

SOFTPROOF MANUAL



Create soft proof images for any profile.

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INTRODUCTION

This plugin will create soft-proof images for any of your photos, in an interactive dialog inside Lightroom 2 or better. You can save the proofed images back into your catalog.

CONTACT AND SUPPORT

You can get support or ask questions in the support forums:

<http://www.lightroom-plugins.com/support.php>

REQUIREMENTS

- Lightroom 3 or newer, including CC versions.
- Mac or PC.

LEGAL STUFF

This plug-in is not specifically endorsed by Adobe Inc®.

The open-source LittleCMS package is used by this plugin. <http://www.littlecms.com> . The license details for LittleCMS are:

The MIT License

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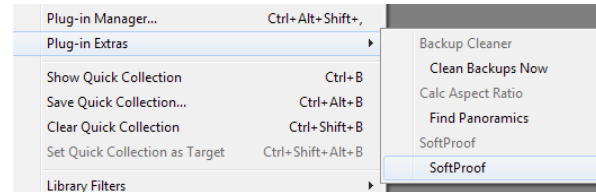
WHAT'S INCLUDED

NEW COMMANDS

One new command has been added to the “File” menu in Lightroom:

CREATE SOFT-PROOF

This opens the soft-proofing dialog, allowing you to apply different profiles to the selected photo.



INSTALLATION

This plug-in adds a new field to your Lightroom database. This is used to store the name of the profile that was applied, if you decide to store copies of the soft-proofed photos.

Before you install this, you should make sure you have a backup of your Lightroom catalog. If you do not already have automatic backups enabled, you can perform a single backup by going to “Edit→Catalog Settings...” and changing the “Back up catalog” list to “Next time Lightroom starts only”, and restarting Lightroom.

WINDOWS

AUTOMATIC INSTALLATION

The easiest way to install on Windows is to use the MSI installer. Simply double-click and run through the prompts that appear.

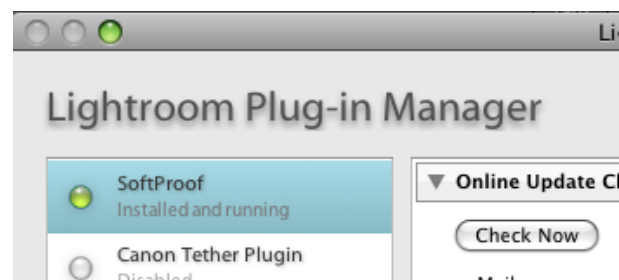
MANUAL INSTALLATION

If you prefer to install manually, download the ZIP file instead of the MSI. When it has downloaded, follow the instructions below for installing on the Mac; the steps are identical on Windows.

MAC

1. Download the ZIP and extract it to your desktop. You should see a folder called “**SoftProofPlugin**” (Mac) or “**SoftProofPlugin.lrplugin**” (Windows), containing the plug-in.
2. Move this folder anywhere you like.
3. Open Lightroom’s Plugin Manager from the File menu, and click the “Add” button at the bottom of the list.
4. Use the file dialog that appears to select the plugin (ending in **.lrplugin**).

Check that a plug-in called “SoftProof” is shown as “Installed and running”.



SETTING UP LIGHTROOM

ENTER YOUR LICENCE KEY

If you have bought the plug-in, you should receive a licence key in an email. Without this, the plug-in will work in trial mode. In trial mode, the proofed images are very small and some of the profile names will be hidden. To enter the licence key, simply copy and paste it and your e-mail address from the email to the box in the Plugin Manager when the SoftProof plugin is selected.

