

Zooming a background

A school sent me this quick shot they had seen on a Look Book page (Figure A) where a background had been zoomed but the subjects were mostly in focus. "How did they do that?" they wanted to know. Well, now they know and so do you.

- Step 1: Open the photo you want to use. This works best with some definite subjects like the pic I was sent. Trying to pull something too small out of a busy photo is not the best use of this method.
- Step 2: Loosely select (with the Quick Selection tool) the subjects you want to be in focus on the top layer (that you created when you duplicated the background).
- Step 3: Once you have the subjects selected (it doesn't have to be that good a selection) choose Refine Edge in the Control Bar. (Figure B) When the Refine edge dialog box opens, change feather to 4 and expand to +6 and then choose Output to New Layer with Layer Mask. (Figure C)
- Step 4: You will now have just the subjects on a layer with the rest of the layer masked. Click the eyeball next to the layer name in the Layers panel to make the layer with the subjects on it invisible.
- Step 5: Double click the background layer to make it editable. It may want you to name it. If it does, call it whatever you like. Make sure this layer is selected in the Layers panel.
- Step 6: Choose Filter>Convert for Smart Filters. This will make sure you don't hurt that layer and can always go back to it.
- Step 7: Choose Filter>Blur>Radial Blur. When the dialog box opens, (Figure D) choose Zoom and pull the zoom slider up until you like the way the background looks. Start with 50. While you are trying different settings, you can leave the quality at Good or Draft but make sure you choose Best for your final output. Click OK. You should now have a zoomed background but no clear subjects.
- Step 8: Click the eyeball next to the layer with the mask on it and your subjects should pop right back in. If you need to touch up their edges, choose the Layer Mask in the Layers panel, grab a brush (press B), change the brush to 0% hardness and about 50% opacity in the Control Bar at the top of the screen, and paint in black (or white) around the subjects. Make sure you have the mask targeted (there will be a small white frame around it in the Layers panel). Remember, black conceals and white reveals. Paint the foreground layer in and out until you get the look you want.

Save the file as a Photoshop Document (PSD) so that if you need to make changes later you can come back. Then choose File>Save As and save a copy of the document as a PNG or JPEG. Then you can upload the photo to the Yearbook Avenue Image Library for use on your pages. 

