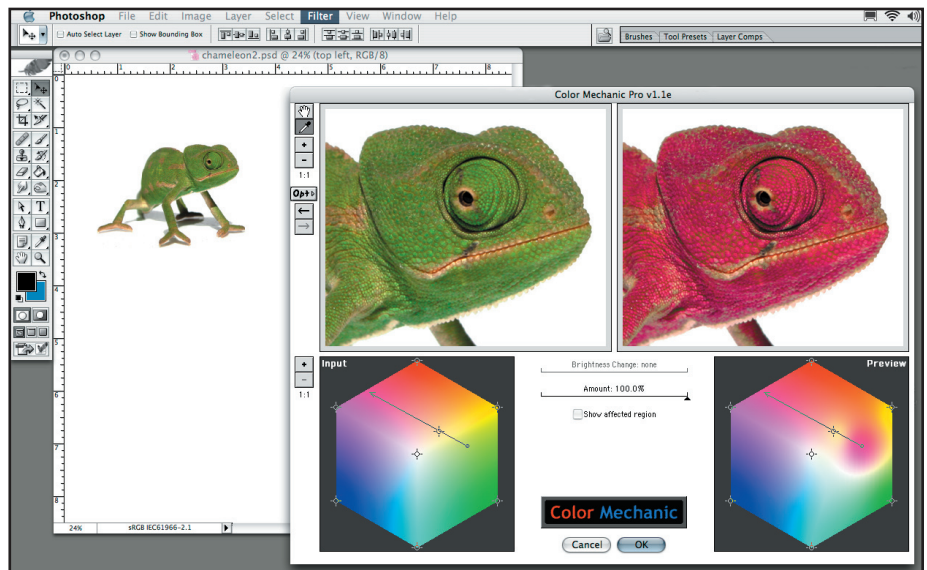# SELECTIVE COLOR ADJUSTMENT
by Brad Sheehan

Often times, working with images requires color changes and adjustments, some of which can be subtle changes used to enhance an image - such as tweaking skin tone and eye color, and others are done for a more dramatic result. In many situations I want to literally 'reach' into the image and change a specific color (or colors) and leave everything else completely unchanged. Of course, I could do this by creating a selection and using various color controls to get the color I want. But that can be tedious and time consuming and may be hard to blend into the overall image. Fortunately there is great plug-in for making such spot changes – Color Mechanic Pro from Digital Light and Color. Here I will show some examples of the power and efficiency of this great tool.

I'll start by showing you how easy it is to simply change a color. In the screen shot below, I have opened an image of a green chameleon (left panel) using the Color Mechanic plug-in running in Photoshop.

To change the body color, I click on a piece of the green skin. The selected color is shown in the color picker beneath the image. I then simply drag the point in the color picker to the new color I want -- in this case red. I can see the result in the image in the right panel. Notice that none of the other colors are shifted. Only the green is affected.

So the basic idea is simple. Just pick a color and drag. No selection areas are required.

I can also control the brightness of the selected color on the brightness slider between the two color pickers. Thus Color Mechanic lets me control all three parameters -- hue, saturation and value.

Color Mechanic's simple and intuitive controls, such as zoom, eye dropper, color brightness, and color hexagon selection, allow for precise color selection and adjustment with only a few clicks of the mouse. Select general areas for adjustment, or lock certain colors/areas to prevent them from being affected by changes in other areas of the image. Its a simple and efficient process that creates truly stunning results.


CHAMELEON

This composition is created with four duplicate layers of the chameleon photo. With Color Mechanic, each layer can be edited individually. This creates even more control over your image and allows for stunning composites, such as this, while still maintaining the same neutral tones across the entire image.

BOTANICAL GARDEN

This example illustrates the dramatic changes that can be achieved using Color Mechanic. Generally, several selections would be required to selectively control the depth, saturation, values and tonal range of the effected color.
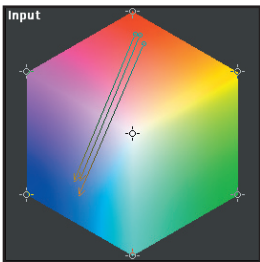
Here, colors were selected using the eye dropper within the Color Mechanic dialogue box, then the color points were dragged to a new color to achieve the required result. It is important to note that not only the leaf color has been changed/adjusted, but also the reflected colors, which become vital in creating a believable image.

SKIN TONE

Color Mechanic can also be used in a much more subtle fashion, as illustrated here, in the correction of inconsistent skin tones so often found in raw imagery. Depending on the lighting of the studio or surroundings, the skin tone of the subject can vary widely. This can be even more evident in composite images, or when using masking around individual subjects.
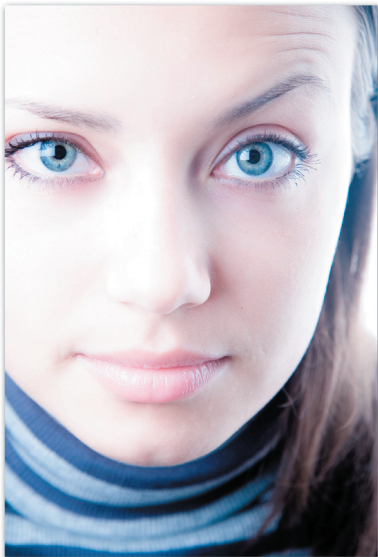
Here I have adjusted the skin tone to a more natural color while still maintaining the blue color in the model's sweater. I also changed the model's eye color to make the eyes much more vivid. It's a subiminal effect that gves the image more impact.

The eye color is close to the color of the model's sweater. So to hold the sweater color, I selected it but did not adjust it. This trick makes Color Mechanic very discriminating. As long as the colors of features don't actually overlap, You can literally split hairs, changing one color while keeping very similar colors from changing.
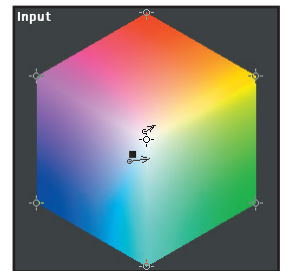
Above all, Color Mechanic allows for the ability to replicate corrections easily, over and over again. Its simplicity and integration with the rest of Photoshop's powerful tools make it at home in any designer's or photographer's applications.

A free trial of Color Mechanic can be downloaded from Digital Light & Color's web site (www.dl-c.com) and within 10 minutes of use, you'll understand the usefulness of this little plug-in as an important part of your everyday arsenal of tools.

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