

Cary Photographic Artists

Converting a Photo to B&W
In Photoshop Elements V6 and above

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Why Black and White Photography?

Versatility It's a format that suits almost any type of photography. Portraits, landscapes, urban landscapes, architecture. Not only that, it's a medium that adapts really well to all lighting situations. Whereas color photography often works best on sunny days or in brightly lit studios - low light just makes a black and white image moody.

No Distractions Colors can be terribly distracting in some images and can take the focus away from your subject.

Subtlety of Tones In a world that often boasts about how many millions of colors a TV or monitor is able to produce, in 'Mono' there is such a variety of what can be achieved in a photo. Black and White sounds so boring - but the fact is that there are so many shades in between - the challenge is bringing them all out in an image!

Variety The creative process with black and white images is so... artistic. It's like molding clay - you can shape it into a myriad of shapes. Black and White images can be strong, high contrast and powerful - or they can be so soft, gentle and subtle.

Adapted from the Digital Photography School - see
<http://digital-photography-school.com/why-black-and-white-photography>

Options for Digital B&W

- In camera
 - Depends on capability of camera
 - Results “fixed” at depression of shutter
 - Not covered further in this presentation
- Post processing
 - Photoshop Elements V6 gives multiple choices
 - Photoshop Elements Versions 1-4 had quite limited B&W options
 - I think versions 5 to 7 are about the same in this area
 - Other processing packages have their own capabilities

Photoshop V6 Options

- **Desaturate**

- Enhance → Adjust Color → Adjust Hue/Saturation
- Move saturation slider all the way to the left
- Often leaves muddy image without enough differentiation between colors

- **Grayscale**

- Image Mode → Mode → Grayscale → OK
- Enhance → Adjust Color → Remove Color
- Often does a decent job, but no options

