

Practical Color Management: Eddie Tapp on Digital Photography

Eddie Tapp and Rick Lucas, 2006 (review copy has a 2007 copyright date), 162 pages.
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This book is eligible for the FRPCUG member discount from O'Reilly

Rating: Timberline*

This book presents the complex topics of color management in an easy to read and understandable manner, suitable for both the professional and non-professional photographer. Eddie Tapp certainly has the credentials to write this book. For more information on the author, connect to his website, <http://www.eddietapp.com/>, and to <http://www.leppphoto.com/eddietapp.htm>.

If you have ever said to yourself, “this photo doesn’t look like what I saw,” then you need to read and study Chapter 2, Understanding Key Color Management Concepts. The author writes about calibration, color profiles and color spaces, all of which can dramatically affect the finished photograph. Or, more accurately, he provides a discussion of “calibration vs. profiling,” which I found especially helpful in sorting out the need for, and the appropriate sequence of, the two techniques. The discussion of color spaces, or color gamuts, is also helpful, but the gamut diagrams do not, in my judgement, effectively show the differences between various classes of devices (e.g., monitors vs. scanners vs. laser printers vs. printing presses). Most non-professionals do not know just how much information in an image is lost—compared to a set of healthy human eyes—when using a camera and then trying to create a print from the resulting image. The discussion in this chapter will contribute to changing that situation, despite the need for better gamut comparisons.

I would also like to see a little more information on calibrating LCD’s. Having experimented with the gamut numbers on my laptop, and eventually returning to where I started, I could use some additional help understanding this topic. Even if I decide to buy one of the calibration kits recommended by the author. True, there is more information in Chapter 4 on this topic (including those recommended calibration kits). What seems to be missing is a link between setting the correct gamma value by the user, and current industry practice in setting the value (which, in some cases, is “normalized”) that is incorporated into actual hardware, when newly shipped from the manufacturer.

You can evaluate this chapter for yourself before you buy because it is available online at <http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/colormgmt/chapter/ch02.pdf>.

If you want to combine scanned photos (and you need to correct those scans), and photos from your digital camera into a printed album, you will find the information in Chapter 3 absolutely essential for a satisfactory result. Considering the vast array of image editing software applica-

tions available today, I don't think it is unreasonable to conclude that almost everyone with a digital camera has tried to correct problem photos. What is *not* obvious—at least to the casual photographer—is that there is a specific sequence needed for effectively applying corrections. That information is provided in Chapter 3, Establishing a Color Management-Friendly Workflow, so don't let the chapter title intimidate you. There are useful nuggets of information on how to set up the image capture devices (scanners or cameras) *before* you start. There are additional recommendations on which camera formats to use, and when to use them. There is also a discussion of how to “prepare a file for output.” While that may sound much too generic, the information on image processing, printer resolution and even paper choices will make a very big positive difference to the quality of your finished product.

There is also a very interesting sidebar on page 29 comparing the qualities of the two primary digital camera sensor technologies.

The remaining two chapters are probably of more interest to the professional photographer, but I suggest you read “The Future of Color Management” on page 133.

The quality of the printing is excellent. There are several sets of graphics that demonstrate subtle color variations.

This is an excellent book for anyone interested in understanding digital imaging technology. It requires some study. If you are satisfied with the processing results from your local retailer, then you will very likely not make use of the information in this book.

For those who enjoy the technology as well as the artistry of digital photography, this book is for you.

*Ratings Key:

- Sandpit--Avoid
- Small hill--Not recommended
- Foothill--Average
- Timberline--Excellent
- Fourteener--Must have