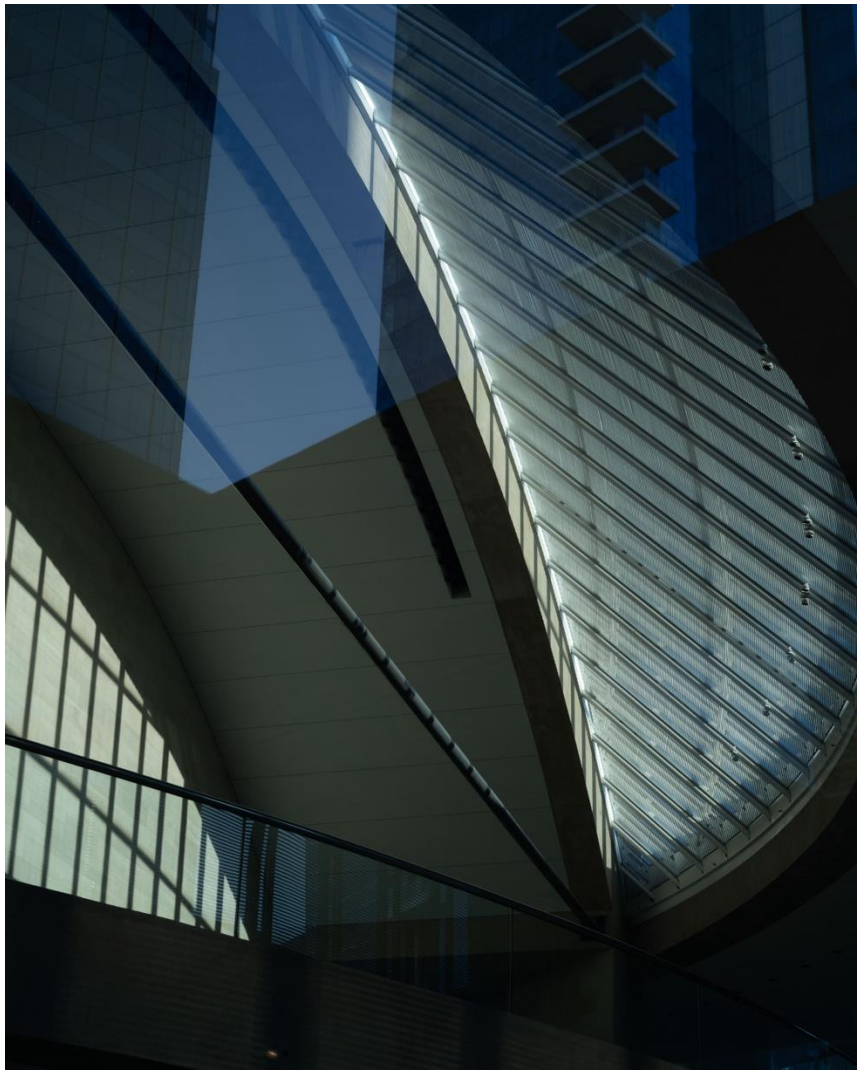
Monochrome Prints – *Steve Sutton*



Out of Camera, Cropped

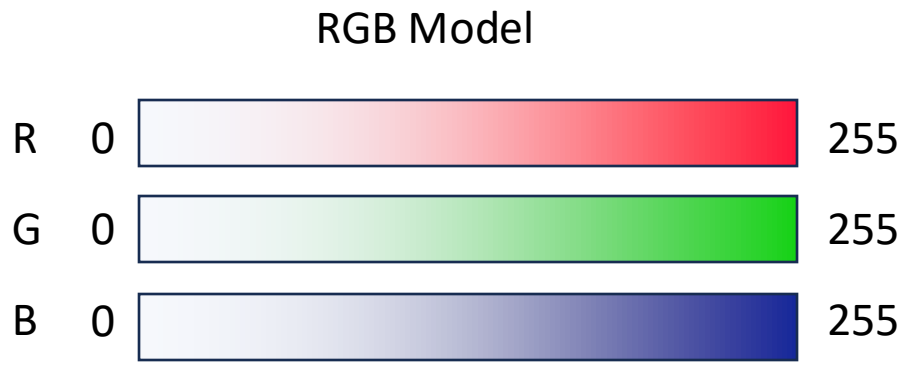
Monochrome Processed

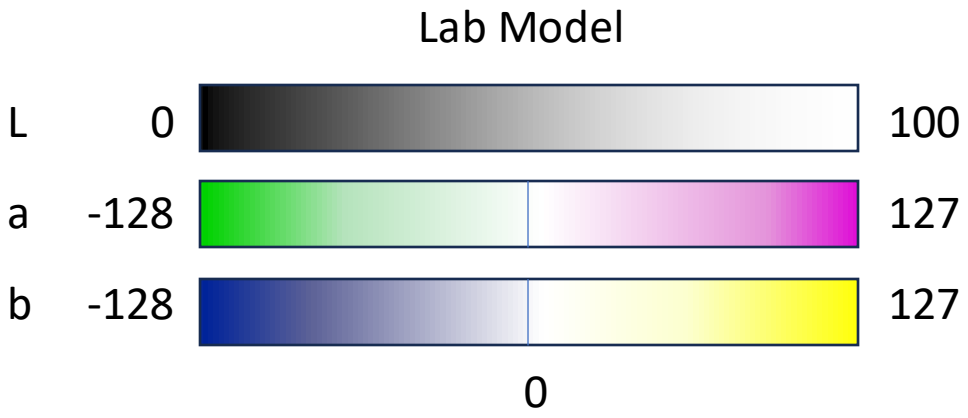
Current Influences & Resources

1. Post Processing for Printing: Charles Cramer https://www.charlescramer.com/classes.html
2. High Impact Monochrome: “From Basic to Fine Art Black and White Photography - Architecture and Beyond” by Julia Anna Gospodarou & Joel Tjintjelaar. https://www.juliaannagospodarou.com/fine-art-architecture-photography/
3. Alan Schaller: http://alanschaller.com
4. Test Print Images: Keith Cooper (Northlight Images): https://www.northlight-images.co.uk/printer-test-images/
5. Monochrome Camera & Film Simulations: Cobalt Image https://www.cobalt-image.com
6. Custom icc Profiles: Chromix http://www.chromix.com/ColorGear/product.cxsa?toolid=997
7. Paper Reviews: Mark Segal via PhotoPXL and Luminous Landscape websites
8. LensWork Duotone: LensWork Online (Photoshop and InDesign templates) https://www.lenswork.com/lwo.htm

RGB and Lab Color Models

- Color models are an abstract way to describe color using a combination of numbers.
- RGB model is based on the fact that any visible color can be realized by combining varying quantities of Red, Green and Blue primary colors. This is the default view in LR and PS. The range for each primary color is 0 to 255.
- Lab model uses L to represent brightness, a to represent a range from green to magenta, and b to represent a range from blue to yellow. With these 3 values you can represent any color.
- The Lab model can be more intuitive than the RGB model, especially for monochrome work:
  - Neutral: a=b=0
  - Pure white: L=100, a=b=0
  - Pure black: L=0, a=b=0
  - 50% gray: L=50, a=b=0
- In both LR and PS you can switch back and forth between RGB and Lab color models. You can use online calculators or the color picker in PS to get equivalent values for specific colors.



