

Eureka Photoshop Users Group - Film Scanning - 12/15/2007

There are many ways to digitize negatives and slides. This is the way that I do it.

First, some caveats about scanning. It's a slow process. It takes about six minutes to scan one frame. I can Lightroom process a dozen images in the time it takes to scan four frames.

Hardware

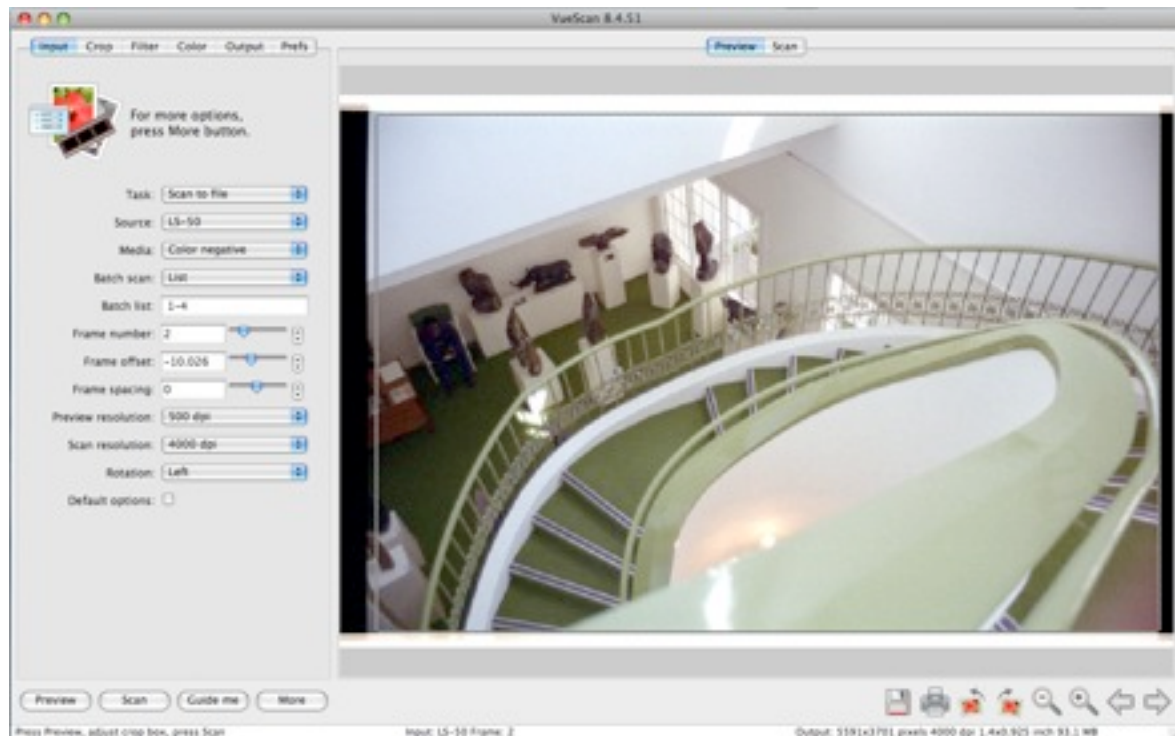
I use a Nikon Coolscan V ED film scanner. I chose it because I have a lot of negatives and slides and not a lot of money. It can scan up to 4000dpi. A 35mm negative is 36mmx24mm which is 1.4"x0.95". At 360ppi, that give an unenlarged print of 15.75" x 10.5". A nice size to enlarge or reduce to the printing sizes that I use. The best scanner for film is a drum scanner (expensive). The worst is a flatbed scanner (cheap).

Software

The scanner comes with scanning software. I found it awkward to use and investigated other tools. I tried Silverfast and couldn't get it to work. Vuescan is what I settled on. Ed Hamrick keeps coming out with bugfixes and new versions weekly. It's pretty easy to use. But, you have to be vigilant in setting up each section of the program.

The Process

Connect the scanner, turn it on, insert a filmstrip. Start Vuescan. This will bring up the set of preferences that you used before with this scanner. If you start Vuescan without, the scanner on and connected, a default set of preferences is used. Here's an image of a scan preview:



There are two kinds of scans, a preview and a scan. The preview is used to set up the cropping for the scan. You'll notice that I have the Preview Resolution set to 500dpi and the Scan Resolution set to 4000dpi. That's because I want the preview to be as fast as possible ... a 500dpi scan is much quicker than a 4000dpi scan.

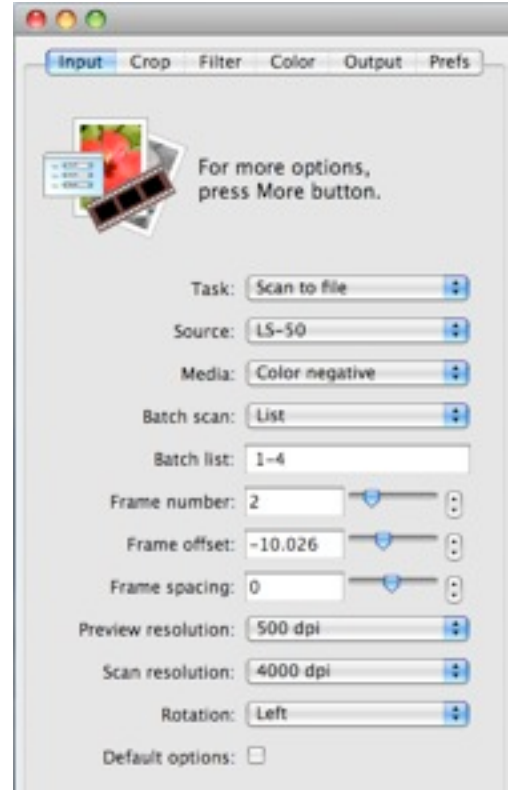
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You'll also notice that the Frame Offset is not zero. That's because when I did the first preview scan the image was offset by about 1/3 to the left. Since the image is 36mm wide, I offset the image by a little over 10mm. Usually the image is centered and no offset is necessary. But when it isn't centered, Frame Offset is adjusted and another Preview Scan is done. You do this until the frame is centered. You only have to do this for one frame. I typically do this for frame 2.

