

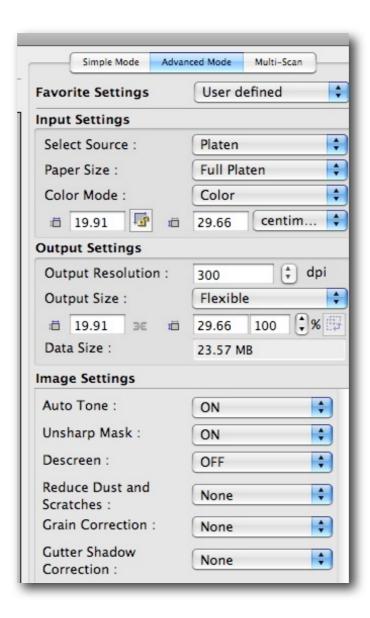
CANON SCANGEAR AND LSI SILVERFAST: QUICK FEATURES COMPARISON

Agostino Maiello, January 2009

Canon ScanGear

Canon ScanGear is a quick, easy-to-use software solution bundled with Canon scanners. ScanGear allows users to scan reflective images without requiring a deep knowledge of the digital imaging techniques.

The user-interface is simple and offers a standard set of features and tools. It is possible to work in an Advanced Mode, which has more features and thus offers the user a higher level of control of the scanning process.

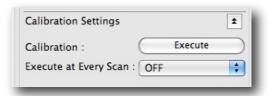


As seen in the screenshot, it is possible to select the source of the image (Platen or Color/Monochrome negative or positive film), the color mode (Color, Grayscale, Black and White) and size. The Output Settings section defines the size and the resolution of the processed image.

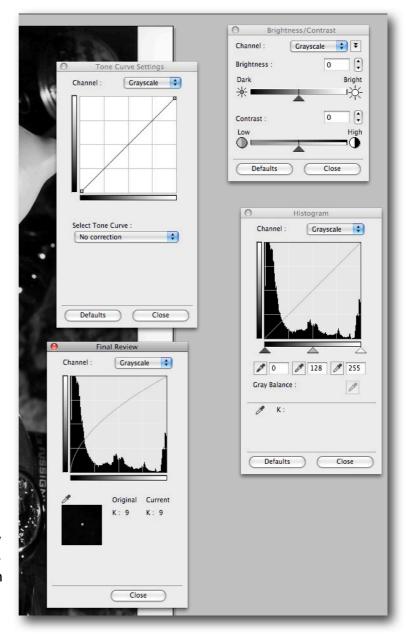
The next six commands allow the user to decide whether to apply some adjustments like AutoTone, Unsharp Mask, etc to the image. The first three are ON/OFF switches, whereas the last three have additional options such as Off/Low/Medium/High.

Rotation and cropping of the scanned image is possible by buttons in the upper left corner of the interface.

A calibration button is located at the bottom of the user interface. This is a completely automated process: the user only clicks the button and then waits for the scanner to perform its internal calibration.



When processing grayscale images, it is possible to apply additional adjustments such as brightness, contrast, curves and levels:



The MultiScan function allows the user to scan more than one image, by simply placing them on the scanner – every detected image will produce an individual output file within Photoshop.

SilverFast Ai

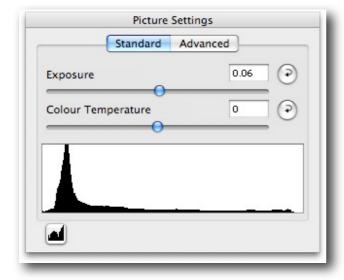
Looking at LaserSoft Imaging SilverFast Ai's interface the difference in terms of features and functionalities become obvious.

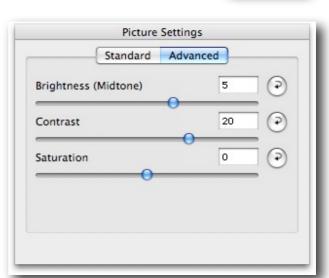
SilverFast's vertical tool bar on the large Preview window offers a wide range of functionality: flipping and rotation, IT8 calibration, dust and scratch removal, Multi Sampling, CloneTool, Auto Adaptive Contrast Optimization, adding of IPTC info, and so on. SilverFast's IT8 calibration is far more flexible and advanced than Canon's solution. Furthermore, SilverFast's Multi-Sampling allows the user to perform multiple scans of the same image, thus minimizing noise and widening the dynamic range (it is also possible to use Multi-Sampling with Multi-Exposure, so increasing the efficiency of the process).

The AACO is customizable: once applied, the user can define several parameters which determine the final result.

SilverFast also offers several commands related to the automation of the workflow (ScanPilot, Job Manager) and to the printing issues (Printer Profiler, Print Image); hence SilverFast can operate as the sole platform from scan to print - not only as an interface to scan images and then pass them over to Photoshop.