WORK AROUND A LIGHTROOM INTERFACE PROBLEM

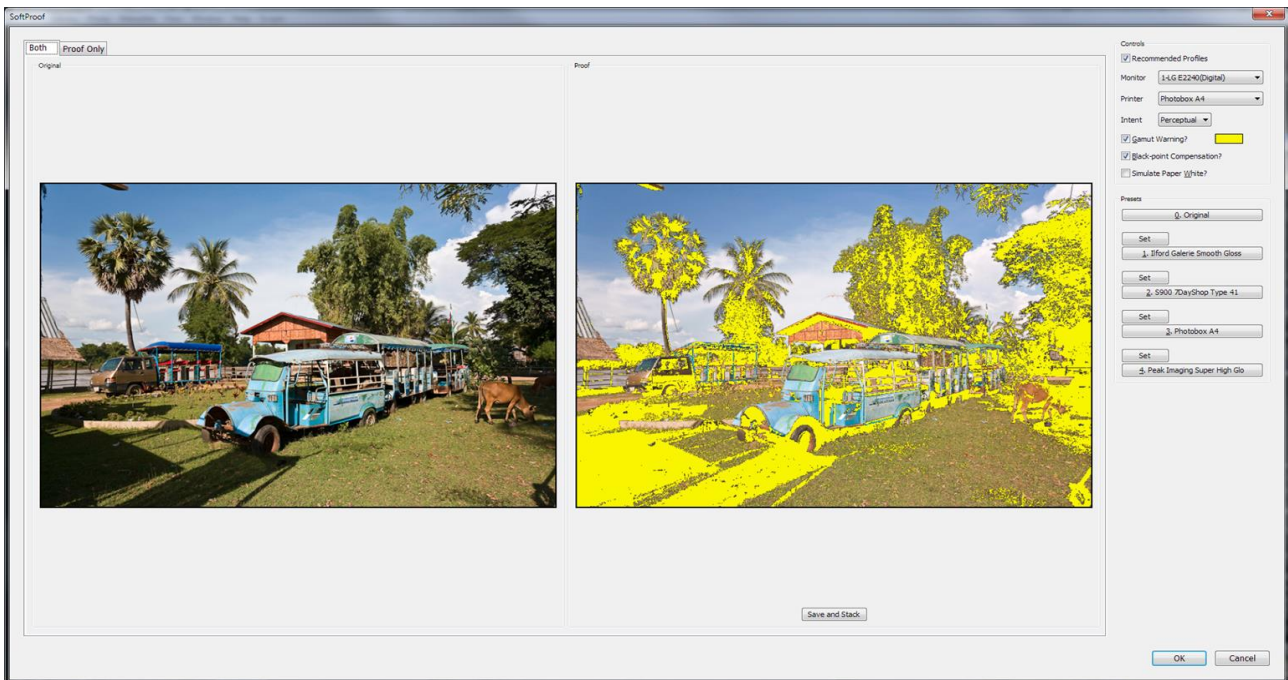
In current versions of Lightroom (3.2) on Windows, there is a problem with the dialog displays where colour-managed images are handled incorrectly. Lightroom converts images from their actual colour-space into the system default (normally sRGB) and then displays this in a non-managed window. If your monitor has a gamut close to sRGB this will not be very noticeable, but for narrow (i.e. laptop) or wide-gamut monitors the display can be very different.

To work around this, there is a tickbox in the Plugin Manager called “Force CMS in Dialog”. When this is ticked, the plugin will display non-managed versions of the images which have already been converted to the monitor profile. This results in the correct display of the original and proofed images.

Should this mis-handling of colour-managed images be fixed in the future, you can simply un-tick this box to have the dialog load the original, colour-managed versions of the images and let Lightroom handle them.

USING THE PLUGIN

To show the soft-proof window, use the new menu item that is added to the File menu. On Windows, you can make this faster using the keyboard shortcut Alt+F+S+S . Either way, this will open the proofing window.



On the left, your original photo is shown. The right-hand photo is the soft-proofed copy. The controls are split into two groups; the interactive controls at the top, and a collection of preset controls beneath them.

MAIN CONTROLS

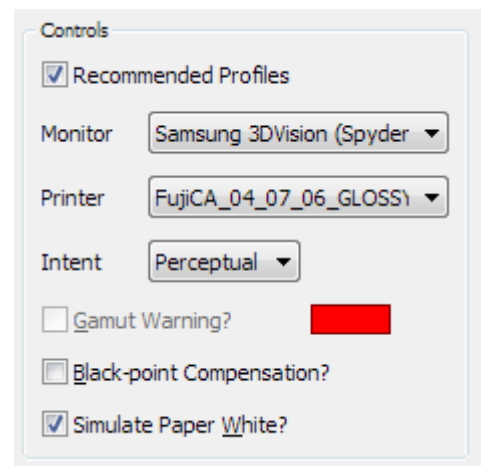
The main controls are at the right of the window:

RECOMMENDED PROFILES

ICC profiles are given one of a set of intentions. Usually, you will want to use profiles which have an 'Output' intention, but you may want to show all available profiles including those for e.g. scanners. To show all profiles, un-tick this box. The list of available profiles in the drop-down list will change.

PRINTER

This is a simple list of all the output profiles available on your computer. In trial mode, some of these names are deliberately incorrect. To apply a different profile to the test image on the right, just choose it from this list.



INTENT

Two rendering intents are allowed - “Perceptual” and “Relative”. These are the same ones supported by Lightroom's Print module. Choose which intent you want to use for the soft-proof; it will update automatically.

GAMUT WARNING

Tick this box to have all out-of-gamut colours highlighted in the proofed image. The colour used for the highlight can be chosen using the colour-well control to the right of the tick-box. *Please note this option is disabled if you also use “Simulate Paper White”.*

BLACK-POINT COMPENSATION

This mirrors the same control in Photoshop.

SIMULATE PAPER WHITE

This mirrors the same control in Photoshop.

Unlike Photoshop, there is no “Simulate Ink Black” control. This is enabled by default.

The final control is beneath the soft-proof image, called “Save and Stack”. This will take the currently-selected profile and apply it to a full-size copy of the selected photo. It will then save the resulting image alongside the original, add it to Lightroom's catalog and stack it with the original. You can use this feature to inspect the proofed images in more detail, using Lightroom's “Compare” tools.

