Colorize Three Ways with Paint Shop Pro's Professional Strength Tools

By JP Kabala

In Paint Shop Pro, and most other graphics software, "colorize" means to convert an image or selection to a uniform hue and saturation while retaining its lightness. Done well, this is a stylish and subtle effect that can be as effective as it is useful.

What you'll need:

- Paint Shop™ Pro® 9
- Download sample image mug.pspimage

When you complete this tutorial, you'll be able to:

- Produce a single-tone image via three different methods
- Recognize the pros and cons of each method
- Use the channel mixer to produce a high-contrast grayscale image
- Use the Edge Seeker mode of the Freehand Selection Tool
- Use the Digital Camera Noise Removal Filter on a selected area

Before You Start

Paint Shop Pro gives you several ways to colorize an image, and in Paint Shop Pro 9, there have been some enhancements to one of the methods that change the way color is handled, so even if you think you know all about this procedure, it may be worth a few minutes of experimentation. There is no absolute "right way" or "wrong way" but there are some things to consider when you choose a method:

- What is your source image like?
- Is it high quality, high resolution?
- How are you planning to use it?
- Is this a single stand-alone image or part of a larger project?
- What color are you recoloring the image to?

The changes to Paint Shop Pro 9's Colorize function in the Adjust menu (the stand alone effect) produces very different result than the similarly-named Colorize function within the Hue, Saturation, and Lightness Adjustment dialog. For some color ranges, particularly yellows, this may produce unexpected results. Depending on your needs, you may need to try both to determine which result is the one you prefer.

Let's imagine that you need to create an ad for a new local coffee shop, a place that calls itself Just Good Joe. They need a marketing piece for distribution to the local businesses in the area. They'd like a basic template that can be used over and over again. And, oh, yes, they don't want to spend the money on 4-color printing. While there will be oversized color versions of the piece in the store itself, the flyer needs to work in grayscale for economic reasons. There's going to be a fair amount of text, and perhaps even a "get acquainted" coupon offer. And they might want to use the graphics on their Web site, too!

Open mug.pspimage, it will be easier for you to grasp the sometimes subtle differences in output if you actually experiment with a "live" image as we discuss this type of adjustment.

Mug.pspimage. is positively not a fantastic image. I snapped it while eating breakfast at a local diner one day. Given that it was about 6AM, I did not want to disturb other customers by the use of a flash, so I was stuck with the ambient lighting. The resulting image is rather yellow, and the contrast isn't as good as I'd like it to be. That's OK, we're about to fix all of that.

Colorize the Quick and Dirty Way—
One Step Plus Colorize

1.   Open the image.

2.   Save it to your computer as mymug1.pspimage.

3.   Choose **Adjust > One Step Photo Fix**. Well, that improved the contrast a bit, huh?

4.   Choose **Adjust > Hue and Saturation> Colorize**. Set the Hue to **18** and the Saturation to **91**, and then click **OK**.

   Now you know why I said "quick and dirty" You could probably still use it, but it would take some work to make it look good. With the color cues gone the surface defects in the mug make it blend into the tabletop pattern. The contrast is off and the whole thing looks messy. Good monochrome images--whether black and white or single color - are not just desaturated color images. We need to make some adjustments.

5.   Save the file, and then close it. We're going to try to do this a different way.

Colorize the Relative Way

6.   Open the image mug.pspimage again, but save it to your computer as mymug2.pspimage this time.

7.   Choose **Adjust > Hue and Saturation> Hue/Saturation/Lightness** or press **Shift+H**.

8.   When the dialog opens, click in the box marked **Colorize**. Set the Hue to **18** and the Saturation to ....Oh, wait, it won't let you use the same settings you used in the other Colorize dialog, because here the entries are percentages, not absolute values. When establishing color, these are rarely the best sort of settings to choose. Why? If you're going to need to duplicate that same color in other elements later, it will be much more difficult to accurately approximate the original conditions.

