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## [Tutorial: Create A Retro Cosmic Design in Photoshop](#)

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This tutorial will teach you how to recreate the **Retro Cosmic designs made popular by [James White of Signalnoise](#)**. All you need is a copy of Photoshop and some time on your hands. In this particular example we're going to create a retro cosmic rainbow but the techniques explained can be used in combination with

any shape and colour.

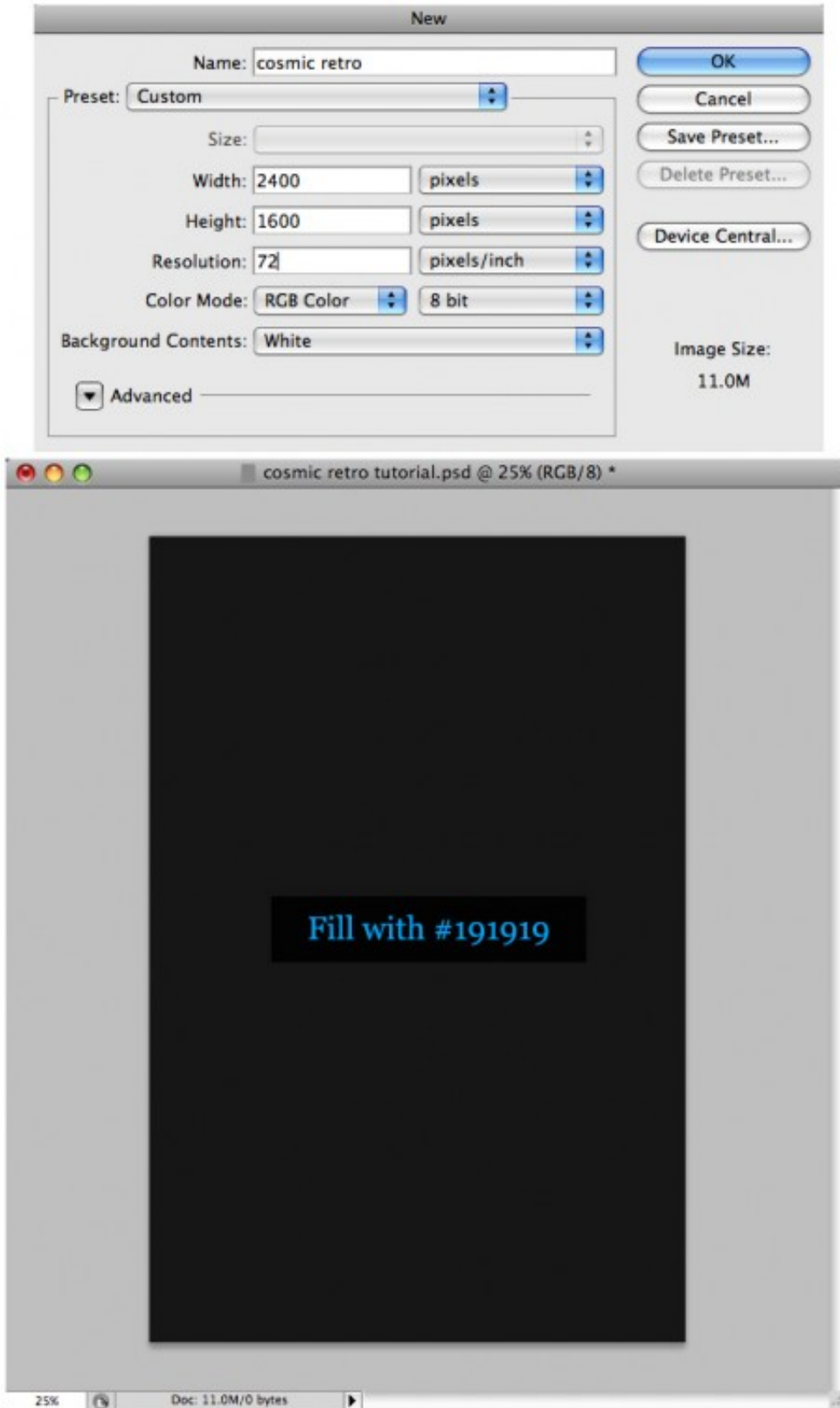
## Preview:



This is a cutout of the final design that will be created in 10 easy steps. So let's get started.

## Step 1: Create document

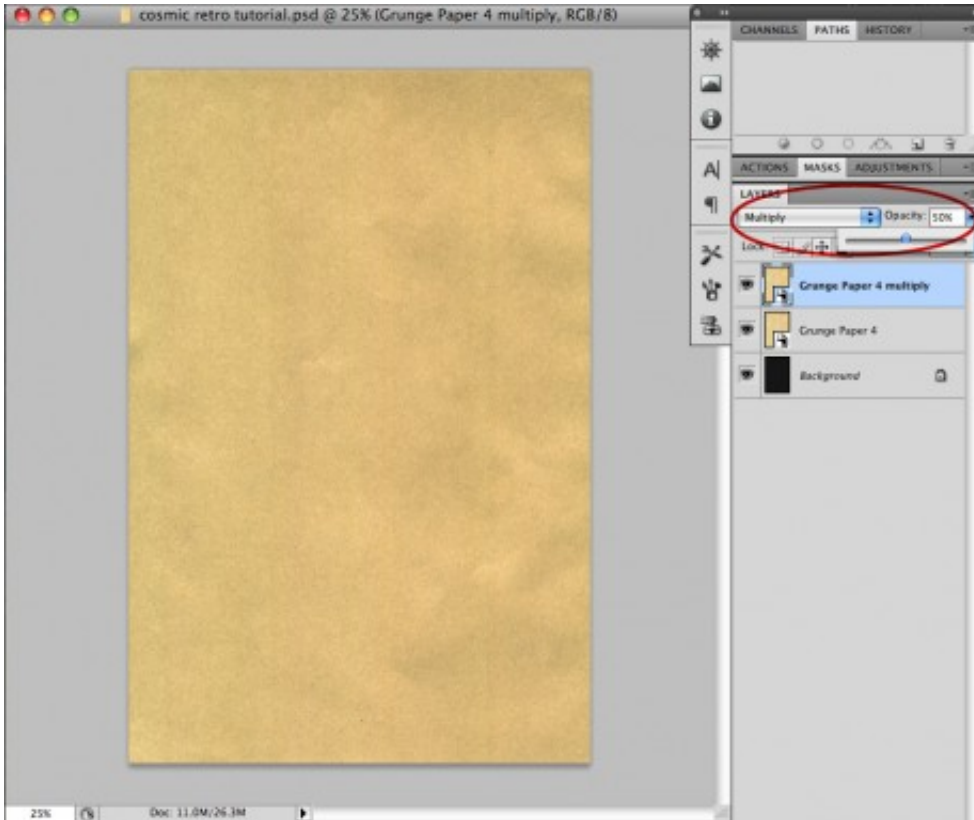
Start by creating a new document of **2400px by 1600px**. Fill the background with a dark grey. I used #191919.