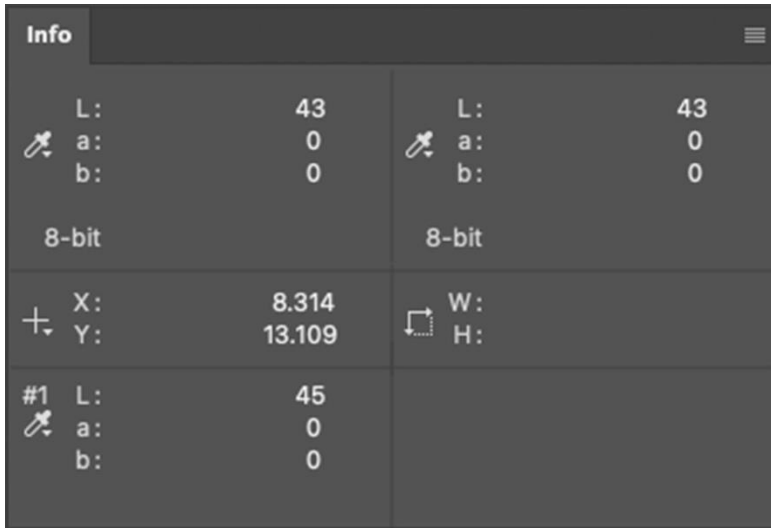


My Current Approach

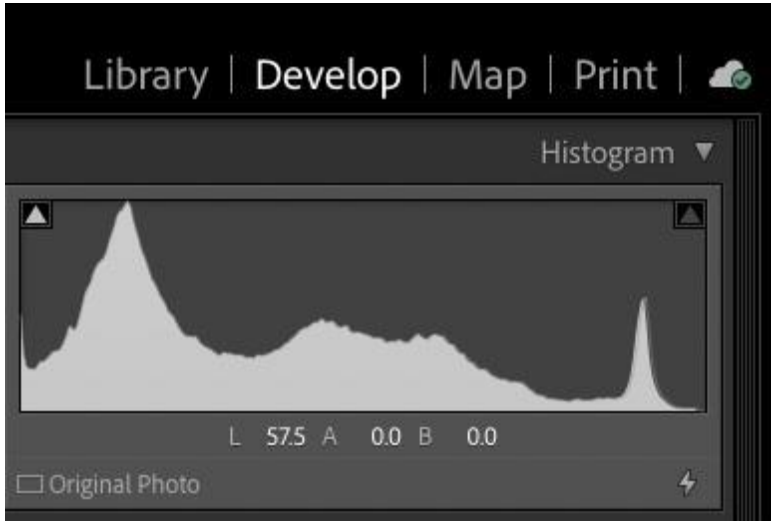
1. 8.5” x 11” trial prints, step away for a while, assess, revise, repeat. Then print big. Don’t rely on what you see on your monitor.
2. Know your paper and printer - Lab values for paper white and black detail. Trust Lab values over your own eyes.
3. Focus on the highlights – they make the print. Crush some near-black tones to add punch/drama. Separate the mid-tones.
4. Keep focus where it belongs – clean up and darken the edges, brighten the good stuff
5. ABW is very good, but a really good icc profile can sometimes be even better for shadow detail, color cast, or linearity.
6. Forget about realism - Choosing B&W is already taking a step away from objective reality (Joel Tjintelaar). Be different, be original, be personal (Julia Anna Gospodarou)

From Charlie Cramer Workshop

Lab Values in Photoshop Info Panel



Lab Values in LR Histogram Panel



How I Evaluate Paper

- Use a test print to understand how the combination of your printer, paper choice and icc profile perform together.
- Estimate the L value of paper white so you can roll-off highlights to this value.
- Understand the L value for black, and near black. Near black may show detail under a magnifying glass, but just look muddy from normal viewing distance.
- ABW printing is very good, but you may find a custom icc profile even better, especially on matte paper.

Example Paper White & Black Points

Paper	L=White	L=Black
Canson Baryta Phographique II	97	2.53
Hahnemuhle Bamboo Baryta	93	3.0
Epson Baryta II	96.2	4.1
Canson Arches 88	96.8	16.1

Source: Mark D. Segal via PhotoPXL

My Current Workflow

ACR:

