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.
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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