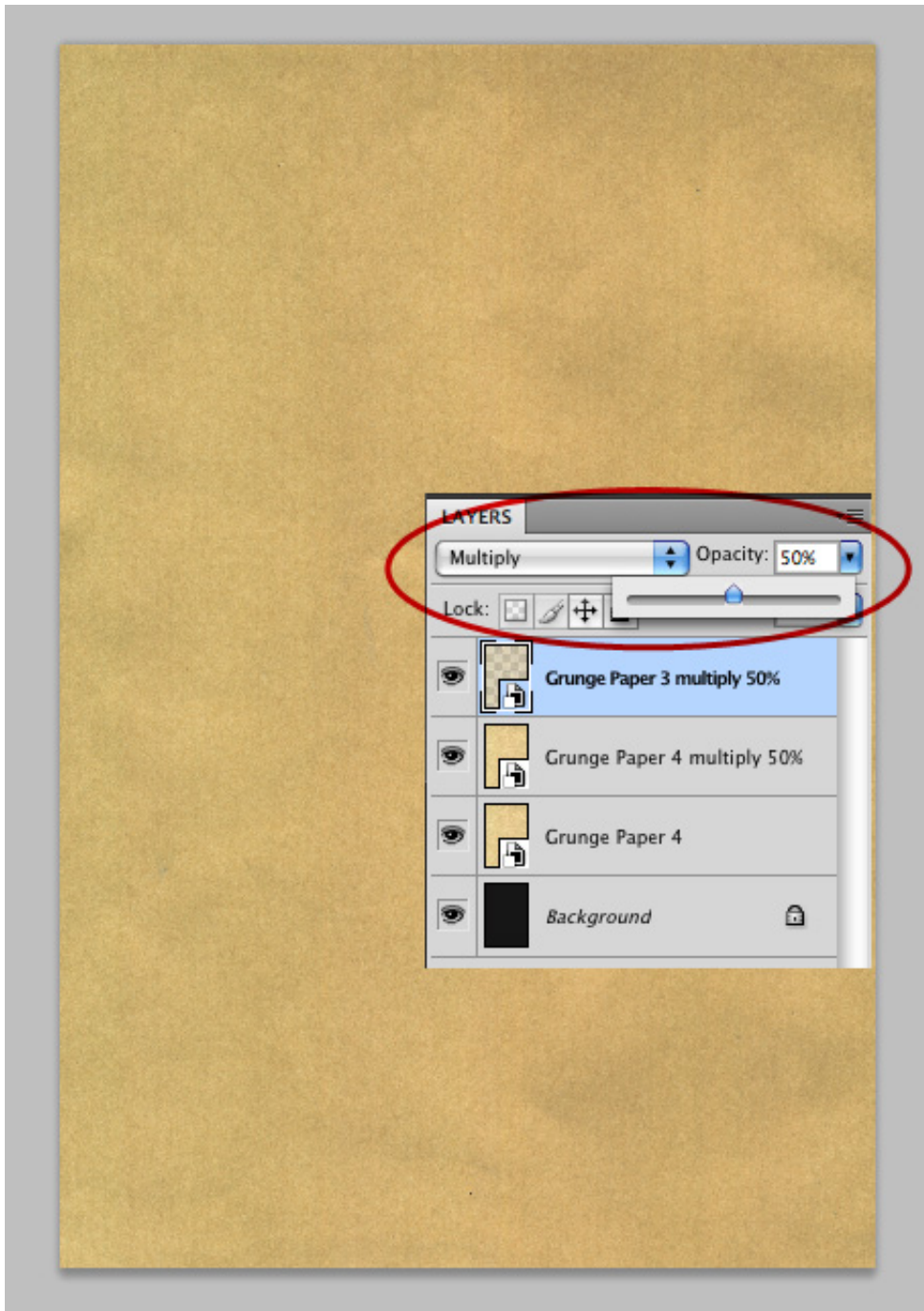
## Step 2: Add Textures

Now we're gonna add some nice [Old Grunge Paper Textures](#) which have been released on Fudgegraphics

earlier. They can be downloaded [here](#) and we're only going to need the textures number 3 and 4. First open **Paper Texture 4** and place it on top of the background layer. You might want to scale it so that it fits the document. It's a good practice to always **convert images to smart object when scaling them down**. This way you won't compromise the quality should you decide to increase the dimensions of the design later on. **Duplicate the Paper Texture 4 Layer, change the blending mode to Multiply and set the Opacity to 50%.**



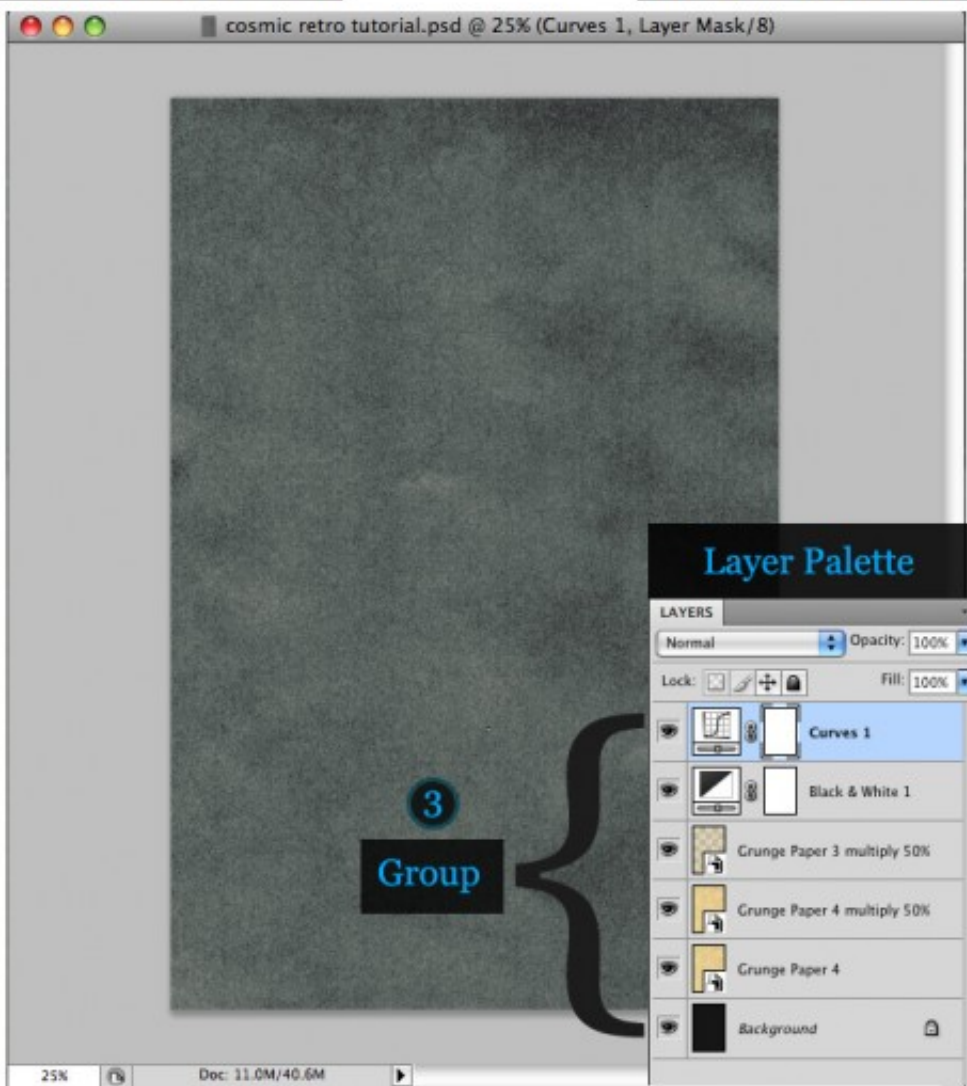
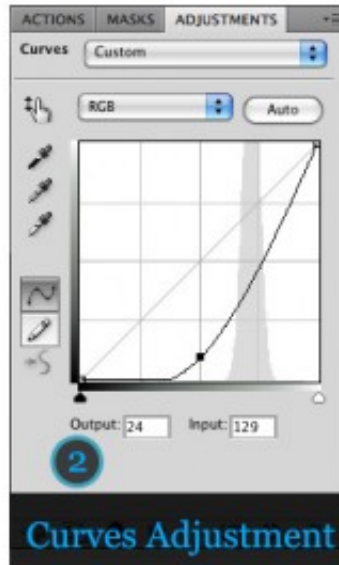
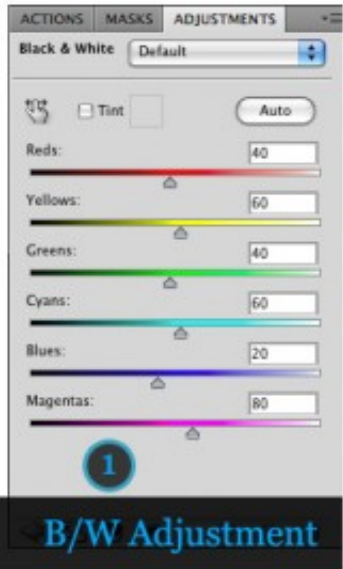
To finish off with the textures we're gonna add **Paper Texture 3** on top of the layers. Again use **Multiply** as blending mode and set the **Opacity to 50%**.



