

celebrate.



Earlier this year, this town finally did what it has been trying to do for the greater part of this past century – not only did we defeat the Yankees, but we also went on to win the World Series. And boy were we excited about it! Through whatever powers that be, every adrenaline-pumped and beer-soaked person between the ages of 15 and 25 just knew that Kenmore Square was the unanimous point of celebration, and as soon as the final out was called, people began making their way over. I grew up in Long Island and have been living in the heart of Yankees country until just over three months ago, but I never really had too much of a baseball problem, and since rioting is a nondiscriminatory activity, I decided to grab my camera and join in.

The celebration began innocently enough – whatever powers that be also let the police know that Kenmore Square was going to be the heart of the celebration, so by the time people started filing in, the square was already closed to traffic. It didn't take long for the surrounding blocks to be completely filled up with joyous fans chanting and dancing and just having a great time. It also didn't take too long for the crowds to begin to itch for some senseless destruction. As the clock began to edge towards 1am, a small victory newspaper fire was set in one corner of the square. At around this point, the police decided that it getting close to our bedtime, and so wielding full riot gear, nightsticks, tear gas, gas masks, and smoke and concussion grenades, the police began to convince us to start heading back to our beds.

Throughout the night, I shot about four rolls of film. Because of the low-light conditions and the running to avoid getting beaten by the Boston Riot Police' nightsticks, many of the photos came out either too dark or too blurry to be much good. Even so, enough came out well enough such that, collectively, they reflect the different and dichotomous moods of the night. The goal of this project was to use all original photography to create an image that would capture and show how a celebration and an overall joyous occasion turned into a darkly violent situation.

I began by looking at my crowd pictures. Since all of them shared the common feature of an open black sky, I decided to combine them to look as one continuous photo. Since they were not shot with this process in mind, the eye could not travel easily from one to the next due to obvious discontinuities such as different buildings. The first step

was to apply gradient masks to the top edges of all the photos so they would fade to a common black sky and the eye had some means to travel easily from one to the other. When similar gradient masks were applied to the sides of each photo, the common element of people proved to allow the eye to travel from one photo to the next with no strainful discontinuities. The masks were then adjusted to allow distinct features of one photo to overlap the other one:



Example of masking used such that features of one photo overlap with the other and ease the boundary between photos

The process was repeated and adjusted until all photo transitions were easy ones. Furthermore, the mask over certain elements of pictures that extended into the top gradient mask – such as hands or signs – was removed to prevent those elements of fading into the background and thus, ‘pop out.’



The top gradient mask of these photos was removed over the arms so that the arms don't fade away and seem to pop-up out of the composite

One of the transitions involved a photo containing a cloud of tear gas and one that didn't. Because the gas made the photo overall significantly lighter than the other photo, the transition was quite obvious. As a result, an artificial cloud had to be created that continued into the second photo. This was done by selecting the approximate area of the new cloud and using the Photoshop Render Clouds filter on a blank channel layer to create a transparency selection of the new cloud. This selection was filled in with plain white on a new layer to create a variably-transparent cloud. Finally the layer opacity and blending options were adjusted to match the previous photos cloud.



Transition between photos without (left) and with (right) the artificial gas cloud

When the process was completed, the composite looked good, but the human element seemed to be somewhat lacking because of the focus on the crowds, so I decided to use some of my close-up photos focusing on individuals. The people were cut out of and originally put behind and above the crowd photos so that they would rise up out of the gradient masks, but this technique proved to produce a look that was clichéd and took away from the mood that was attempted to be captured. Instead, I decided to simply create two rows of composite images that would show the transition from celebration to fright – one which concentrated on the crowds and had a general view of the night, and one which concentrated on specific individuals and their emotions. The two were separated with a single, elegant line, and the result looked complete.