

## PORTRAITS



*Before*



*After*

1. Getting a good portrait begins with getting a good picture. It is important to have diffuse lighting across the face to give a molded appearance. The face should be brighter on one side with a soft shadow on the other.
2. I have the subject sit on a bench by an L-structured wall. The “studio” is outdoors under a patio roof so that indirect light come from one side and light reflected off a wall comes from the other side. I use a cloth background of suede or velvet. I have the subject sit on the bench at a 45° angle then face the camera. I take some pictures with the subject’s body turned 45° towards the wall and then 45° towards the incident light. This creates different shadows. I use a bench so as not to get the arm of a chair in the picture.
3. Photoshop; Using layers, first make a duplicate layer by dragging the background layer down to the “Create a new layer” icon. Re-label the new layer “Eyes, teeth” by double-clicking on the name. Select the **Sponge** tool and set on **desaturate** to whiten the teeth. Set the **Sponge** tool to **saturate** to redden lips (go easy here) and increase eye color. This might be a good time to improve the catch light in the eyes using off-white and a very, very small brush. Do this only if really needed.

4. Duplicate the “Eyes and Teeth” layer and label the new layer “**Remove**”. Select the **healing brush**, select a **hard brush** and remove all unwanted lines and blemishes.
5. Duplicate “Remove” and rename “**Reduce**”. Now let’s look at “personality lines”. These are lines we want to lighten but not remove entirely because they suggest a person’s personality and are part of their face. Using **healing brush** and small strokes, remove all unwanted lines. Then change “Opacity” to about 34% or so to bring the lines back.

Note: To bring back a particular line just a little, create a mask and using a brush of 35% and a flow of 75%, mask out affects of “Reduce”. Use Alt/’click on mask’ to see where mask is being reduced. Use Alt/’click on mask’ to return to normal.

6. Now we’re going to work on improving the quality of the portrait. Duplicate the last layer and re-label 20/50/0. Select Filter/Sharpen/Unsharp Mask then 20/50/0. See what it does. Maybe we’ll keep it, maybe we won’t. It depends on the picture. If it doesn’t improve the picture, get rid of this layer.
7. Create a “**levels**” adjustment layer. Adjust as needed.
8. Create a “**curves**” adjustment layer. Place a dot at the intersection of the bottom and left lines. Place another dot at the intersection of the top and right lines. Click on the top dot and nudge it gently to the left. You can do this by dragging it or using the left keyboard arrow button. Click on the bottom dot and nudge gently to the right. These two actions should increase the slope of the Curves line and make the picture more contrasty and give it a little “pop”.
9. Create a “**hues/saturation**” adjustment layer. Adjust as desired. ‘Desaturate’ sometimes helps skin tones more than saturate.
10. Now we’ll work on the background. Place an empty layer as the top layer. You can do this by just clicking on the second icon from the right at the bottom of the Layers palette. Label it “Background”. Use the magic wand to select the background. If it selects too much, decrease the tolerance and try again, or use Quick Mask to improve the selection. Grow by 1 pixel (Select/modify/expand – set to 1 pixel – OK). Create a fill adjustment layer by clicking on the third icon from the right at the bottom of the Layers palette. This icon is called “Create new fill or adjustment layer”. Select Solid Color, pick a color, and fill.

11. Make another empty layer at the top of the layers. Use the Eyedropper tool in the toolbox to make both the foreground box and background box the same color as the background. Get back the selection by holding down CTRL and clicking on the Layer Mask Thumbnail in the Color Fill Layer. Click on the foreground box to get the Color Picker. Slide the little circle up and to the right to make the selected color considerably lighter. Click OK. Choose the **Gradient tool** in the toolbox, open the **Gradient picker** and choose “**foreground to background**”, then choose Radial Gradient, the second from the left icon at the top.

Draw a line from the center of the face halfway up the background. Release the mouse button. There should be a light halo around the face. If necessary, repeat this operation. If it still doesn't work, call 480-948-4746.

12. That's about it. For some icing on the cake, to make part of the hair brighter, choose **Levels** and adjust the center (gamma) slider until the dark part of the hair is just the right color. Then add a **black mask** that will put the picture back where it was. Using the **paintbrush** on white, opacity 35%, flow 75%, we can bring back the bright area as desired.
13. Select “T”; Calisto MT, 12 pt. Add a signature. Select the Move tool and move the signature to the right place.
14. You should have a professional quality picture.



**Before**



**After**