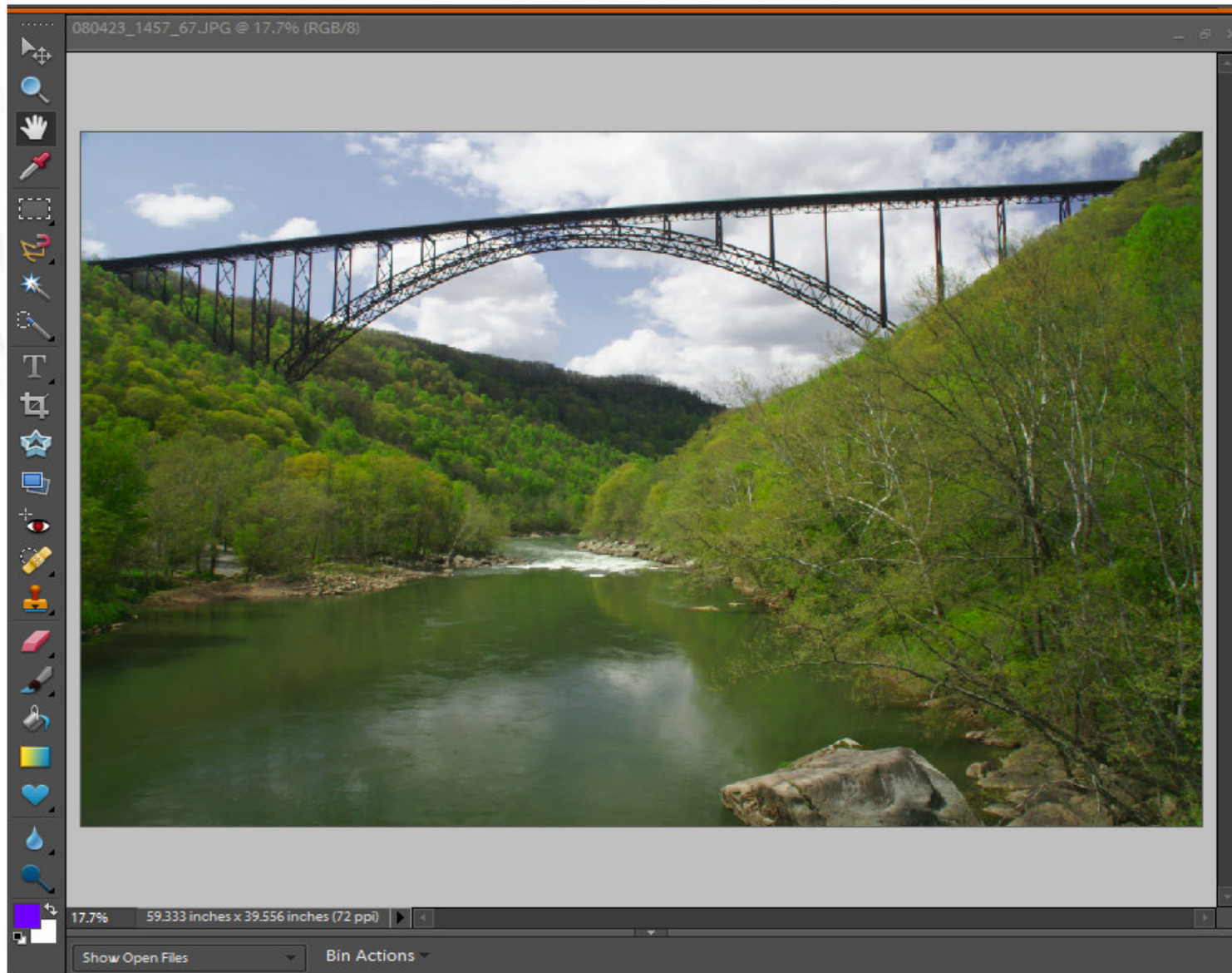
- **Convert to Black and White**

- Enhance → Convert to Black and White
- Pre-set “Styles” and individual sliders for colors