### Step 3: Adjust the Background

Now add a **Black&White Adjustment Layer** to desaturate the background. Again this is the most inobtrusive way of doing it. Alternatively you could merge all of the layers and desaturate them using the shortcut **Cmd+Shift+U**.

Next we're going to add a **Curves Adjustment Layer** using the settings shown below. This will darken the background which should now look like this:

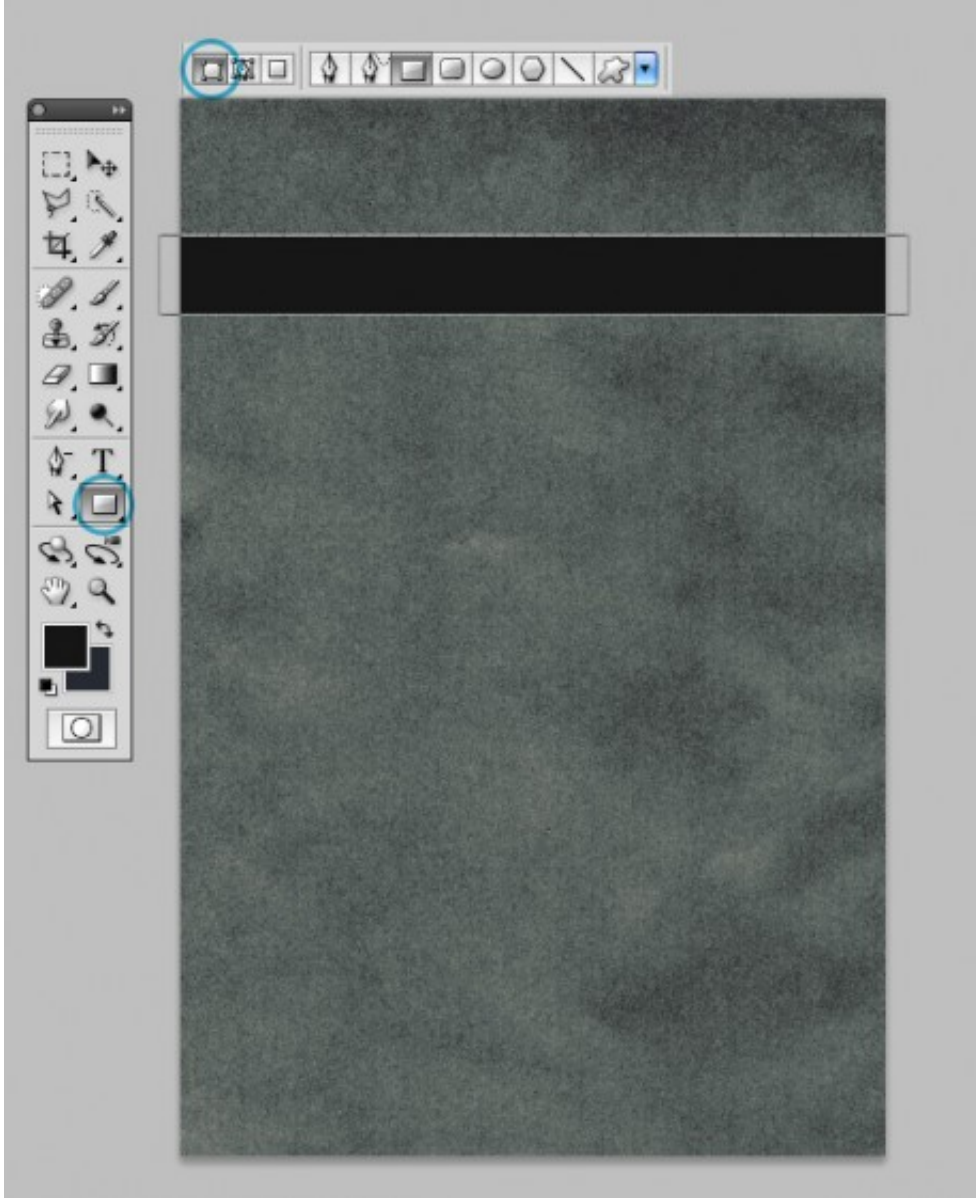


Once you've completed all these steps you should put all the layers in a group and name it "background". This will help you keep things organized.



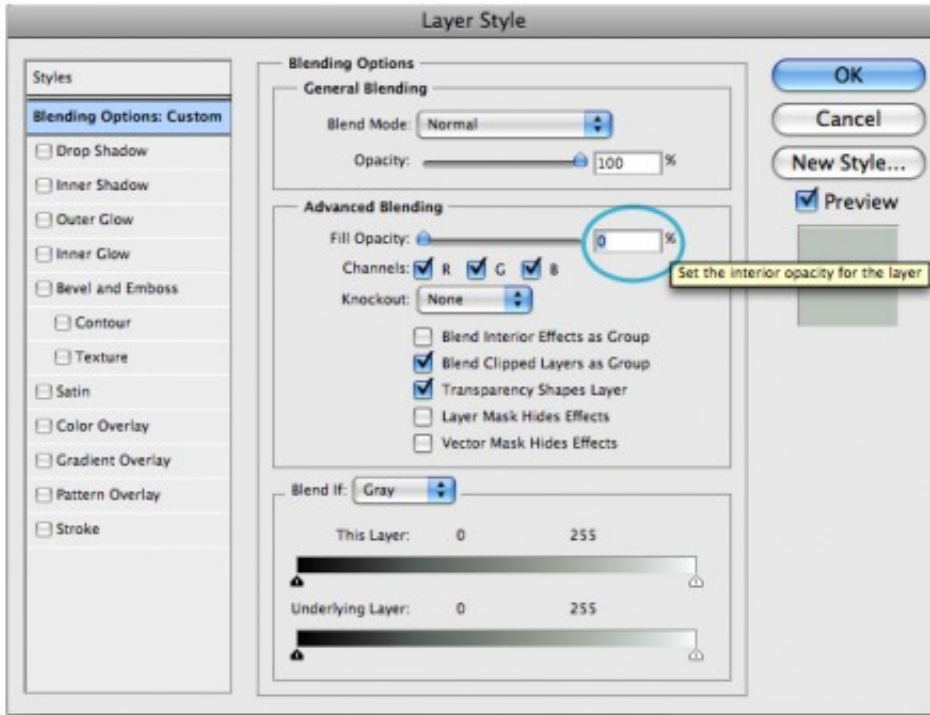
## Step 4: Adding the Shapes

Now that we've prepared the background we can finally start to add our geometric shapes. Select the **Rectangle Tool** and make sure you have selected the "Shape Layer" option. The fill colour is not important as we are going to alter it through the Layer Style anyways. Draw a rectangle like shown below (roughly 1700px by 180px).