9. It was almost impossible to duplicate exactly the color in mymug1, but settings of Hue **33**, Saturation **33**, and Lightness **31** produced a pleasant "coffee with cream" shade, but it also enhanced the noise and made the mug look as speckled as the tabletop. And, by increasing the lightness, it looks a little washed out. I might have spent more time working to improve the contrast, and decreasing the noise, but the experience taught me that reproducing the color for other elements was going to be a real pain anyway. We need a better solution.
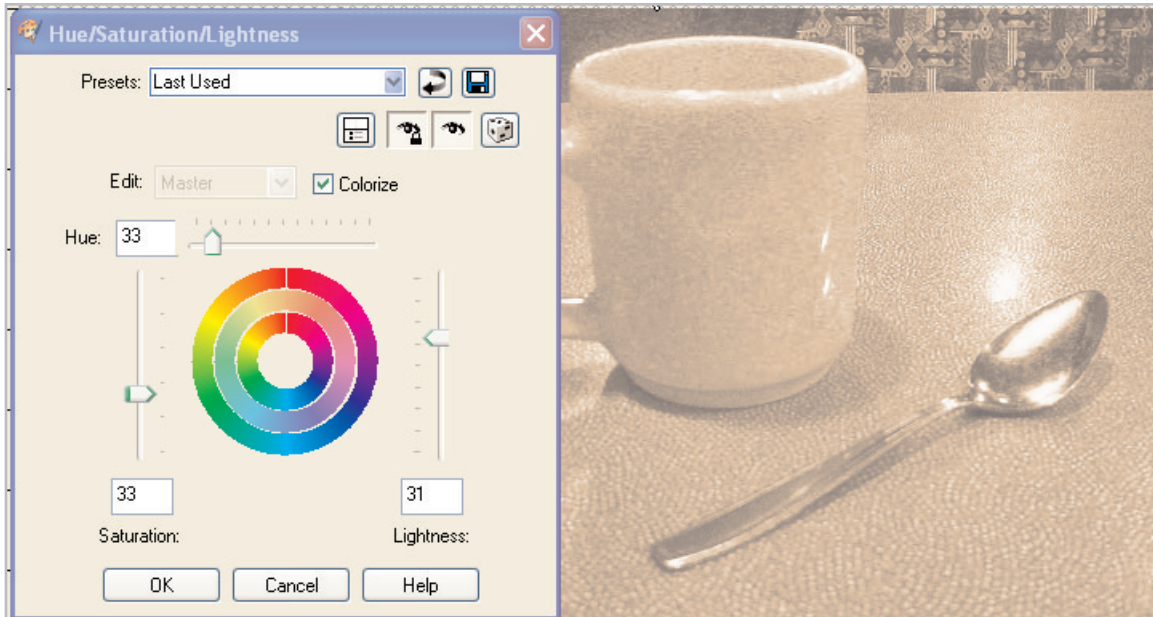
10. Choose those settings anyway, click **OK**, save the file, and close it.

Colorize the Most Controllable Way

11. Open mug.pspimage and save it to your computer as mymug3.pspimage this time.

12. Select the **Freehand Selection** Tool from the Tools toolbar. When the Tool Options palette refreshes, set the Selection Type to **Edge Seeker** and the Mode to **Replace**. Click around the perimeter of the mug to trace around the outside of the mug. Change the Mode to **Remove** and trace inside the handle area. This will give you a clean selection of the mug.

13. Choose **Adjust > Photo Fix > Digital Camera Noise Removal**. When the dialog opens, set the Correction blend to **80** and the Sharpening to **25%**. By making a selection before we apply the Digital Camera Noise Removal filter, we get rid of the unpleasant speckles in the cup without obliterating the texture in the tabletop. Click **OK**.
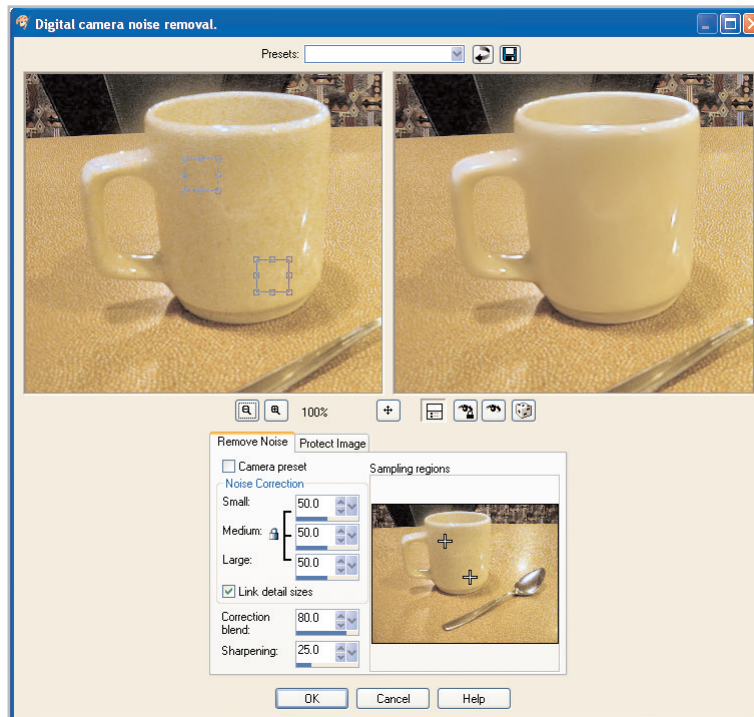