Before conversion – Improve/edit color picture

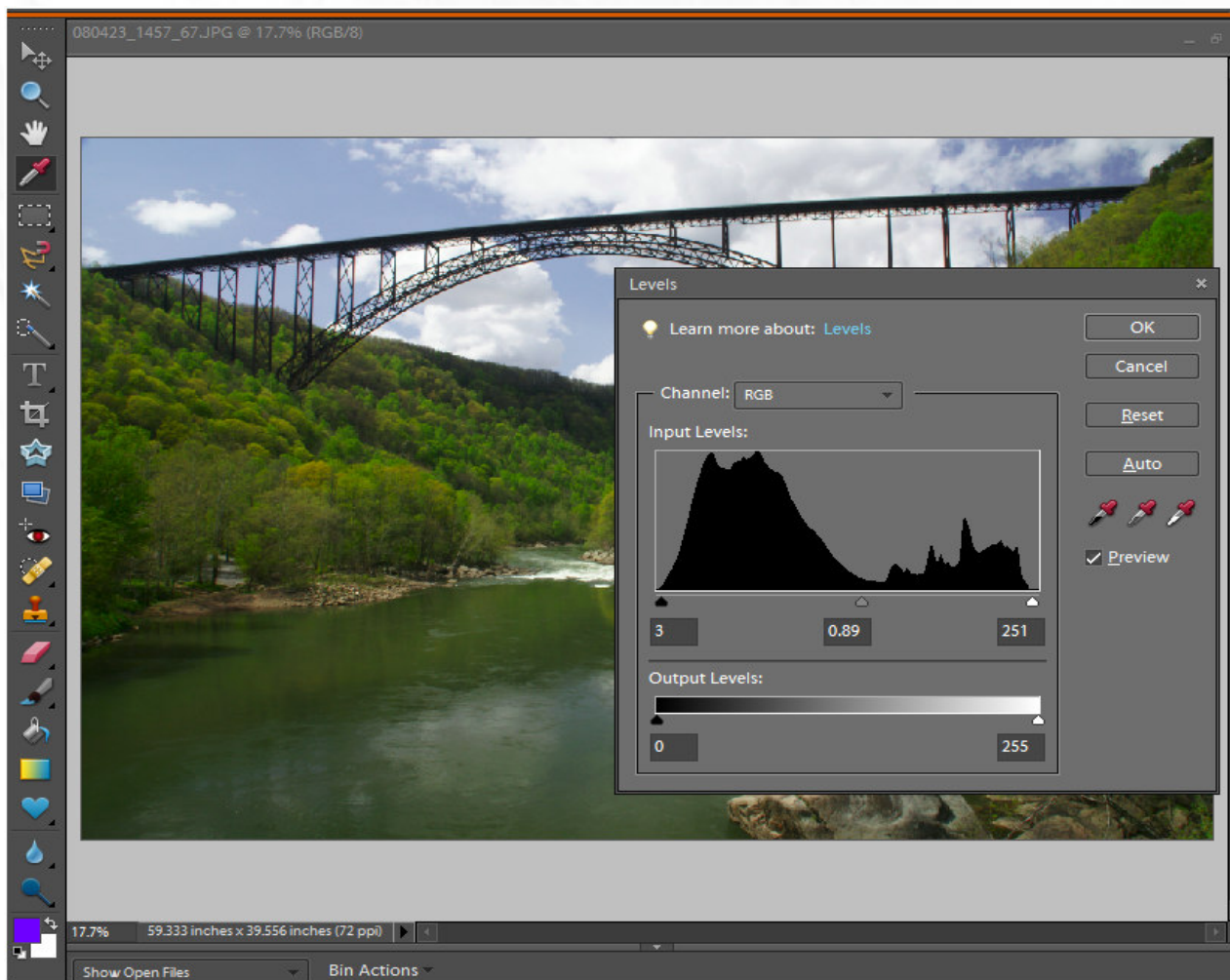
- Rotate
- Horizon/perspective
- Levels or contrast
- Clone stamp or other adjustments

