Nik Collection Notes

The Nik Collection comprises a comprehensive suite of seven image processing plug-ins. Suitable for Lightroom, Photoshop, Elements and Aperture if you have a Mac. Plug-ins that were at one time quite expensive are now free and as they are regarded as some of the very best out there whats not to like and should be downloaded. Then you can indulge in hours of "mucking about", do "jiggary pokery" or even "creative and artistic impressions to delight the viewer", which of course is what I do.

These notes are not extensive because there are hundreds of tutorials on the net about each plug in and I will point to those I think will be of most benefit. Nik have their own channel on Youtube.
 If you go to www.google.com/nik collection and click on one of the plug-ins you will be taken to that particular page and if you scroll down past the promo blurb you will see a section like this:

Dfine on YouTube **View all videos**

Help with Dfine   controls, no mouse required.

Tutorials   **Troubleshooting & FAQs**

Take a tour of the interface and explore simple   Browse a list of common questions and find the
lessons to build your expertise.   answer you're looking for.

Keyboard Shortcuts   **Visit the Help Cente**

Navigate quickly through basic and advanced

This example is typical of all the product pages and by clicking on the highlighted parts you can watch videos (they come up one after the other) or go to tutorial/help pages where topics are explained in detail.

All the Plug-ins have a very similar layout with presets or filters in the left pane, the main image window in the centre and tools/adjustments in the right hand pane, usually in tabs. Click on the tab to open it. At the top is an Options Bar which gives you different viewing windows, a preview or compare button and various controls on the right hand side. Such as Select, Zoom, change background colour, etc.

Lets now look at the plug-ins in more detail:
Dfine 2 this is a noise reduction program. I am not saying it's any better than the noise reduction found in Lightroom or Photoshops Camera Raw module, but it does work both automatically or manually. When you open the plug-in it automatically does global noise reduction. This is usually good

enough for a large percentage of images. However you can manually adjust colour noise or contrast noise (luminence noise) by using Control Points or Colour Range for selective noise reduction. Colour Range is very similar to the same named tool in Photoshop, it uses the eyedropper tool to pick out different colours as a selection for selective noise reduction.

Go to Youtube in your browser and type **dfine 2** *in the search box. It brings up several videos. There are the official Nik training videos (about 5 in total) and one by Anthony Morganti about 20 mins long which covers just about everything you need to know.* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_RCy5QVytoc *There is another a bit frantic by Ed Gregory (photos in colour) of about 17 min. which is also informative.* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TQ6oPcWK-Co&t=2s

Pro Sharpener 3 Which as the name suggests sharpens the image. It can though do both output sharpening and pre sharpening *(with RAW images this compensates for the IR filter fitted in front of camera sensors, which causes a little softness of the image).*

Pre sharpening would be done at the start of post processsing. You should zoom in to see the effect. I use this sparingly and never go above 50%. I always leave sharpen area/edges in the default position halfway. You can be selective with Control Points but I never have.

With **output sharpening** you can set it for various options such as a computer display or a print. If Print is selected another box comes up where you can input type of paper, viewing distance, printer resolution and specialised controls for strength, structure, local contrast and focus. By using Control Points you can also do selective sharpening.

For Videos Youtube gives plenty of choice. Typing in **Raw Sharpener Pro 3** *in the search box bring up a good choice. Anthony Morganti has done videos on all the Nik Plug-ins and is a good choice as are the Nik training videos. There is one over an hour long. You could say comprehensive, it goes into sharpening in great detail. There is also a good one about 40 mins long.*
This video gives a good understanding of the various options available .
https://www.lynda.com/Photoshop-tutorials/Nik-Sharpener-Pro/123441/126738-4.htl

Viveza 2 A general purpose image enhancement program. Which I mainly used to use for localised dodge and burn adjustments, though it's more powerful than just lightening or darkening an image . I am now doing more of my enhancement workflow in Viveza. There is nothing in the software that you couldn't do in Photoshop with layers and masks. But I think Viveza is more flexible and quicker using Control Points. For instance in the sunset picture I demonstrated it took about five minutes to do comprehensive colour and tonal adjustments in different parts of the image using control points. It would have taken much longer in Photoshop. One tip when opening Viveza you will find it is not full screen. If you press the "F" key on your keyboard it will go full screen.