The scanning features are plenty and powerful. By means of intuitive sliders, the user can easily handle exposure, color temperature, brightness, contrast and saturation of the image:





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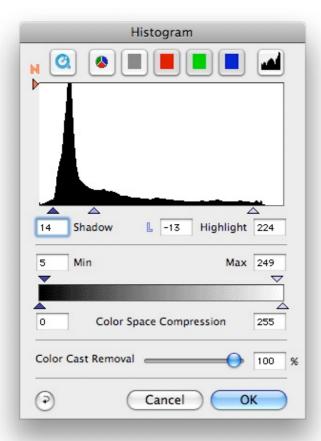
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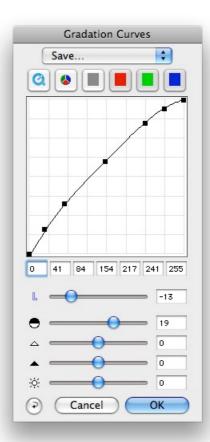
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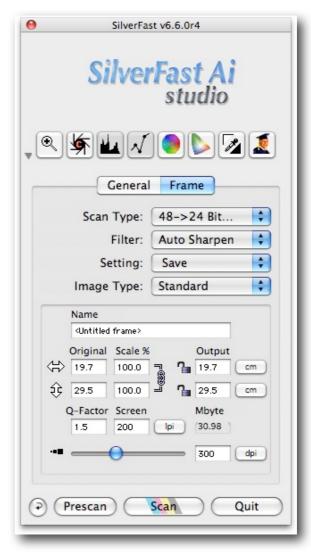
All adjustments are available for all kinds of images (color, grayscale); and can additionally operate in levels and curves, color casts, in one or more color channels, etc.:



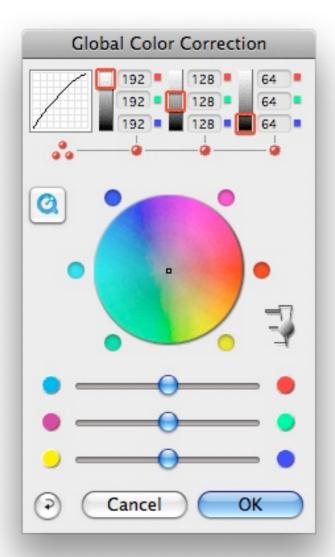


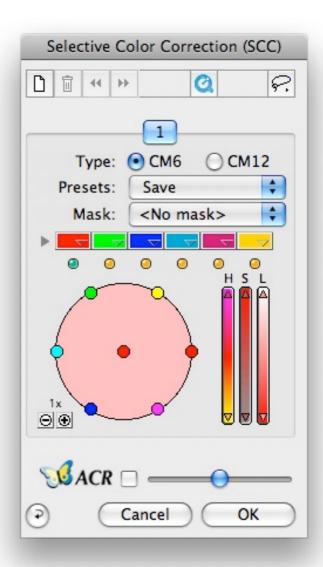
Performing these adjustments on the Preview itself allows the user to see the final result and all corrections in real time – SilverFast always offers predictable results.

The left panel incorporates the standard commands for the input and output parameters:

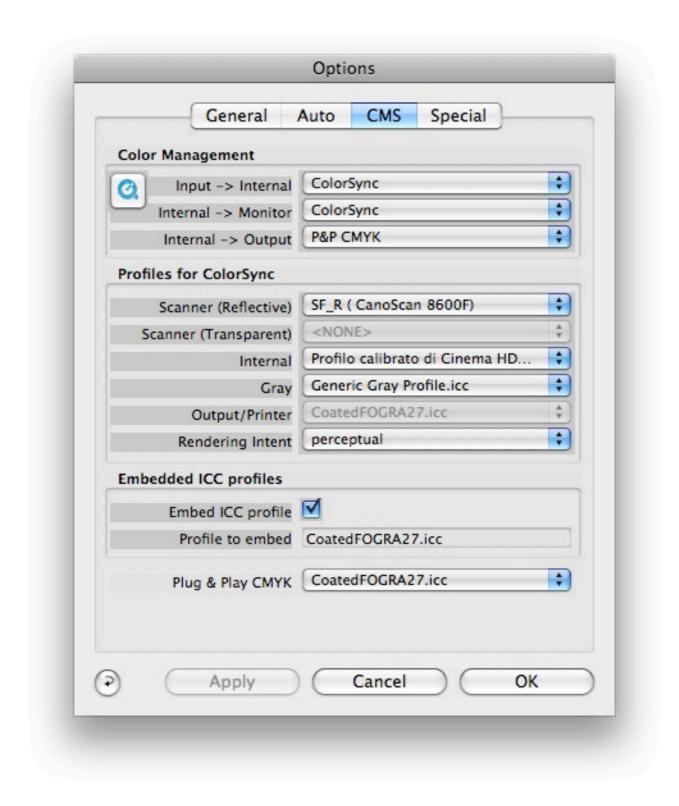


A global or a selective color correction allows the fine tuning and alteration of colors.





The color management settings can be found within the CMS dialog under the Options menu. Here, the user has complete control over profiles, color spaces and separation tables; ideally, the entire system has been profiled (i.e. scanner, monitor and printer):



Conclusion

It is clear that the functionality of SilverFast Ai is much more professional while still being relatively easy to use.

This comparison shows clearly that, although Canon's ScanGear is a valid, fast and easy software for basic scanning, SilverFast Ai offers much more professional functionality - from a basic and automated scan to a complex and fine-tuned professional result.