Original



Adjust levels

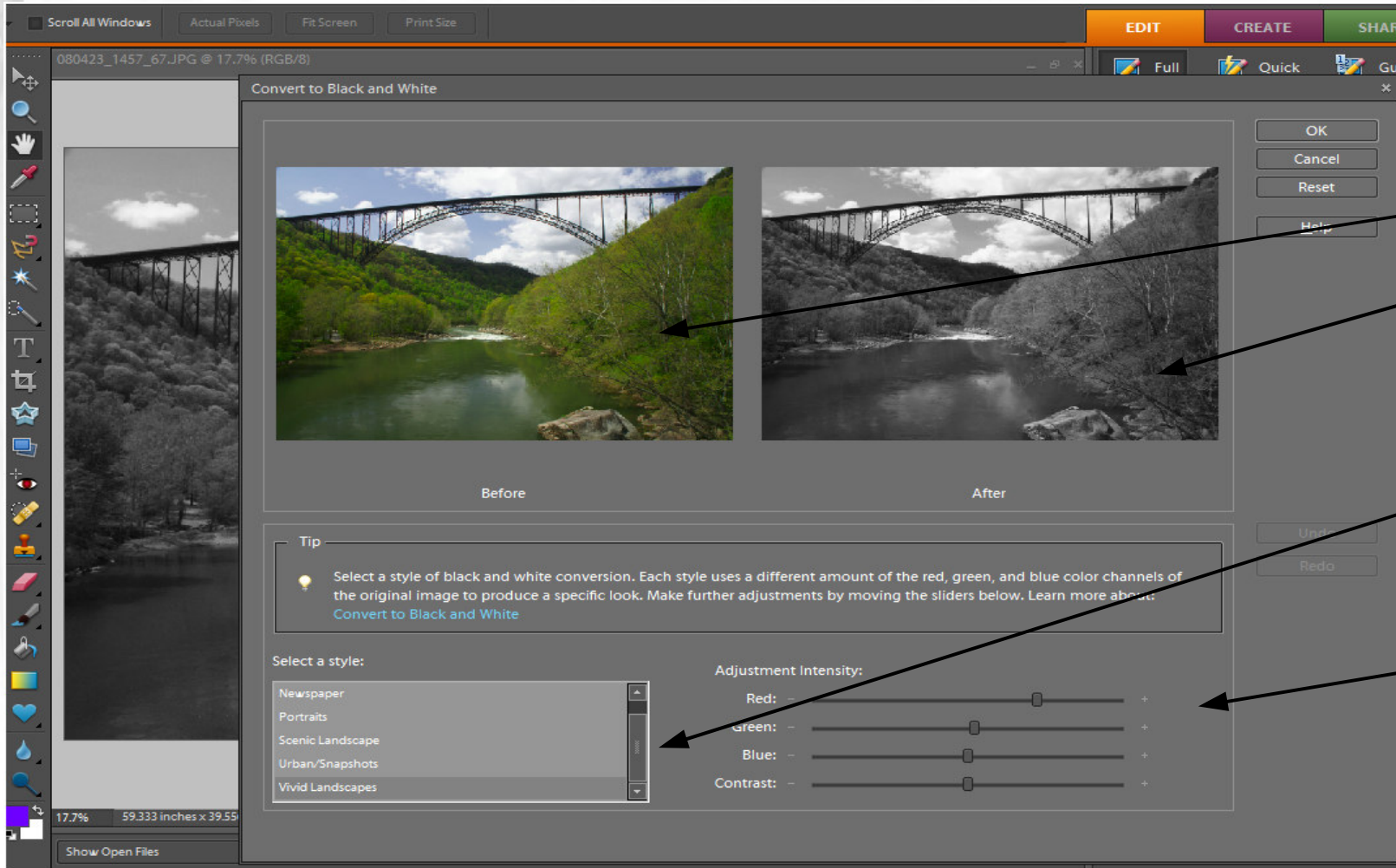
Enhance → Adjust Lighting → Levels...



TIP: Hold Alt while moving slider to see clipping.

Convert to Black and White

Enhance → Convert to Black and White...