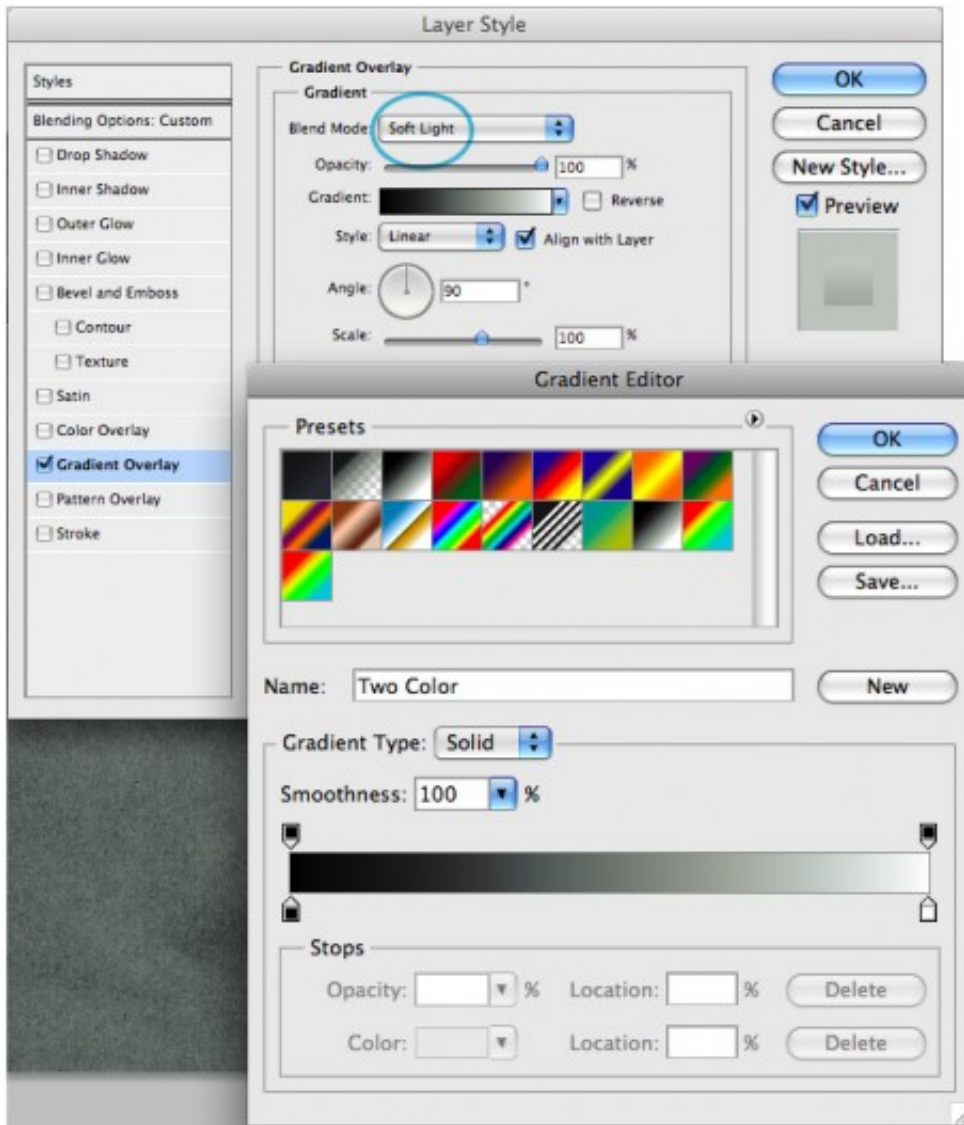


## Step 5: Changing the Layer Style of Shape

Open up the **Layer Style** for the rectangle shape and set the **Fill Opacity to 0%**. Then add a simple **Black to White gradient** at an angle of 90° and change the Blending Mode to **Soft Light**.