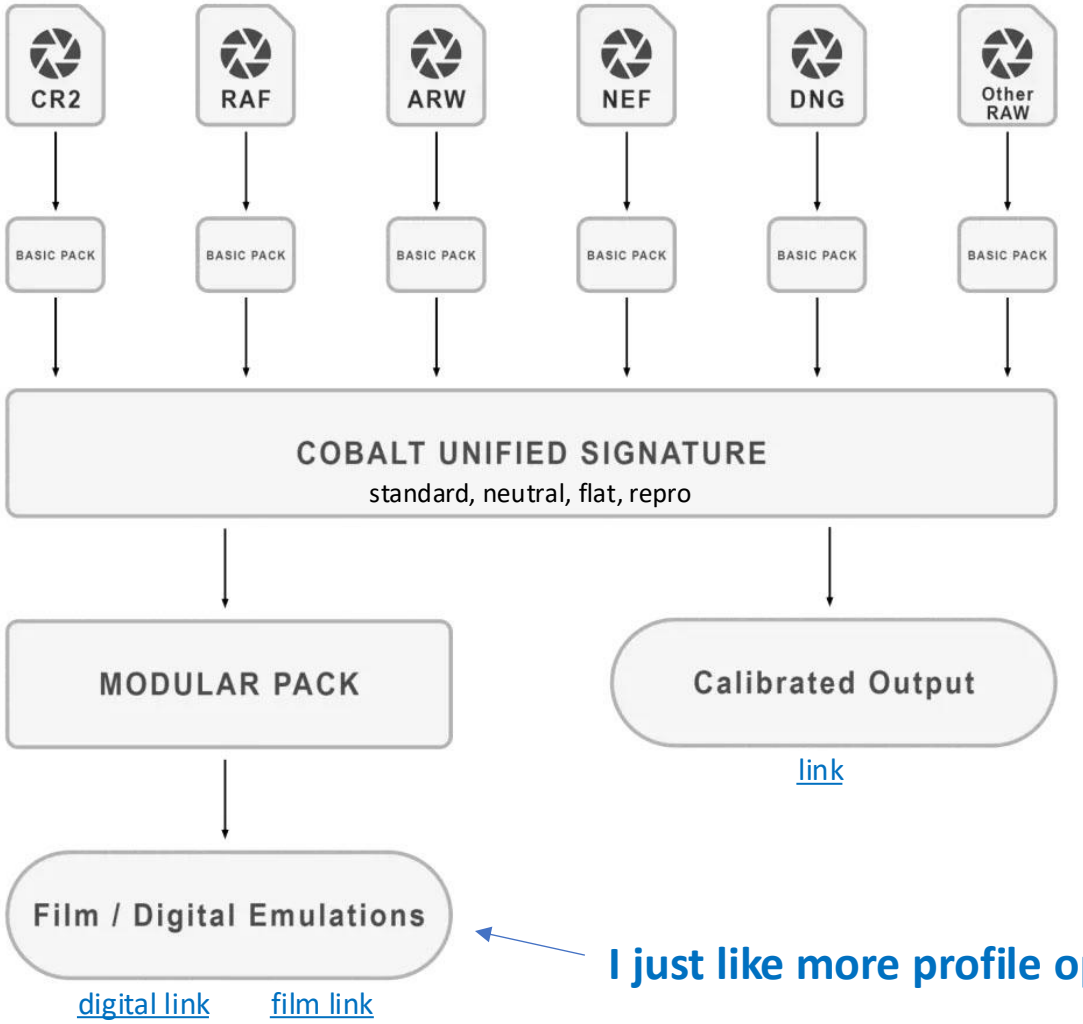
- Cobalt monochrome profile
- Global adjustments focused on on midtones. Keep histogram away from the edges
- Open as smart object in PS

Photoshop:

- Roll-off the white point to L=96
- Crush darker tones to add punch
- Add a contrast curve
- Clean-up with healing tools
- Vignette to darken edges

Make a TIF copy for printing.

