GETTING STARTED WITH APPLE COLOR

Color Basics

• Import project from FCP using file > send to > color
• Set drive for project, media, and render files the first time color launches (click upper left hand “up” button to navigate to desired folder)
• Optimal set-up for color correction is dual display (select in windows menu) and has video card to output to external monitor. In an ideal work environment, you are never using the computer screen to judge color
• Color interface is unlike other Mac applications – it’s designed for Davinci users and has a hardware color correction box styled interface
• Color has eight “rooms.” Clicking through tabs in sequence allows you to progress through working on a grade sequentially
• Each shot can have four grades applied consisting of one primary, up to eight secondaries, and effects.
• COLOR HAS ONLY ONE LEVEL OF UNDO! So be careful – it’s better to try something you’re not sure about on a new grade instead of potentially ruining a grade that is already carefully calibrated.
• Learning how to work with Color is best done with a LOT of experimentation, trial and error. Learning what all the buttons do is just the beginning.

User Preferences

• Setup room (if it’s not showing up, go to color>preferences)
• Set up project, media, and render directory
• Hue wheel angle (where colors are arranged on wheel - default setting matches FCP color wheel)
• Encoder sensitivity, joyball sensitivity etc - control surfaces - how fast and reactive color is to knobs if you are using external controller.
• UI saturation - how much color program will show (try muting display color to .3 to improve color judgment so eye is not overwhelmed by bright colors)
• Frames / seconds minutes/ hours - changes timeline display (usually keep set to seconds)
• Show shot name etc – modifies what you see in timeline display
• Loop playback - loops shot that you’re parked on, or loops in to out (if points are set)
• Maintain framerate - will drop frames during playback to maintain rate (vs playing every frame)
• Synchronize refresh (cleaner playback but processor intensive)
• Color wheels on right used to color code grades
• Monochrome scopes – change scopes color (green is traditional) – or turn off monochrome for color scopes.
• Limit shadow adjustment - turn on to apply color corrections more to blacks than
white (once you get whites white, you don't want whites to change as you grade) - turn on to make adjustments only to blacks - usually should be on

• Show control surface dialog (if you have external controllers)
• Enable proxy support - not usually needed (only if working in 2K or film) - turn off for working in video
• Video output – depends on your card. COLOR CURRENTLY CANNOT OUTPUT TO BROADCAST DISPLAY VIA FIREWIRE
• Force RGB – only for HD if you have video card (makes card to real time conversion from YUV to RGB) – disabled for firewire
• Autosave – input time
• Update UI (user interface) during playback – for real time scopes. Update secondary display for working with real time scopes without an external display.
• Radial HSL interpolation – turned off makes linear moves (red straight to green) vs moving around radius – usually you want smooth linear move from one color to another.
• Internal pixel format – bit rate of project and how it renders out (8 /10 /12 bit), set to match project (DV and HDV is 8 bit).
• Messages tab – for error messages
• Project settings (things like framerate, resolution – these are read from FCP project if you send to Color)
• Grades tab – storage bin for grades that you want to save; application (not project) specific
• Shots tab – kind of a shot bin

Primary In Room
• Doesn't make a “look,” just sets and balances shot to send to other rooms for tweaking
• Colors can be adjusted using wheels (like FCP), HSL sliders (next to wheels; sliders and wheels are tied together, so that changing one changes the other), curves (more like Photoshop, more refined tool that can tweak one color value without affecting other colors; allows you to isolate and work with one color channel), or by inputting numbers on right hand side.
• Monitor all adjustments using scopes – notice that shadow values affect bottom of scopes and highlights affect top of scopes.
• A great way to learn more about color correction is to hit “auto balance” button and look at the numbers in the advanced numbers tab.
• Move shadow wheel around – only bottom of scope moves around
• Small diamond at the bottom of each wheel, curve, and number restores to default.
• Copy to selected or copy to all to copy a grade to another shot (careful with “copy to all” since there is only one undo level, so you can’t undo the whole thing)
• Workflow: start by setting blacks, then highlights (turning off saturation can be helpful, use waveform). Look at bottom of scopes and try to get all three RGB
color areas on scopes more or less equal.

- Control-1/2/3/4 to create a new grade or toggle between existing grades
- Control-g to toggle grade off and on to compare graded image to original
- Reset button to restore to default
- Grades can be copied, pasted, or dragged and dropped onto other shots (or grade levels)

**Secondaries Room**

- Color can apply eight secondaries to each grade
- Enable box must be checked to view secondary adjustments (toggle on and off to compare before and after)
- Colors can be adjusted using wheels and sliders (similar to primary in)
- HSL values can also be adjusted using curves – very precise, fine tuning tool to pinpoint narrow range or spike using rubberbanding-like technique
- Reset button (reset all or reset one)
- Many colorists start in room 3/4 with a specific vignette, then backtrack to earlier secondary tabs – Color renders in order from left to right
- Pink, magenta, red are face tones – play with it to improve face color on hue curve (decrease red)
- Working with Vignettes:  
  a) Choose shape - circle, square, user shape (jumps into Geometry room to draw and attach new shape)  
  b) Vignette has three preview modes – full color, vignette only, and black and white image of matte  
  c) Play with vignette softness setting to optimize vignette edge  
  d) Vignette parameters are controlled by WHEELS, and inside / outside tab; NOT by curves, which will continue to make global changes to entire image
- Use HSL slider in upper right to make a chroma key matte; use eyedropper tool and crosshairs to select a color pixel from the image.
- Use tracker – creates frame-by-frame animated moving vignette for moving color effect (also done in Geometry room)
- Hit save on left to save a secondary

**Color Effects Room**

- Filters / FX on left column
- Workspace in center
- Parameters on right
- Create complex, sequentially processed effects by dragging and dropping multiple effects into workspace and building tree with branches and nodes
- Use “add” effect to create new branch (parameters can be adjusted to determine relative weights of branches of effects)
- Click each node to see effect at that point in the tree
• Use bypass button to compare before / after effect
• Click output to show final image
• Color FX bin has premade effects – useful way to learn about how color effects are built.
• New FX can be saved into Color FX bin

**Primary Out Room**
• Looks like primary in
• Enable clipping on right
• Modify ceiling RGB values
• Can be used for last minute tweak, but generally not so essential

**Still Store Room**
• Generates stills of color-graded shots that can be used to compare across multiple shots (useful for color matching and especially for skin tone)
• Make still at indicator position
• Double click still / display loaded still to see both in one frame

**Render Queue**
• Select a shot / add selected (make sure you are parked on desired grade)
• Or add all
• Hit start render
• YOU MUST DISABLE SCREEN SAVER or it will stop color from rendering (b/c screen saver is competing use of graphics card)
• File > send to > FCP
• Whole grade can be saved in set-up room for future use