

LOMO PHOTO EMULATION

Lomography has become the umbrella term for any lo-fi camera. It started with a small Russian camera called a Lomo-A and has expanded to include any inexpensive camera including the Holga and Diana cameras that are medium-format plastic body cameras with plastic lenses. These cameras are full of imperfections but the artistic community has come to embrace these cameras for exactly that reason. There is a Japanese concept called Wabi Sabi that refers to the beauty of imperfection. These cameras fit neatly into this philosophy.

Some of the characteristics of a Lomo style photograph are:

- Increased Saturation & Contrast
- Blown Highlights/Clipped Shadows
- Vintage Style Fading and Color Shifts
- Cross Processed Colors
- Heavy Vignetting
- Sharp Center/Blurred Edges
- Film Grain

This document has a collection of strategies to emulate these characteristics. They can be combined in many different ways, each producing a different look. They can be applied in very subtle ways to strengthen a more or less normal photograph or applied heavily to produce more stylized photos. It all depends on how you want your photographs to appear.

Here is a list of links to each strategy:

Image Intensity

[Contrast](#)

[Saturation](#)

[Clarity](#) (Midtone Sharpness)

Selective Saturation

[Reduced Color Strength](#), on top of

[Boosted Saturation](#)

Color Processing

These recipes can be used alone or together, mixed or matched to produce a wide range of tonal variations:

[Warming](#)

[Color Grading](#)

[Vintage Color Shift & Fading](#)

[Cross Processing](#) w/ [Blown Highlights](#) & [Clipped Shadows](#)

Lomo Effects

[Vignette](#)

[Blur Edges](#)

[Film Grain](#)

[Texture](#) (Grunge)

INCREASED CONTRAST, SATURATION & CLARITY

Three of the main adjustments that are performed on many photographs can be pushed a little harder to make stunning changes. These are easily achieved with curves adjustment layers.

Increase the Contrast >

The contrast is raised for most shots straight out of the camera. This is typically accompanied by a lowering of the gamma, the middle gray point, to darken and richen the photograph.

add _____ a CURVES adjustment layer with a typical typical S CURVE,
pull _____ the HIGHLIGHTS up
pull _____ the SHADOWS down
lower _____ the midpoint GAMMA as desired

Increase the Saturation or Vibrance >

The difference between Saturation and Vibrance is that Vibrance does not affect caucasian skin tones, i.e. the pink to orange to yellow range.

add _____ a VIBRANCE adjustment layer
pull _____ the SATURATION up
use _____ VIBRANCE instead if there are skin tones in the photograph

Increase the Clarity >

Clarity is midtone sharpness. The Layer Sharpen recipe, made famous years ago by David Blatner, author of 15 books including 'Real World Photoshop', is used and then restricted with the Blend If option in Layer Styles.

select _____ the image layer
duplicate _____ the layer [CMD] J
convert _____ for SMART FILTERS FILTERS> CONVERT FOR SMART FILTERS
set _____ BLENDING MODE to OVERLAY [or soft light for less, hard light for more]
run _____ HIGH PASS filter FILTERS> OTHER> HIGH PASS...
open _____ LAYER STYLES by double-clicking on the layer name
adjust _____ BLEND IF so only the midtones are affected

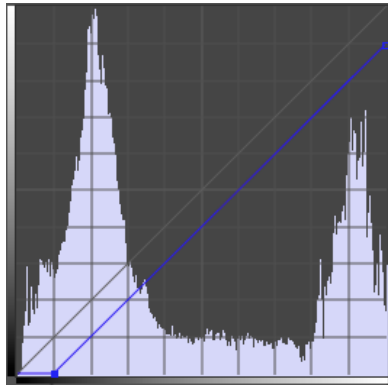
WARMING

As photographs age their colors shift. If you read the reports published by [Wilhelm Imaging Research](#), the leading authority on photographic longevity, you will see that there are numerous causes of fading and various responses to these causes, depending on if we are looking at color negative film, color slide film, b&w film, or digital prints with either dye or pigment ink.