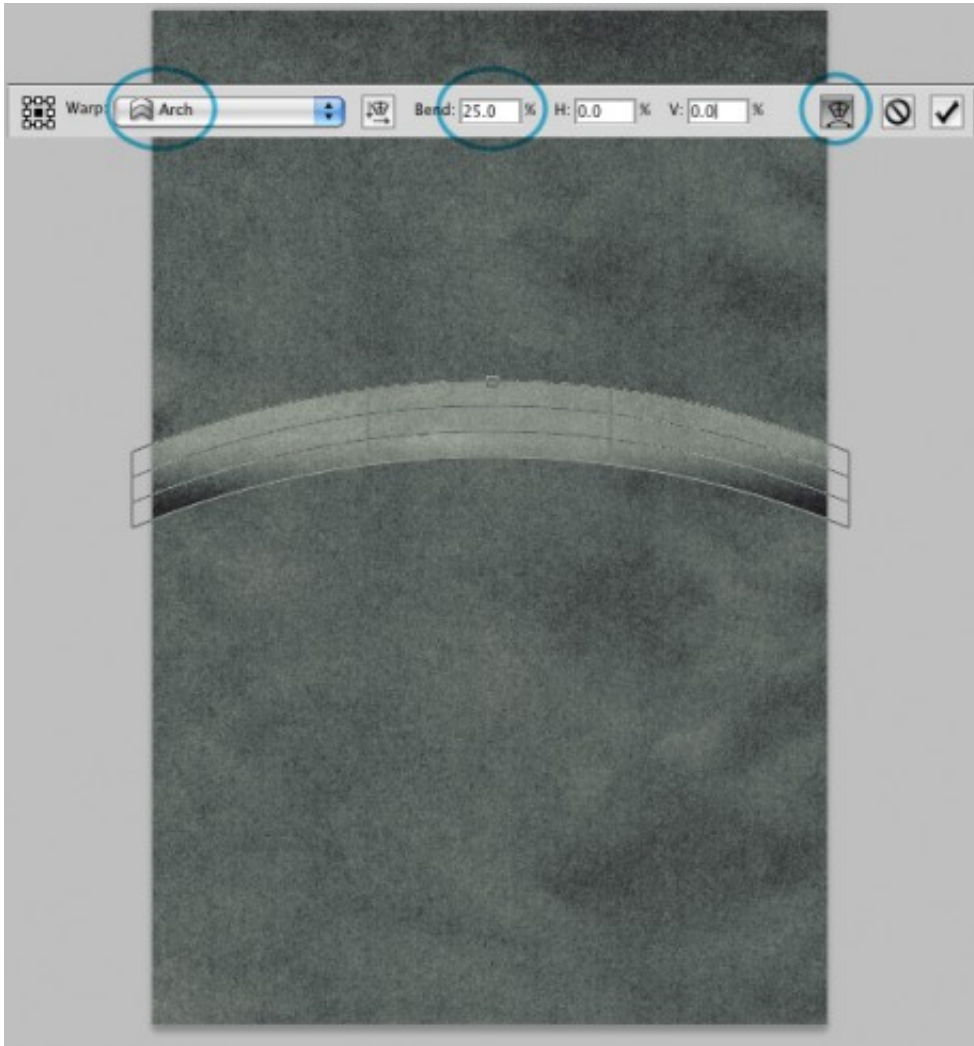






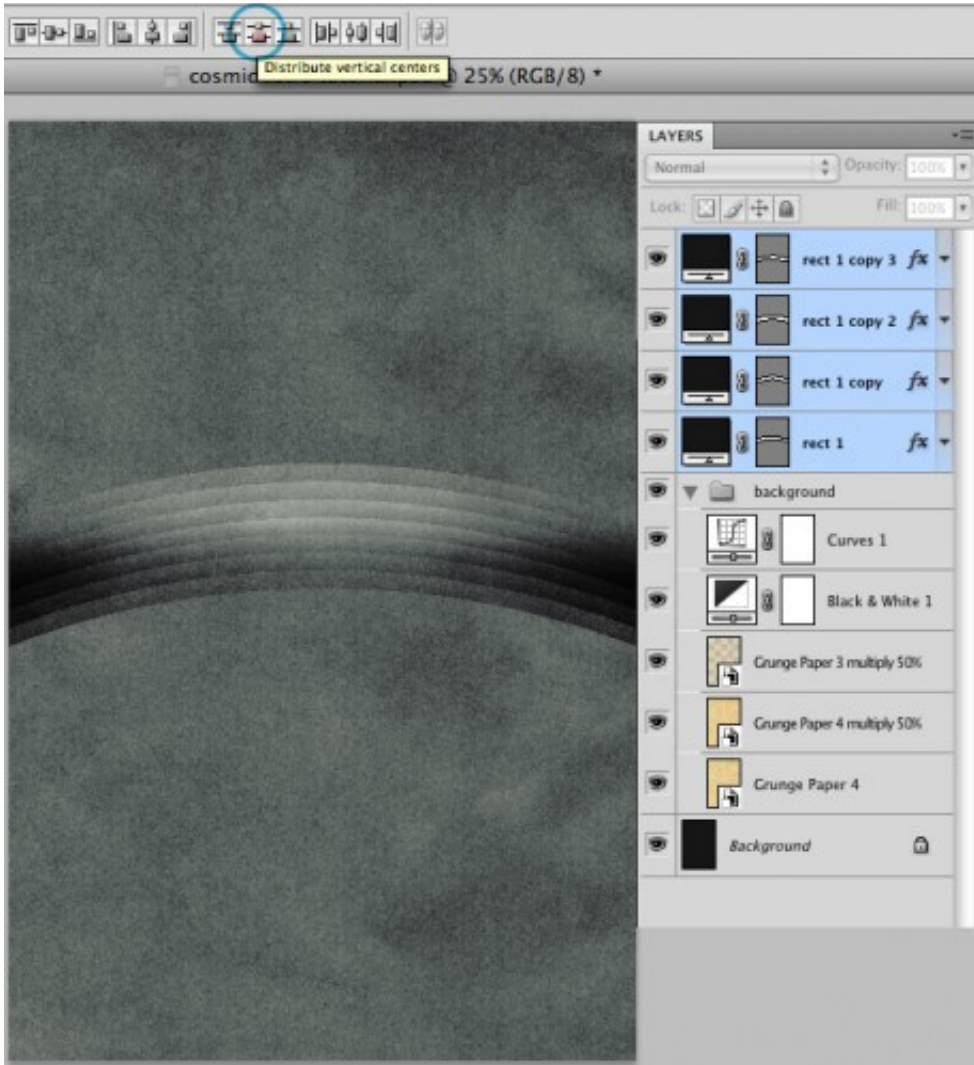
## Step 6: Warp Rectangle into Arch

With the rectangle shape layer still selected choose **Edit > Transform Path > Warp**. Use the **Arch** Preset and set the **Bend** to **25%**. Hit Enter.

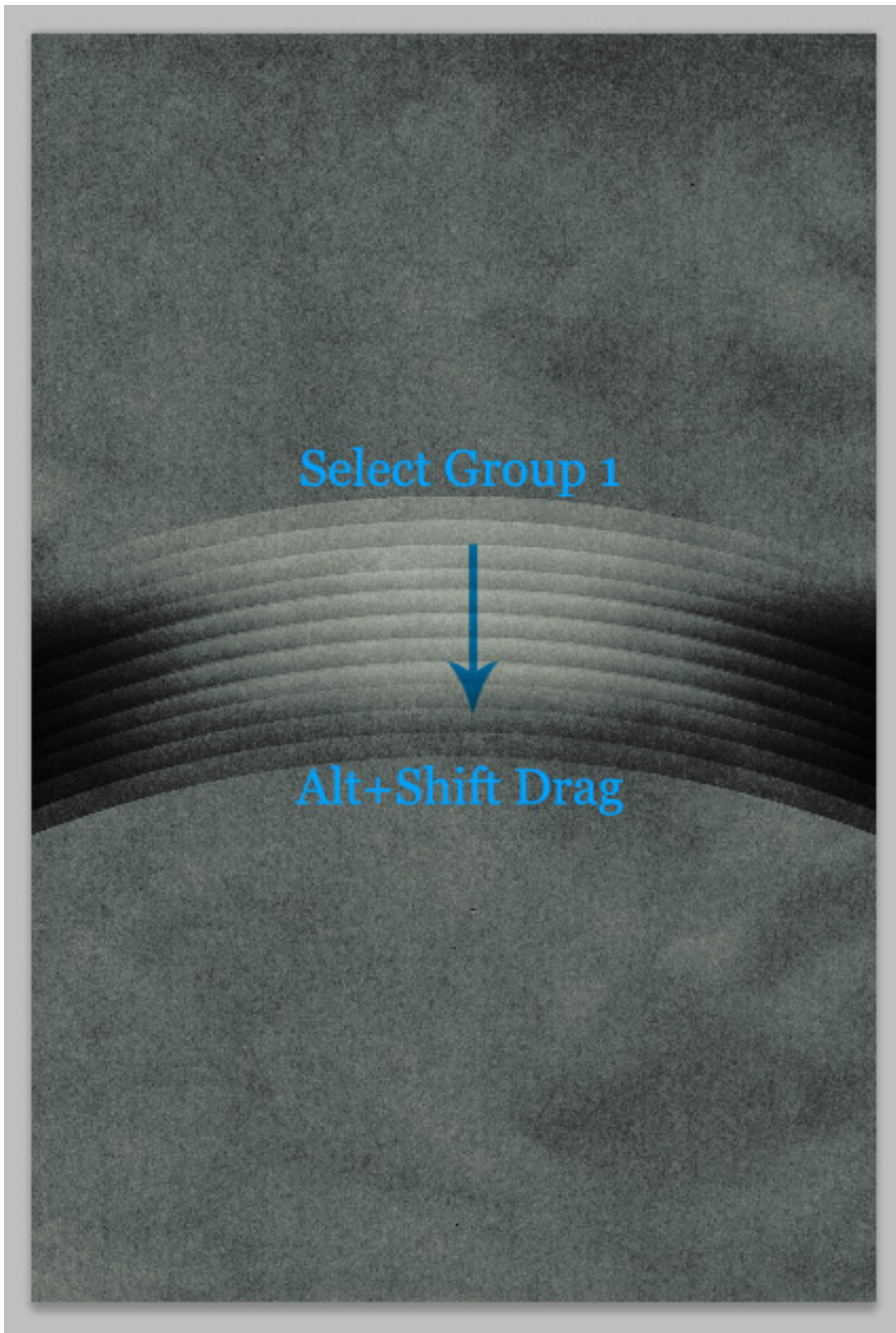


## Step 7: Duplicate and Move Arch

**Hold Alt+Shift and move the shape downwards.** This will duplicate the layer (Alt key) while keeping it inline with the original layer (Shift key). Repeat this step until you have four instances of the Arch layer. Select all 4 layers and choose “distribute vertical centers” from the distribute palette.

