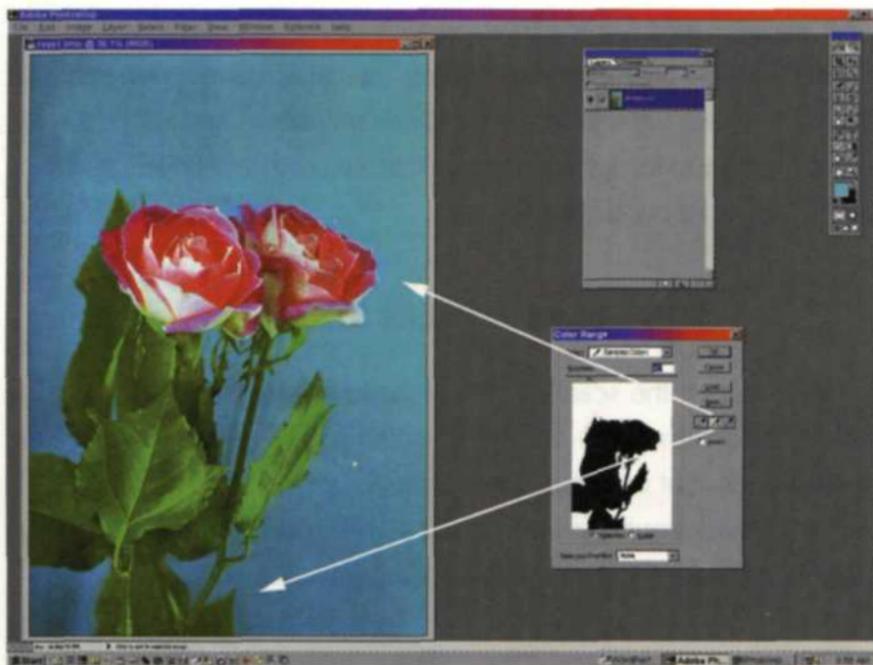


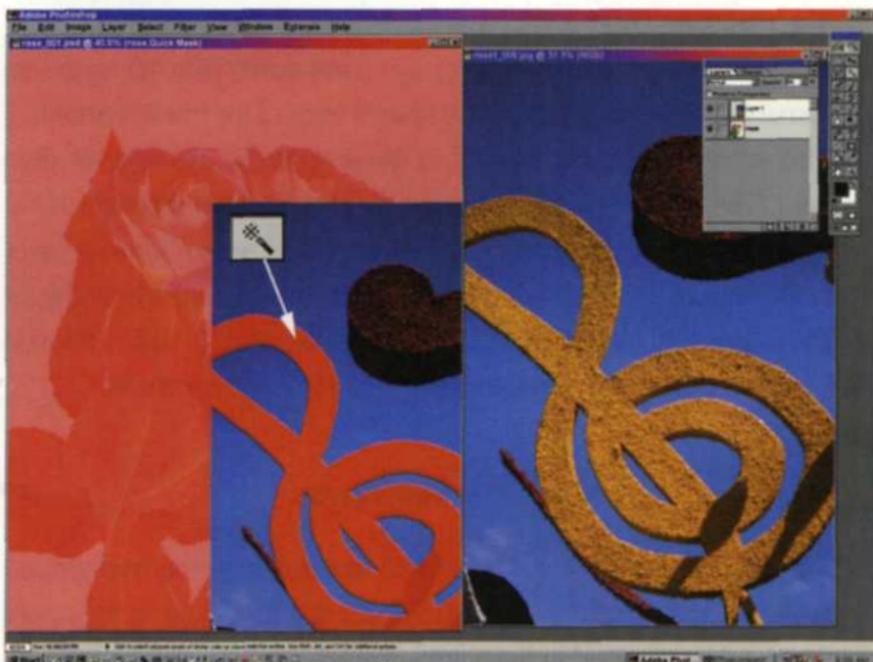
LAYER IT ON: Part II

Jack and Sue Drafahl

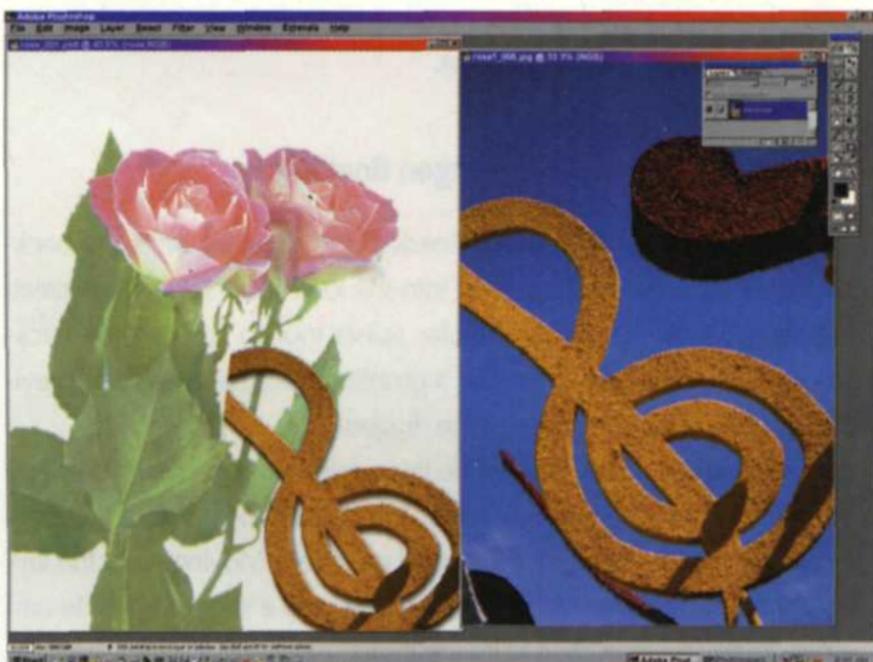




Background A



Layer 1A



Layer 1B

In last month's article we laid out some of the basics of layering bitmap photo images. Since layering is so complex, we decided to expand this article to include the step-by-step process of how one image was created. We chose a project we worked on which presented some challenges and some definite rewards!

THERE IS A WONDERFUL yearly event in Portland, Oregon called the Rose Festival. Over a four-week period, a variety of special events such as parades, airshow, boat races, hot air balloon races and an amusement park are scheduled to delight both young and old. Over the years we have collected thousands of images from these events and decided to create a poster.

