

# Introduction to Color Correcting

## GET A CINEMA-QUALITY LOOK AND FEEL IN YOUR NEXT PROJECT

Most of the videos that you view online today have a lot in common: They are shot on a digital video camera, are cut together to some music, have had some titles added, and are compressed and then uploaded. The online audience has an insatiable appetite for aerial footage, and you want to make sure that your content looks as appetizing as possible. We're going to discuss some techniques that, with practice and patience, will give your videos the cherry on top to stand out among all the other eye candy.

### Standard shooting

Most of us purchased a traditional camcorder-type camera or one of the many popular action cameras to capture life's moments. The average consumer will take the camera out of the box, charge the battery, insert a storage card, and start shooting without changing a single setting. This method produces satisfactory results for most, and if you fall under this category, there is absolutely nothing wrong with this approach. If you're more of a "prosumer" or an aspiring cinematographer who likes to take advantage of all the features

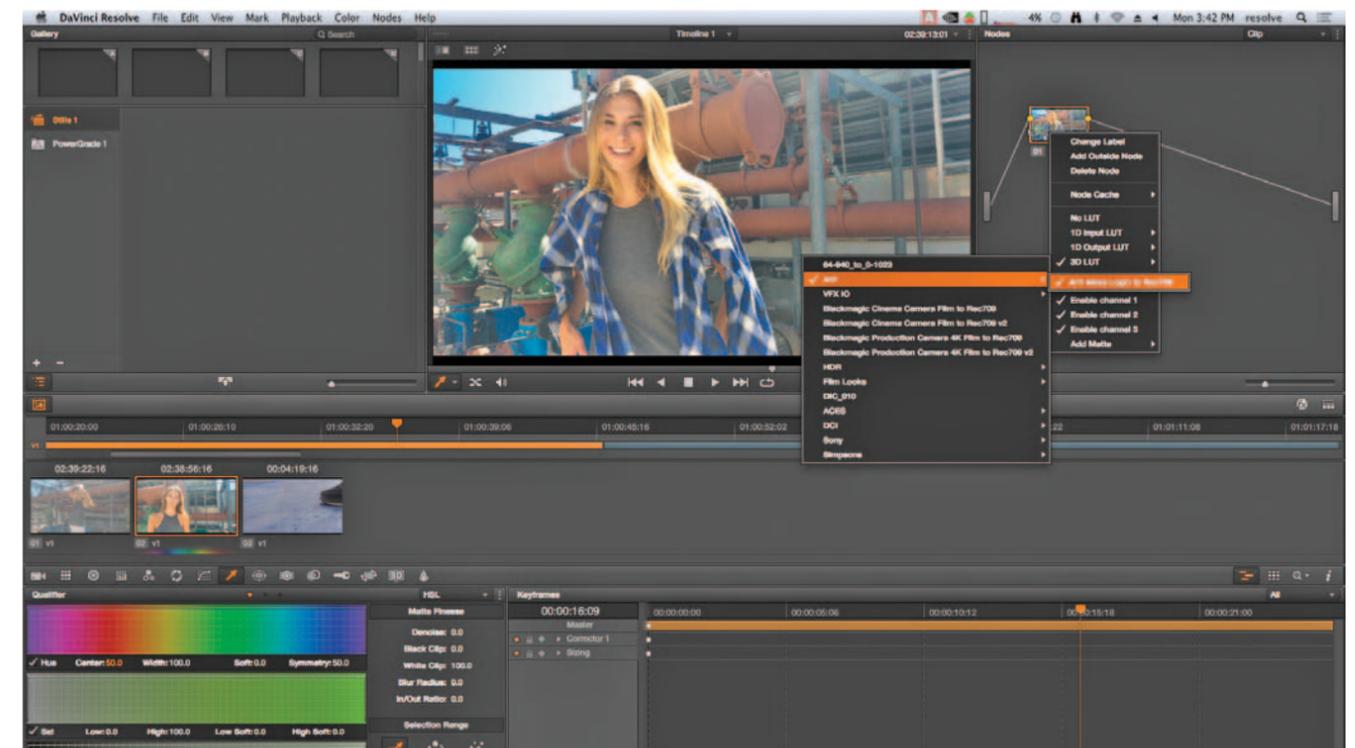
of the camera you paid for, then you might have noticed that the camera has much more to offer.

Depending on the type of camera you shoot with, you might have different user-selectable modes that alter how the video is recorded; they could be named something as simple as "vivid," "cloudy" or "cinema." These settings make certain assumptions for you, such as shutter speed, white balance, and ISO (sensitivity to light). All of the camera presets have their own pros and cons, and for most videos that go straight from camera to YouTube,

you probably won't need anything more. Those of you who are willing to spend some time in postproduction, should do yourselves a favor and find the mode on your camera that gives you a very low-contrast, low-saturation image, which is commonly referred to as "flat." Some of the most popular "aerial-friendly" cameras on the market allow you to control how flat the image is captured. On GoPro, there is a setting called "ProTune"; with Canon, it's "Log"; and DSLR has "CineStyle." The correct term for this look is "Log" (logarithmic).



