



Color Lookup

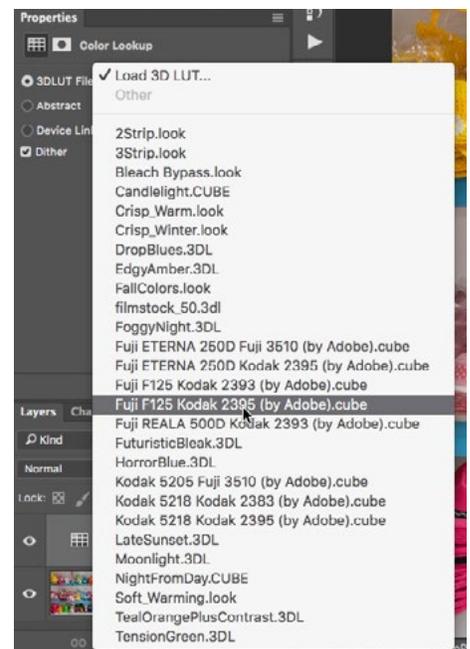
Color Lookup

In Photoshop, the Color Lookup adjustment uses Color Lookup profiles, and you'll learn how to create those in this lesson. In the past, this adjustment has been mostly useful to people who work with video, but it has become more popular with photographers as of late. It allows you to build up an effect using a series of multiple adjustment layers and then save that look by creating a Color Lookup profile. A Color Lookup profile is essentially a table of numbers that describes the set of colors you started out with and the set of colors you ended up with (as a result of the adjustments). Video people use this technique a lot because it allows you to apply the effect at 60 frames per second, across multiple types of software, without taxing the computer too much.

The Color Lookup command as an adjustment layer

You can access Color Lookup by clicking on the Adjustment Layer icon at the bottom of the Layers panel and choosing Color Lookup from the menu that appears. The adjustment layer will appear above your image layer in the Layers panel and the settings for the adjustment will appear within the Properties panel. You'll find that the settings are different than those you would get when creating other adjustments. Each menu choice basically gives you an effect that someone else created using a series of adjustments and incorporates them into a single preset.

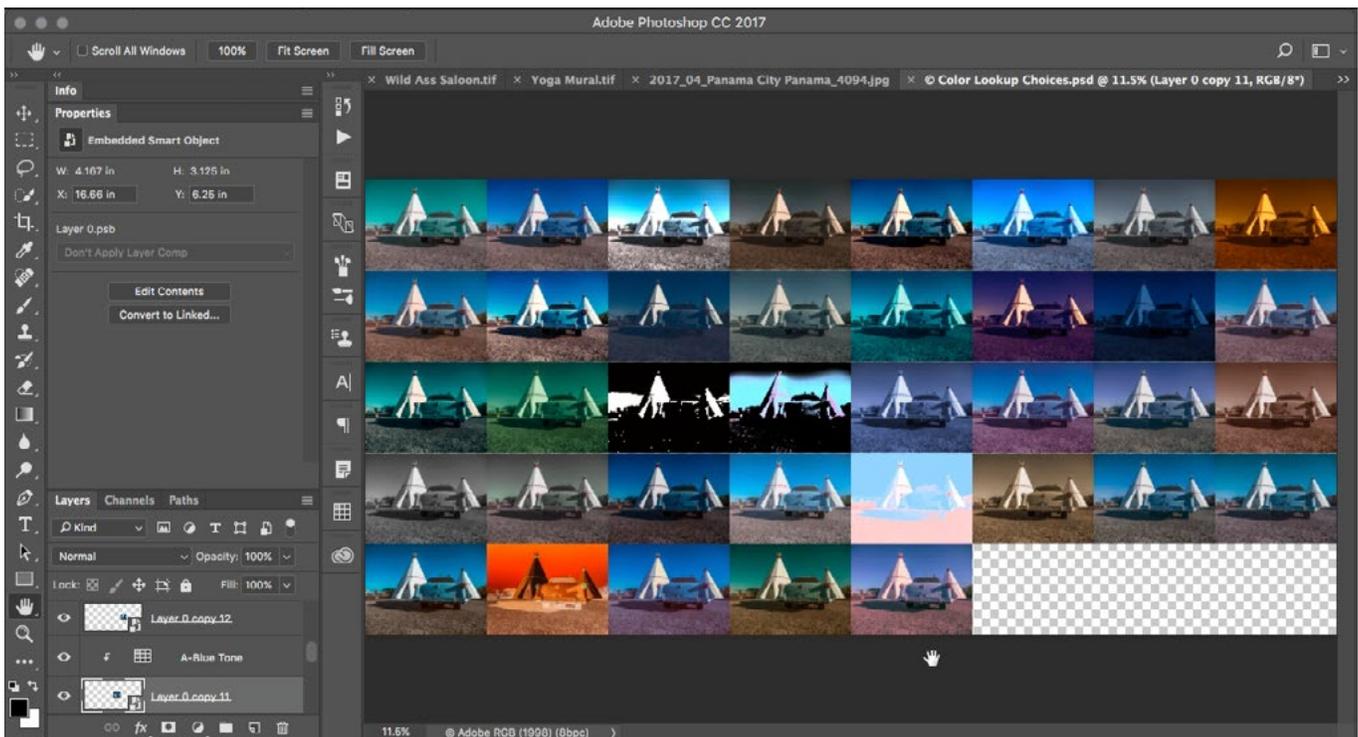
The Color Lookup settings give you three different types of menus to choose from: 3DLUT, Abstract and Device Link. Each of these menus contains various presets that come with Photoshop. Choosing one will apply an effect to your image. At the top of each menu, you'll find the "load" option, which will allow you to use a profile you created.