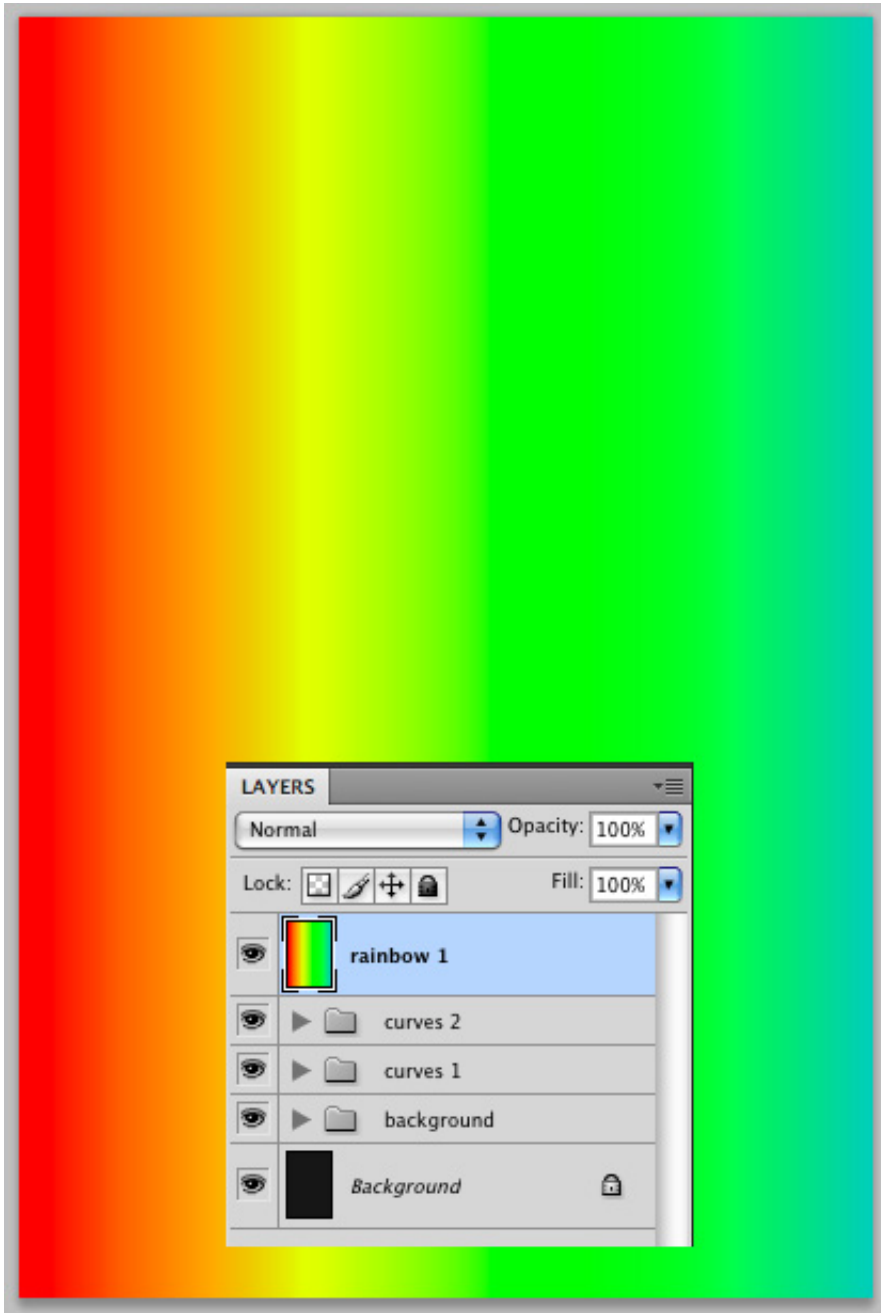


Now **group the 4 layers and duplicate** the group. Select the group copy and again while holding Alt+Shift drag the layers downwards. Align the 2 groups vertically and distribute them to your liking. It should look similar to this.



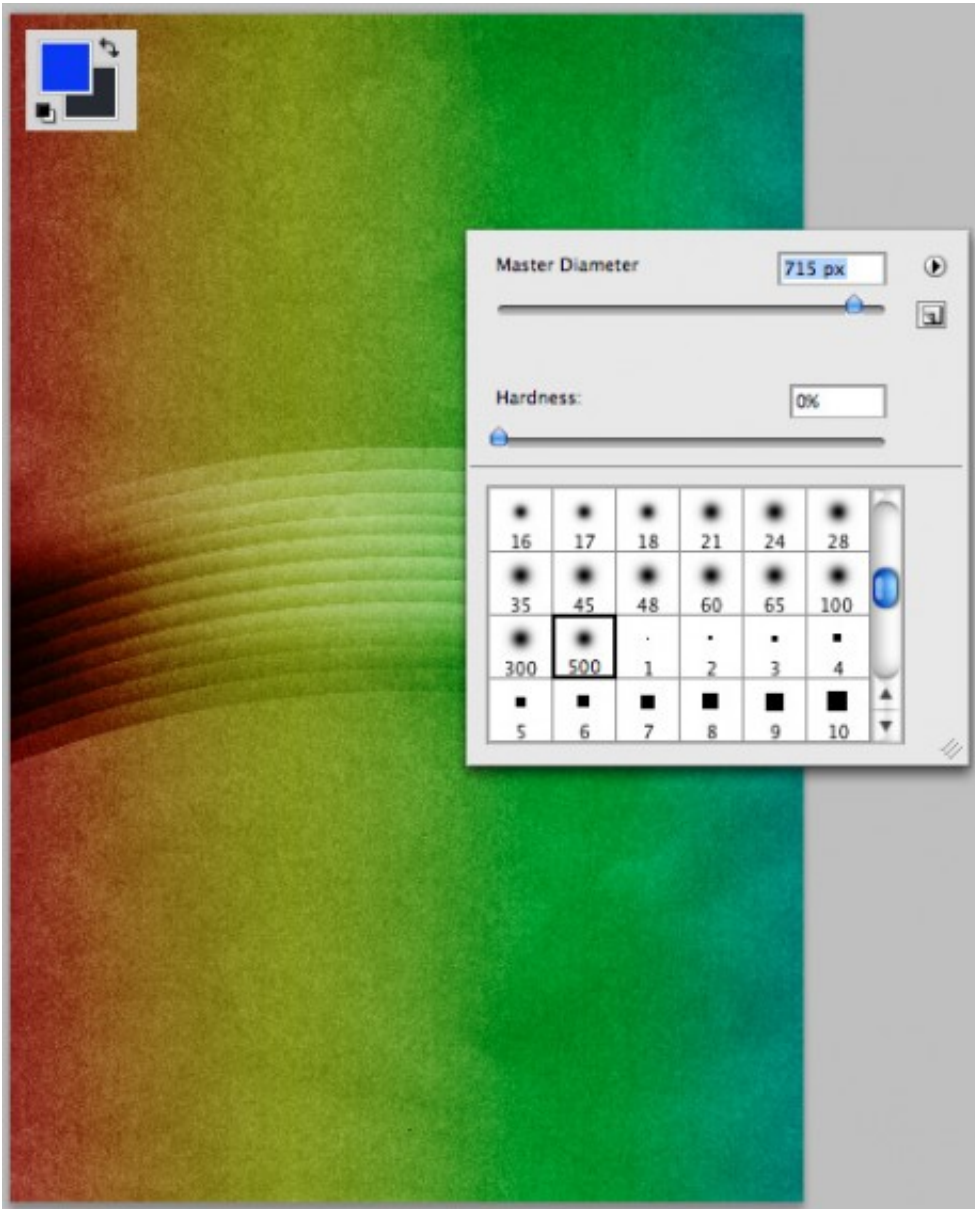
## Step 8: Adding Colours

Now that we have the basic layout of our design it's time to add some colours to it. Create a **new layer on top** and **select the Gradient tool**. Define a nice **colourful rainbow gradient** and **apply it horizontally** to the blank layer.



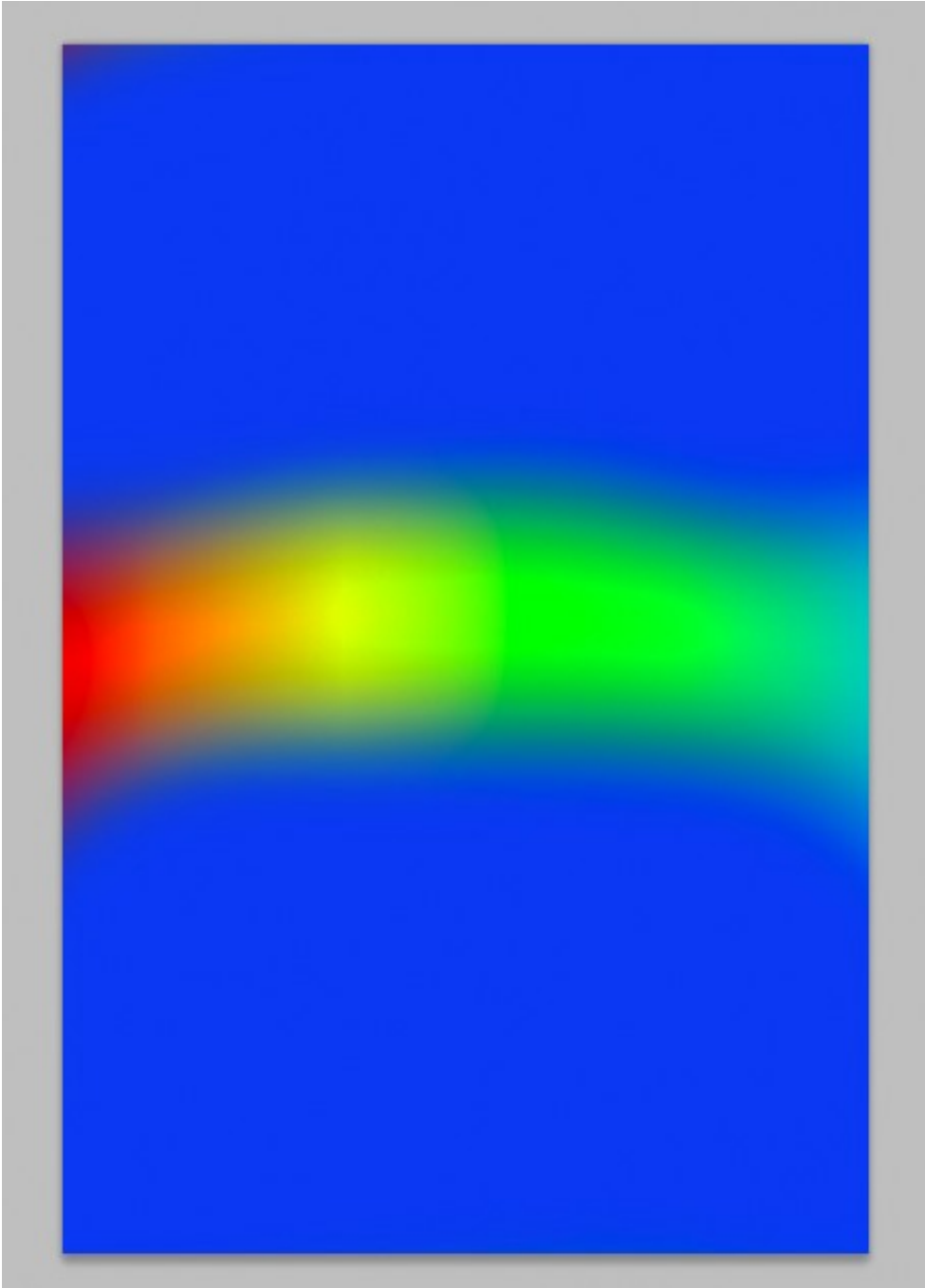
Change the **layer blending mode to Soft Light**. Choose a **dark blue** and paint over the non-rainbow areas with a large soft brush.





