

The AdobeRGB Conundrum

by Brian Smith

From the numerous submissions I still get of Digital Images submitted for projection (or website display) it seems many of you are still confused about the Colour Space that you use to edit your files.

Many of you have learnt that the AdobeRGB colour space offers a wider gamut of colours than sRGB, and the former is often chosen as a default in your digital SLR settings. Nothing wrong with that – I do it myself for the same reasons as you. Since many (but not all) modern printers also offer a wider gamut than sRGB, this is a good choice for preserving such colours in your prints.

However, editing is one thing – displaying either through a monitor, projector, or on the web, is another. In fact, unless you have an extremely advanced computer monitor, you won't actually be able to see the extra colours that AdobeRGB theoretically offers on your monitor!

But, as long as you are editing in a colour managed application like Photoshop or Elements, then what you see on your monitor will still be accurate (especially if you've profiled it using the club Spyder). But if the photo is displayed using software that is not colour managed – and as far as I know, this currently applies to all competition projection software – then only images that have been converted to the sRGB colour space will display correctly. This is because sRGB is the presumed default colour space for all image rendering devices and software, and the world wide web.

The pictures alongside hopefully demonstrate the problem.

The first image on the right is an original AdobeRGB image, correctly rendered in a colour managed application.

The 2nd picture shows how this AdobeRGB image will be rendered in a non-managed application, or on a sRGB device such as a digital projector. The general effect is a reduction in saturation and punch.

The 3rd picture shows the original AdobeRGB image after conversion to sRGB, and rendered in a non-managed application. Spot the difference!

So when submitting digital images ALWAYS ALWAYS convert them to sRGB, or you won't be doing them justice.

