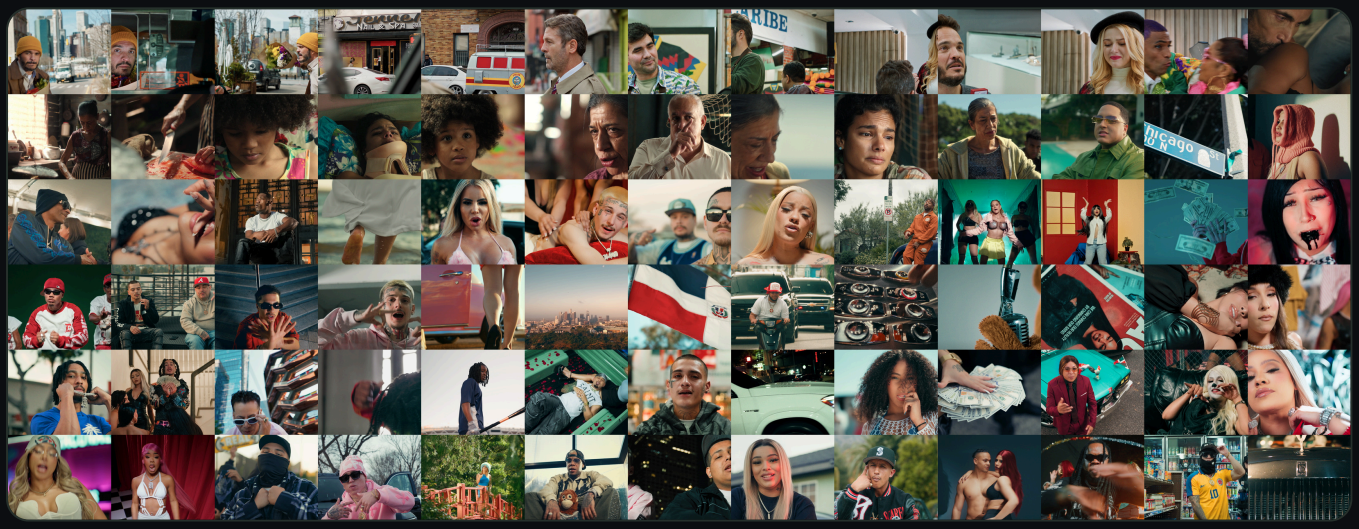
PRACTICAL GUIDE

Mixed Lighting

Why the face comes out half orange and half blue, and how to control it on set



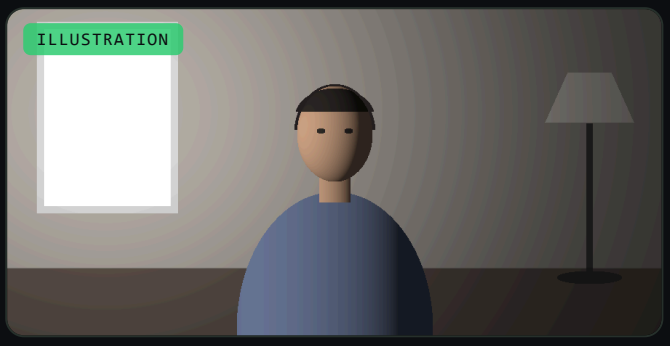
by Luis Taveras · Colorist

The problem: two colors on one face

Every light source has its own color. Your eyes blend it all and see it as normal, but the camera can only adjust to one color at a time. If a window and a bulb both hit your actor's face, the skin ends up with two colors, and that's one of the hardest things to fix in color grading.



Window (blue) on one side and bulb (orange) on the other: two-color skin.



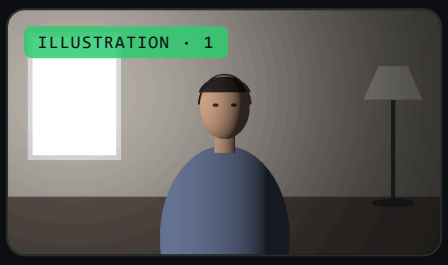
The same scene with one light: clean skin.

The color of every source

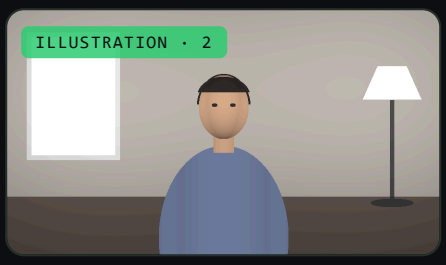
Window / daylight	bluish · ≈5600K and up
Household bulb	orange · ≈2700K
Studio tungsten	warm · 3200K
Fluorescent / cheap LED	green or magenta tint
Quality bi-color LED	adjustable · 2700–6500K

Three fixes on set

- [ ] **1 · One light as the queen.** If you use the window, turn off the house bulbs. If you use your own lights, close the curtains. Fewer sources, more control.
- [ ] **2 · Match your lights.** Set your LEDs to the same temperature as your main light, and use bulbs of the same type and color.
- [ ] **3 · Color gels.** Orange (CTO) turns daylight warm; blue (CTB) turns warm light into daylight. That way every source speaks the same language.



