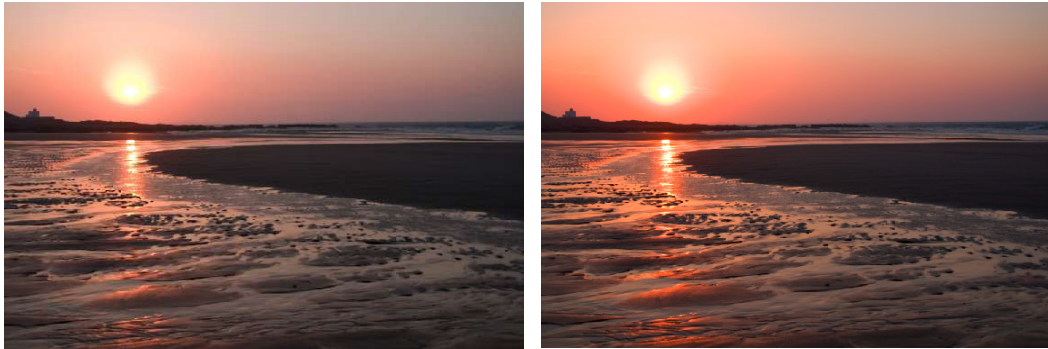


HOW TO BOOST COLOUR IN YOUR SHOTS

If you are a fan of Fuji Velvia you will no doubt have searched the web and found many “Velvia plug-ins” or “Actions” for Photoshop. Some of these work well and others are simply dreadful, the good ones usually cost money. This tutorial will give you a cheap option by learning how to do the job properly yourself.

Problems with Saturation

The first place most people start when trying to emulate the colour saturation that Velvia is famous for is with the “hue/saturation” slider in Photoshop. Unfortunately this tool is a bit of a brute and can create some nasty side effects in the shape of image artefacts, especially around areas of highlight. It also doesn't look very natural. Here is a before and after image using the “hue/saturation” tool to increase saturation.



Before

After

As you can see it's not very subtle and if you were to look closely at the image you would start to notice deterioration around the bright areas where data is being lost.

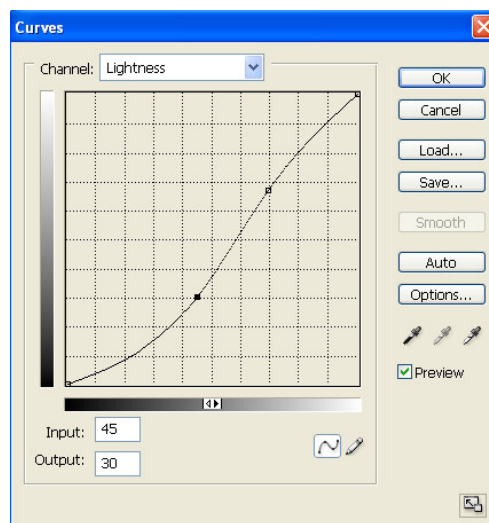
An Alternative

What follows is a very simple trick to add colour saturation to your images without introducing the same damage that the hue/saturation slider can. It also provides you with much more control. I am assuming you have already made any necessary colour correction before you take the following steps:

1. Convert your image to LAB Mode using “Image|Mode|LAB Color” from the menu.
2. Open the Curves dialog using “Image|Adjustments|Curves” from the menu. If you are not familiar with the curves dialog you should take a look at the Curves tutorial on my web site.
3. Select the Channel as “a” in the channels drop down.
4. Now drag the top of the Curve to the left and the bottom of the curve to the right. This increases the steepness of the line but it must still pass through the centre grid point in the dialog. This can be seen in the illustration below.



5. Now switch the channel to "b" in the drop down and repeat the procedure. Note that it's important that the line always passes through the centre point on the grid otherwise you will introduce a colour cast to your image. This can be a useful technique for performing colour correction but beyond the scope of this article.
6. You should now notice that your image is more saturated and the colour has been boosted without introducing any artefacts to the image. The technique is most useful where there is little colour in the image; with an image that is already quite saturated it is easy to go to excess. The basic principle is the steeper the line the greater the colour boost – but don't overdo it.
7. The final optional step is to add a little contrast by selecting the "Lightness" channel and then applying an "S-Curve" as shown below. The severity of the S-Curve will depend on the picture and the effect you are looking for.



8. The final image can now be sharpened using the lightness channel. If you are unfamiliar with this technique check out the sharpening tutorial on my web site.

Here are the before and after shots so you can compare the effect.



Above is the original image exactly as shot before any processing has taken place in Photoshop or Camera RAW.



Here is the finished image having had the colour boosted as described in the tutorial. The printed output is far better than can be achieved with the Hue/Saturation slider.

If you would like to know more about LAB I strongly suggest you take a look at the book "Photoshop LAB Color" by Dan Margulis.