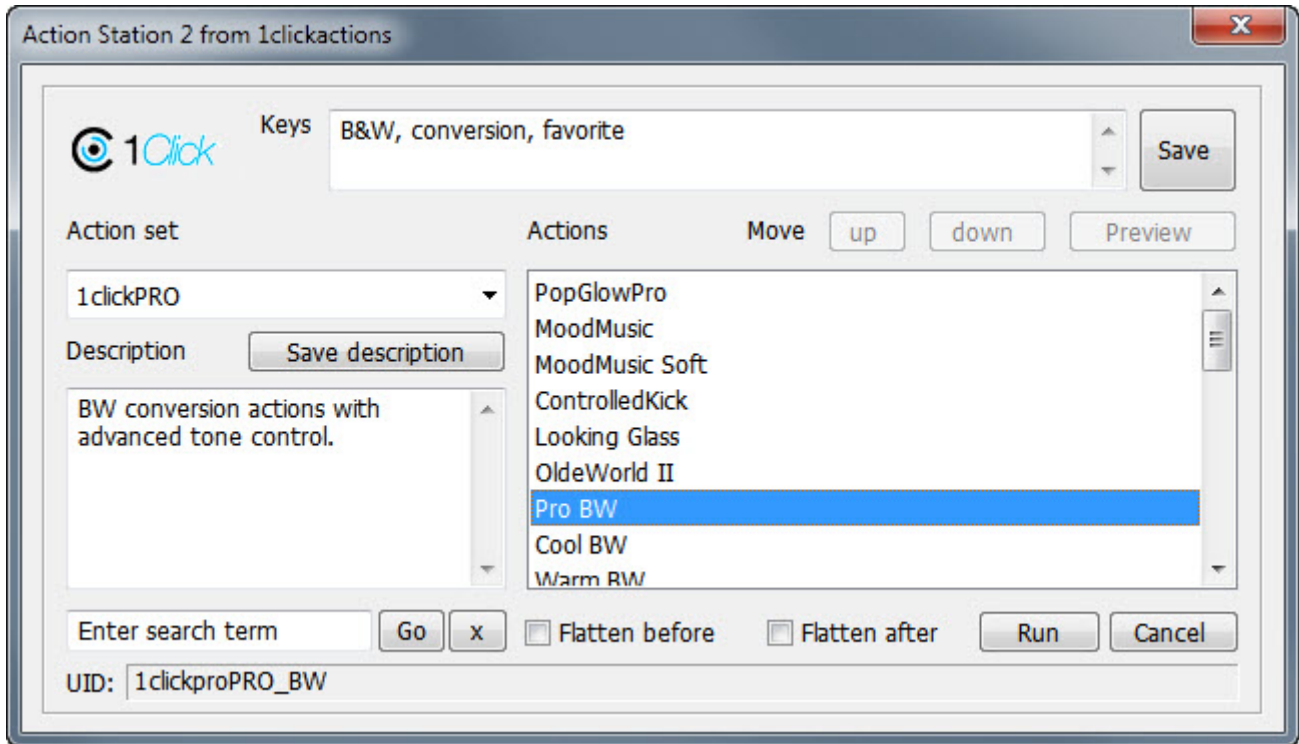


# Action Station 2

For Adobe Photoshop CS4 and CS5



Action Station 2 is an advanced action manager for Adobe Photoshop. It allows you to locate and run actions you have installed in Photoshop without having to open the Photoshop action palette. You can scroll the action sets and the actions within each set and also assign keywords and description to your actions and even add sample images to each action.

The search function operates on both the action name and any keywords you have attached. The flexible keyword system lets you create virtual categories for your actions (for example an action could have a keyword tag of 'wedding' or 'portrait') or add a keyword tag of 'fivestar' or 'fourstar' to create a rating system or mark your favourite action.

The description field also allows you to add notes to remind yourself of what the action does without having to run it, you can also link up to two sample images to each action as a further reminder.

Action Station 2 also allows you to run more than one action in succession without having to reopen your action palette or even the Action Station 2 user interface.

Action Station 2 recognises all the actions you have installed in Photoshop whether they are 1clickactions products, 3rd party actions or actions you create yourself. Once the action is installed in Photoshop it is ready for use within Action Station without any further setup.

## Action Station 1 vs Action Station 2—a comparison.

	<b>Action Station 1</b>	<b>Action Station 2</b>
<b>Compatibility</b>	CS2, CS3, CS4, CS5	CS4, CS5 (CS3 version to follow)
<b>Windows or Mac</b>	Both	Both
<b>Action Tagging</b>	None	Keywords, Description.
<b>Search function</b>	Action name	Action name, keyword.
<b>Run multiple actions</b>	No	Yes (from same action set or search result set) run order changeable.
<b>Flatten image options.</b>	If built into action	If built into action, before running action and/or after running action.
<b>Create duplicate document</b>	If built into action.	User selectable.
<b>Linkable previews</b>	No	Yes (jpg format files) 1 or 2 per action User can add own images
<b>Works with 3rd party actions</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Works with 1clickactions</b>	Yes	Yes Example preview images will be made available from 1click-actions website.
<b>Works with user created actions</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Assign to category</b>	No	Through keywords
<b>Assign to favorites/add action rating</b>	No	Through keywords

## Installing Action Station version 2

**Requirements**—Photoshop CS4 or CS5 (32bit or 64bit), Windows PCs and Mac OSX compatible.

**The program is supplied as a zip archive with versions for Mac OSX and Windows PCs**

### Automatic Installation

#### Windows.

**From the zip file run the file**—*ActionStation-2.0-windows-installer.exe*.

The installer attempts to locate your Photoshop installations and copies the required files to the necessary folders, a copy of the files is also saved to your Program Files directory so that it can be installed manually if the installer cannot find your Photoshop installation. If you have more than one version of Photoshop installed then the installer will attempt to install Action Station into all CS4 and CS5 versions on your system.

The support folders and files required by Action Station will be created automatically when Action Station is first run from Photoshop.

#### OSX

**From the zip file run the file**—*ActionStation-2.0-osx-installer*.

The installer attempts to locate your Photoshop installations and copies the required files to the necessary folders, a copy of the files is also saved to your Applications/1clickactions/Action Station 2.0 folder so that it can be installed manually if the installer cannot find your Photoshop installation. If you have more than one version of Photoshop installed then the installer will attempt to install Action Station into all CS4 and CS5 versions on your system.

The support folders and files required by Action Station will be created automatically when Action Station is first run from Photoshop.

The installation places two new entries onto your Photoshop File-Scripts menu—Action Station 2.0 itself and also the supplementary File-Finder script that may prove useful in locating where the action preview images should be stored. The File-Finder script can be removed by manually deleting it from the Photoshop—Presets—Scripts folder if you no longer need it.

An uninstaller program is created on both Windows and OSX systems if you need to remove the program for any reason. Please be aware that the uninstaller will remove Action Station 2 from all your Photoshop installations.

