

ONE 8-SECOND LOOP / MAKING OF

One Loop, Twelve Grades

A flat, ungraded loop of a woman walking past a desert gas station, graded twelve ways by code: color math written by Claude Code, baked into LUTs and applied with ffmpeg.

12

grades

191

frames per loop

0 CU

for the grades

112

credits (CU) in all

A loop that leaves room.

The grading starts from one seamless loop: 191 frames at 24 fps, Rec.709, kept plain on purpose. Low contrast, muted color and a neutral balance leave room for every grade to show, and because it loops, all twelve grades play on the same moment.



Frame 1: she leans on the car.



Frame 81: she walks on past the pump.



Frame 191 flows back into frame 1.

Why flat

A grade can only push what is there. A soft, slightly desaturated source takes a strong look without clipping skin or crushing the shadows; looks tuned on it overcook a contrasty source, so they are re-tuned for each new one.

Why a loop

Every grade shares one continuous timeline. The page switches grades without the footage jumping, and the reel wipes from one grade to the next while she keeps walking.

Twelve short lists of numbers.

Each look is a list of color operations in looks.json, applied in order: white balance, ASC CDL, contrast, saturation, split tone, hue shifts, levels, mono, duotone and highlight roll-off. Vignette, grain and halation are finishing steps on top.



Sunset Glow: 6 operations, then halation and vignette.



Duotone: 2 operations.



Teal & Orange: 8 operations, then vignette.



Noir: 4 operations, then vignette and grain.

Every number stays editable

Teal & Orange is three hue shifts (oranges $\times 1.8$, teals $\times 2.2$, blues pushed toward teal), a split tone with teal shadows and orange highlights, and a contrast of 0.45. Stronger or softer is one number, and the same recipe runs on any clip.

Descriptive names

Movie titles and film-stock brands are trademarks, so every look carries a plain name that says what it does: Tobacco Filter, Pastel Film, Bleach Bypass, Blue Hour.

Taste is settled on a still.

Before any video render, every recipe ran on one frame of the loop and came back as a labelled grid. A still takes seconds and a video render takes minutes, so each round of changes was judged here.



One round of the still test: sixteen looks on one frame.



The ungraded frame they were tuned on.

What got cut

A cobalt-blue kept color read too harsh and was dropped. Only red and gold stayed as kept colors. Four looks were cut from the reel to keep it short: Scorched Desert, Vintage Slide, Tungsten Halation and Silver Screen.

Judge it like a colorist

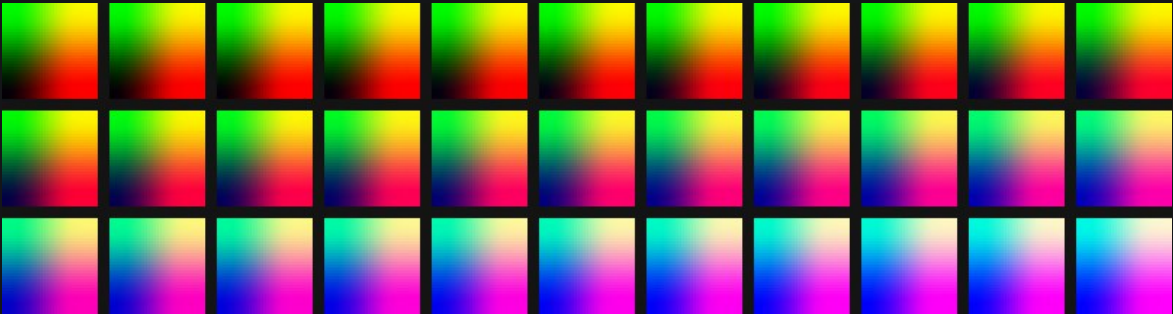
Is each look clearly different from the source? Is anything overcooked: skin turning orange, crushed or clipped detail, neon colors? Are skin tones believable everywhere except the stylized looks?

Color in a cube, position after.

Each recipe is evaluated on every point of a 33 × 33 × 33 grid of colors and written as a standard .cube file. ffmpeg applies it with tetrahedral interpolation, so the grade is identical on every frame and loads in Premiere, After Effects or Resolve.



In: the ungraded frame.



The Sunset Glow LUT: 33 slices of the cube.



Out: through the LUT, plus halation and vignette.

What a LUT cannot do

It turns one color into another everywhere in the frame and has no idea where things are. A hue key could not turn the teal car red, because most of its paint mirrors the warm sky.

Dropped: the sky-only regrade

A per-frame sky mask, found from the mesa line, texture and motion, leaked around the columns and the hair. It did not look good enough and was dropped.

A still sets the grade.

Golden Hour has no typed settings. match.py measures the average color and contrast of the clip and of a golden-hour still of the same scene in CIE Lab, then shifts and scales the clip's colors onto the still's (Reinhard transfer).



The clip, average L 50 · a 1.6 · b 7.6.



The reference: a golden-hour still of the same scene.



Golden Hour: the clip moved to L 42 · a 11.0 · b 14.9.

Still one LUT

The transfer is a fixed function of color, so it bakes into an ordinary .cube like every other look. Re-run match.py whenever the source changes.

Why it convinces

Matching to a version of the same scene in other light is a very convincing time-of-day change: the warm sky, the orange in the asphalt and the deeper shadows all come from the reference's numbers.

Masks where color fails.

Black and white with one color kept. Her lips and fingertips are the same red as the jacket, so color alone also catches them. SAM 3.1 Video on Scenario tracked the jacket and the pump across all 191 frames; the code does everything else.



The two SAM 3.1 Video masks on frame 1: jacket and pump.



B&W + Red: only the masked red stays.



B&W + Gold: the same masks, hue +34°.

A color key was not enough

The first version keyed red by hue, saturation and brightness, then dropped small blobs. It was rejected as not precise: red still showed on skin and in the background.

Masks say where, code says what color

Two SAM runs, 52 CU. The pump mask is narrowed to its red paint, so the white panel and the black hose stay grey, and a guided filter snaps every edge to the image.

Twelve grades in 51 seconds.

showreel.py types each look's name and settings into a menu panel, presses enter, and wipes the new grade across the moving loop. The finale is a 3D wall of all twelve, with the music cut by six bars so a downbeat lands on it at frame 926.



The panel types each grade's name and settings.



The finale: a ring of all twelve.



It lands on a 4 × 3 grid.

Music

ElevenLabs Music v2.5 on Scenario made four takes. The energetic ambient one was kept, normalised to about -18 LUFS with a fade-out, and the reel ends on the Scenario end card.

The receipt

Twelve grades: recipes, LUTs and ffmpeg (code only)	0 CU
Two object masks, SAM 3.1 Video (jacket, pump)	52 CU
Reel music, ElevenLabs Music v2.5 (the kept take)	60 CU
Total, 3 finished Scenario calls	112 CU

From the Scenario usage records for 15 October 2026. The three music takes that were not used are not counted.