One of the first things to happen is that photographs get warmer. This is simple to achieve with either a curves adjustment layer or by applying a color adjustment layer and scaling back its opacity. The former darkens the photo while the latter lightens it.

Warming with a Curve >

- add _____ a CURVES adjustment layer
 - select _____ the BLUE channel
 - pull _____ the bottom SHADOW point to the right by 10 to 15%
 - pull _____ the top HIGHLIGHT point down by 10 to 15%
- this warms up the photo and darkens it a bit



Warming with a Solid Color >

- add _____ a SOLID COLOR adjustment layer
 - the COLOR PICKER will open
 - select _____ a color in the golden yellow range
 - adjust _____ the OPACITY down to 10 to 15%
- this warms up the photo and lightens it a bit

COLOR GRADING

Color Grading is a term used in the film industry. There are many articles and tutorials written on the subject and many work to make it much harder than it really is. The effect is to cool down the shadows by adding blue and to simultaneously warm up the highlights by adding yellow.

Since blue and yellow are complementary colors they can be altered with one simple curves adjustment layer that affects only the blue channel. This is Color Grading demystified.

Color Grading with a Curves >

add _____ a CURVES adjustment layer

select _____ the BLUE channel

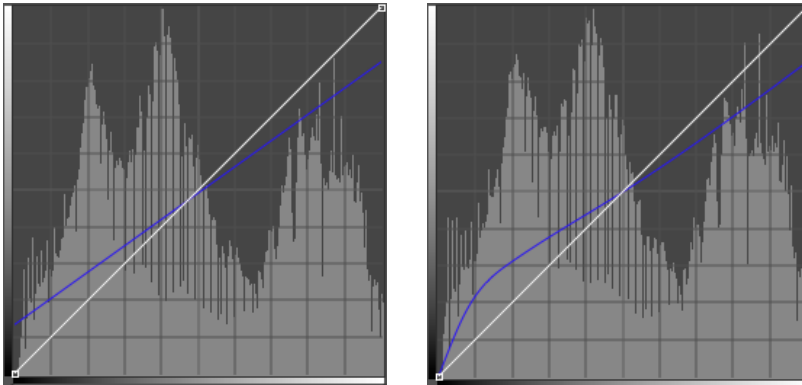
pull _____ the bottom SHADOW point up by 10 to 15%
this cools down the shadows

pull _____ the top HIGHLIGHT point down by 10 to 15%
this warms up this highlights

The bottom of the curve can be adjusted to avoid too much fading, if desired...

add _____ an adjustment point near the bottom to keep the blues raised, then

pull _____ the very bottom shadow point back down towards black

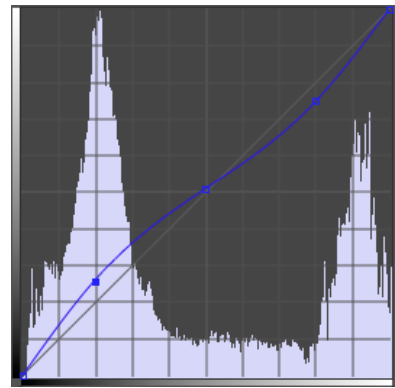
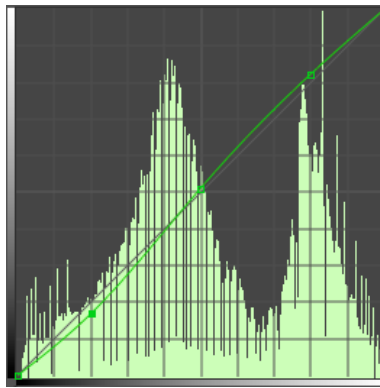
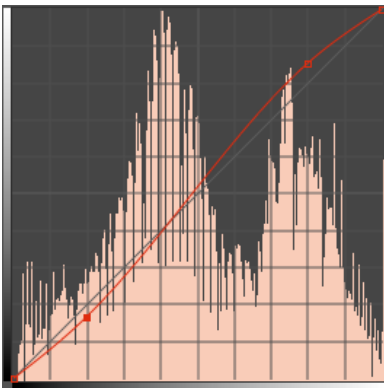


VINTAGE COLOR SHIFT & FADING

One of the first things that happens to older film is that it starts to fade in a general manner. This is easily emulated with a curves adjustment layer. Beyond that, Wilhelm Image Research points out that color negative film typically loses density in the blues first.