As usual typing **Viveza 2** *into Youtubes search box brings up a multitude of video's.*
Try this video as an introduction. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QEWtmeBPGQk
As usual the Nik training videos are worth looking at (11).

HDR Efex Pro. As the title suggests used for processing High Dynamic Range images. You can process single images or bracketed sets. As with all HDR software you can auto align image sets, as well as reduce ghosting and Chromatic Aberration. You can use a number of presets as starting points. Though some of the controls need figuring out, such as depth, detail and drama. However the Plug-in can give "natural" looking images quite quickly. **This Plug-in is not available in Elements as it cannot process 32 bit images.**

I am not a great HDR photographer. If a scene overloads my sensor by which I mean badly clips shadows or highlights, I tend to bracket the exposure and usually use the Photomerge to HDR in Lightroom. However I have used the plug-in occasionally. The real power are the adjustments in the

Tone Compression Tab. This is where you either go OTT or turn the image into a realistic depiction of the scene. So these controls are important.

For a start I suggest you go to the link below and play through the various videos to give you some idea of how it works. They are the Nik tutorials.

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLp5lYDsQi4gn0IlCabE3IWHjiMIoP9Kkk

When you type in **HDR Efex pro** *in youtubes search box, it brings up a list some of which some are webinars by Nik, as they are long I have not viewed them all however Nik are professional so they should be good and usually show workflow practices.This one discusses HDR and what it is as well as covering all the main points about the Plug-in.* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nlcB5rjNpZI&t=287

This webinar by Tim Grey is very comprehensive, covers HDR in detail and therefore very long.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PXIgHeygTAk

I Think the following Plug-ins constitute the heart of the collection and the ones you will use the most often

Colour Efex Pro 4. A set of 55 different filters, some of which you will never use, but some you will find indispensable. For instance there are 4 different Contrast filters and 4 ways to do a Vignette. They do the same thing in different ways. The real power comes with the ability to "stack" different filters together and save them to use again and again as "recipes". And also to use Control Points for selective adjustments. All filters come with a set of presets so you can quickly see what they do and most adjustments are fairly intuitive. However beware its so easy to go OTT. You have to experiment to appreciate the real power of the plug-in.

This video should be your first stop. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oalNkt7UKuI&index=2&list=PLp5lYDsQi4gmGUvE-VCGHJxn74Uk2

Go here if you want a description of each of the filters. It is part of the Nik help page for Colour Efex. https://support.google.com/nikcollection/topic/3297791?hl=en&ref_topic=2991630

If you type **"Colour Efex pro 55 filters in 52 weeks"** *into the Youtube search box then as above you can go thru each filter. This time by video. Happy viewing.*

Naturally there are a multitude of video's on Youtube to peruse at your hearts content. If you type **"Colour Efex Pro 4"** *in your browser search box, you will bring up articles such as the "5 best filters" "the filters I use the most" "the 5 best landscape filters" etc*

Silver Efex Pro. The doyen of the collection and the one that made Nik famous. Probably used by more serious black and white digital printers than any other. It's worth downloading the collection for this alone. The plug in simulates the classic film emulsions and darkroom techniques used in black and white processing, with real richness and depth. There are many different presets to get you started. It has a plethora of controls, such as brightness/contrast/structure for highlights, midtones and shadows. It also has colour filters and simulates classic B&W film types. And naturally Control Points for localised adjustments. Probably the program that has made B & W so popular again on the club scene.