## Manual Installation

Action Station is delivered as a downloadable zip file or on CD and contains the following folder and files:

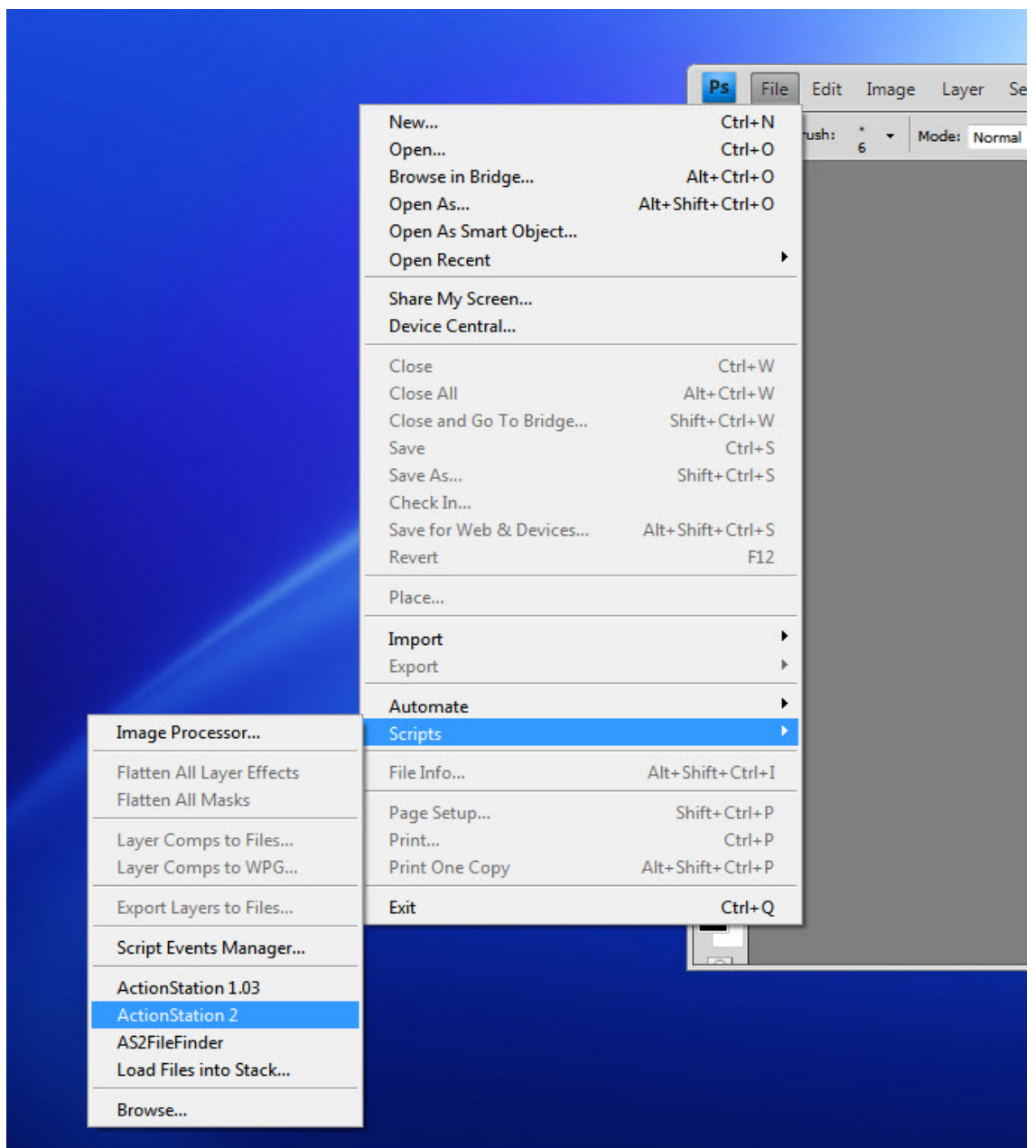
**AS2Guide.pdf (this document)**

**AS2FileFinder.jsxbin**

**AS2 folder (containing 2 files ActionStation 2.jsxbin and 1clog.png)**

To install Action Station 2 simply copy the AS2 folder to your Photoshop scripts folder (usually C:\Program Files\Adobe\Adobe Photoshop CS5\Presets\Scripts\

Restart Photoshop and Action Station 2 should appear on the Photoshop File Scripts Menu as shown.

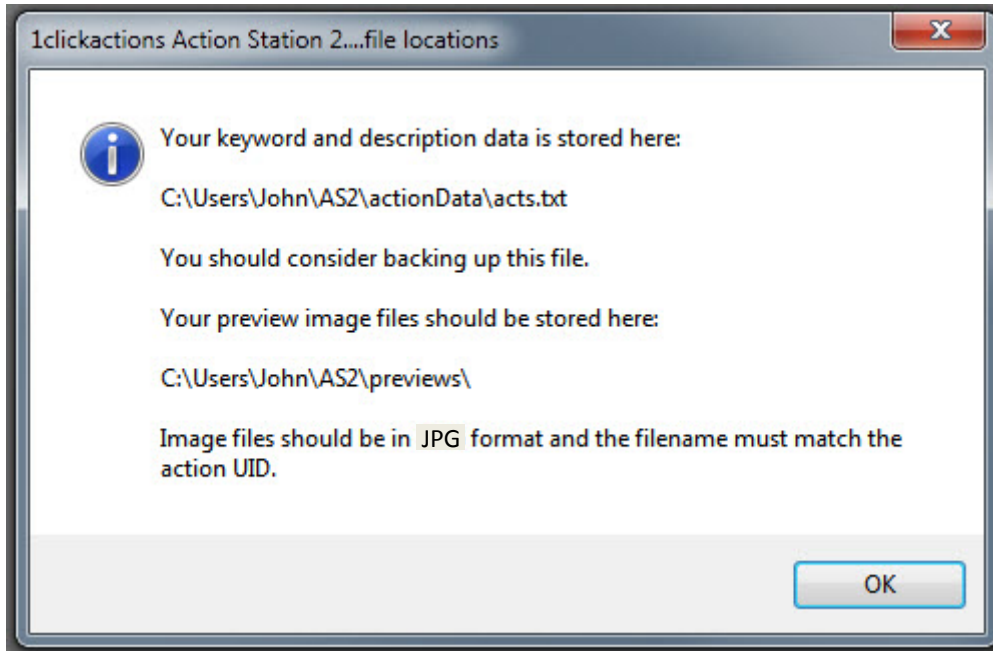


## Optional

You can copy the AS2FileFinder.jsxbin to the Presets/Scripts folder and it will also appear on the Photoshop menus. This file is not necessary for Action Station 2 to operate but is designed to indicate where the keywords, descriptions and linked image files are stored on your system.

Action Station 2 stores the keywords and descriptions to a files called *acts.txt* on your hard disk. This file is created automatically the first time you save an action keyword or description in a subfolder of your *Home* directory. This folder varies depending on your system and operating system. On Windows Vista and Windows 7 this folder is usually found at C:\users\yourname\. On Windows XP this folder is likely to be \Documents and Settings\yourname. On OSX the home folder can be seen in the Finder Application and usually has your name.

The AS2FileFinder script can be run in Photoshop to display the location of the Home folder and the Action Station 2 created files if you are unsure. Running this script will display a message similar to the one below.