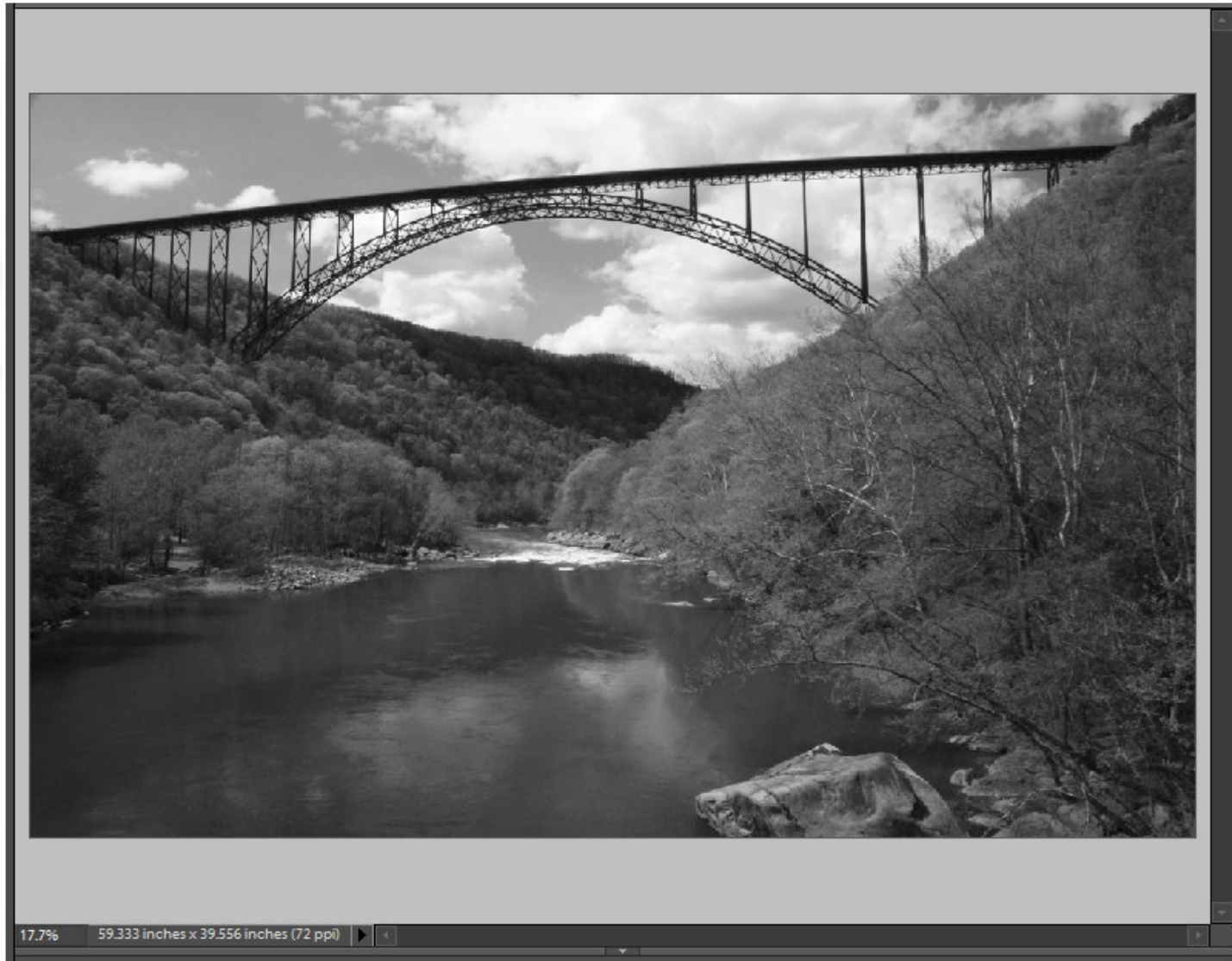
Before

After

“Style”
presets

Custom
sliders

“After” With Vivid Landscape

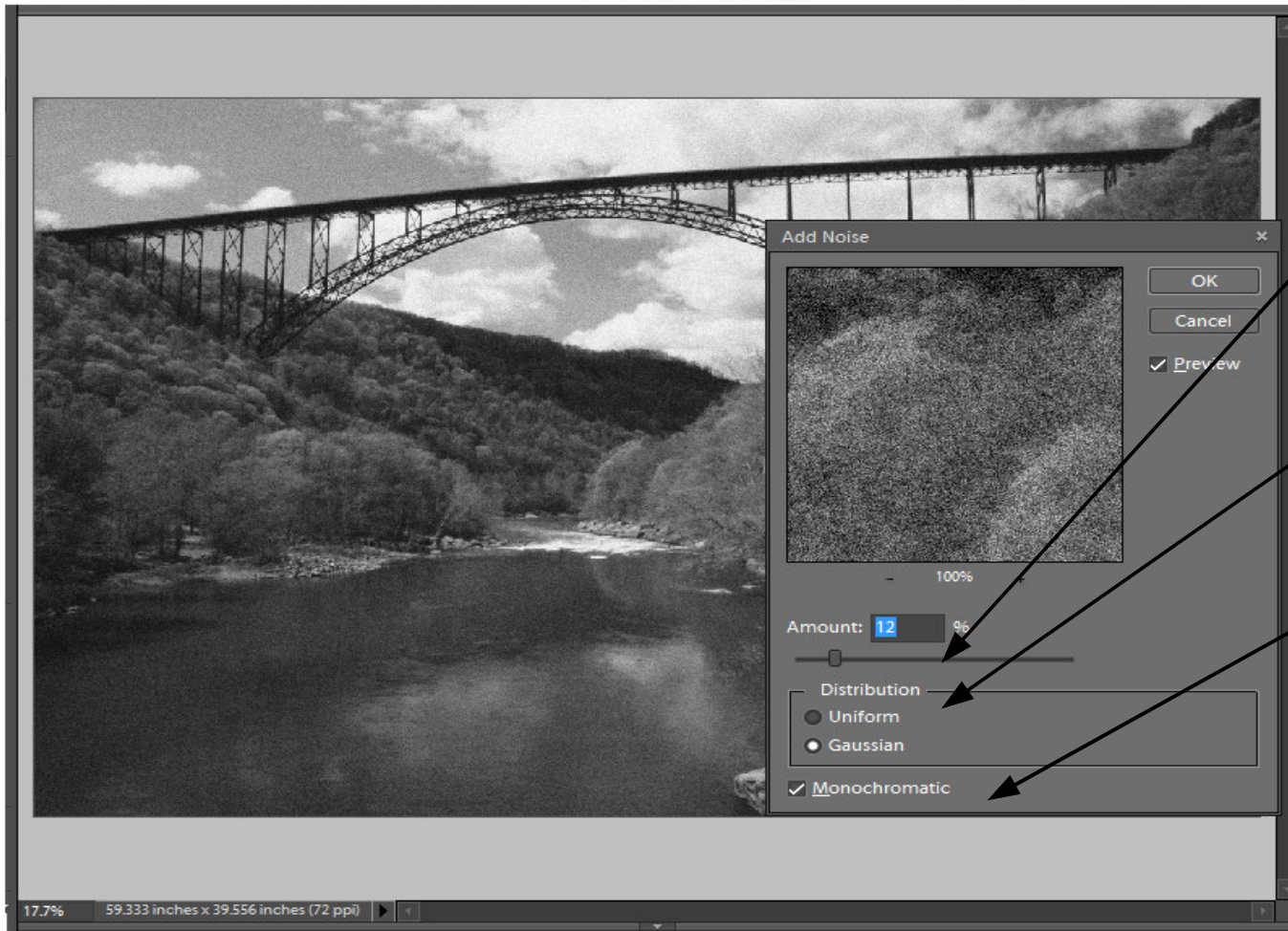


Many people like “Grain” in B&W images

- Reminiscent of silver-based B&W films
- Two ways to add
 - “Simple”
 - “Better”

Noise filter

Filter → Noise → Add Noise...

