings. Note the Apply buttons. You can additionally set different values for the Red, Green or Blue channels if you like. Some images are said to contain more noise in the Blue channel.

Once you have your values entered, select New, name your Setup, click Save and it will appear in the Setup window and the settings will be applied to your image automatically whenever that Setup is chosen.

If you don't want to save it and just want to adjust each image individually just use the detail window and the Texture Control Panel.

I would not suggest setting any sharpening until you have checked focus. If you image is out of focus, sharpening will not correct it. See the Tutorial on Checking Focus and start there. If you make a Custom Setup to correct focus, you can add your sharpening to it and resave.

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