Here, we clicked on one of the preset menus within the Color Lookup Properties panel.

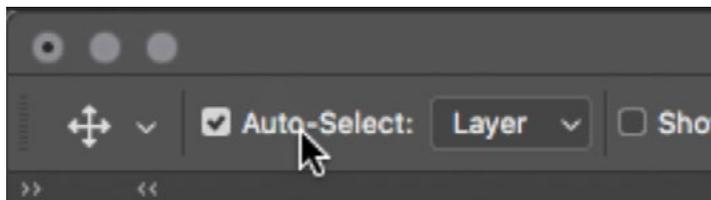
The “Color Lookup Choices” preview document

In the class materials for this lesson, you’ll find a file that allows you to easily preview all of the different Color Lookup presets. This file, titled “Color Lookup Choices,” takes each one of the presets and applies it to an image so you can get an idea of what each effect looks like. The document is special because it will allow you to preview the effects on any picture. It applies each of the Color Lookup effects on separate instances of the same smart object, creating a grid of images displaying the different effects. If you double-click on one of the smart object image layers, it will open as a separate Photoshop document. You can then copy your own in image (by choosing Select > All and then Edit > Copy) and paste it into that “Color Lookup Choices” document (by choosing Edit > Paste) and click Save. When you click Save, the image will be updated within every instance of the smart object in the “Color Lookup Choices” document. Note that you may need to resize the image you pasted by using the Free Transform command (Edit > Free Transform) so that it is scaled correctly.



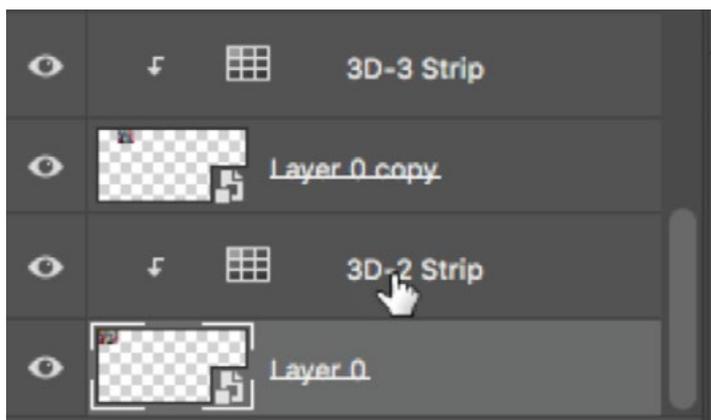
The “Color Lookup Choices” document is being viewed in Photoshop. It creates a grid of the same repeat image with the different Color Lookup presets applied to it.