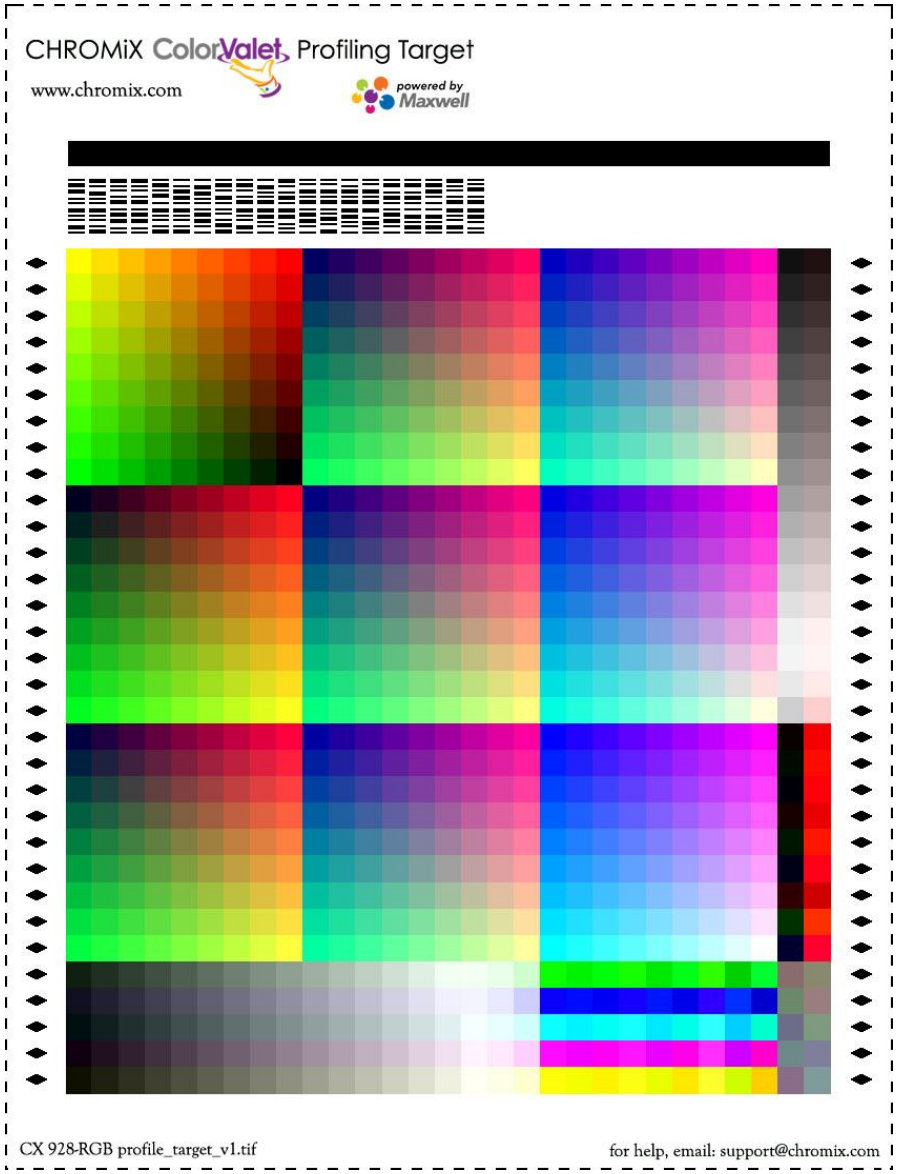
Print with Canon Professional Print & Layout with custom icc profiles on Pro-1000 printer.



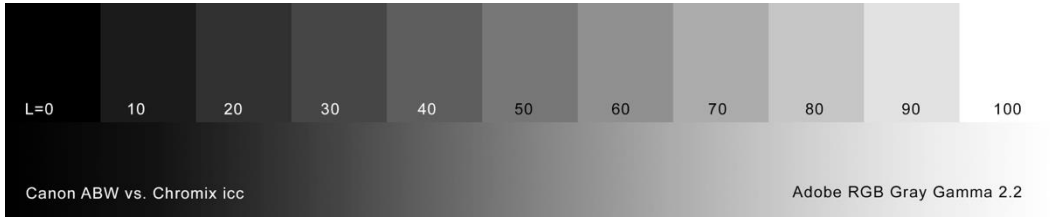
I use Chromix Profiles for Monochrome

- My goals for monochrome printing are to get the ”correct” gray value without any color cast.
- I’ve found icc profiles from Chromix can do this even better than ABW for some papers.
- Some paper manufacturers like Red River provide Chromix profiles for free on their website. For other paper manufacturers like Canon and Moab I purchase custom profiles from Chromix.
- I especially like Chromix Deep Color (M3) profiles for matte paper. These profiles are made using a polarizing filter on the scanner to overcome light scattering inherent in matte papers. As a result, you get better deep shadow details.
- Custom profiles are as simple as printing the Chromix target per their instructions, mailing the print to Chromix, and receiving profile files by email in a few days.

https://luminous-landscape.com/red-river-palo-duro-softgloss-palo-duro-etching-san-gabriel-baryta-paper-review/