Typing **Silver Efex Pro 2 tutorial** *into, yes you guessed it, Youtubes search box bring up the usual eclectic collection. The first port of call should be the training video's by Nik (13). As usual by clicking on the first they should all play one after the other. The webinar ones are very useful too, to see how pro's use the software.There are too many to recommend so play to your hearts and available times content. There are probably more video's on Silver Efex than any other Nik Plug-in.*

Analog Efex Pro. Probably the most underated plug-in and maybe the most fun of the suite. It

replicates the look of old photos and of darkroom techniques. It adds grain, fade, toning, borders, light leaks, cross processing and much more. The presets simulate, Classic Camera, Black and White, Colour Cast, Motion, Wet Plate, Double Exposure etc. It doesn't just simulate processes, but cheap camera's and lenses as well. Each set of "Camera's" has its own set of presets. This will be a stack of tools which you can adjust individually to get the effect you want. You can "build your own camera" with these tools, 14 of them. These tools also form the stacks from the presets windows. This plug-in is more than just a collection of old, vintage, retro type effects, its a powerful program that can achieve more or less any "look" you like.

*Type in **Analog Pro 2** in, well you you should know by now and scroll down to the Nik Training video's (15). These will take you thru all 14 tools so you know what is going on.This video also helps* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-bawxTBDw1s&t=1022s *and this one, though the guys style may grate.* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jkFnvEGMPwg *There are several Nik videos which may give you some ideas. **Search for Analog Pro 2: Getting Creative.** Also check this one out , which is a good video of the Multi Lens option.* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ATY0DasAPp8

Is there a particular workflow routine for the Collection?
Not really. Normal worflow is for me, RAW conversion, global adjustments in Lightroom, this tells me whether I need to do any noise reduction or not. If it's global I will probably do it in Lightroom. If it's a local area such as noise in shadows, then Dfine which does it better. ***Dfine also allows you to reduce the effect in localised areas as I will demonstrate.This may be important for your image.***
(*A quick digression. N*ik on it's help page suggests you do presharpening before doing any noise *reduction in Dfine. However 99% of all articles I have read or viewed always say you do noise reduction first. The general thrust being that all noise reduction software in getting rid of noise softens or smears the image and therefore whats the point of sharpening an image in order to smear it immediately after. I have tried experimently doing what Nik suggests and then doing it my way. I prefer my way. Try it yourself).*
My camera is a Fuji XT-1 and a small amount of presharpening is desirable. On any camera if you use Raw then some presharpening is desirable, especially if you have used noise reduction. This can be done in either Lightroom or Presharpener 3. If I need to enhance more selective areas then I would use Presharpener 3. After doing global adjustments in Lightroom then I would do selective adjustments in Viveza or if I want more specialist adjustments Colour Efex, using Control Points. *Myself I find it easier to use Control Points rather than the Adjustment Brush in Lightroom.* If I want a B & W image then I would go straight to Silver Efex rather than Viveza, or if I want a "Retro" look Analog Efex. Then sharpen after with Prosharpener **Or** one of my own sharpening actions. I would use Prosharpener for selective sharpening.

If you take Raw images then you will post process in a dedicated image editor such as Lightroom or Adobe Camera Raw which comes with Photoshop or Elements. In the latter two you click the Open Image button to pass the image on to the main editing area. To access Nik in Photoshop or Elements there are two options. First is to go **Filter > scroll down to the Nik Collection, then sideways to click on which ever plug-in you want.** The second option is to use the **Nik Selection Tool.** This is a floating window where you can click on whichever plug-in you want.
*(When you install the set it automatically installs this tool and it appears when you open Photoshop or Elements. If you don't see it go to **File > automate >** scroll down and click on **Nik Selection Tool** and it will appear. In Elements the only difference being **File > Automate Tools).** Do be aware though that the tool may not work correctly in some versions of Windows. My computer has version 10 and it works. The club computer has version 7 and it is hit and miss.*
If you want to do all your image processing in Lightroom then you access the Nik plug-ins differently. Go to **Photo > Edit In > scroll down and choose whichever plug-in you want.** A dialog box pops up

with three choices you choose the top one because the others are grayed out. ***Edit a copy with Lightroom Adjustments***, clicking on ***Copy File Options*** gives you a choice of file structure, bit depth, colour space, resolution and compression. My preferred options are Tiff, 16 bit, AdobeRGB, 300, none and off you go to the plug-in. As the name suggests you are editing a copy and when you click the save button in the plug-in the copy is placed next to the original file in Lightroom. There is a difference if you want to edit an HDR set of images. Lightroom cannot work in layers. You have to use the **Export** command in the Library. Click on the **Export** button and a dialog box appears. In the left hand pane, under Google, click on HDR Efex, then in the main window you can set your file settings as described above. When you click on the save button in HDR Efex a copy comes back into Lightroom with all your edits.

