



ALL NEW

Colour
Management
Pro

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Preface

For the vast majority of photographers looking for help with colour management, technically complex solutions will only lead to organised despair, so every subject in this book is approached from a practical standpoint because it doesn't require a PHD in colour theory to achieve consistently beautiful colour.

In the days before digital capture became widespread it's reasonable to say that colour management was only properly considered by high-level professionals and even then the available tools had some notable limitations. For most photographers the process involved little more than choosing a particular film that produced likeable colours and finding a reliable photo lab for the processing.

Digital photography changed everything and suddenly photographers found themselves in the driver's seat with the task of managing the colour personally. To some this was an opportunity and to others a curse, however the major advantage is that photographers are now able to control the output to a far greater degree than was previously possible. In essence, we now have more creative control but also a greater responsibility to get everything right.

The aim of this book is not to explain every nook and cranny of pointless colour theory that is rarely needed in the real world but to try and demystify the overall process and apply a very pragmatic approach in simple language, so you can reliably produce pleasing results across a range of situations; today, next week and next year.

Most photographers still tend to view effective colour management with a degree of confusion and trepidation but given recent advances in both software and hardware it really doesn't need to be that complicated nowadays. A little upfront investment in tools and knowledge is all we need to produce great results every time.

A few months ago I broke the habit of a lifetime and looked inside the engine bay of my car for about ten seconds before sheepishly realising everything is electronically controlled nowadays. Any further investigation would be utterly pointless; yet I'm not in the least bit bothered how it works whether driving down the motorway or handbrake turning into a London parking space.

In much the same way there is no point in becoming obsessed with tricky colour theory for 99% of photographers. Indeed that would be counterproductive, since our aim is to work as efficiently as possible with the minimum of fuss and confusion. All we need is a streamlined workflow that doesn't require continual maintenance or research. Above all it should also fit in with our individual needs as well, since this is not a case where one glove fits all.

Most photographers have the relatively simple aim of ensuring that their prints match what they are seeing on the monitor, however I shall also look at other areas that may be of interest to more advanced readers and those who are simply looking to understand a little more. Ultimately only you can decide what to incorporate in your workflow based on your personal objectives.

You may of course decide to cherry pick and go straight to particular sections, which is fine, however I would encourage you to at least read through some of the earlier parts because there are several suggestions during the shooting and setup stages that should make your overall workflow far more effective and reliable.

Any attempt to cover every aspect of colour management would be an act of sheer folly because it would cover literally thousands of pages, so I have chosen instead to focus on the areas that are primarily of interest to photographers and to discuss them from that point of view.

For those who feel a degree of anxiety about the whole process of colour management I'd like to reassure you that all of this can be done with relatively little fuss once the basic concepts are clear and I'll offer guidance at every stage, while also bearing in mind that we all have differing budgets and needs.

It would be naive to think you can operate a properly managed colour workflow with zero financial investment but it doesn't have to cost the earth if you take a sensible approach. Over the longterm, effective colour management produces a clear cash saving by cutting out wasted time and materials, which can be a huge drain on your bank account if you are throwing away one bad print after another.

There is one piece of advice on colour management I would like to suggest before you read further. Try to take it step by step and don't attempt to do everything in one go. There is a great deal of information to absorb and it's important to understand each stage clearly so you understand how to troubleshoot if something isn't right. If you can simply start by properly calibrating your monitor, you are already ahead of most other photographers.

NB If you find there are certain colour related words you don't understand you may well find them explained in the glossary at the end of the book. Although there is a vast array of scientific and technical jargon that can be used in colour management I will deliberately use as little as possible to try and keep everything simple.

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