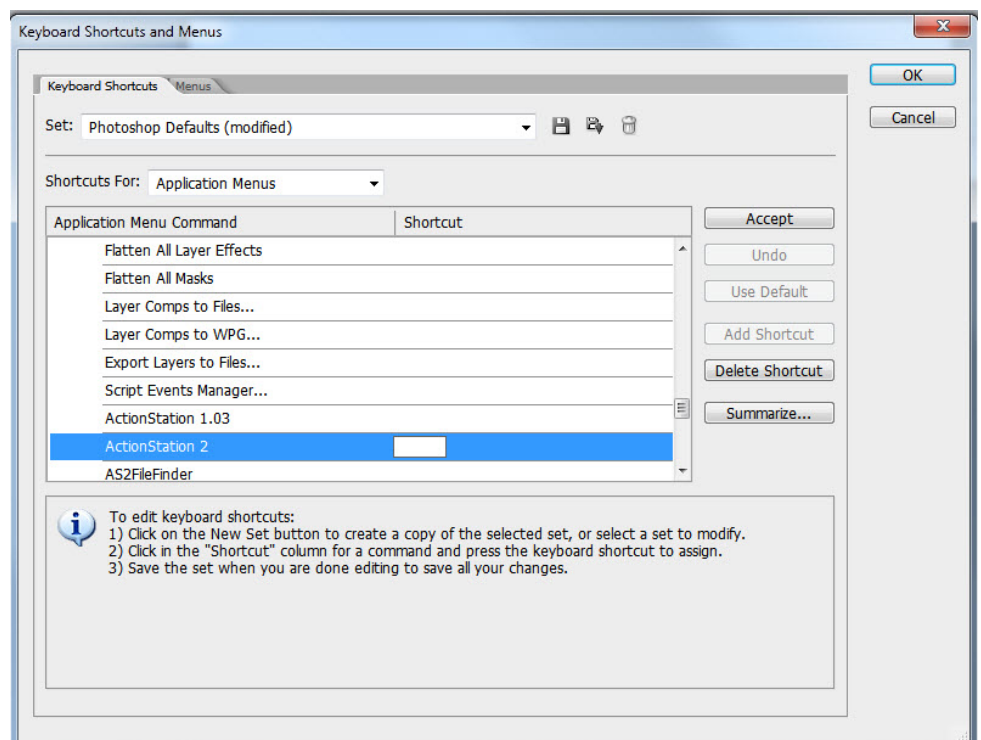
This is important as you should backup the acts.txt file just in case you have a hard disk problem at some time. **There is no need to open or edit this file**—Action Station 2 will write to and read from this file automatically.

The other important information provided by the AS2FileFinder script is the location where you must save any images you want to link to your action. The correct location for these files (which should be in jpg format) is YourHomeFolder\AS2\previews\ - if you are unsure the AS2File Locator will tell you where you need to save these files.

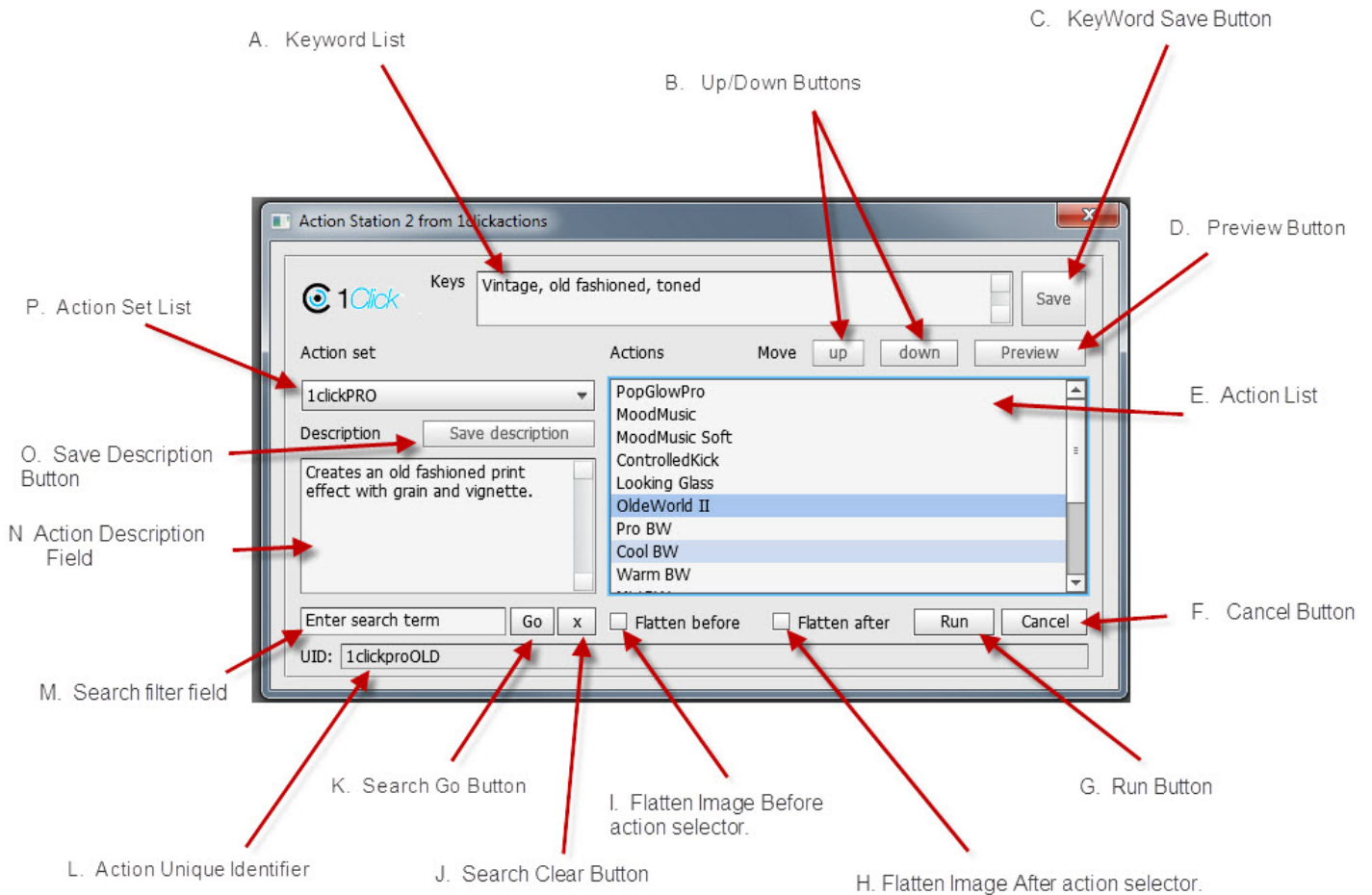
## Starting ActionStation2

You can run the program from the Photoshop File-Scripts Menu but you might wish to assign a hot-key to it. To do this select Edit-Keyboard Shortcuts and navigate to the ActionStation2 entry and assign whatever keyboard shortcut you find convenient.

You can then launch Action Station 2 by simply pressing the shortcut key(s).