When you open any of the plug-ins you will be happy to note they all have a similar layout. With Presets or Filters on the Left hand side. Together with History, the ability to save custom "recipes" and the ability to import and store "recipes". *Recipes are the name given by Nik to a collection of filters or adjustments that you put together, to use over and over again with different images.* The Main Image window is in the centre and on the right hand side are the tools that you will adjust for a particular "look" in your image. There are sometimes tabs for a range of similar adjustments, for instance brightness, contrast, saturation controls will be grouped under one tab and vignette, toning and borders will be grouped under a different tab. The bottom tab always gives you the choice of having a loupe view or a histogram graph. There is a bar running along the top with various options. Going from left to right you can close/open the left hand pane. View the image in either single/split view or compare the image side by side or top to bottom. Further to the right depending which plug-in is open you have other options such as as select tool, hand tool, zoom tool and you can change the background colour by clicking on a downward looking arrow. As all plug-ins are slightly different so these tools will vary. For zooming I would suggest using the keyboard shortcuts, which are ctrl + "+" (plus sign) to zoom in. Ctrl + "-" to zoom out (minus sign) and Ctrl + "0" to fit image in window (thats zero not the letter O). Else you can also double click in the image to go to 100% and double click again to go back to normal. When you have finished adjustments in any Plug-in click on the **OK** button on the right hand bottom, you can also **cancel.** Nik Plug-ins always do their adjustments on a separate layer and this is what you will see in Photoshop or Elements. (*The only exception is HDR Efex which because it uses 32 bits can't use a separate layer. Also if you use a plug-in directly in Lightroom you have a **Save** button rather than OK*).
In some Plug-ins you also have a **Brush** option. When clicked and you go out of the Plug-in a dialog box pops up with some options, you choose **paint** this puts a mask on the layer and you then *paint* in the image where you want the effect to happen.

Probably one of the most powerful tools in the collection are Control Points. As the name implies you can add or subtract an adjustment to any part of the image. As the Nik help page explains.
Control points allow you to quickly create precise selections without the use of complex masks or selection tools. Each plug-in in the Nik Collection include control points that are adapted to that particular plug-in. For example, in Dfine 2, control points enable you to selectively apply noise reduction while in Viveza 2, control points provide selective color and light control. Each control point creates its selection based on the color characteristics of the object that the control point is placed on. These characteristics include the colour, hue, saturation, brightness, and location of the object selected. The Control Point then creates a selection automatically based on the similarity of other objects and areas in the image to the selected object. You can then control how large a selection to create using each control point's built in Size slider. By adding multiple control points to the same image, you can create more and more precise selections and affect multiple parts of the image simultaneously.

Well thats the promo, however I do find they work really well. They are far easier than doing selections in Photoshop. The nearest in Photoshop/Lightroom is the adjustment brush which I don't think is as intuitive. They certainly speed up my workflow and I now use them to do most of my editing.

This Nik training video will give you a lot of insight into what control points are and what they do.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NdcBY7gO6hc&t=336s

Typing in "using nik collection control points" in Youtubes search box brings up the usual suspects, the above video being one of them.

Whoops, I said at the meeting that Nik had their own channel on Youtube so I had better tell you. Its "Nik Collection by Google". Just type that into Youtubes search box, theres only 254 Video's .

To use the hyperlinks in this document press Ctrl and click.

Both Anthony Morganti and Ed Gregory (photo's in colour) have made tutorials about all the Nik Plug-ins. Just type their names in the search box on Youtube. Then scroll down the page for the Nik playlist or anything else you fancy.

Some of the webinars Nik did are also very good. Various Professionals share their workflow techniques. The webinars are long usually about an hour. Keep you out of trouble.