Cool backgrounds you create in any size or color

One thing I get constant requests for is, "Are there any new backgrounds I can use? I have tried all the ones in the Jostens Clips."

Well, I am thrilled to say that, thanks to a very cool video tutorial I recently saw at *online.davecrossworkshops.com*, here is a way to create an almost unlimited number of very cool backgrounds, in any color and size you choose. Because this background is created in Photoshop and is not a photo or an imported graphic, you can make it as big or as small as you want. Best of all, it is BEYOND EASY! Plus, once you have done it, you can try different filters, colors and angles to create other backgrounds for different parts of your book.

1. Open a file by choosing File>New. Make the file slightly larger than you want it to be when you print it. So, if your yearbook is 8.5 inches by 11 inches and you want this background to cover the entire double-page spread and bleed off the edges, then make the dimensions 11.5 inches high by 18 inches wide at 300ppi. If you are only going to use the background on part of your page, then figure out in advance what size you need and go just a little bit larger at 300ppi. Leave the background transparent and the color mode RGB. (Figure A)

2. Using the color picker, choose the colors you want for this background. I am going to choose blue as my foreground color and green as my background color. (Figure B)

3. Switch to the Gradient tool (Figure C), make sure that the tool is set to Foreground to Background in the Control Bar (Figure D) and then drag a gradient from one spot to another.

4. Your gradient should look like this (Figure E) but with your colors. You can change the way the colors blend, or blend them in another direction, by redragging the Gradient tool until you have it the way you like it.

5. Switch to Quick Mask mode by pressing Q. Still using the Gradient tool, drag in another direction. Your screen may appear red; don't worry about that. Mine now looks like this. (Figure F) The red is just the mask you have applied because you are in Quick Mask mode.

6. Now choose a filter. I am going to use the Color Halftone filter (Filter>Pixelate>Color Halftone). When the dialog box opens, change the Max Radius to something around 15 depending on the size of your document. No matter what you do, you can always go back and try something different.

7. Add a new layer by choosing Layer>New>New Layer.

8. Press Q to exit the Quick Mask Mode.

9. Choose Edit>Fill. When the dialog box opens, choose Foreground Color.

10. Choose Select>Deselect and look at your new background. (Figure G) If you like it but think you could do better or want to try again with a different filter, colors or angle, just open your History panel (Window>History) and go back to the spot where you want to make a change and continue from that point.

11. If you think you are close to what you want but just need to do a little tweaking, consider rotation (Image>Image Rotation). That might be all you need. You could also (in the same place) flip the background either vertically or horizontally.