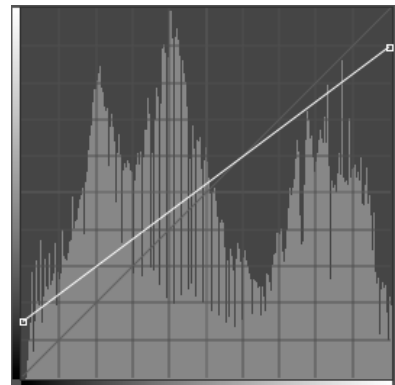
Color Shift with Curves >

- add _____ a CURVES adjustment layer
 - select _____ the RED channel
 - make _____ an S CURVE
 - pull _____ the $\frac{3}{4}$ HIGHLIGHT point up a lot
 - push _____ the $\frac{3}{4}$ SHADOW point down a fair amount
 - select _____ the GREEN channel
 - make _____ an S CURVE
 - pull _____ the $\frac{3}{4}$ HIGHLIGHT point up a little bit
 - push _____ the $\frac{3}{4}$ SHADOW point down a little bit
 - select _____ the BLUE channel
 - make _____ a REVERSE S CURVE
 - pull _____ the $\frac{3}{4}$ HIGHLIGHT point down a little bit
 - push _____ the $\frac{3}{4}$ SHADOW point up a little bit
- set _____ the BLENDING MODE to COLOR or OVERLAY for more punch, if desired



Fade the overall tonality with Curves >

- add _____ a CURVES adjustment layer
- pull _____ the HIGHLIGHT down by 10 - 15%
- push _____ the SHADOW point up by 10 - 15%



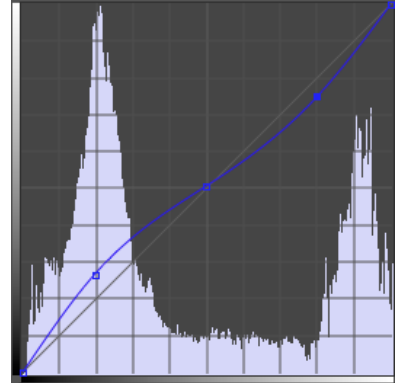
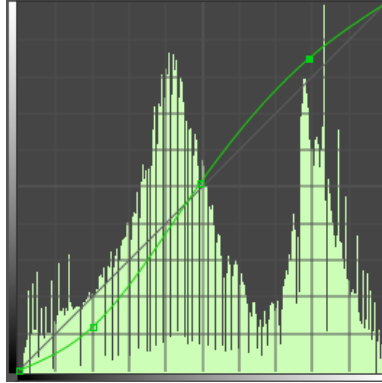
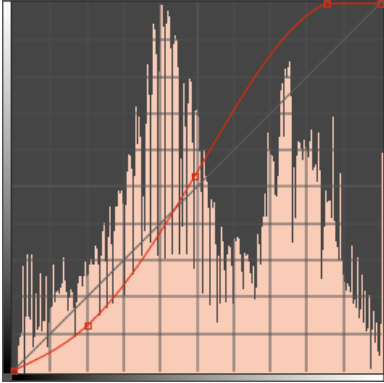
CROSS PROCESS w/ BLOWN HIGHLIGHTS & CLIPPED SHADOWS

Cross-processing is another one of those happy accidents when someone developed either color negative film [E6] in slide film chemistry [C41] or vice versa. No one is actually credited with the discovery but it became quite widespread, even though the results were unpredictable. The results are spiked colors and high saturation and contrast.