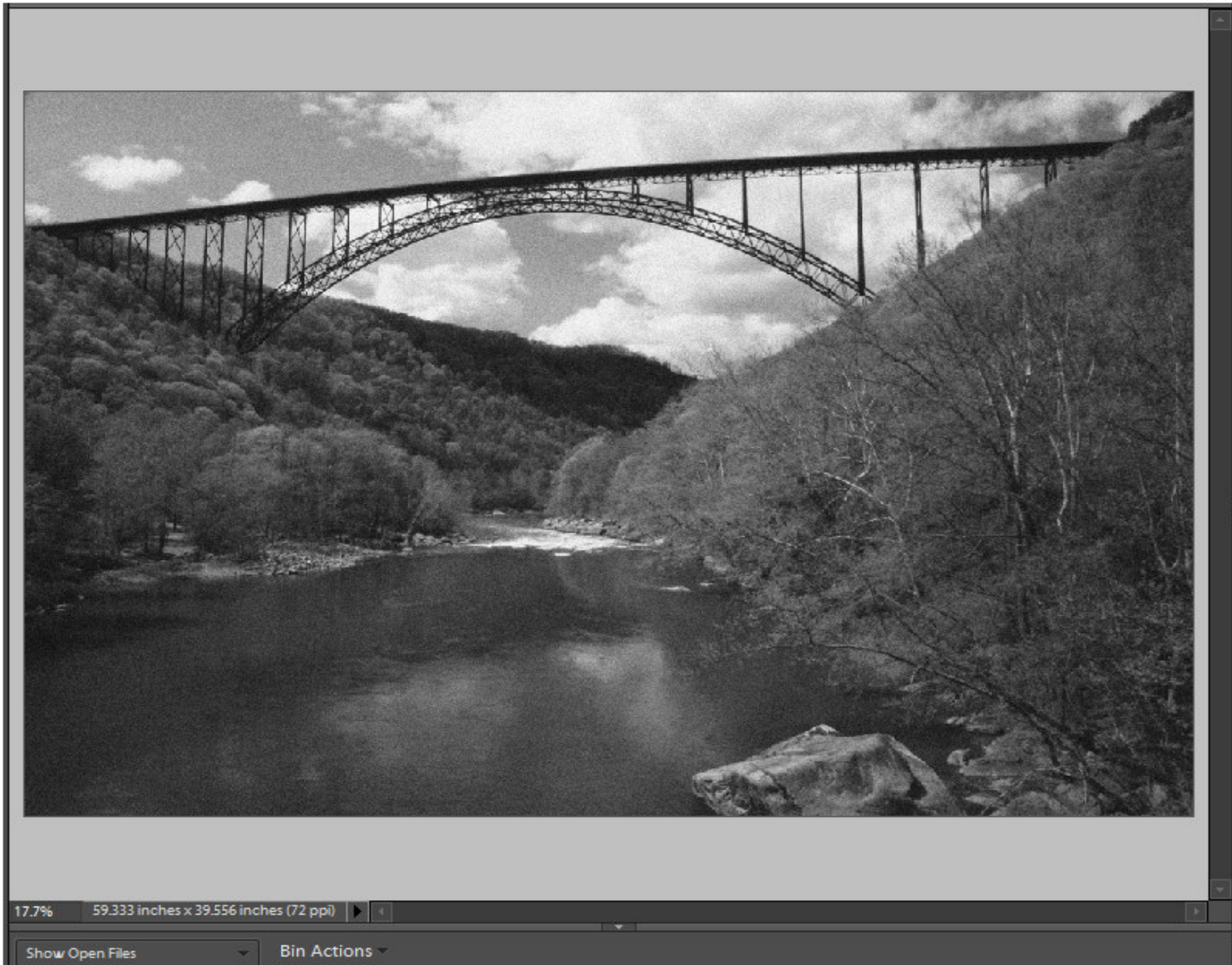


Slide to desired amount

Gaussian

Monochrome

Image with 12% Gaussian Noise



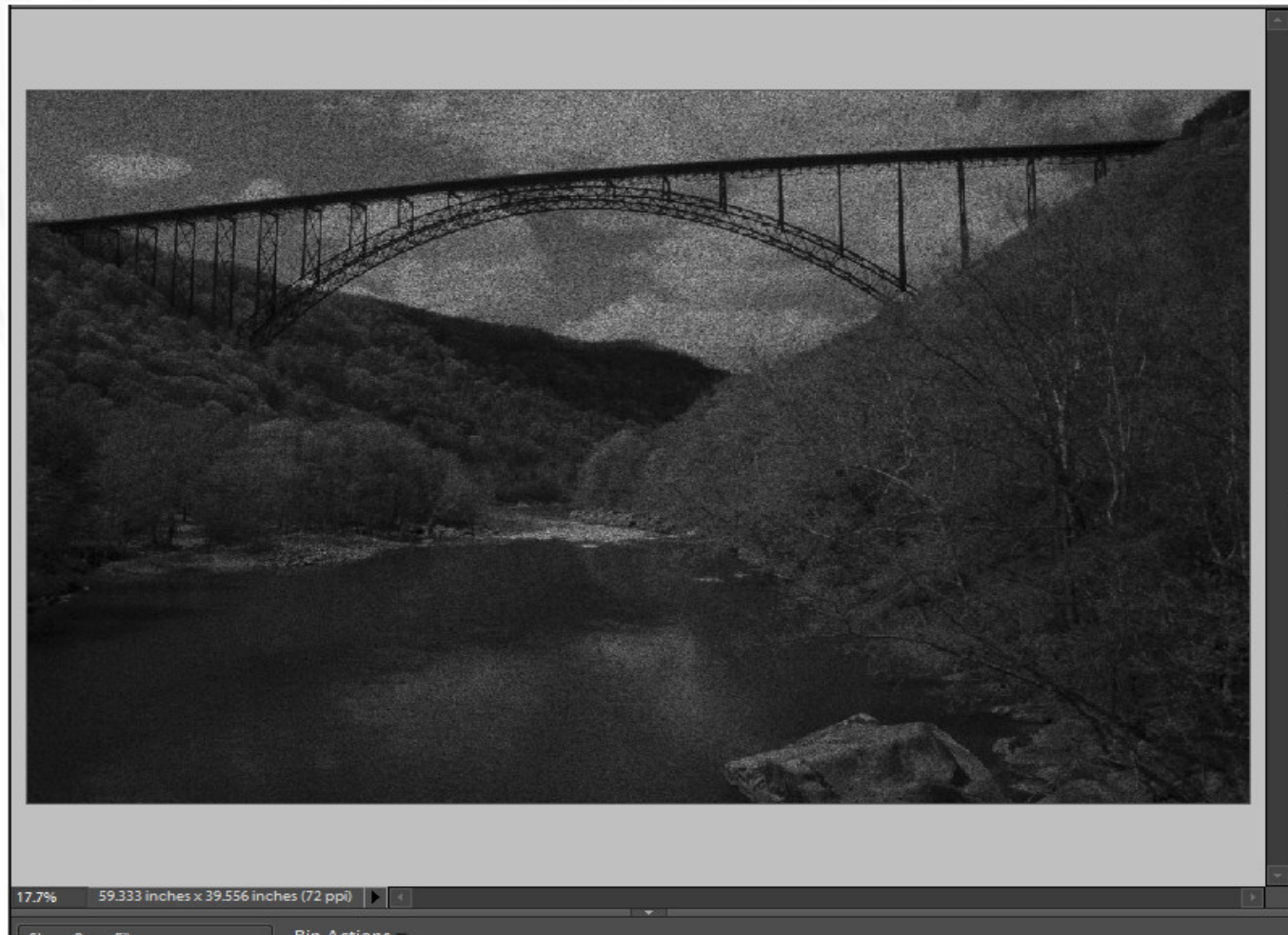
Drawbacks

- Noise applied directly to the image is often too sharp and noticeable
- Too “artificial” looking
- Remedy is to use a layer to add noise

Add a new fill layer

- Layer → New fill layer → Solid color
- Choose black (0 0 0) or white (255 255 255)
- With new layer selected, choose
 - Filter → Noise → Add Noise
 - Slide to maximum (400%)
 - Make sure Gaussian and Monochrome
 - OK
- With new layer selected, choose
 - Filter → Blur → Gaussian Blur
 - Slider to 1 pixel
 - OK

Image with blurred noise layer – Ugly, huh?



Adjust opacity of new layer to achieve pleasing “grain”



Final steps

- Layer → Flatten Image
- File → Save As...
 - NEVER OVERWRITE YOUR ORIGINAL

Other options

- Photoshop CS
 - B&W Adjustment Layer (Version 3 +)
 - Channel Mixer (Direct or via adjustment layer)
 - Raw conversion options (V3, with improvements in V4)
- Plug Ins - free
 - optikVerve labs
 - The plug-in site Photo Freebies
- Plug-ins – commercial
 - NIK Silver Efex Pro
 - Power Retouche Black & White Studio
 - The Plug-in site B/W Styler

Thanks

- Hope this topic was useful
- Slide show, anyone?