It's very important to spend time understanding how to read scopes if you want to successfully balance an image and learn to make shots match. In this image, you can see that the shot is pretty well balanced.



Resolve offers a lot of contextual menus to make tasks such as applying a LUT as simple as a right mouse click. Here, we applied an ARRI LOG-C to REC709 to material shot on a Panasonic Lumix GH4.

### Why shoot flat?

When most people try shooting flat, they usually think, "Why would anyone ever use this mode? It's horrible!" Even producers who see Log on set for the first time say that. I won't get into the technical details or the color-science explanation behind Log here, mainly because we don't have the space. If you're really interested, there are some great online resources to satisfy your curiosity.

All modern, high-end production cameras can capture video in Log. They each have their own interpretation of Log, but for the most part, the image is captured flat and desaturated. Arri Alexa calls its version "Log C," and Sony refers to its version as "S-Log"; by the time you read this, you might have heard that Panasonic will be releasing "V-Log" for its aerial-friendly 4K camera, the Lumix GH4. DJI also recently announced the availability of an upgraded camera for the Inspire 1 called the X5 and the X5R. The X5R will be capable of recording in Raw using DJI's version of Log called "D-LOG."

### What is "Log"?

Log might not, at first, be pleasing to the eye, but you're seeing a canvas that offers you an entirely new level of detail; each pixel is just waiting to be painted! After you've spent some time in color correction, I promise that you'll enjoy shooting this way and that your productions will benefit greatly from this approach.

Color correction for video is similar, if not identical, to what you can do with still photography. If you shoot stills in Raw, you're already familiar with the concept of Log: You take

a Raw still into an editor such as Photoshop and add contrast, saturation, and filters. Guess what? It's the same concept to color-correct video. If you've shot simultaneous RAW and JPEG files on your still camera, you'll notice that the JPEG images have more contrast and saturation than the RAW. That is an example of using a LUT (lookup table). (More on this later.) If you're a still photographer, you are likely familiar with the concept of using a histogram to ensure a properly exposed image. We can't discuss color correction without bringing up the importance of learning how to use scopes, like a histogram.

### Getting the right color

Scopes are the only real way to ensure that your color is accurate. RGB Parade and

your work much easier. Even if you aren't going to color-correct your footage, you should always manually white-balance your cameras.

### The basics

Now, let's begin your first steps into the world of color correction. Believe me when I tell you that it isn't as difficult as you might think. There are many tools to use for color correcting video; some you might already own. They look intimidating, but once you understand how to navigate the basics, you'll see how intuitive these applications can be.

Most editorial software have a basic color tool set, but there are some color-specific applications that you should learn. One of the most widely used applications is DaVinci

*EVEN IF YOU AREN'T GOING TO COLOR-CORRECT YOUR FOOTAGE, YOU SHOULD ALWAYS MANUALLY WHITE-BALANCE YOUR CAMERAS.*

Vectorscope are the two most common scopes you'll come to rely on for color. You will quickly find out that you can't trust your eyes alone when coloring your footage, but it's easy to access scopes in most color correctors.

It's important to note that you should do yourself a favor and never trust auto white-balance on your camera. If your camera offers a way to manually white-balance, take advantage of that feature. If you're shooting with multiple cameras, make sure that you white-balance all cameras to match. This step alone will make

Resolve, made by Blackmagic Design; the Lite version of it is even free! Resolve has been used on multiple television shows and feature films.

Let's start with the basics. Load up a clip into Resolve, and apply a LUT. Think of it as a video or still filter similar to what you apply on Instagram to quickly modify your image. You can add a LUT to your Log video, and it will instantly add contrast and saturation, making it look similar to what you shot normally before you discovered Log. For those of you itching to know what most common "non-Log"



Lookup tables (LUTs) are nondestructive when used within the software, meaning that you can apply them to a shot and remove them without “baking” any color into the clip unless you want to.



The effect is similar to shooting stills as Raw+JPEG. The Raw image is flat, and the JPEG has a LUT applied to make it look “normal.”

footage is called, it is Rec. 709 (the format most Americans watch on TV). For a lot of you, adding a Rec. 709 LUT to your Log footage might be all that you need. If you’re capturing footage to turn over to a client, the LUT applied gives you the confidence to know that your footage will look amazing once it’s fully color-corrected.

### Final words

Now that you have a basic understanding of what you can accomplish by shooting Log, go out and shoot some flat footage, download DaVinci Resolve Lite (for free from [blackmagicdesign.com](http://blackmagicdesign.com)), and familiarize yourself with the interface.

In a future issue, we will work with the Log footage and go over some basics of color correction as well as discuss necessary tools, such as scopes, to refine the cinema look and feel of your videos. ✨