The first time that I reviewed **Blackmagic Design**'s DaVinci Resolve, I spent 110 hours trying to read the manual and book. And while I learned enough to get started, it wasn't enough to master the Resolve software. What I really wanted was to sit down with a trained colorist and learn firsthand how to make regular images look beautiful, but that just wasn't going to happen since I live in Tampa, Fla. So you can imagine how excited I was to hear about the Tao of Color series from www.taoofcolor.com , which showed me that all I really needed was a good mentor.

Tao of Color Owner Patrick Inhofer has over 20 years of experience as an editor and colorist. Based in New York, he has color graded short and feature films, commercials and documentaries, including two for Director Barry Levinson. You've probably seen his work on network, cable and pay television (on **ABC**, **NBC**, **National Geographic**, **PBS**, **Discovery**, **TBS**, **TNT**, **HBO** and **Showtime**), at New York's Museum of Modern Art or at film festivals.

I think that the value of being mentored is lost on many people today. In the old days, before everyone believed that a college degree was the perfect solution to learning a craft, most people had mentors. If you wanted to be a blacksmith, you found a blacksmith who would train you until you were good enough to go out on your own. This system worked for centuries. And because Inhofer is a strong believer in the mentoring process, I signed up for the Tao of Color series. Not many training sites will teach you about **DaVinci** software along with the other skills you'll need to be a successful colorist. To help you build real-world skills, Inhofer created a "Grade-Along" using footage from a real Indie film. The idea is that by doing the work, asking questions when you get stuck, and uploading your work for Inhofer to critique, you'll get the full benefits of a mentor without actually having one in your town.

Inhofer's Tao of Color training is much more than simple interface training. He'll guide you through the entire color-grading process, from the initial client phone call through final delivery. But I'm getting ahead of myself. First, you get to watch six hours of DaVinci Resolve 9 training tutorials taken from Inhofer's 17-hour Tao of Color MasterClass. This six-hour training gives a complete overview of DaVinci Resolve 9, and after watching these videos you'll watch the Grade-Along while following along on your own computer. I used the full version Resolve 9 on my Savage IO Databrick NLE, which is probably the fastest PC running Windows 7 that you can buy. The Grade-Along is DaVinci Resolve Lite compatible as well, so you can take the training now and get the full version of Resolve only when you actually need it.

I've been writing reviews for 14 years, so I have seen a lot of tutorials. With the Tao of Color program, you're not just downloading some footage, importing an XML before being left to work on your own. It's more like you're an assistant colorist watching Inhofer work while he explains what he's doing and why. This is pretty much what I was looking for, and I'm actually becoming fluid with the interface. Now, when I see a shot on the scopes, I know where to begin and how to get the screen results that I pictured in my head. If you follow along using the same footage on your own computer, you'll learn too. As you go through this entire film several times shot by shot, from prepping the timeline of locked picture through the final revisions and delivery, you'll begin to believe that you're a colorist. The Tao of Color series is great because you won't just see Inhofer working — he's developed a Heads-Up display so you can see the shot you're both grading, what node you're working in, and other relevant data, like scopes and the timeline.

A Lesson page accompanies each video, and these Lessons are essential training components. They provide background information, links to other websites and resources, and other essential information you'll need to fully understand each Lesson. They also include additional downloads for reference images, audio, project files, XMLs, stills exported from Resolve and more. It's like having an experienced colorist mentor send you links to articles and blogs that will round out your knowledge of becoming a colorist.
One of the first things you'll learn with Tao of Color is how to properly prep a timeline for grading in DaVinci Resolve 9. If you don't know how to do this, you can find yourself with an end product that doesn't match the original locked version that you were given — and this will pretty much end your career. Just this knowledge alone is worth the cost of the whole series. You'll also learn that all programs don't play well together. Using the provided short film *Dead Man's Lake*, you'll start in Premiere Pro, find problems you can't solve, take a side trip in Final Cut Pro 7, clean things up, and then finally export back into DaVinci Resolve 9. Left on my own, I wouldn't have any idea of how to wrap my head around this problem, let alone solve it. In doing this part of the tutorial, I learned a workflow that will allow me to de-bug whatever problems I might find when "XML-ing" a timeline from my nonlinear editor into DaVinci Resolve. If you don't own Premiere Pro or Final Cut Pro 7, the XMLs that Inhofer created in each of those NLEs are provided to you, and the concepts covered in this lesson can be applied to any NLE, including Avid, Final Cut Pro X and Vegas.

Short films tend to be very personal projects, as they're usually more about art and less about making a profit. But every short film has one thing in common: a director with a vision. In the Tao of Color series, each short film includes an extensive discussion of the director's vision for the film, including scripts, reference images, Skype calls and project files. I found this information to be very useful, as I'm so used to editing my own projects that it was interesting to get into the process of executing someone else's vision for a change. Shot on an **ARRI** ALEXA camera to ProRes 4444, and recorded as Log C, Dead Man's Lake is a seven-minute indie short with over 130 shots that were filmed over multiple days under changing light conditions. It doesn't get any more real world than that.

Inhofer makes learning a lot of fun, even if it involves Look-Up Tables (LUTs) or grading Log-encoded footage using LUTs, which, as it turns out, isn't as difficult as it sounds. Now, if I need to use LUTs, I know their limitations and how specifically to use them within DaVinci Resolve 9. Overall, the Tao of Color DaVinci training is a painless way to learn a great new skill

set. And if you buy the Premium Edition of the Grade-Along, you can send Inhofer Dead Man's Lake after you finish your grade — and he'll give you his feedback on your work. That surely sounds like a mentor program to me.