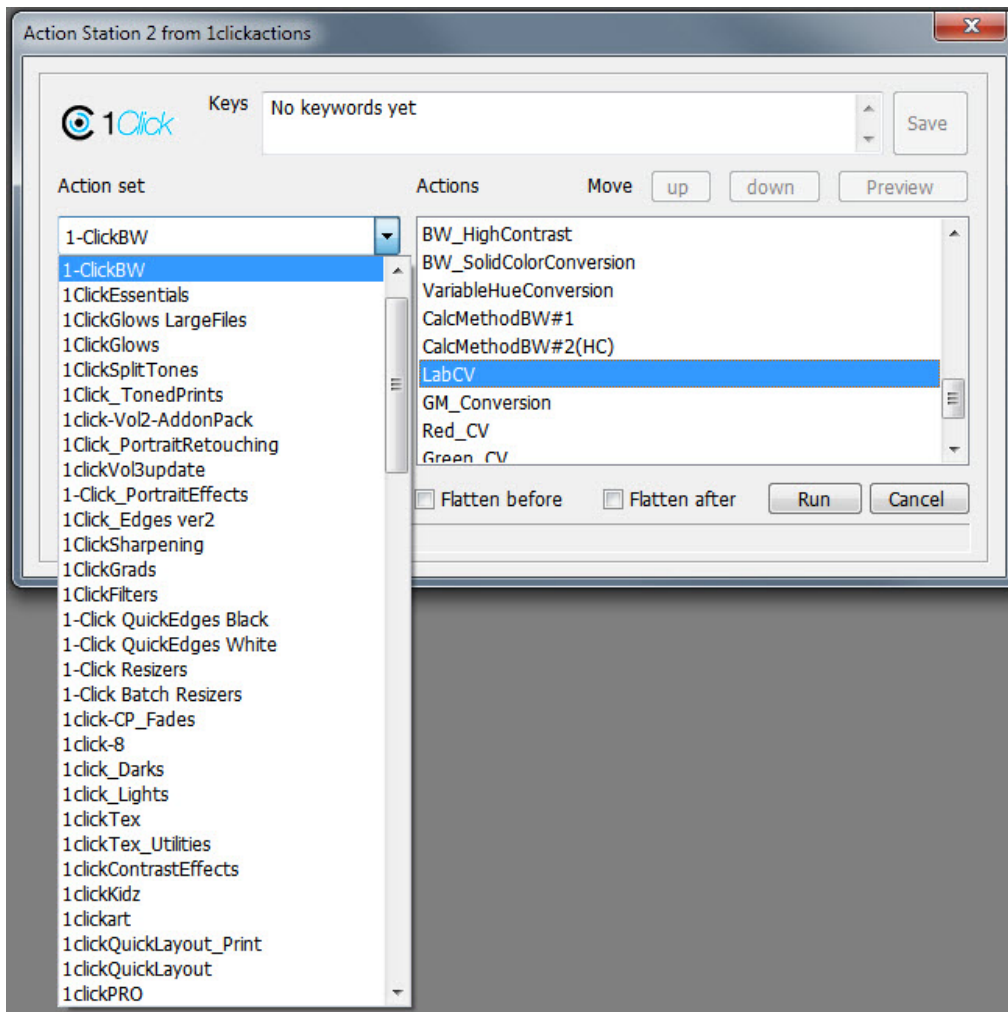
# Action Station 2 User Interface.



- A. **Keyword List**—used to add keywords to the selected action, these can then be searched on as well as action names. You can add your own keywords.
- B. **Up and Down Buttons**—Allows you to change the order in which actions are run if running multiple actions at the same time. To run multiple actions they must be in the same set or the same search result set.
- C. **Keyword Save Button**—Saves keywords to a file. Use after adding keywords.
- D. **Preview Button**—Allows you to display a preview image if one has been saved for the selected action.
- E. **Action List**—Displays the actions in the currently selected set or the results of the active search.
- F. **Cancel Button**—Closes the program without running any actions.
- G. **Run Button**—Runs the currently selected action (or actions if more than one is selected).
- H. **Flatten Image after action selector**—If selected this will flatten your image after running the selected action or actions.
- I. **Flatten Image before action selector**—If selected a duplicate image will be created and flattened before the action or actions are run.
- J. **Clear Search Button**—Clears the search field so that all actions are displayed.
- K. **Search Go Button**—Displays only actions that match the search term.
- L. **Action Identifier (UID)** - Created automatically by the program. Image files with a filename that matches the UID can be displayed by clicking the Preview button (D.).
- M. **Search Filter Field**—Used to enter text that you want to search on.
- N. **Action Descriptor Field**—Allows you to enter a description of the selected action.
- O. **Save Description Button**—Saves the text currently in the action description field.
- P. **Action Set List**—Displays all the action sets installed in Photoshop or the set of the currently selected action.

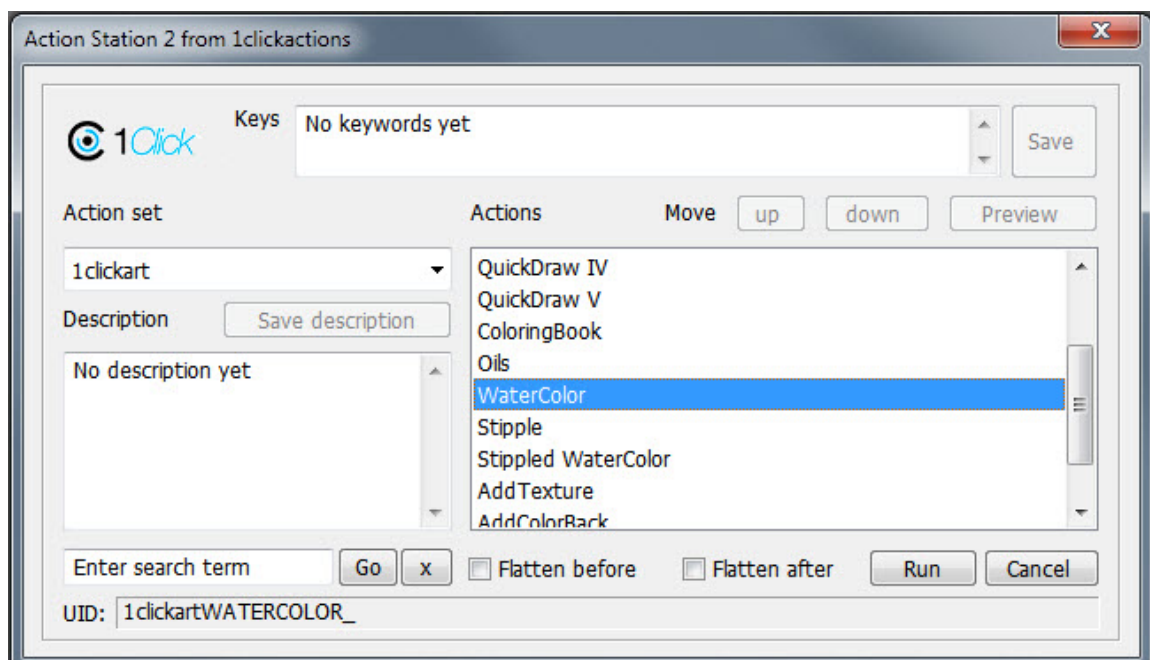
## Running Actions

At its simplest you can select the ActionSet from the list box on the left and then the Action from the list on the right.