After you insert your own image into the “Color Lookup Choices” document, you can zoom in and move around the document to decide which of the effects you like the most. When you find one, you’ll need to determine which of the Color Lookup presets is being used. With the Move Tool active, look in your Options Bar above the main image window and determine whether the Auto-Select feature is turned on. (The setting will be on the left side of the Options Bar.) If Auto-Select is turned on, simply click on the image thumbnail you like and that layer will automatically be activated in the Layers panel. If that setting is turned off, hold down the Option key (Alt on Win) and click on the image thumbnail that you like. Holding down the Option key temporarily activates the Auto-Select feature for as long as you have the key held down.



The Auto-Select setting can be found in on the left side of the Options Bar above the main image window.

With the desired image layer highlighted in the Layers panel, look at the name of the adjustment layer that appears directly above it. This will be the name of the Color Lookup preset that was applied to it. You’ll then know which preset to use on your image or images. You can even easily apply the preset by dragging the adjustment layer to another image document. To do this, activate the Move Tool, click within your document and drag the adjustment up to the Photoshop tab that contains the image you want to apply the effect to. The document containing your image will become active and you will need to move your mouse into this destination document before releasing the mouse button. This will place the Color Lookup adjustment layer into your image document.



After activating the image layer that contains the effect you like, look at the name of the adjustment layer “clipped” to it (appearing above the image layer). This is the name of the Color Lookup preset.

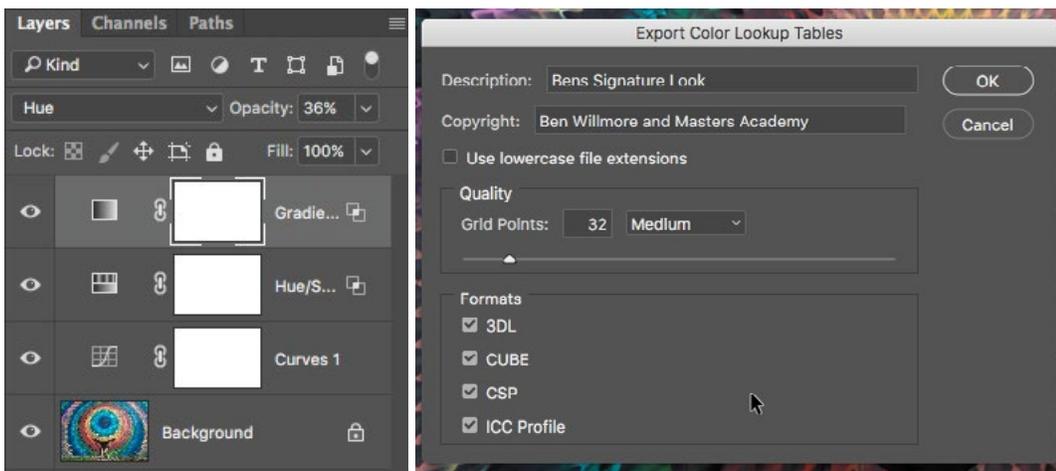
Creating your own Color Lookup presets

If you don't like any of the Color Lookup presets that come with Photoshop, you can make your own.

Why would you want to create your own presets? Here is one reason: There are some effects that will require you to switch between color modes in order to execute the effect. For example, you may need to take an RGB document, switch it into LAB mode in order to apply a certain effect and then switch back to RGB mode. If you take the effect created while in LAB mode and turn it into a Color Lookup preset, you will not need to switch color modes in the future.