In normal blending mode the rainbow layer should look similar to the picture below.

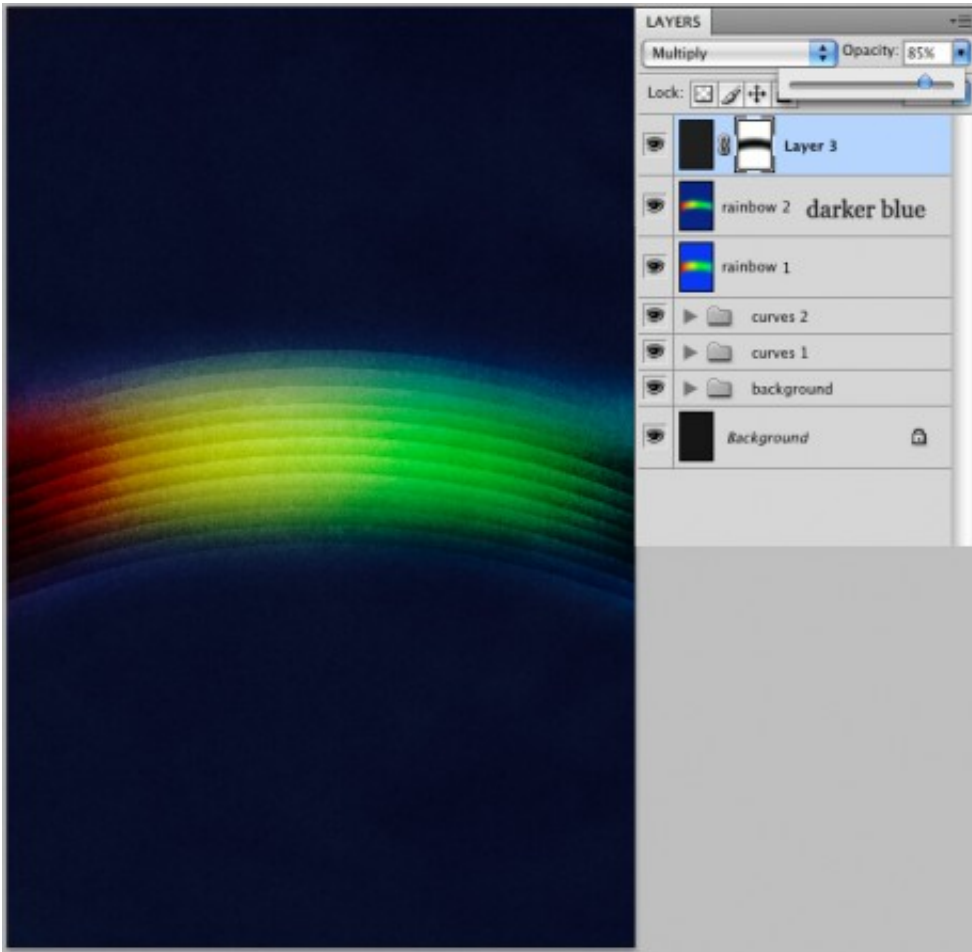




## Step 9: Enhancing Colours:

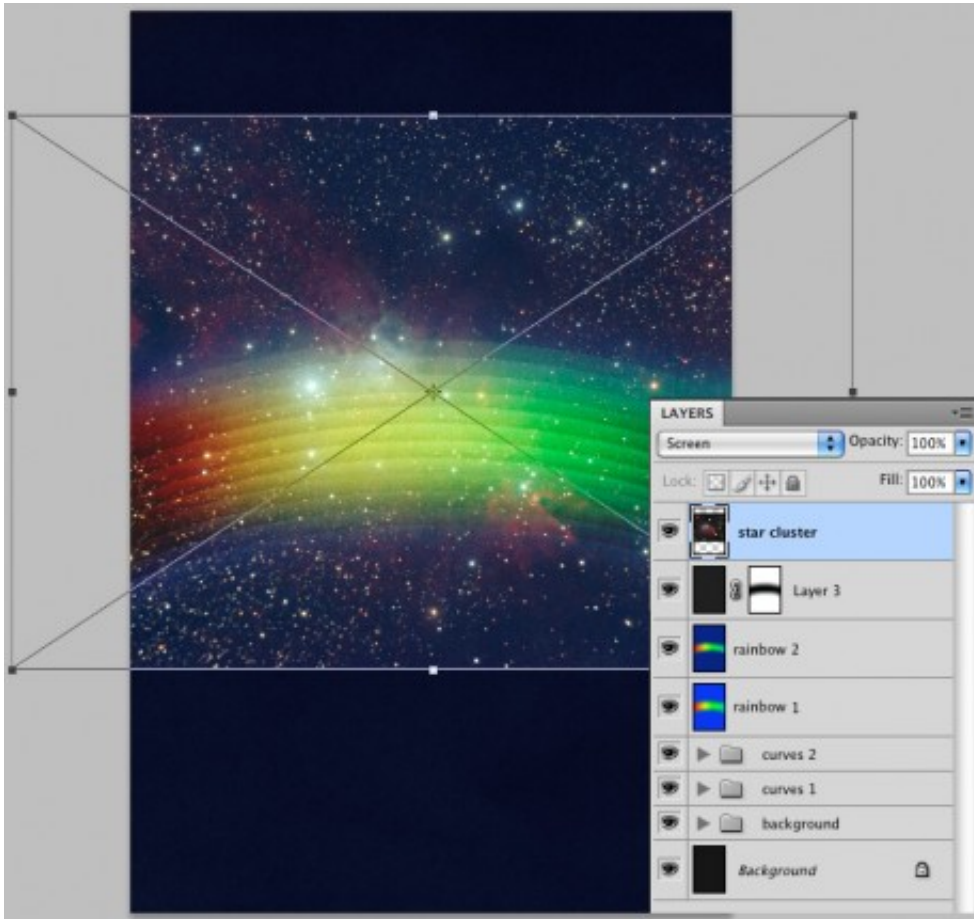
As the “soft light” blending mode suggests its effect is not very strong. Hence we’re gonna **duplicate the rainbow layer** to get more vibrant colours. Keep the soft light setting but change the **Layer Opacity to 40%**. Choose an even **darker blue and paint over the non-rainbow areas** as before.

Now **create a new layer and fill it with a dark grey** colour. Set the blending mode to **Multiply** and change the Layer Opacity to **85%**. Add a **layer mask** and with a large soft brush (same as we used before) hide the rainbow part. This is done by choosing Black as fill colour and painting over the rainbow. The beauty of layer masks is that if you masked too much simply switch too White and paint over the areas you want to be visible again. Your design should look similar to this.