One light.



Lamp matched to 5600K.



No control: two colors.

Watch out for green

Many office lamps, store lights and some cheap LEDs stain the skin with a green tint you can't see on set, but you can see on screen. If you can, turn them off or replace them with high color-rendering lights (high CRI/TLCI).

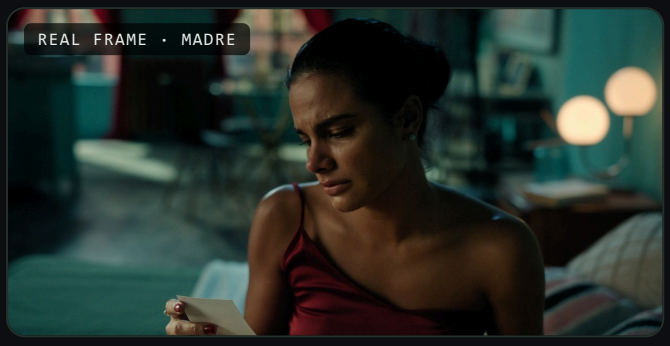


Fluorescent overhead: the skin looks greenish.

Tip: take a phone photo on set and look at it. The green and magenta your eyes miss, the camera sees.

Mixing isn’t forbidden

Films mix colors on purpose: a blue window in the background and a warm lamp on the actor can look beautiful. The key is that it’s a decision, that the mix stays in the background or on the edges, and that the skin gets one clean light.



Warm lamp in the scene and cool walls: the skin stays natural.



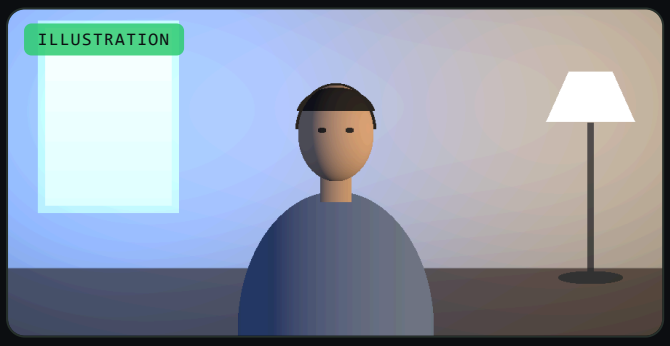
Warm practicals in a cool room, decided on set.



Pink and blue neon on purpose: party.



Cool sci-fi mix.



Blue background and warm skin: mixing as a tool.



Soft, clean window light on the skin.

Frames from *Madre* and *La Fábrica de Bodas*, color graded by Luis Taveras. *Sintel* (2010) and *Tears of Steel* (2012) © Blender Foundation · durian.blender.org · mango.blender.org · CC BY 3.0 license.

Before you shoot: quick checklist

- [ ] **Walk the location** and list every light source: windows, bulbs, lamps, screens, neons.
- [ ] **Choose the main light** and decide what gets turned off, covered or corrected.
- [ ] **Set the camera's white balance** to that main light.
- [ ] **Match** your LEDs, or bring CTO and CTB gels.
- [ ] **Turn off or replace** green office or store lights.
- [ ] **If you mix on purpose**, keep it in the background or on the edges, never on the face.
- [ ] **Check the skin** on a reliable monitor before you roll.

What your project gains

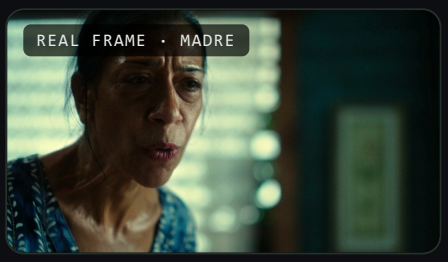
When you control your lights on set, skin looks natural, shots match each other, and the colorist can focus on creating the look instead of rescuing the image.



Interior with several sources, all decided.



Warm practicals and production design color.



Window light through blinds.

Frames from *Madre* and *La Fábrica de Bodas*, color graded by Luis Taveras.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Luis Taveras

COLORIST

Luis Taveras is a colorist, member of the Colorist Society International, with five feature films and more than 500 music videos. His credits include *Madre: a dos centímetros de ti*, winner of five awards at the 2025 New York Dominican Film Festival, and *La Fábrica de Bodas*, which premiered at the United Palace in New York. For him, color is the last place where a film can still change its emotion, and the skin always has to feel true.

5	500+	10
feature films	music videos	years in the craft

What I do

- Color grading for film
- Music videos
- Commercials and brands
- Cinema mastering and delivery (DCP)

Member, Colorist Society International · ID 98523302

DGCINE Film Agent · SIRECINE AC-PTA 18224

Planning your next shoot?

I'd love to collaborate with you on the color of your next project. Write to me and watch my demo reel.

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