Crossprocessing with Curves >

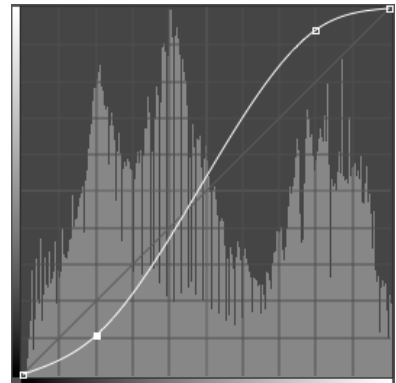
add _____ a CURVES adjustment layer
select _____ the RED channel
 make _____ an S CURVE
 pull _____ the $\frac{3}{4}$ HIGHLIGHT point up a lot
 push _____ the $\frac{3}{4}$ SHADOW point down a fair amount
select _____ the GREEN channel
 make _____ an S CURVE
 pull _____ the $\frac{3}{4}$ HIGHLIGHT point up a little bit
 push _____ the $\frac{3}{4}$ SHADOW point down a little bit
select _____ the BLUE channel
 make _____ a REVERSE S CURVE
 pull _____ the $\frac{3}{4}$ HIGHLIGHT point down a little bit
 push _____ the $\frac{3}{4}$ SHADOW point up a little bit

set _____ the BLENDING MODE to COLOR or OVERLAY for more punch, if desired



Blow out the highlights and clip the shadows >

add _____ a CURVES adjustment layer
 pull _____ the $\frac{3}{4}$ HIGHLIGHT point
 up to about 5 ~ 10%
 push _____ the $\frac{3}{4}$ SHADOW point
 down to about 10%



COLOR STRENGTH

This dual-layer strategy uses and gradient map to reduce the colors on top of an oversaturated layer. The reduction layer has its opacity lowered and a certain areas are painted out with a mask to reveal an oversaturated layer beneath. This could also be called Selective Saturation.

Boost the Saturation >

add _____ a HUE/SATURATION adjustment layer
rename _____ it '*boost color*'
raise _____ the saturation up, ~ 20

Reduce the Saturation on top >

select _____ the boosted saturation layer
add _____ a GRADIENT MAP adjustment layer
rename _____ it '*reduce color*'
_____ this places the *reduced* layer over the *boosted* layer
select _____ the BACK-TO-WHITE map
set _____ the BLEND MODE to Overlay, Hard Light, Soft Light or Color
_____ depending on the desired look
reduce _____ the OPACITY ~50%

Reveal the boosted layer below >

select _____ BRUSH tool,
select _____ a large size, very soft, e.g. 350 - 500 pixels, hardness = 0 **B**
set _____ OPACITY and FLOW to ~50%
paint out _____ the mask with black where more important saturated color are
set _____ BLACK as the foreground color, WHITE as the background color
hit _____ D then X
paint out _____ the mask with BLACK (to erase mask/ reveal sharp layer below)

VIGNETTE

A vignette is caused when the image circle from a lens is not large enough to cover the entire film plane. This means that less light is hitting the corners of the frame and they get dark. This effect is usually associated with older cameras, especially those that shoot medium format film. It can also be created by using a lens hood that blocks the edges of the frame when using a wide-angle lens.

There are cameras that exploit these apparent weakness with artistic intent. They are generally known as Lomo Cameras, named for the now legendary Lomo-A, a small 35mm film camera from Russia. This group also now includes any camera that is lo-fi, such as the Holga and Diana cameras that are inexpensive medium-format plastic-body cameras that have a plastic lenses. The lenses usually do not cover the film plane and the resulting photographs have vignettes.

The inherent lack of uniformity in the plastic lenses creates irregularities in the shape of the vignette. The Photoshop Vignette Tool is too uniform for this effect. A better approach is to do it by hand, sticking to a relatively round shape, but still maintaining irregularities.

The following recipe shows how to emulate this effect. If you really like this look, you should try shooting with a camera that has a plastic lens and go for the real effect.

