

CMYK Soft-Proofing & Luminosity Masks

From: **Patricia Minicucci** (*****@*****.com)

Sent: Sat 11/21/09 6:07 PM

To: tony.kuyper@goodlight.us

Tony:

I just wanted to give you a heads up re a use of luminosity masks that I do not believe you've mentioned before (but I could be wrong about that).

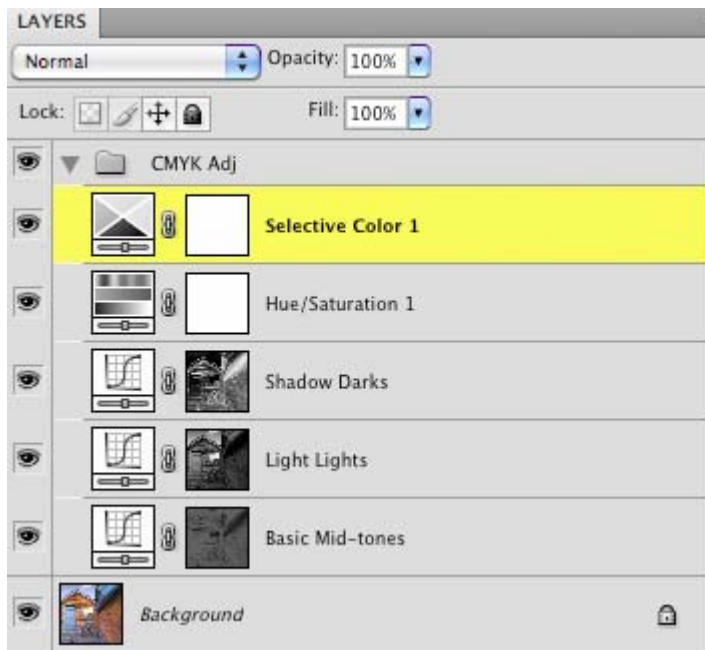
I've been involved in several book designs lately and have had to prep a lot of images for CMYK halftone printing. The normal guidance is to soft-proof using the available profile(s) and adjust images by:

1. A global curve to correct loss of "overall" contrast.
2. A Hue/Saturation adjustment layer to correct for loss of vibrancy.
3. A Selective Color adjustment layer to nudge blues from too much magenta, etc.

This is always a dispiriting exercise as you face the limitations of 4 color ink-sets. The worst, though, was the global curve adjustment. Bludgeoning is the verb that comes to mind, no matter how delicate I tried to make the adjustments. Since I am a "read-the-manual" personality, I persisted in following the advice of the pros, which is to say that I forgot to do what I already know how to do. In essence, to use targeted luminosity masks to correct contrast issues.

Out of frustration with results, I started using the masks to address the contrast issues posed by the soft proof. Which masks were used varied with the tonal range of the image itself, although increasing midtone contrast was almost always an automatic step. Since the "lights" adjustment was always to increase the "lights" and the "darks" was always to increase the "darks," I did not need to mask the mask.

Here's one such layer setup:



I cannot begin to tell you what a difference this has made. I have one finished book in hand and the color/contrast of the included images are just spot on. Using the masks in this manner gives an exact degree of control over contrast adjustments. No more bludgeoning. I almost want to say "no images were harmed by this conversion" but that may go a bit far.

Since I already use saturation masks with all color images to balance saturation and vibrancy, tweaks for CMYK are mostly idiosyncratic to the particular press being used and very, very modest. Slight boosts to yellows, etc. Using the soft proof as a guide, I have not felt the need to re-use saturation masking as a way to fine tune adjustments but that may change with different images.

In any event, you might think about mentioning this as an aside in updates to the luminosity masking tutorial. It is simply marvelous.

Best,

Pat

Patricia A. Minicucci