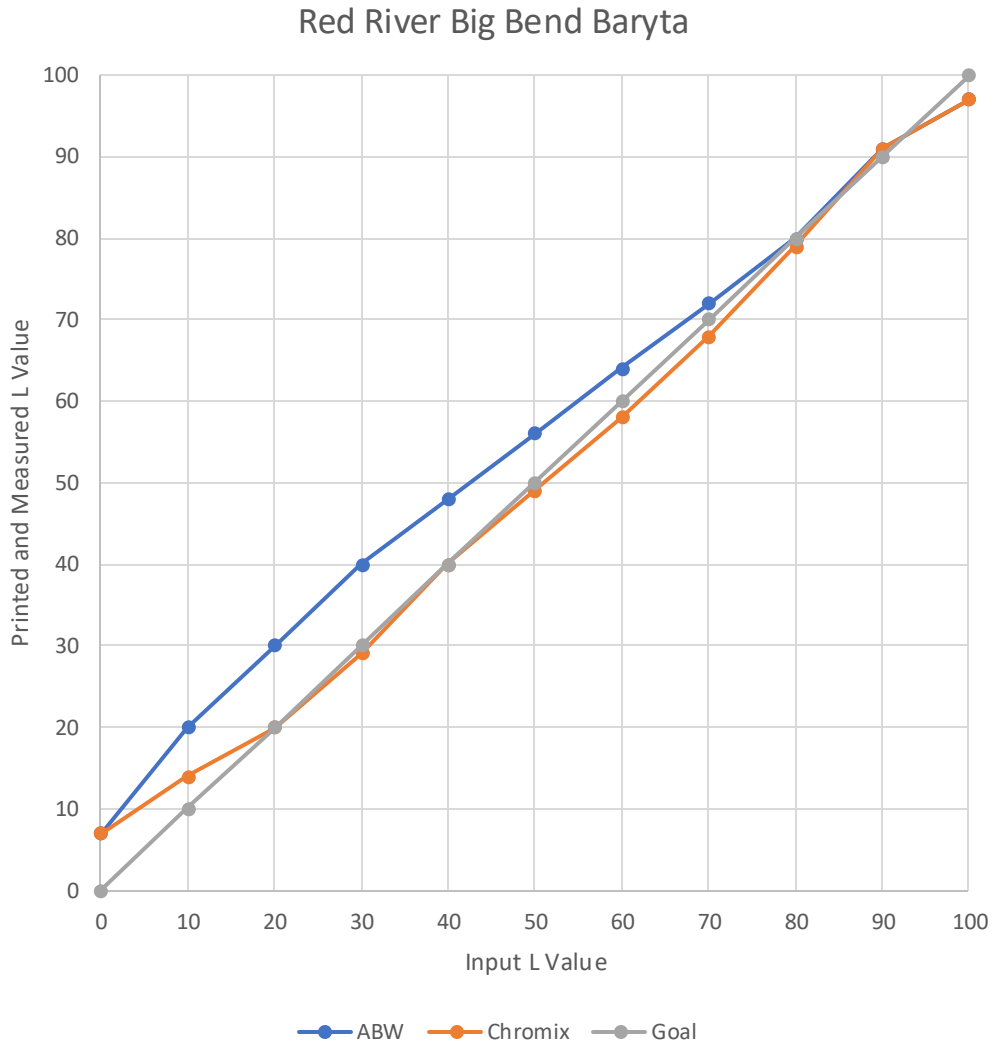
My Own Experiment Comparing ABW to Chromix



