

Channels are a feature of Photoshop that once mastered, open endless possibilities for creativity. Channels are useful for selections, making textures and 3D objects, color modifications, masks, and more. For example, imagine investing an hour making a complicated selection, by hand, complete with feathering. If you close your file, you'll lose all that work. Save that selection in a channel, ready to use or modify later.

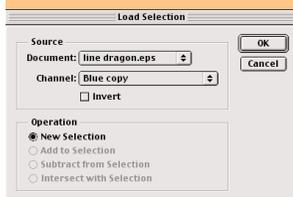


Fig. 1  
Selecting the new channel.

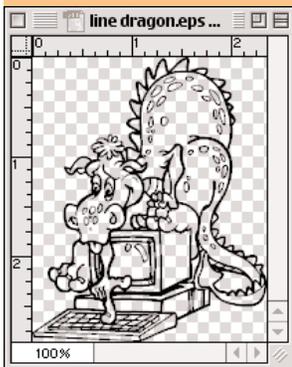


Fig. 2  
The new channel selection filled with black, and the original scan deleted, ready for color on a layer below.

**I**n this issue I'll try to explain how to get only the inked lines of our cartoon into a Photoshop file without any fill color. Why do we need to do this?

Well, if we scan our inked cartoon and save it as a TIF, the scanned image is white to the edges, obscuring any scenery on layers beneath. We need a method that will let us isolate the cartoon and place it on any background we choose. We could change the blending mode of the image layer to Multiply in order to let the lower layers show through the white, but later, if the entire cartoon needs to be put on a color other than white, maybe a colored t-shirt or dark business card, the white frame may not be acceptable. Erasing the white areas manually is an impractical option and just plain silly when we can have the computer do it for us with a few mouse clicks.

Open your high resolution cartoon TIF and go to the Channels palette. You will see a single composite RGB channel and each of the Red, Green and Blue channels broken out into layers. Drag any one of the Red, Green or Blue channels to the new channel icon at the bottom of the palette, creating a copy or Alpha Channel.

Switch back to the Layers palette and make a new, empty layer by clicking on the icon at the bottom of the Layers palette. Then from the Select menu > Load Selection... . This will bring up a dialog box with a pull-down menu for our Source/Channel (Fig 1). Pull this menu down and select the new

channel that you made earlier. In the same dialog box under Operation, make sure that the radio button for New Selection is pressed. Hit OK.

Back in the Layers palette in the new layer, you will see the 'marching ants' indicating an active selection. (If the marching ants are marching around the edges of your file window, your cartoon lines are not selected and you'll need to menu Select > Inverse.) Once you've convinced the marching ants to select the outline of your cartoon, fill it with black. Now you should see just the lines of your cartoon with no white fill inside or out, and the checkerboard pattern indicating transparent areas should be visible behind your cartoon lines (Fig 2).

*"We need a method that will let us isolate the cartoon and place it on any background we choose."*

Now that we have only what we need, we have no use for the scanned layer anymore. Double click that layer to change it's name to something other than Background which unlocks it, and then delete it.

Finishing your cartoon is now just a matter of creating a new layer beneath the layer with your lines to hold the color. Background elements can be placed on additional layers as needed and pulled to the bottom of the layers stack in the palette. ■