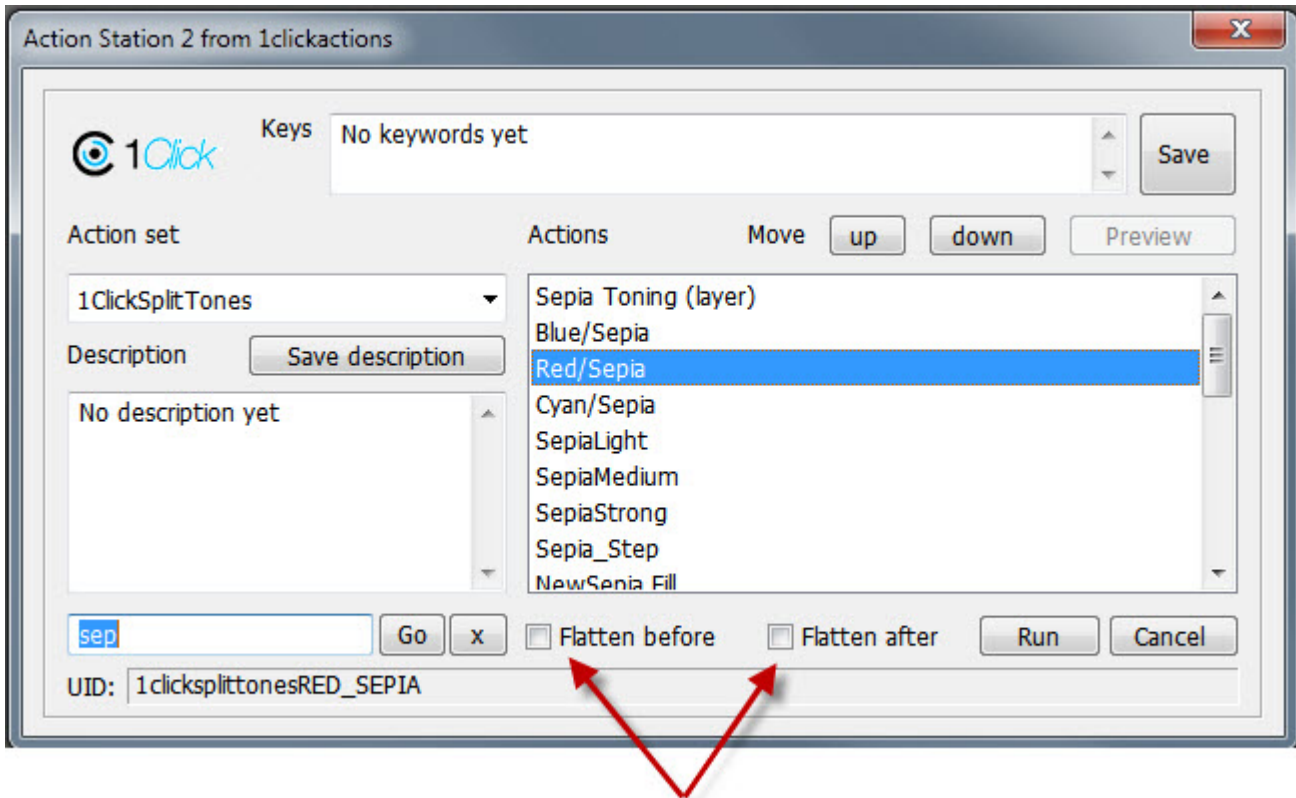
In this example above we have selected the **1-clickBW** action set and the **LabCV** action. If we now click the Run button Action Station 2 will close and the LabCV action will be run.

In the example below the **Watercolor** action is selected from the **1clickart** set.



## More about running actions

### Flatten Before & Flatten After selection boxes.



Before you hit the 'Run' button you have the option of selecting either or both of the 'Flatten' options. Many actions will flatten your images anyway (not always a good idea!) and Action Station has no way of knowing how your actions behave. You can however take back a little control with these selectors.

The '**Flatten before**' option will *duplicate your image* and then *flatten the duplicate BEFORE* running the selected action(s). This is a very useful option since it guarantees that you will not damage the original and also you can be sure that the action will work on a flat file—something many actions prefer. One drawback however is that some actions automatically create a duplicate as part of the action. In this case selecting the flatten before option might lead you to have multiple copies of your photo—the original, the flattened duplicate created by Action Station and also any copies created by the action itself. It might be useful to add reminder to the description box as to what setting is suitable.

The '**Flatten after**' option will *flatten the end result*. This might be useful if you know that you don't need any layers left on the file, for example the action is creating a proof for the web.

If both options are selected a duplicate will be created and flattened, the action will run on the duplicate and then the result will be flattened at the end.

The 'Flatten before' option is the safe option but at the risk of multiple images being left open in Photoshop.

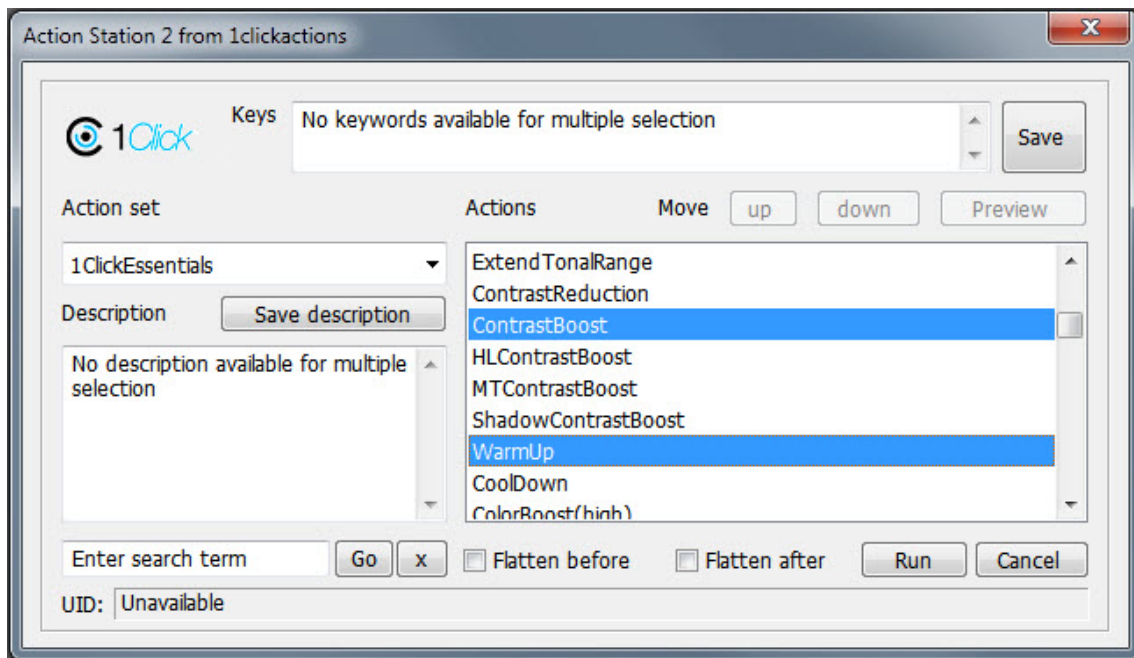
## Running multiple actions.