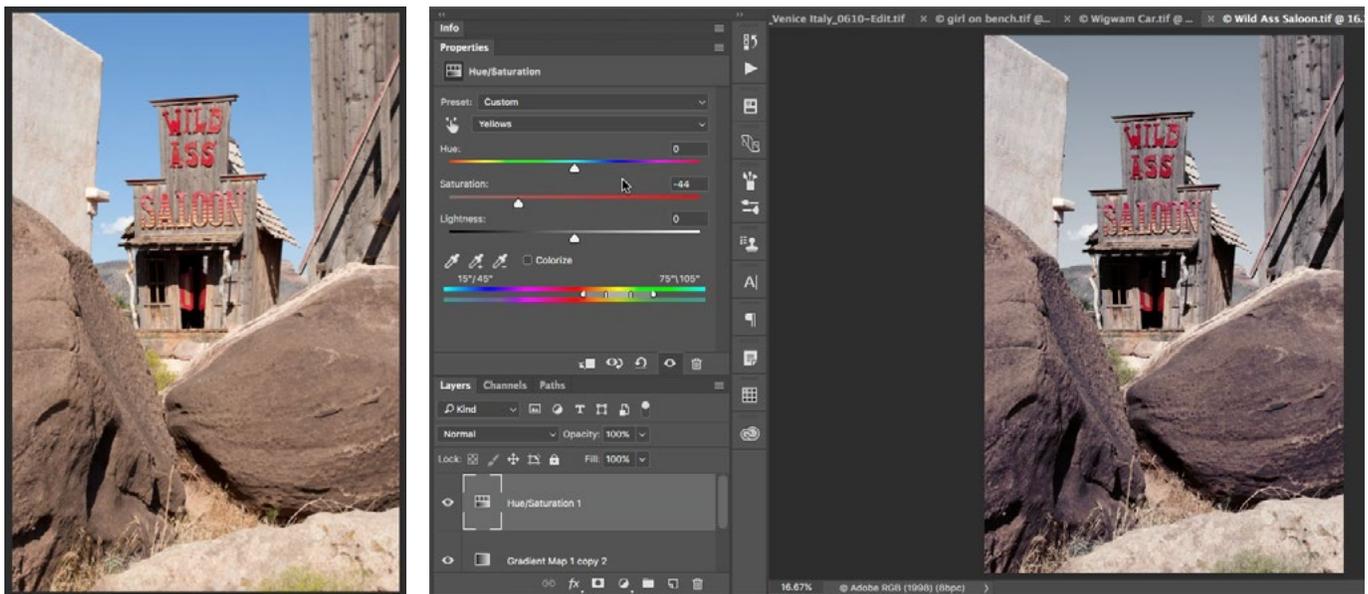
Here is another reason you may want to create a Color Lookup preset: Maybe you have a specific formula you use for creating a particular look and you want to keep that formula private. In that case, you would use however many adjustment layers you need to create the look and then save that look as a Color Lookup preset. Then, you will just need to apply one preset to create the look and no one will know what went into creating it.

To create your Color Lookup preset, open an image so that the image layer is the Background layer. Then, use any combination of adjustment layers required to create the effect you like. Note that any changes to the layer masks will not be recorded in the Color Lookup preset. Then, go to the File menu and choose Export > Color Lookup Tables. A dialog will appear and, at the top, you can use the Description field to name the preset.



Far left: Three adjustment layers were used to create an effect. This effect will be turned into a Color Lookup profile. Directly left: The Export Color Lookup Tables dialog will give you options for the profile.

The Quality slider will determine how exact the adjustment should be. The lower the number you use, the more the colors can vary and the size of the profile file will be smaller. The higher the setting you use, the more exact the colors will be, but the file size will be larger and it will take a longer amount of time to apply the preset. It's generally a good idea to keep the Quality setting at Medium or higher. I usually keep all of the Formats check boxes turned on so that I can test them later. Click OK and you'll be prompted to choose a location for the preset on your hard drive and click Save. You will end up with one file for each of the formats you selected within the Export Color Lookup Tables dialog. If they were all selected, you'll have four files. To test these presets, open an image in Photoshop and create a Color Lookup adjustment layer. In the Properties panel, click on one of the menus and choose Load. You'll then be prompted to navigate your hard drive to the location where you saved the presets and click Open. Your preset will then appear in the menu and, when you apply it, you'll get the same results as when you combined the adjustment layers before creating the preset.



Above is one example of an effect that was created with adjustment layers and then turned into a Color Lookup profile. In this instance, the two adjustment layers used were Gradient Map (using a brownish gradient) and Hue/Saturation (desaturating all colors except for the reds and oranges).