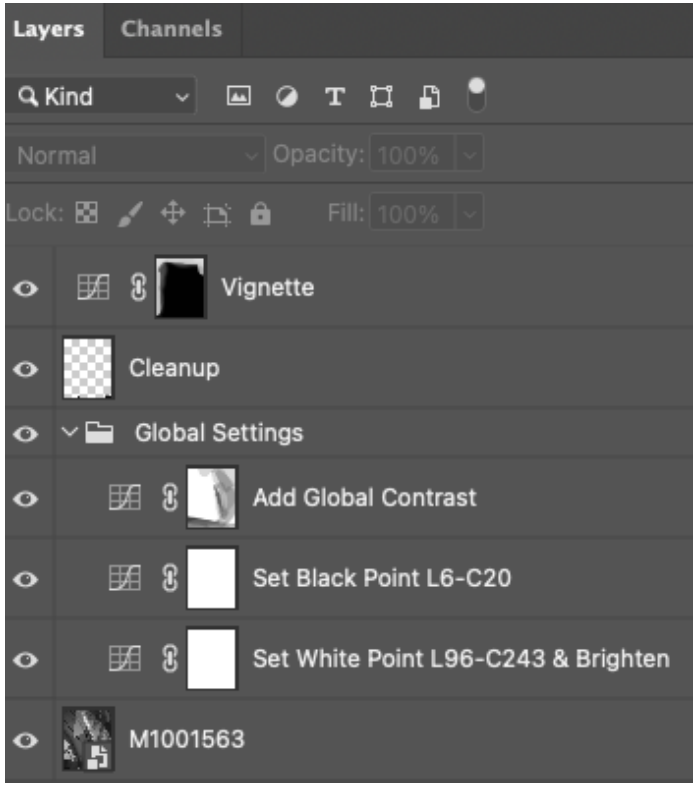
RR Big Bend Baryata

Canon ABW				Chromix ICC			
Ref	L	a	b	Ref	L	a	b
0	7*	0	1	0	7*	0	1
10	20	1	-3	10	14	0	0
20	30	-1	-4	20	20	1	-3
30	40	0	-2	30	29	0	-1
40	48	0	0	40	40	0	-1
50	56	-2	0	50	49	0	0
60	64	0	0	60	58	0	0
70	72	0	1	70	68	0	1
80	80	0	-1	80	79	0	-1
90	91	0	0	90	91	0	0
100	97	0	1	100	97	0	1