Suppose you have a favorite BW conversion but you want a brown toned version. Action Station lets you run both actions one after the other—for example the convert to BW action will run and then the toning action will run. You can also use the flatten options together with multiple actions.

It takes a bit of experimentation before you get used to the results of running actions back to back as until you try it you can't be sure of how the first action will leave the file - flattened or with multiple layers—not all actions work well together. Using both the flatten before and after options might be useful, at least you know your original will have been duplicated and there will be a flat copy for the second action to work on. You might end up with several copies open however—it really is trial and error.

If you do hit on a combination that works together why not tag them with keywords—for example you could tag both your actions 'BWCombo' - you can then use the search function to look for 'BWCombo' and both actions will be there for you.

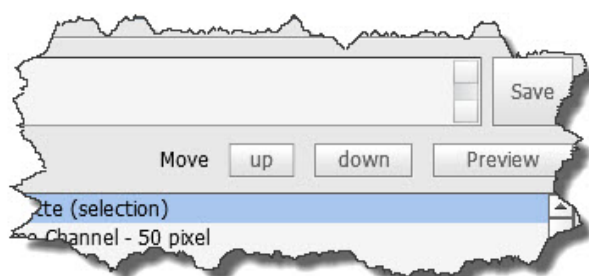
To run more than one action they both must appear in the action list at the same time. There are 2 ways to make sure of this—they must either be both in the same set or they both must appear in the set of actions returned by the search. This is where the keyword tagging comes in.



In this example we are going to run the ContrastBoost action followed by the WarmUp action. To select 2 actions click the first action and then Ctrl (Cmd) - Click the second action.

## Changing the order of actions

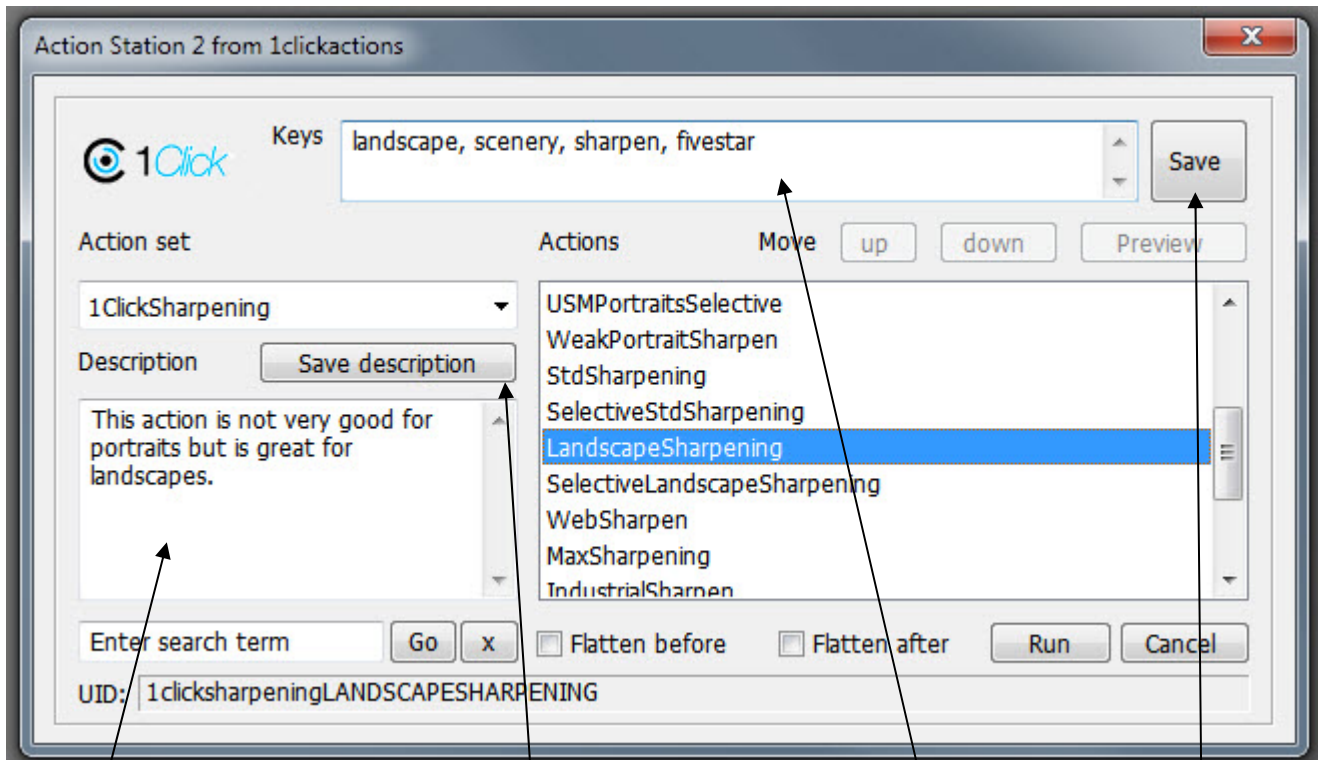
Suppose we want an action that is lower down are list to run before an action above it—here's where the Move Up and Down buttons come in to play. *Please be aware that these are only available in Search mode—ie the action list is displaying actions that are the results of a search not just showing the actions in a set.*



Select the action you want to run first and move it up the list so that it is above the one you want to run second, then Ctrl-Click to select the action you want to run second.

As this function is only available when searching it is essential that the actions are linked in some way, by their name or more likely as by a keyword you have added to both actions.

## Adding keywords and descriptions to actions.



Type any notes about the action in the box here. You can type anything at all—the text will appear the next time you highlight this action in Action Station.

When you have finished typing the description click the Save Description button.

When you have finished typing your keywords click the 'Save' button.

Type in any keywords you want to tag to this action in the box here. You will be able to search for any of these keywords whenever you run Action Station.