We knew that the background image had to be a rose, since it was the symbol of Portland's festival. The tough part was narrowing down our selection to just a handful of photos. Following is a synopsis of how we created this poster. Keep in mind that there are several different approaches that achieve the same end product—this was our approach.

SOFTWARE USED:

Adobe Photoshop 5.0

HARDWARE USED:

PII 400 with 256 meg , RAM and 24 Gig RAID

Nikon LS2000 film scanner

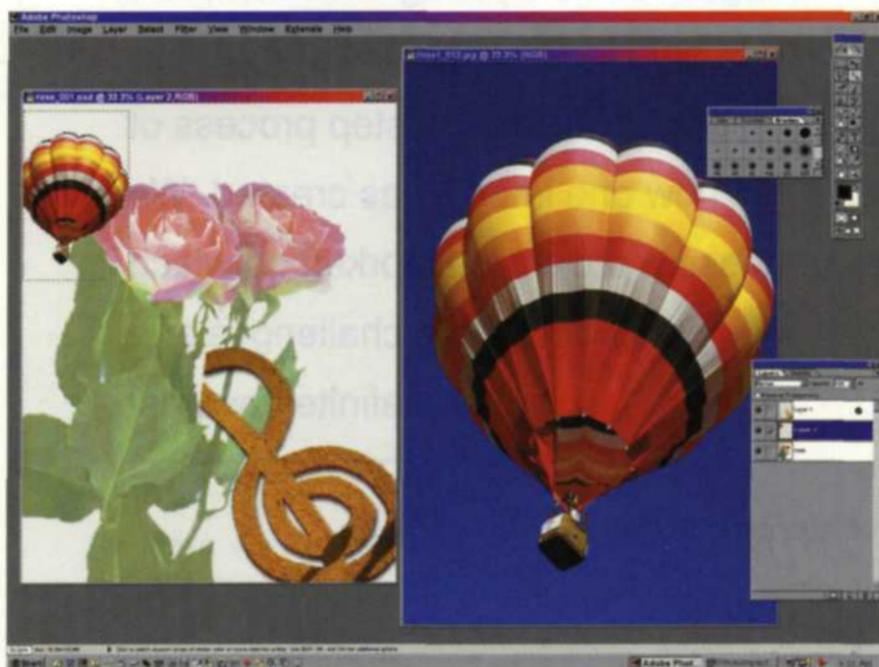
Epson 3000 inkjet printer

17 Inch monitor at 1600 x 1200

Background Image

The background image was scanned at CD resolution 3072 x 2048, and cropped to fit the size of the poster. The image was opened into Adobe Photoshop, and the color range function from the select pull down menu was selected. We used the + eyedropper to select the blue background, and then deleted it, so it was replaced with a white background.