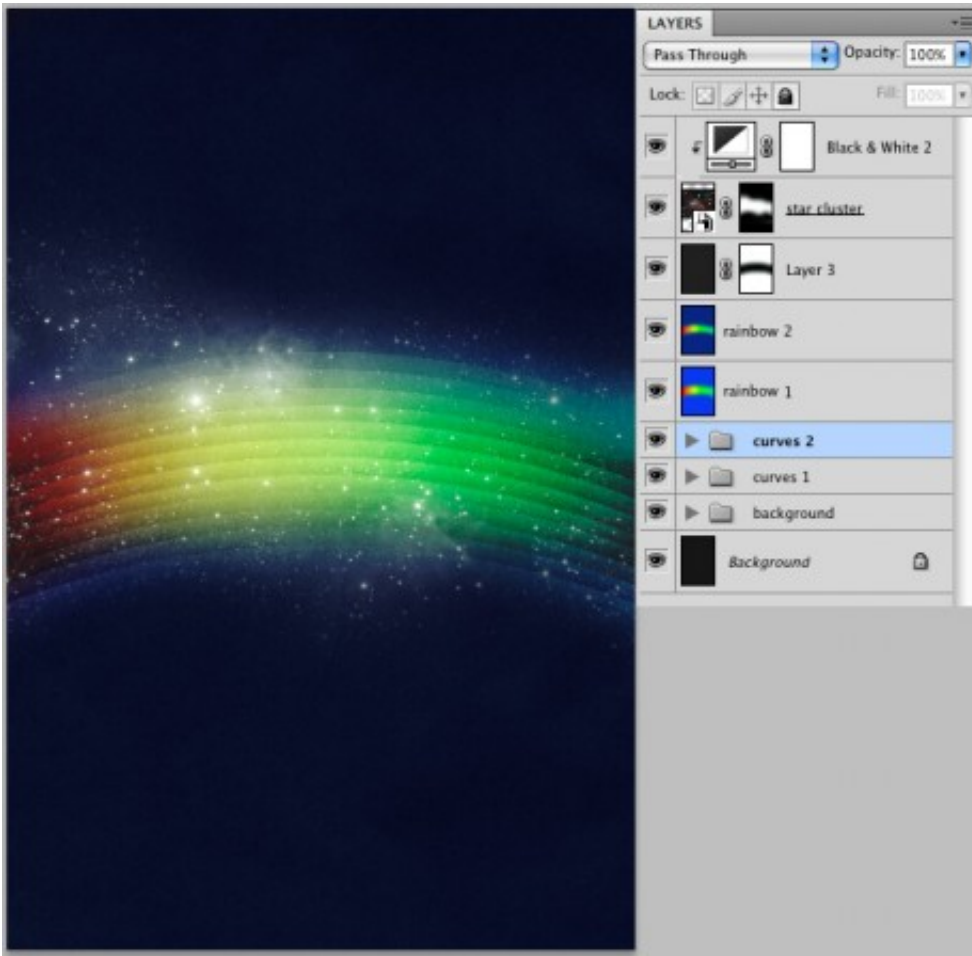


## Step 10: Adding Stars

As finishing touch we're gonna add some star clusters to our design. Go to Flickr and download the [Christmas Tree Cluster](#) photo by Luca Argalia aka Skywalker79 in its original size. Place it on top of all the layers. **Set the Blending Mode to Screen.** Scale and place it to your liking. Again I converted the photo to a Smart Object before scaling.



**Add a Layer Mask** to the star cluster layer and **hide the edges** of the photo as well as the parts you don't want. I also added a Black/White Adjustment layer to the stars to get rid of all the colours.



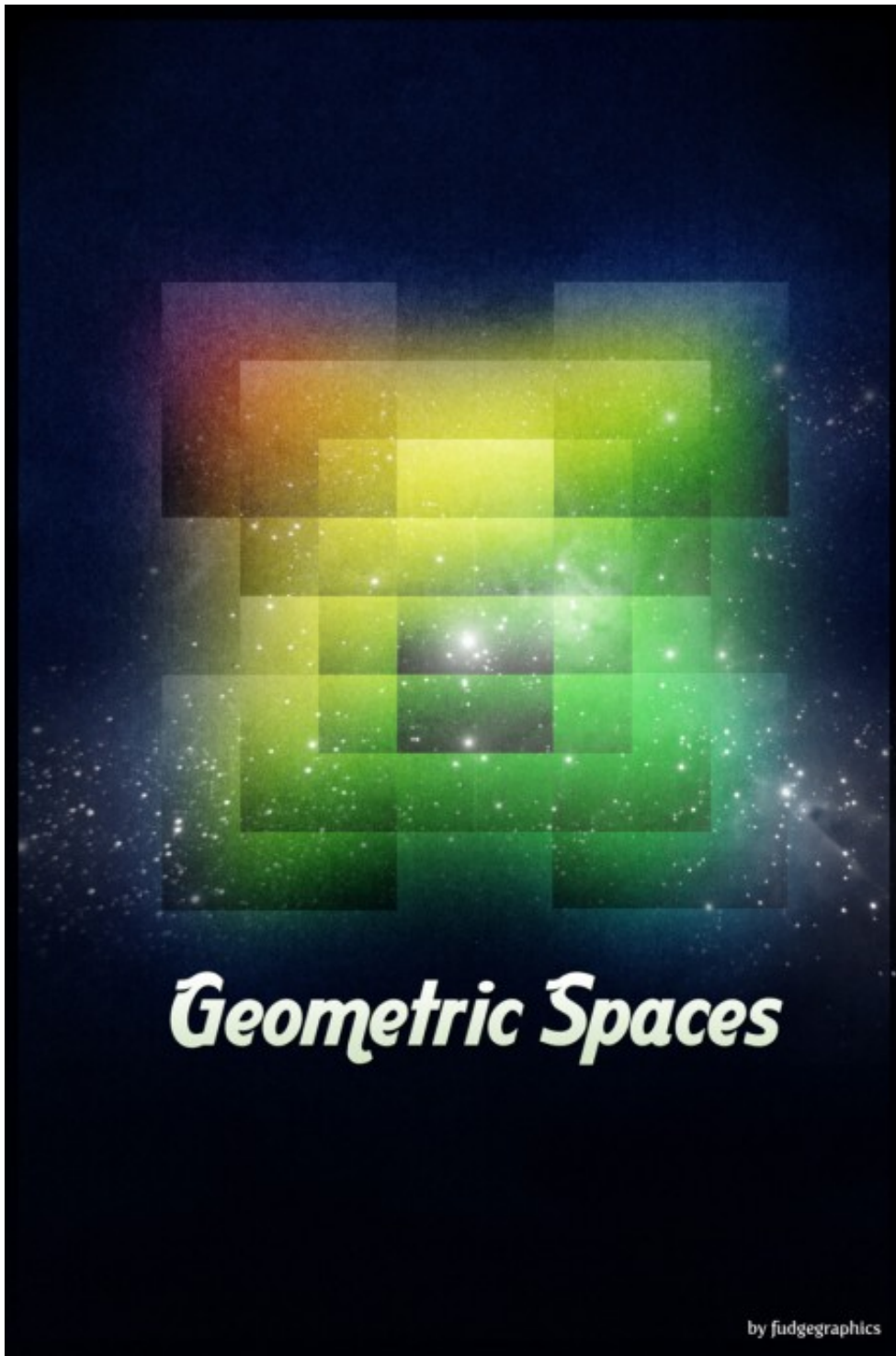
## Final Image

That's it. The design can be finished of with a rounded border and dark vignette. Here's the final retro cosmic design that we have created today.



## **The Possibilities are endless**

Here's another piece designed using the same techniques.



I encourage you to play with different shapes, angles and gradients. Go nuts, have fun and don't forget to post your images in the [Fudgegraphics User Showcase on Flickr](#) for us to see. Please leave a comment if you run into any trouble completing this tutorial.

### **iPhone Wallpapers:**

As a special bonus I made these 2 designs into iPhone/iPod Touch Wallpapers. I hope you like them.





## Download:



contains 1 .zip file – 2 Wallpapers, 359 Kb

Written by [Franz Jeitz](#)



Franz Jeitz is a freelance designer and owner of Fudgegraphics. Originally from Luxembourg he now lives in London. Franz loves design, music and is a tea enthusiast. Follow him on [Twitter](#).

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