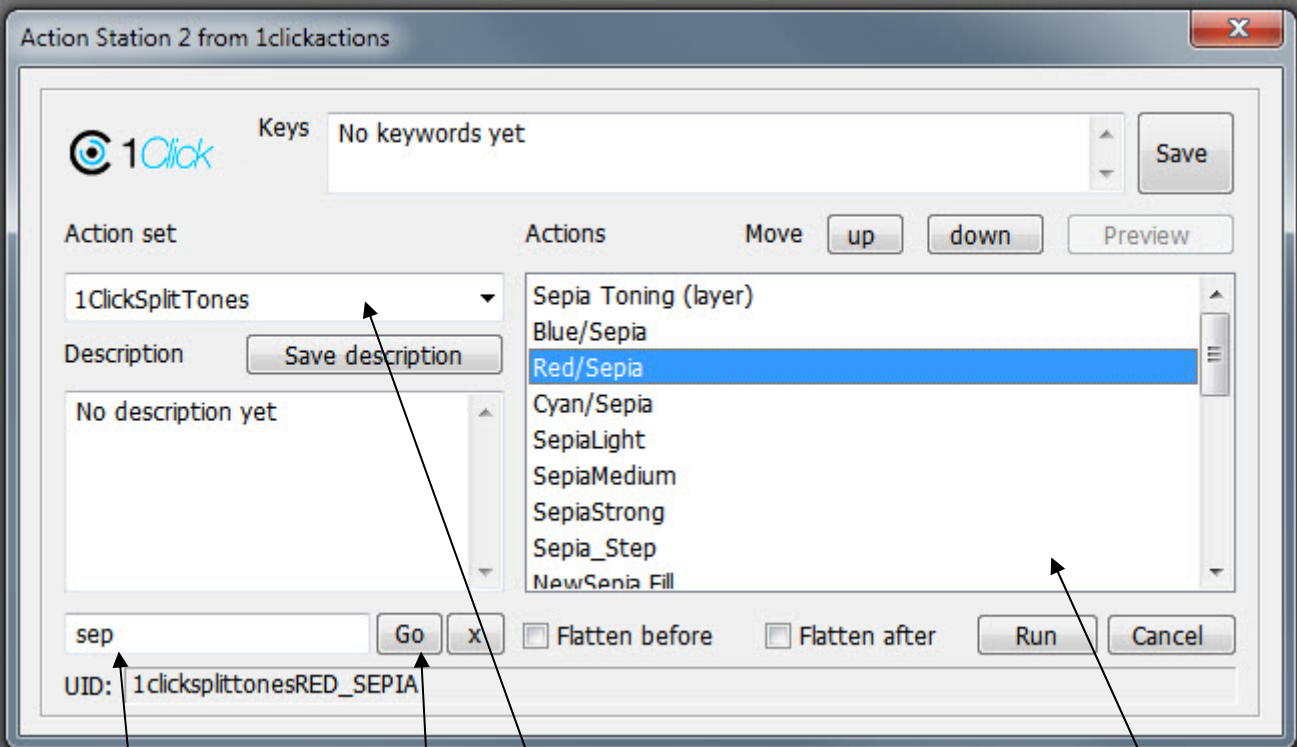
Try not to include too many keywords and remember that any searches you run will search both the action name and the keywords, so in general its best to not include words that appear in the action name in the keyword list as the search will find them anyway.

As a general rule you will add a words you want to search on in the keyword list and just general notes to yourself in the description box. Remember searches will operate on the ActionName and Keywords—not the description field.

Try and keep keywords to a minimum for faster searches and try not to repeat words that appear in the action name in the keyword list. How you use the keyword field is up to you—one possible idea would be to use a keyword of 'catLandscape' to mark an a particular actions part of a Landscape category or add a keyword of 'fave' to indicate it is one of your favourite actions.

## Using the search function.

You can use the search features even before you've added any keywords as the search will operate on the action name without any manual input. So suppose you know you have some sepia toning actions with the word sepia in the action name a search for 'sepia' or even 'sep' would find these actions for you. If you prefer to refer to these tones as brown rather than sepia then use 'brown' as a keyword the Action Station will locate all the actions with the word 'brown' in either the keyword or action name lists. In addition you can use the "/" key which acts as 'OR' - so a search of red/green would find all actions with *either* the word red or green in the name or keywords.



The screenshot shows the 'Action Station 2 from 1clickactions' window. At the top, there is a 'Keys' field containing 'No keywords yet' and a 'Save' button. Below this, the 'Action set' is '1ClickSplitTones' and the 'Description' is 'No description yet'. The 'Actions' list includes 'Sepia Toning (layer)', 'Blue/Sepia', 'Red/Sepia' (highlighted), 'Cyan/Sepia', 'SepiaLight', 'SepiaMedium', 'SepiaStrong', 'Sepia\_Step', and 'NewSepia Fill'. The search term 'sep' is entered in the search field, and the 'Go' button is highlighted. The 'UID' is '1clicksplittonesRED\_SEPIA'. There are also 'Flatten before', 'Flatten after', 'Run', and 'Cancel' buttons.

Enter the word (or part word) you want to search for here.

Click 'Go' to activate the search. You can click the 'X' button to clear the search term.

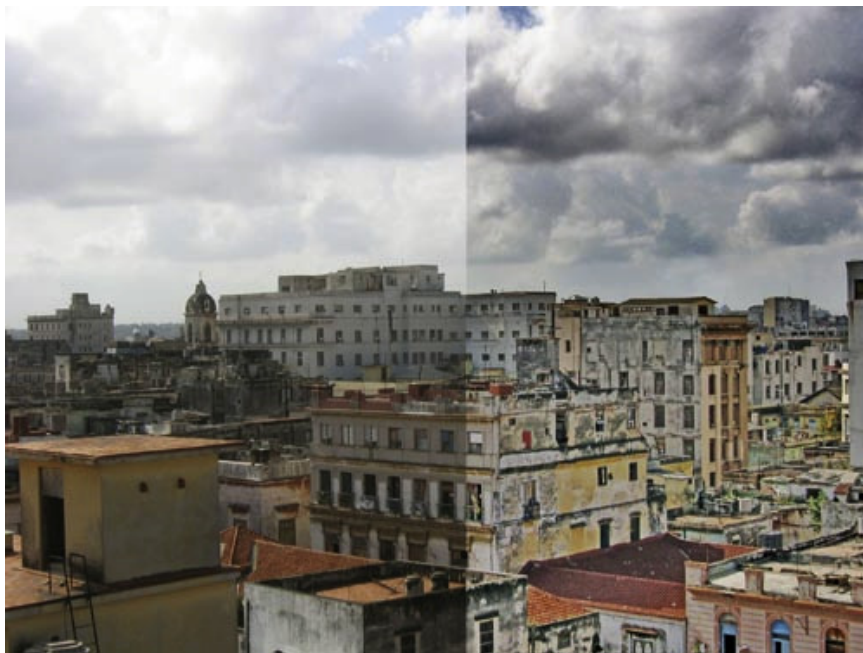
All the actions that match the search will be displayed here. Depending on the search there may well be several matches. To run one of the matching actions simply select it from the list and click Run.

You may well receive several matches that are in different action sets. Once you highlight an action in the list (in this case (Red/Sepia) the action set indicator will display which set the selected action belongs to. In this case the 1clickSplit-Tones set.

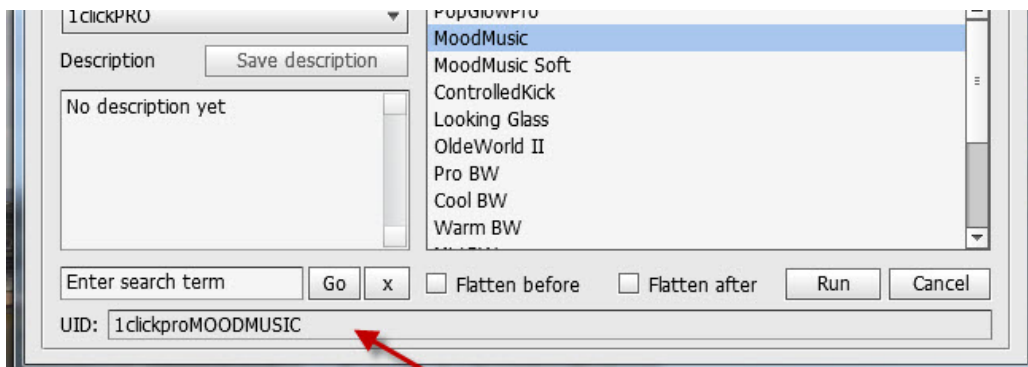
One thing to be aware of. If you have lots of actions you will get lots of matches which may take a while to locate. To safeguard against this the search term must have 3 or more characters before it will run. This is simply to prevent you inadvertently entering a single character and hitting 'Go' - after all think how many actions you have with the letter 'a' in them!

