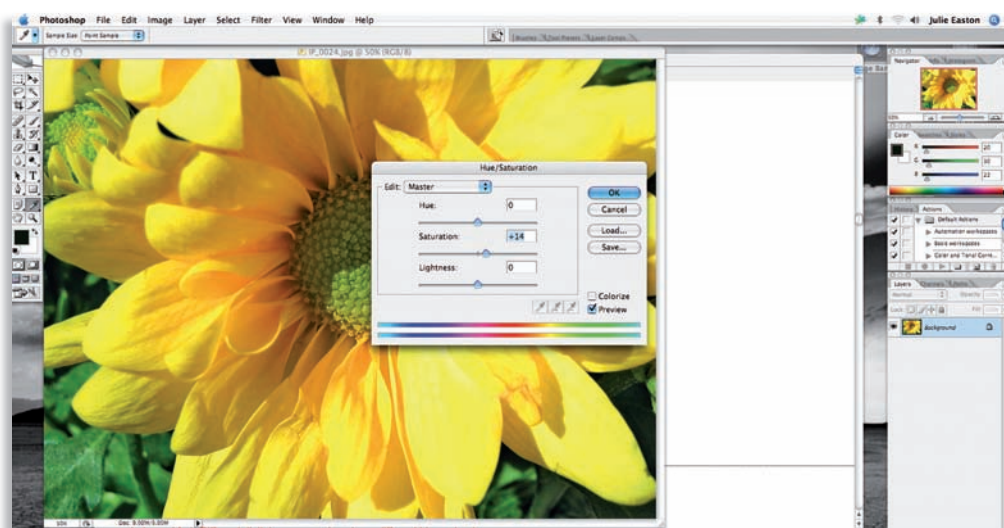


Helpdesk

Our Photoshop pro tackles your editing woes and sets you on the path to image enlightenment

BY JULIE EASTON



lighting can look off when different images from different cameras are comped together. I shoot under Tungsten lights, and set both cameras to the pre-set Tungsten white-balance setting, but they both produce different results. What's going on?

Simon Tucker

This is a common problem and it relates to the different ways in which camera manufacturers describe Tungsten lighting. Tungsten covers a wide range of different colour temperatures from 2000-24000 degrees Kelvin for domestic bulbs, to 3200-3400 degrees Kelvin in studio setups. It depends on what the particular manufacturer has based their Tungsten setting on as to what colour the resulting image will be. Generally cameras will be matched to the studio setting (which is what Tungsten film was balanced for), but some cameras will aim to reproduce in accordance with domestic values, which will produce cold tones if used under studio lighting.

The best thing that you can do to achieve consistency between your different cameras is to use a manual white balance setting if there is one available. Measure the light using a piece of white card underneath the lighting that you intend to use for each of your cameras and hopefully the images will comp together naturally. If you can, shoot in RAW so that you maintain the image data and can adjust the white balance settings in post-production.

LIGHTEN UP: Measure your white balance manually if working under studio lighting



HUE'S THAT GIRL?

I am having trouble getting strong colours from my digital SLR and I spend a lot of time in Photoshop increasing the saturation, but the results still aren't as vivid as when I worked with film. I use a lot of flora in my digital artwork and I really need the texture and vibrancy of flowers to remain.

However, I find that Photoshop tends to turn colour into solid blocks and there are uncomfortable transitions between different colours. Can I avoid this effect when adjusting the saturation?

Sarah Dunn

Increasing the saturation of an image in Photoshop leads to blocky colours and unwanted artefacts because you are clipping the pixel data and forcing tonal values too high. If you are selectively increasing one colour channel, then you might find that some pixels are changed and others nearby are not,

FLOWER POWER: Use the Saturation command as a last resort to avoid blocky colours; try increasing the contrast

which is where the "uncomfortable transitions" make their appearance. Digital saturation enhancement will exaggerate the differences in tones that are usually too subtle to notice, and this will lead to the loss of texture that you describe.

Before jumping right in and using the Saturation command in Photoshop, try enhancing the contrast first, as this may help to bring out the tones in your image without losing pixel data. Also, use the Levels and Curves adjustments options to make subtle changes to your image. Use the Saturation command as a last resort and hopefully you'll find that your floral images retain more detail, but still have plenty of contrast and colour.