The Input Tab

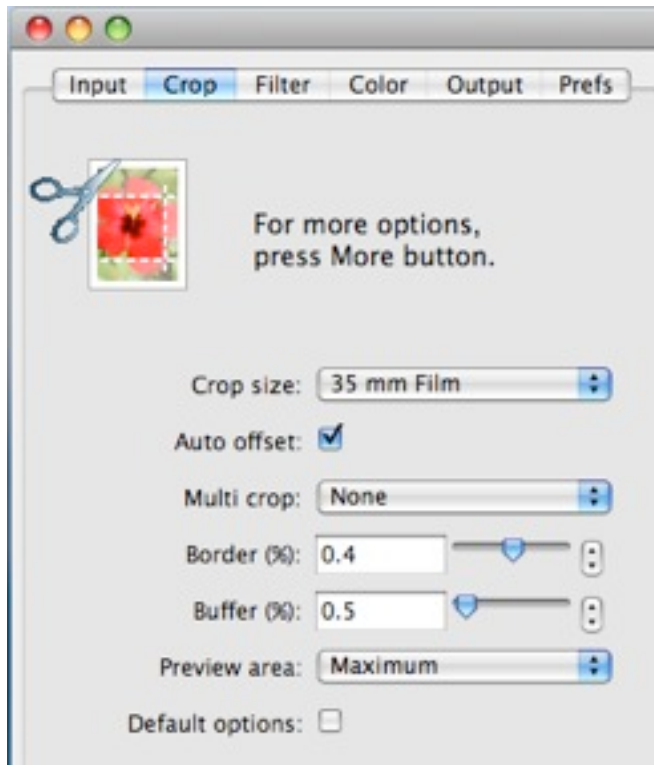
This Vuescan tab sets what kind of scanner is being used, the media type, resolutions, orientation, and batch scan options.

When I preview, I set the Batch Scan to Off and the Frame Number to 2. After the cropping is set, then I change the Batch Scan to List and the Batch List to 1-4 if there are just 4 frames on the filmstrip.



Rotation is used to set the orientation of the image.

None will give a portrait orientation. Left will give a landscape orientation.



The Crop Tab

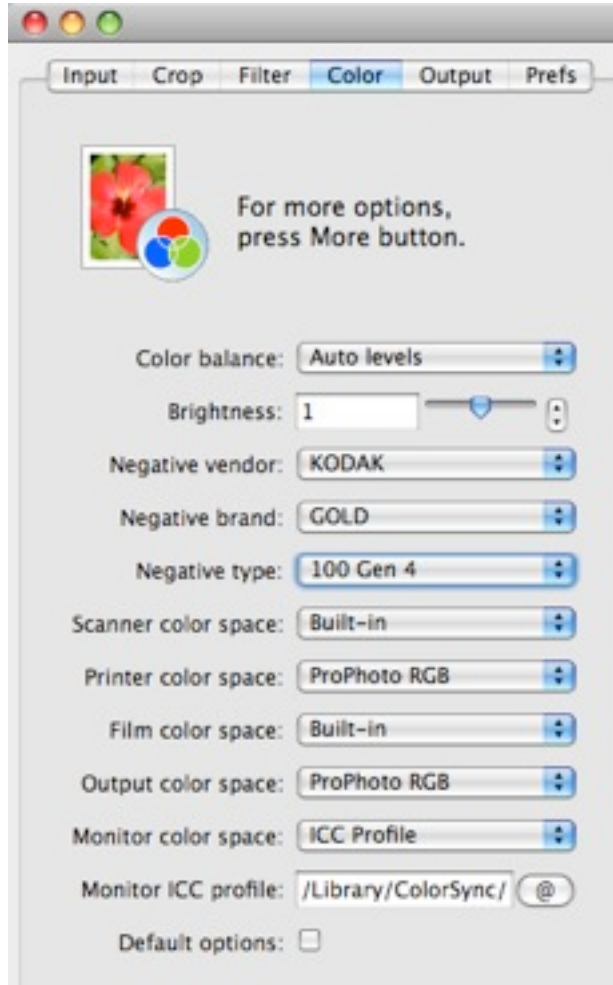
There are a number of entries in Crop Size. I use 35mm Film because that's what I'm scanning. If you preview and don't like where the crop lines are, you can move them for each frame. I didn't mention before that you can preview all the frames on a strip. You don't

have to preview just one. The advantage to doing them all is that if the crop frame isn't where you want it you can adjust each one.

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The Filter Tab

The only thing I use here is the Infrared Clean. It gets rid of dust and scratches ... sort of. Better than nothing. I haven't noticed any image degradation through using it.



The Color Tab

This is where you enter profile information about the film, scanner, output, and monitor color profiles. It's pretty easy to do this. For the film, you look on the edge of the filmstrip and there is a code that will match up with the film vendor, brand, and type. You just use the pulldowns to select the right ones. I use ProPhoto for output/printer as it's the largest color gamut that Photoshop and Lightroom use.

The Output Tab

This is where you specify what file format you want and where the scan file go. You can specify a file naming scheme that can have an auto-incrementing number in the filename. Minimal metadata can also be entered.



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The Prefs Tab

The most useful items for me are specifying how much memory Vuescan can use as well as turning off some the annoying bit of the program (splash screen, sample images).