## Adding example images to actions.

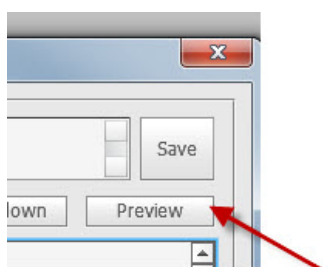
When you have possibly hundreds of actions installed its easy to forget what they actually do. The keywords and description fields help but we can take this further by associating one or two images to an action. For example we might find it useful to associate the image below with the 1clickactions Contrast Effect No3.



1clickactions intends to offer downloadable sample packs for their actions at a later date but why not add your own? The procedure is quite simple—saving an image with a particular name to the previews folder created by Action Station. If you are unsure where this folder is the you can use the ASFileFinder script. The image should be small so as to save space and must be saved in jpg format (eg from the PS Save for Web option). It is essential that the image is linked to the correct action so it needs an unique name—Action Station will tell you what that name needs to be!



Whenever an action is selected in Action Station a unique identifier (UID) is displayed at the bottom of the user interface. In this case the UID is “1clickproMOODMUSIC” (the MoodMusic action from the 1clickPRO set is selected). You must save the image you want to use as the example of this action in jpg format with the same name as the UID. The easiest way to do this is to copy the UID field and then paste it into the file name box when saving the file. Remember the file must be saved in the / previews folder. If you want to add a second preview image just use the same filename but add “\_aft” at the end of the name.



Using the above example you might have *1clickproMOODMUSIC.jpg* as the first file and *1clickproMOODMUSIC\_aft.jpg*. You can use any image but why not try a before and after image—from the preview box you will be able to switch between the two.

If there is a preview image associated with an action clicking the Preview button will open the image for you. If there is no associated image then the preview button is disabled.

## Problem solving.

*Q. I don't know where to store the preview images.*

A. The preview images must be stored in the following location—Your Home Folder—AS2—previews. If you don't know where this is then run the ASFileFinder script in Photoshop and it will tell you.

*Q. I've saved the images to the correct location but they still don't appear.*

A. Make sure that the file is in jpg format and its name matches the UID of the action as displayed in Action Station. You should copy from ActionStation UID field and paste it when saving the file.

*Q. I tried searching for BW but it doesn't work at all.*

A. The search requires at least 3 characters to search on. This is deliberate as shorter searches might return hundreds of results.

*Q. The up and down buttons don't work.*

A. These only work in search mode. Make sure that the actions you want to run appear in the search results.

*Q. Can I get the preview to show the result of the selected an action on the image I have open in Photoshop?*

A. Unfortunately no, the preview can only display an image saved previously and linked to the action.

*Q. Is Action Station an action? It doesn't appear in my action palette.*

A. No, Action Station is not an action so will not appear in the action palette in Photoshop. Action Station will appear on the Photoshop scripts menu.

*Q. I don't have many actions installed, why should I buy Action Station?*

A. You shouldn't! It is only really useful when you have many actions installed.

*Q. It will take me ages to create images for all my actions can you help?*

A. Not really, it is intended to provide downloadable images for 1clickactions' actions in the near future. There is no need to have previews at all however, you can still use Action Station without previews and add images gradually.

*Q. Can I use AND or OR in my searches?*

A. Yes. Use / to create an 'OR' search eg sepia/brown. Action Station treats spaces as AND so Action 1 searches for the string "action 1"

*Q. How can I speed up ActionStation?*

A. The speed depends on the speed of your computer and also the number of actions you have installed and the number of keywords you add. Try not to duplicate the action's name in the keywords as the search would find it from the action name anyway.

*Q. Why can't I search on descriptions?*

A. The search only works on Action Name and Keywords.

*Q. How do I separate keywords?*

A. There is no special requirement; spaces or commas are fine.

*Q. If I rename an action will it still work in Action Station 2?*

A. Yes, but you would need to rename an attached preview file(s) as well.

*Q. What if I have more than one action with the same name?*

A. This is not a problem as Action Station will indicate which set any selected action comes from in the ActionSet list box. However you should not have the same set installed twice with the same actions in as this may cause Action Station to run the action twice. There is no need to have the same action set installed more than once so you should delete one of the sets. Action Station creates a unique reference (UID) for each action based on the set name and the action name so having the same set installed twice would lead to all the actions in the sets having the same UID which causes the action to run more than once.

## Hints & tips.

**Creating linked actions**—certain actions work well together so you can use the keyword function to create an artificial link so that you can run these actions together. As an example you could add a keyword of 'linkbwtone' to a BW conversion action and also to a toning action. A search for 'linkbwtone' would then find both these actions and they could then be run combined.

**'OR' searches** — \*\*\*\* BE CAREFUL WITH THIS \*\*\*\*\* The search box will let you use the / key in your search term for example 'brown/blue' - this will in effect search for 'brown' OR 'blue' not 'brown blue' (although it will still find 'brown blue'). Whilst this can be useful you have to be aware that it might return many results.

**Preview Images**—there is no restriction on the size of the files you can use as preview images but there is no real benefit of using large images, a general rule would be an image of between 500-800 pixels (72dp).

**Assigning actions to categories**—Whilst assigning to categories is not supported it is easy to replicate using keywords. For example you could have a keyword of "cat\_landscape" or "cat\_portrait" to which can then be searched on. Using the keyword system is far more flexible than having fixed categories.

**Assigning a 'rating' to an action**—Again this is possible through the keyword system, for example "rat\_5", "rat\_3" etc. You can then use the search to find all your 5-star actions (ie all your "rat\_5"s).

**Moving Photoshop to a new computer**—If you move Photoshop to a new computer you can transfer your keywords, descriptions and preview images by copying the *actionData* and *previews folders* to your new machine. These need to be located in your Home Folder/AS2 folder—run the FileFinder script on your computer to find out the actual path to these files.

**Creating Before/After linked previews.**— Action Station 2 allows you to link either one or two preview images to each action the first image **use** the action's UID as the filename, the second image (assuming you want to use one) **must** use the action's UID followed by **\_aft** (underscore and the letters aft). When you click the preview button Action Station will display the first image but if it detects there are two linked images then the 'Switch' button will be enabled—clicking this switches between image 1 and image 2—so if you use an image before running an action as your first image (UID.jpg) and one after the action (UID\_aft.jpg) then clicking the Switch button will flip between the 2.

You can of course use two unrelated images—perhaps a portrait and a landscape or a color and BW.

If Action Station detects two linked images the Switch button becomes active, allowing you to quickly change between the two.

