

# Table of Contents

<b>1 The Zone System.....</b>	<b>1</b>
The Zones Revealed .....	4
Signal to Noise Ratio.....	5
It's All About the Noise.....	5
Histogram Zones.....	8
Zone System Example: Ring Nebula.....	9
Noise: Heart of the Zone System .....	11
Noise Control.....	11
The Dark Zone .....	13
The Dim Zone .....	15
The Middle Zone.....	17
The Bright Zone .....	18
Review.....	21
<b>2 Photoshop® Basics: The Standard Curve .....</b>	<b>23</b>
Photoshop® Tips.....	26
Processing Checklist.....	28
Open a File.....	30
Set the Black Point and White Point .....	31
Curves Dialog.....	32
Add a Point.....	33
Aggression.....	34
Adding a Second Point .....	35
A Third Point .....	36
The Sweet Spot.....	37

Curves Dialog (continued)	
A Curve too Far .....	38
Background Control: Levels .....	39
Multiple Passes .....	40
Putting the Pieces Together.....	41
Review .....	42

### **3 Photoshop® Processing Tips .....43**

Open a File .....	46
Set White/Black Points.....	47
Refine the Black Point .....	49
Iterate Standard Curve/Black Point.....	50
Set Brightness of Dimmest Details.....	52
Micro-Contrast.....	54
Final Tweaking with Curves .....	57
Selecting Dim Zone for Smoothing.....	58
Smoothing the Dim Zone.....	60
Selecting the Bright Zone .....	60

### **4 Image Processing Workflow .....63**

Imaging Decisions.....	65
Individual Exposure Times.....	65
Total Exposure Time .....	67
Cooling .....	67
Guiding Advice .....	68
Dithering.....	69
Image Processing: Luminance .....	70
Noise Control.....	70
Master Reduction Frames .....	73

Image Alignment .....	75
Basic Histogram Processing .....	76
Advanced Histogram Processing .....	80
Color Profiles.....	86
Star Selection.....	87
Star Shape Corrections.....	88
Zonal Sharpening .....	89
Cloning and Healing .....	90
Star Sharpening .....	90
Zonal Smoothing .....	93
Photoshop® CS2 Reduce Noise Filter .....	94
Image Processing: Color.....	95
Color Binning Effects .....	96
Color Balancing.....	100

## 5 Selecting Stars ..... 105

Photoshop® Tips .....	108
Tutorial Start.....	113
Open the File .....	113
Duplicate the Layer .....	113
Remove the Stars .....	114
Set Blend Mode .....	117
Select Stars .....	119
Clean Up the Selection .....	122
Expand and Feather the Selection.....	124
Selection to Layer .....	126
Filter Examples.....	128
Review .....	130

## 6 Controlling Color ..... 131

Photoshop® Tips .....	134
Fixing Color Problems.....	143

## 6 Controlling Color (continued)

Remove Color Bias .....	144
Color Balance .....	145
Quick Balance .....	151
Severe Color Bias .....	152
Automatic Bias Removal .....	153
Color Balancing Tips .....	155
Color Noise = Weak Color .....	156
Atmospheric Extinction .....	158

## 7 Image Cleanup..... 159

Photoshop® (and Other) Tips.....	162
CCDStack for Data Rejection .....	166
Soft Stars.....	168
Cleaning Up Soft Stars.....	171
Unsharp Mask.....	173
Minimum Filter .....	175
Fixing Star Halos.....	177

## 8 Fixing Star Elongation ..... 179

Photoshop® Tips.....	182
Open File.....	188
Fix Up Stars .....	193
Elements and Wavelengths .....	201
Choosing Emission-Line Filters.....	202
Camera Considerations .....	206
Equipment Issues .....	208
Acquisition Tips.....	210

<b>9 Emission-Line Imaging: Acquisition .....</b>	<b>199</b>
Elements and Wavelengths .....	201
Choosing Emission-Line Filters.....	202
Camera Considerations .....	206
Equipment Issues .....	208
Acquisition Tips.....	210
<b>10 Emission-Line Imaging: Processing .....</b>	<b>213</b>
Prepare the Image.....	216
Noise Considerations .....	216
Equalizing the Background Levels .....	217
Balancing Emission-Line Color .....	219
Combining the Data.....	222
DDP stretching and exporting the image .....	223
<b>11 Emission-Line with Natural Color.....</b>	<b>227</b>
Two Approaches .....	230
Luminance Enhancement .....	230
H-alpha as red channel.....	237
Processing the Result.....	239