BALANCING ACT

I use a couple of different cameras to capture images that I later comp together for digital projects. I am having trouble getting to grips with my white balance settings and the

"BEFORE JUMPING RIGHT IN AND USING THE SATURATION COMMAND, TRY ENHANCING THE CONTRAST FIRST"

LET THERE BE LIGHT

I am weighing up the odds of buying a handheld light meter and wanted your advice. I have a Canon 5D with reflective light metering and was wondering if I would benefit from investing in a handheld meter that has both incident and reflective metering options.

Ian Clifton

All DSLRs have reflective light metering built in, which measures the light reflected by the subject toward the camera. Incident lighting measures the light falling onto the subject, and can give more accurate light readings. With a handheld meter you can get in close and take a meter in the same light as the subject, figuring the results into your calculations. The main advantage of using a handheld meter is if you are photographing light, bright subjects like snow, which can often fool a camera's built-in metering into underexposing the image. They are essential under studio lighting to ensure correct exposure of your subjects. Sekonic (www.sekonic.com) does a good range of light meters to suit all budgets.

PEN TROUBLES

I am using a PC with Photoshop CS2. I love your magazine and your tutorials are really excellent, but unfortunately something is holding me back from being able to really move forward creatively. I just can't get my head around the Pen Tool, therefore I can't create any of the great stuff in your magazine that relies on this. It's completely my fault I know, but I just can't get past what has now become a major hang-up with my Photoshop usage. I have studied web tutorials on using the Pen Tool, but it just doesn't click for me.

Would there be any chance at all of some help with this? I'm sure I can't be alone in finding the accurate plotting of points for tracing completely mystifying.

Antony Baker, via email

You're definitely not alone in this one, Antony. A lot of people have trouble getting used to the Pen Tool for cutting out objects, but it is an essential tool to get to grips with if you want to further your Photoshop skills. The trick here really is practice, practice, practice. The web is full of great tutorials that can help you, though some are more complicated than others. One good tutorial can be found at <http://retouchpro.com/tutorials/?m=show&id=30>, which isn't the best-looking of step-by-steps but it is a good one for simple explanations. We wish we could offer you a quick-fix solution, but unfortunately this is one case when there really isn't one.



OUT OF CONTROL: The Pen Tool is tricky, but you just gotta learn how to use it. Online tutorials can help



SENSITIVE TYPE: The larger sensor on the D50 make it a better choice for good image quality than a prosumer camera

PIXELS VS POWER

I want to invest in a new camera but I am confused as to what is the most important thing to look for: megapixels or image-processing capability? I need to be able to print out comfortably at A4 and possibly larger, and I am torn between a nine-megapixel Fujifilm S9500 prosumer model, or a six-megapixel Nikon D50 DSLR. I've been working with film and scanning my images in, but now I think it is time to go digital.

Jamie Donaldson

Once upon a time it was all about the megapixels, but that race seems to be finally slowing down. Manufacturers are realising that pursuing higher resolutions isn't worth it when most users don't print out large enough to notice a difference. What is more important is the size of a camera's sensor. Prosumer models, like the S9500 that you mentioned, have tiny sensors meaning that the enlargement ratio for printing out at A4 is a lot bigger than on the D50, which, like all DSLRs, has a larger sensor. This means that at A4 size you will get better quality images from the lower-resolution Nikon than the nine-megapixel Fujifilm. You will also benefit from less noise and better contrast. Therefore, if picture quality is your only concern then we'd definitely recommend going for the DSLR option, although you will have to take other things into consideration like cost, additional lenses and portability before making your final decision.

MEMORY LOSS

I've done something silly and accidentally deleted some images off of my memory card. It was a long and tiring shoot and the thought of having to do it all again is not exactly filling me with joy. I have heard of rescue software; can you recommend a product, and will it work?

Jane Dorman

There are programs that can recover images from a memory card to a reasonably good extent so don't panic just yet! A quick Google search reveals a number of different software solutions that you can use. PhotoRecovery is available from www.gorecovery.com and comes in both Mac and Windows versions. The software costs £22.78 (\$42) and can be downloaded as soon as payment is made so you can begin your attempt to recover images straight away. There is no guarantee with this sort of program, however, so don't be disappointed if your images are beyond saving. In the meantime don't use your memory card or format it, otherwise your chances of recovery disappear completely.



BRING IT BACK: You may be able to save deleted images on your memory card with software like PhotoRecovery

HELPDESK CALL FOR QUESTIONS

Want help with your Photoshop problems? Then let our team of experts sort you out.

Send your emails to us at:
advancedpshop@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Remember to specify whether you are using a PC or Mac and the version number of your edition of Photoshop.