Draw an elliptical selection >

select _____ the topmost ADJUSTMENT layer
so this effect affects all layers below
draw _____ a circular or elliptical MARQUE using the LASSO tool L
refine _____ the selection with SELECT> REFINE EDGE... [CMD] [OPT] R
INVERSE the selection [CMD] [SHFT] I
FEATHER a lot ~150

Alter the density with a curves layer >

add _____ a CURVES adjustment layer (the selection becomes the mask)
pull _____ the bottom-left shadow point to the center of the bottom edge
this darkens the selected area
adjust _____ the middle point of the curve **down**
to bring more of the highlights into the vignette
adjust _____ the opacity of the layer to alter the depth of the effect
paint _____ into the mask to refine the shape of the vignette if desired
use a very large and very soft brush for this, e.g. 500 pixels at 0 hardness

BLUR EDGES

Blurring of photographs at the edges is typically a result of plastic lens. These lenses are not consistent so an irregularly shaped blur area is appropriate. The process employs a sharpened image layer on the bottom and a blurred image layer on top, the center of which is removed with a mask.

Blur a duplicate image layer >

duplicate _____ the image layer [CMD] J
rename it _____ 'blur'
make sure it has *not* been converted into a smart filter layer

select _____ the bottom image layer
convert _____ the bottom image layer to accept SMART FILTERS
use _____ FILTER> CONVERT FOR SMART FILTERS
this allows adjustments later
sharpen _____ the image layer FILTER> SHARPEN> UNSHARP MASK
set _____ Amount = 95
set _____ Radius = 5
set _____ Threshold = 0
or use HighPassFilter sharpen trick

Reveal the sharp image layer below >

select _____ the top image layer, 'blur'
apply _____ LENS BLUR with FILTER> BLUR> LENS BLUR
set _____ Radius = ~25
or to the maximum amount of blur desired
add _____ a MASK by clicking on the MASK tool icon (bottom of palette)
select _____ PAINT BRUSH, large size hit B
set _____ to a large size (500 px), minimum hardness (0)
reduce _____ OPACITY and FLOW to 50%
set _____ BLACK as the foreground color, WHITE as the background color
hit _____ D then X
paint out _____ the center with BLACK (to erase mask/ reveal sharp layer below)
touch up _____ with WHITE if desired...

GRAIN & NOISE

Both Black & White and Color Film is made of small crystals of silver. Each type of film has a different texture, depending on the speed and type of film used (conventional vs. tabular grain) and how the film is developed. Digital sensors have no such texture. There are several ways to add such a texture. The first is to use digital noise as described in the first section below. Another is to shoot at a very high ISO (Canon cameras have more noise than Nikons). Another method, also described here, is to scan film and make an overlay of that image.

Using Digital Noise >

add _____ a new **SOLID COLOR** layer
set color _____ to Middle grey
rename _____ the layer 'Noise'
set _____ the **BLENDING MODE** to **OVERLAY**
run _____ **FILTER> NOISE FILTER> ADD NOISE**
 set _____ to low ~15 depending on what type of film to be emulated
 (pulled 400 vs. 100 vs. tab, etc.)
 use _____ the uniform / monochromatic settings
reduce _____ the effect with **OPACITY** as desired...

Overlay a Scan of Film >

A better way to emulate film grain is to actually use a scan of a real piece of film.

scan _____ a piece of real film that is a picture of a flat even gray surface.
 this can be done with a range of different film types...
 e.g. Color 100 & 400, Tri-x (straight & pushed), TMax, Agfa 100,
 or even Fuji NeoPan 1600 developed in Gamma Plus (if you can find either!)
open _____ the scanned film image
copy _____ onto target image
 make sure the pixel dimensions are similar!
adjust _____ opacity to low

TEXTURIZE

It is possible to add a texture to a photograph simply with an overlay. This can be used to emulate a distressed print or to make a double-exposure. This is a simple extrapolation of the film grain technique.

Overlay a Scan of Texture >

scan _____ any type of texture surface or material
e.g. Crumpled paper, cardboard, rocks, twigs, thorns
open _____ the scanned texture image
copy _____ onto target image
make sure the pixel dimensions are similar!
adjust _____ opacity to low