

Red Bandit Rescue – Color Correction for Photos

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Shoo away color bandits that live in places you frequently take photos, with the help of a Hue/Saturation Adjustment layer.

Do you have an invisible bandit that lives somewhere you frequently take photos? Mine lives in my kitchen and he is an evil little red guy. Nearly every photo I take there has a “lovely” red cast to it.

Whether or not you have a color bandit, you’re bound to take a photo every once in a while with a color cast. Today’s easy tip utilizes the Hue/Saturation Dialog box to help us “shoo” our color bandits away.

This is an ENCORE tutorial. It was originally published March 16, 2009, by Jenny Binder. It has been updated for current software.

Here is the before and after image Jenny Binder used to complete the tutorial. I will use my own photo.



Step 1: Open a Photo

- Open a photo (File > Open) with a color cast issue.

Here is a photo I took of my niece in our garden tub. I LOVE the photo, but the bathtub looks a little pink (it's white) and Nettie's skin turned out pretty red. Jenny's method of color correction helped my photo quite dramatically.



Step 2: Add a Hue/Saturation Adjustment Layer

- In the Layers panel, click on the Create New Fill or Adjustment Layer icon and choose Hue/Saturation.
- In the Hue/Saturation (Properties) panel, open the Channel drop down menu (currently shows Master) and choose the color you think is the problem. For this image, I'll choose Red.

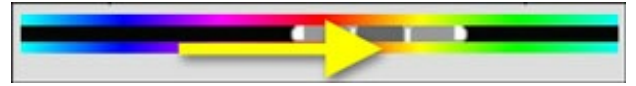
When you choose a specific color to adjust, the two spectrum color bars at the bottom of the panel have an added feature. The added gray bars are showing you what range of colors will change when you move the Saturation slider. The problem is, many times our eyes play tricks on us and the color we think we need to adjust, isn't really the right color. So the next step is necessary.

- In the Hue/Saturation (Properties) panel, click on the Color Picker tool (Eye Dropper tool) icon. It's the first one that does not have a plus or minus next to it.
- On the image, click on something that's supposed to be white. I'll click on the white mat inside the frame that's hanging on the wall.



Did your color channel change? When I clicked on the mat of the picture on the wall, my color channel changed to Yellow. If yours didn't change, that's ok, you're just a good guesser. (Or maybe you have better color sense than me!)

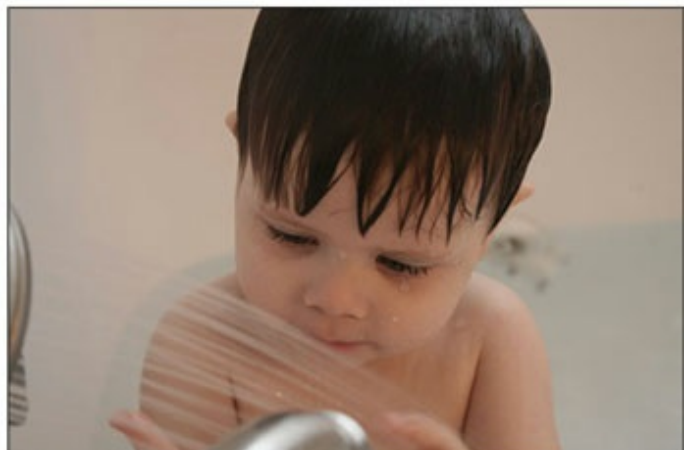
Step 3: Adjust the Saturation Slider



- In the Hue/Saturation (Properties) panel, click and drag the Saturation slider to the left to remove the color cast.



If the color cast is extreme, you might have to desaturate a lot, but most of the time a little adjustment will do it. Here's the original image and what it looks like after applying this technique. The after image will still need a few more adjustments to make it a good photo, but removing the color cast was a great start.



Step 4: Save the Adjusted Image

- If you are going to make additional adjustments to your image, save it (File > Save As) as a PSD file with a unique name.
- When you are finished making adjustments, save the image as a JPG file with a unique name.
- Close the original working copy without saving.

Here is the image after additional adjustments were made. I LOVE it.



A NOTE from Jenny Binder: This technique doesn't work on every photo. Sometimes it ends up de-saturating something you didn't want changed. But it does work most of the time. Also, if you are camera-savvy, you might be asking why I don't just adjust the white balance on my camera before taking the pictures. I guess because normally the photos are of my children (ages 7, 4, and 1), and catching them "in the act" isn't something that can wait on me to finish adjusting my camera settings. I'd rather have a red picture I want (and can fix) than a perfect picture that was taken 20 seconds late and didn't capture the moment.



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