* Scanner limitation

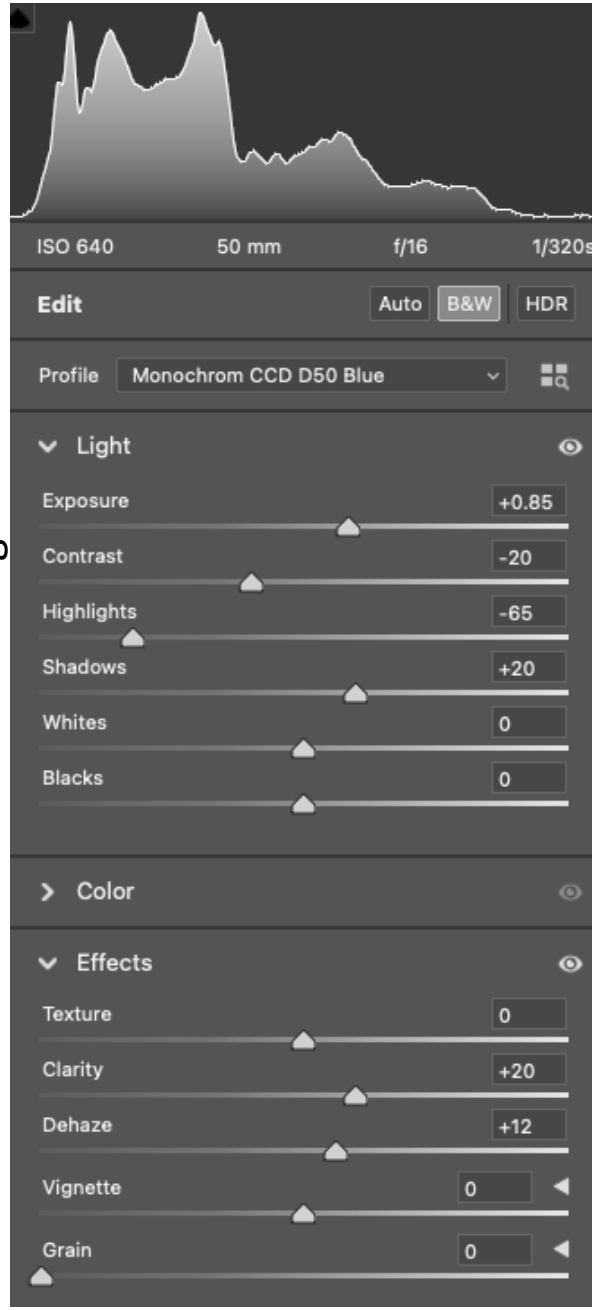


Screen Shots from Demo

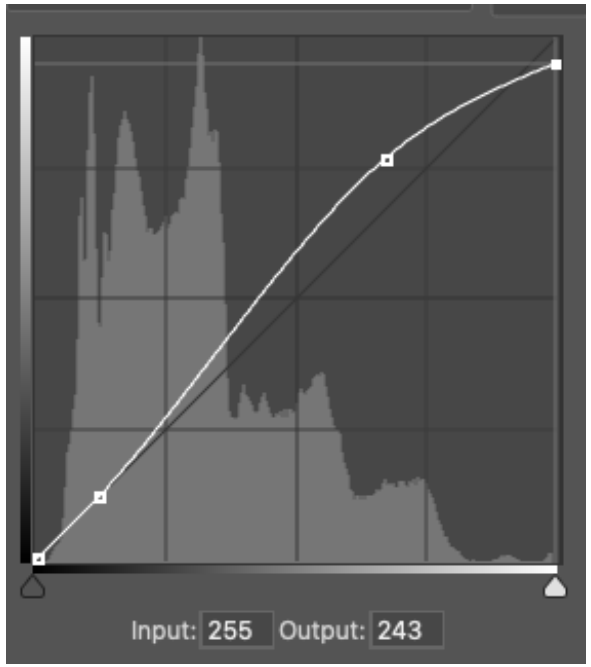


Photoshop Flow

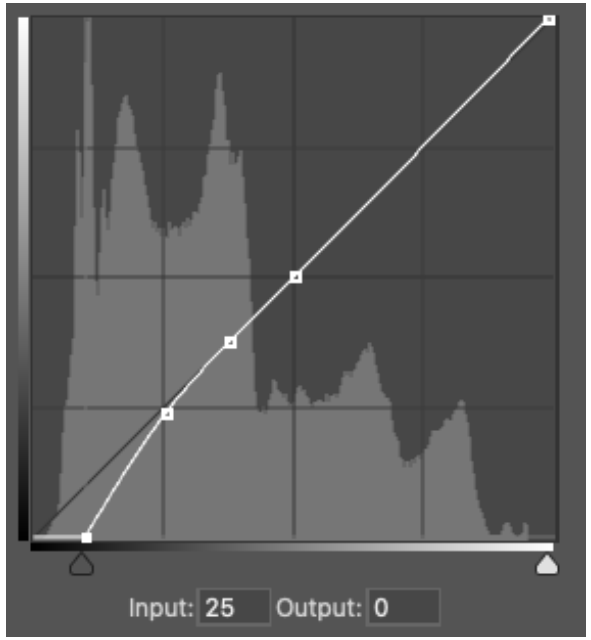
ACR Settings



Set White Point



Set Black Point



Duotone Conversion (LensWork Style)

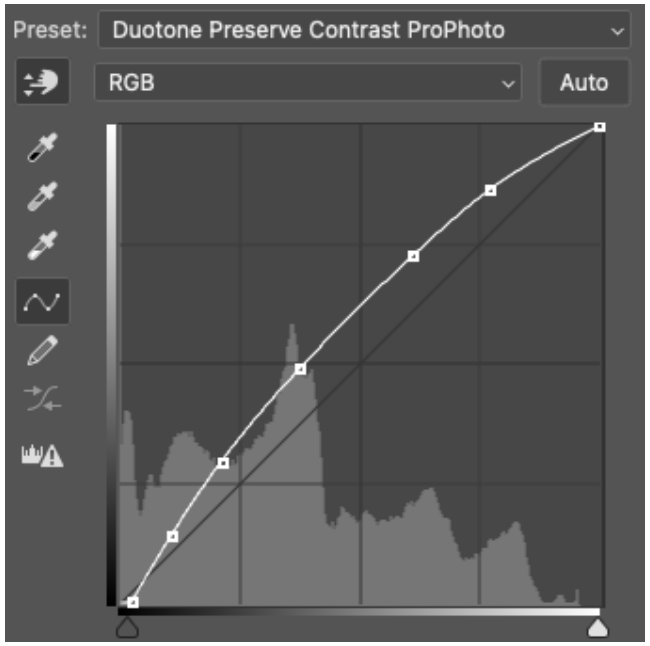
Monochrome

Duotone

Duotone Process in Photoshop

1. Flatten Image
2. Image/Mode/8-bits/channel
3. Image/Mode/Grayscale
4. Image/Mode/Duotone
5. Choose custom preset available from LensWork Online ($10 trial subscription)
6. Image/Mode/RGB
7. Apply contrast recovery curve. Curve value depends on gray working space

RGB = ProPhoto
Gray = Gray Gamma 1.8



RGB = Adobe RGB
Gray = Gray Gamma 2.2