14. Press **CTRL+D** to deselect.

15. Choose **Adjust > Color Balance > Channel Mixer**. When the dialog opens, click in the box marked **Monochrome** and adjust the sliders as follows:

- Red: **146**
- Green:**12**
- Blue: **53**
- Constant: **-55** (that's negative 55)

Click **OK**. Now you have a desaturated (grayscale) layer that is still a 24-bit image, and can still use all of Paint Shop Pro's features. We've improved the contrast but there are few problems best fixed before we add color.
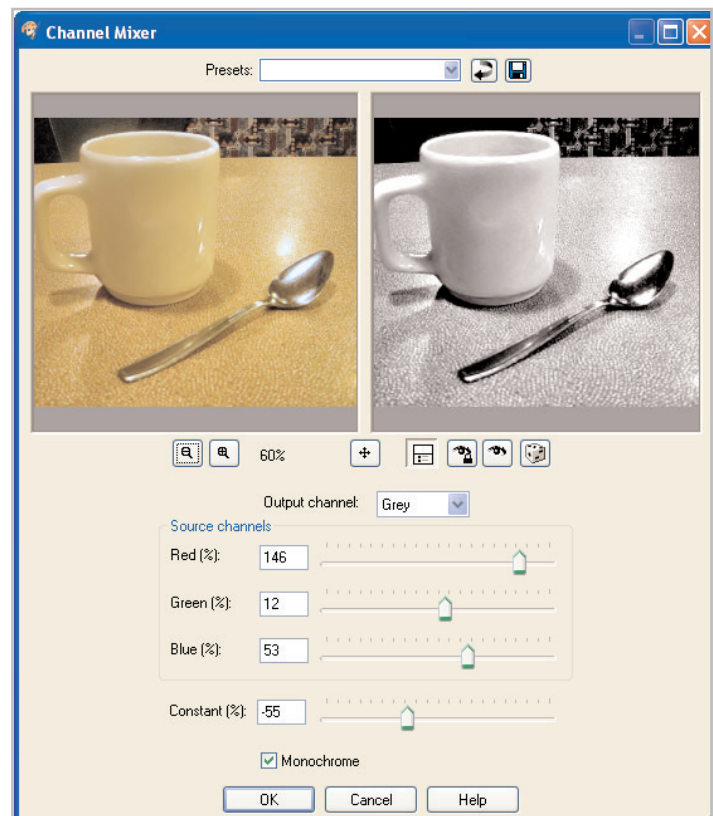
16. There's no coffee in the mug, so place medium gray (HTML color code **#808080**) in the background swatch and take the Ellipse Tool, and draw a very thin oval and align it with the top of the mug as shown.
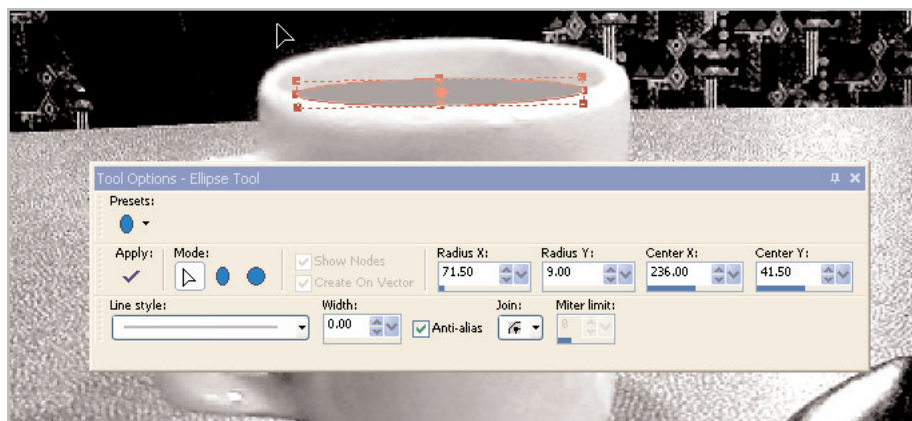
17. Choose **Layers > Merge >Merge Down** to combine the ellipse with the mug.