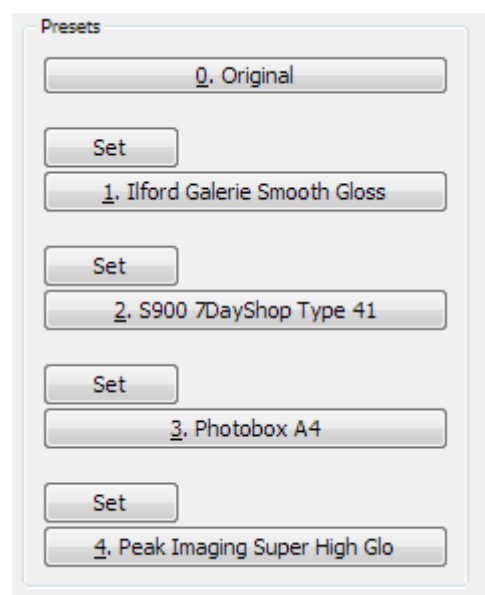
PRESET CONTROLS

To make it quicker to switch between your most commonly-used profiles, you can assign four presets using the buttons below the main controls. Use the “Set” button above each preset option to assign the currently-selected profile to that button. Selecting the preset button will apply that profile.

It will also store a temporary copy of the resulting soft-proof image on disk, allowing you switch very quickly between different profiles to see the differences. You can also use the keyboard shortcuts shown on the buttons in Windows (Alt + 0, 1, 2, 3 or 4).

WHAT'S SOFT-PROOFING?

Pretty much everyone will have printed a photo at some point and been disappointed with the results. The colours didn't match, or it was too dark, or in some other way was very different from the photo you saw on screen. The reason for this is that each output device, including your monitor, will be different from every other output device and different again from an imaginary ideal set of colours. Using ICC profiles helps to correct for these differences.



WHAT'S A PROFILE?

In short, an ICC profile is a set of mathematical functions which take a colour and apply a set of corrections to it, to come up with a different colour. This new colour will be “incorrect” - it is different from the intended one – but, when it is sent to the output device, the inaccuracies in the device undo the corrections giving you the original colour back again.

Some printer manufacturers provide ICC profiles with their printers which will give you a fairly good starting point. They will have measured the printer's response at the factory and then tailored the printer driver and ICC profile to get a good result. There are several problems here, though.

First, they will have sampled a small number of printers and then assumed that all of the others will respond in exactly the same way. They certainly should all be close, but won't be exactly the same. More importantly, each type of ink and paper will have a different look, meaning that each will need a different set of colour corrections to get the most accurate result. Most printer drivers will offer the choice of several paper types (photo, matte, plain etc.) which also help – these adjust the amounts of ink that get used - but they will not be able to cope with the huge choice of papers available today.

The answer is use a measured profile, created for your specific printer, ink and paper choices. You will end up with different profiles for each combination, and potentially even different profiles for different viewing conditions; a print will look different in sunlight when compared to fluorescent lighting, for example.

These measurements can be taken with devices like the DataColor Spyder, ColorMunki and others. They're not cheap, but in the long run will save you money in lost ink and paper used in countless “wrong” prints, and the time it takes to make them.

Datacolor: <http://www.datacolor.eu/en/>

ColorMunki: <http://www.colormunki.com/>

X-Rite : <http://www.xrite.com/>

So WHY SOFT-PROOF?

It's highly unlikely that any output device, even a monitor, will be able to show the full range of colours that are used in a photo. In particular, very strong or very dark colours tend to cause problems. When a device is asked to show a colour that it can't cope with, it must somehow convert it into one it *can* cope with. This results in a flatter-looking print and, depending on how it handles the conversion, potentially one with lots of way-off colours.

By using a measured profile, you help the device driver come up with a much closer match for these unusable (or “out-of-gamut”) colours. Using the information in the profile, it knows exactly what colours the device is capable of. However, each test print still takes time, ink and paper to produce.

A soft-proof simulates this process by applying the printer profile to the image, and then converting the result back for display on your monitor using a slightly different process. This gives a close indication of how the print would look, without having to actually make the print. You can then choose whether the result is close enough to print.

If you are not happy with the soft-proofed result, you could then try to adjust the photo so that it still looks pleasing but is “easier” for the printer to reproduce; that is, more of the photo's colours lie within the capabilities of the printer and don't need to be converted and compressed. For example, if your printer doesn't handle intense greens well, making them appear too blue, you can use Lightroom's normal image editing tools on a virtual copy of the photo to reduce the intensity of the greens a little. The greens wouldn't be as intense as you might like, but at least they would be green!

KNOWN PROBLEMS

THE SHORTCUT KEYS DON'T WORK

On Windows the plugin can be started using the shortcut key Alt+F+S+S (Hold down Alt, then press F, S and S again). Unfortunately, there is no facility for doing this on the Mac.

AFTER SAVE AND STACK, THE NEW PHOTO DOESN'T APPEAR

When you use the “Save and Stack” feature, the Library display shows that the photo is stacked but it is impossible to show the other stacked photos. This is a Lightroom bug. To make all the photos visible, you select any other folder in the Library and then the original one again.

THANKS

The French translation was kindly provided by Pierre-Etienne Courtejoie .