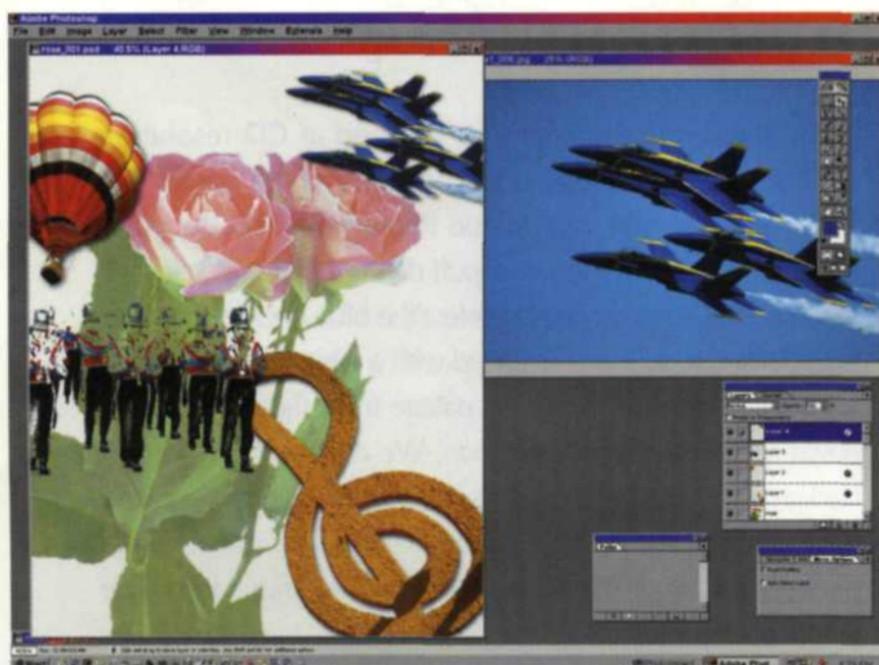
We then opened the layers palette from the window pull down menu in Adobe Photoshop. We double-clicked on the background image and made a background layer with a 50% opacity setting. This would reduce the dominance of the background so it would not compete with the various layers we would place on top.



Layer 2



Layer 3



Layer 4

Layer 1: Music Symbol

The music symbol from the parade float was scanned in at the same resolution and dragged onto the background, creating layer 1. From the edit pull down, we used the transform/scale function to reduce the symbol in size. Using the magic wand, we were able to select the symbol away from the background and delete the background image from that layer. We then went to the layers effects pull down and added a small drop shadow to the symbol layer so that it would have better separation from the background image.

Layer 2: Hot Air Balloon

We opened the scanned hot air balloon image and selected the blue background with the magic wand tool. We then reversed the selection so that only the hot air balloon was selected and dragged it onto the background as layer 2. We then went to the layers pull down again, and added a drop shadow for separation.

Layer 3: Marching Band

The marching band image was loaded and dragged onto the background creating layer 3. The image was sized down with the layer size command and moved to cover the straight edge of the music symbol.

This straight edge was created in the scanner by the edge of slide mount. The irregular select tool was used to remove the right band member since he was cut off at the edge of the image. From the layer pull down, we went to the options menu and moved the highlight slider labeled this layer, to 102 from a setting of 255. This removed the straight edges of the image leaving just the band members.

Layer 4: Blue Angles

The airplane image was loaded and dragged onto the background creating layer 4. The image was sized down and moved to the upper right area. We planned to have final text between the hot air balloons and the jets so we allowed extra space. The background was selected using the magic wand and removed. A very slight drop shadow was added to separate the jet's exhaust.

Layer 5: Dragon Boat Races

The dragon boat image was loaded and dragged onto the background. It was scaled down to fit into the lower left corner, thus creating layer 5. We used the irregular select tool to remove the background view of the city. We had a problem because one of the previous layers was blocking part of the dragon.

We just selected layer 5 from the layer palette, and moved it between layer one and the background layer. This moved the horns of the dragon out from under the feet of the band members. Moving on to the layers option palette, we added a yellow glow and a slight emboss to add some depth and separation to the dragon.



Layer 5



Layer 6



Layer 7

Layer 6: Rodeo Queen in Parade

This image was loaded and scaled to fit in the lower right corner creating layer 6. The background was selected and removed using the magic wand and the delete keys.

Going back to the layers palette, we selected and moved this layer so that it was just above the dragon boat layer. This would place layer 6 under the band and music symbol layers. This was necessary so that the symbol was not lost, and to hide the part of the horse that was cut off by the edge of the slide mount.

Layer 7: Rose Festival Text

The text tool was selected from the floating toolbox and the words "Rose Festival" were typed. The text was moved and placed in the desired position on the poster. A drop shadow, bevel, and emboss was then added from the layer effects menu.

Saving the file

We saved the image as a Photoshop PSD file in a working directory so we could come back at any time and change any layer or effect. We then went to the layers pull down, and used the flatten image to collapse all layers into one image. This image was then saved out in our final image directory as a TIF file for RGB work, and as an EPS for any CMYK work. Total time for the entire project was less than an hour.

Poster Variations

The best part of using layers is that you can make several variations for multiple presentations. This is vitally important if the client wants to see variety before making a final decision. Each variation is created by loading in the original layered non-flattened PSD file, selecting a specific layer and making your modifications.

Layers can be moved, re-sized, effects added, or just about anything you desire. Each variation can then be saved out as a new PSD file. This allows you to be able to refer back to your original values if necessary. A new Tiff and EPS file can be saved out for your final presentation.

To show how easy it is to backtrack and make changes, we made a poster variation. We went back into the PSD file and selected the hot air balloon layer, and applied a third party special effects filter to give the hot air balloon motion.

The layering function is very difficult to master, but we love the creative potential it gives our image editing. Many technical and creative editing problems are easily solved with the use of layers. The key to your layering success is intense practice and patience. It will be worth all the work, because a whole new world of image editing awaits you.

Jack and Sue Drafahl are freelance writers and professional photographers based outside Portland, Ore.