18. From the Tools toolbar, select the **Magic Wand** Tool. When the Tool Options palette refreshes, reset the preferences to the default (the reset button is in the Presets menu) and click the medium gray ellipse. This will put a selection around our coffee.

19. Choose **Effects > Artistic Effects > Colored Edges**. When the dialog opens, set the Color to **black**, Luminance to **3**, Blur to **6**, and the Intensity to **24**, then click **OK**. This will put an uneven rim around the selection. Don't deselect just yet.

20. Choose **Adjust >Blur >Average**, and when the dialog opens, choose a setting of **15** and click **OK**. This mixes a little cream into the coffee and gives the surface some dimension. Press **CTRL+D** to deslect.

21. Choose **Adjust > Hue and Saturation > Colorize**. When the dialog opens, set the Hue to **18**, Saturation to **91**, and click **OK**. By using the Channel Mixer to desaturate the image and improve the contrast first, we can get an absolute color setting that we can apply to any other images that might be a part of our project. In fact, we could even set a preset for this exact color called JustGoodJoe and all grayscale images that we subsequently colored would harmonize with this one perfectly.
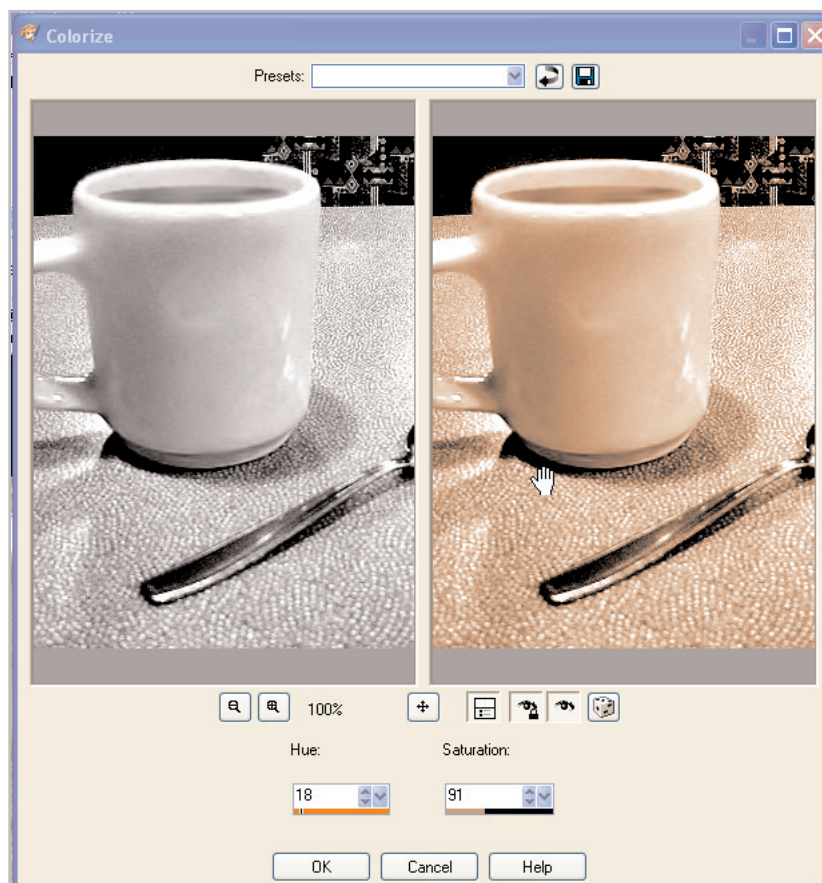
22. Oh, and the flyer? I'd probably do something like this with it, given the company name. The font is Agent Red, a freeware font from Pizzadude.