



### **COLOUR GRADING USING A REFERENCE IMAGE (December 2021)**

This method uses curves to match the colours of a photo to another image or picture.

Load the image you want to use as the colour reference and the photo to be altered into Photoshop.

With the rectangular marquee tool select the area of the reference image that you want to use.  
Press Ctrl + C to copy the selection.

Select the photo to be altered and add a new blank layer.

Press Ctrl + V to paste the selection of the reference image onto the photo on the new blank layer.

Use the Free Transform tool to enlarge and move the selection to where you want it on the photo.

On the new layer with the colour reference image use the lasso tool to pick out three areas 1. Highlights. 2. Mid-tones. 3. Shadows.

On each of these in turn as you select them, go to the Filter menu>Blur>Average and this will create an average of the colour selected in each area.

Press Ctrl + D to deselect the lasso areas. This ensures when selecting the Curves Adjustment layer the selection doesn't appear on the mask.

Then add a Curves adjustment layer above the background layer and below the colour reference layer. The Curves Adjustment layer is accessed via the adjustments layer icon on the bottom right. This icon is the half circle.

Remember to select the Curves part not the mask. For some reason Photoshop defaults to the mask which is odd.

On the Curves Adjustment layer double click on the white point dropper (The bottom one) and this brings up the Color Picker menu. Then drag the dropper to the highlight area on the reference image (which is now on the new layer) and left click on it and then click Ok on the Color Picker menu.

Make sure Sample All Layers is selected on the line just under the top menus otherwise it won't sample correctly.

A small panel will appear. Click on No as we don't want to save as a default.

Then use this white point dropper on a highlight area of the photo you want to colour grade. Just take the dropper and click on a highlight area.

The highlights should change to the selected colour. You can try different highlight areas to see which matches the best or which you prefer. This sets the white point.

Repeat for the black point (The top dropper) and finally for the mid-tones (The middle one). Try different areas to see which matches the best or which you prefer.

You can now add another Curves Adjustment layer and adjust things further if required.

Then possibly add a Hue/Saturation layer and adjust again as required.

Then possibly add a brightness / Contrast adjustment layer to tweak a bit more.

Once finished select these adjustment layers and Press Ctrl + G to create a group to keep things tidy.

You can now turn off the reference image layer and if you want can go to the Window Menu>Arrange>2-up Vertical so you can compare the two images side by side.

Then if required make further adjustments in the normal way using either Lightroom or Photoshop.