

EVmath Re-Color

Brandie’s Story

Zach Shapiro | Final Personal Project | W26 Masters Program

Why I Chose This as My Final Personal Project

I chose this project because it represents a turning point in my development as a colorist. Although I was initially proud of the original grade, the published films appeared noticeably darker and less saturated than I had intended. That experience exposed gaps in my understanding of color management, monitoring, shot matching, and delivery, and ultimately helped motivate me to pursue the Master’s Program. Returning to the original camera files allowed me to apply what I have learned, measure my growth against my previous work, and build a more intentional grade in which color supports the story without overpowering its documentary authenticity.

About the Film

This film was created for EVmath.org as part of a three-part documentary series featuring rural Oregonians whose lives have been transformed by electric vehicles. Brandy’s profile combines interviews and observational footage to show how an electric vehicle fits naturally into rural family life, helping audiences see EV ownership as practical, capable, and personally relevant.

Final Recolored Video



The grade should disappear into the story

The creative objective

Build trust in Brandie, preserve the reality of rural life, and make an electric vehicle feel naturally at home within it.



The color is successful when the viewer notices Brandie’s experience and not the grade.

Color carries the audience from curiosity to possibility



CURIOSITY

A modern vehicle enters an unfamiliar rural context.



TRUST

Natural skin and an open image establish credibility.



CONNECTION

Warmth and visual unity keep the family at the center.



POSSIBILITY

Scale and clarity make the technology feel capable.

Uncontrolled conditions made continuity the central challenge



2 person crew

6 hours to capture the film

1 lighting setup: the interview

Everything else relied on available light: changing sun, color temperature, exposure, shooting direction, and two camera systems.

Matching means preserving difference inside a shared visual logic

The goal was not to make every shot identical.

It was to align the qualities that affect continuity (exposure, contrast, white balance, saturation, skin, highlight behavior, and shadow density), while preserving real changes in place and light.



Challenge:
Shooting in various settings with two separate cameras:
Canon C500 Mark II + DJI Mavic 3 Cine

The palette connects people and place



SKIN
warm / believable

DENIM
cool / grounded

SKY
open / inviting

SAGE
natural / restrained

GRASS
warm / textured

MACHINERY
lived-in / practical

People remain the emotional anchor



Priority

Keep Brandie’s skin tone warm, natural, and visually separated from denim, foliage, and the cooler background.

Method

Balance globally first; isolate skin only when the surrounding correction would compromise it.

A dedicated skin-test node supports evaluation without becoming a permanent beauty treatment.

Each environment has a different narrative job



LANDSCAPE

Expansive, warm, and textured—Warming the palette, while limiting saturation to keep it feeling inviting and authentic.



INTERIOR

Intimate and immediate—hold skin and cabin detail against the bright exterior.

A common working space makes creative matching possible

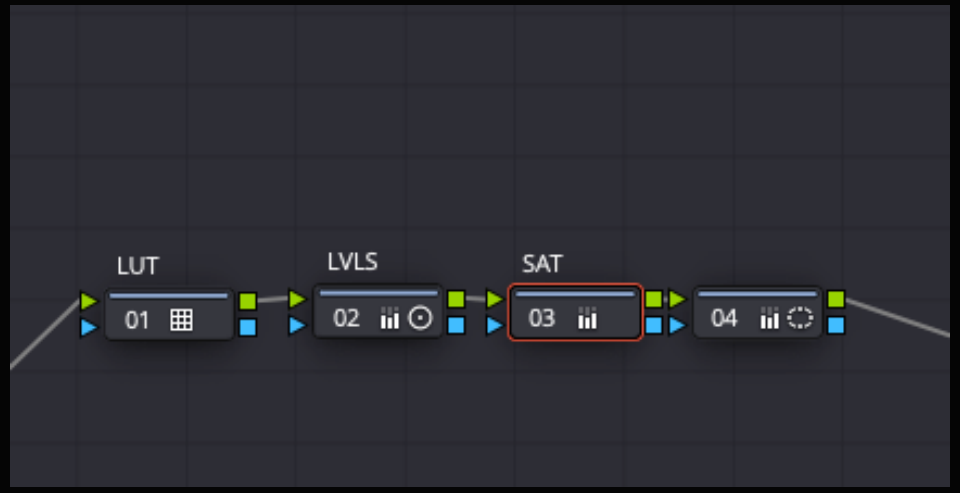


DaVinci YRGB | Color Space Transform nodes provide the IDT and ODT

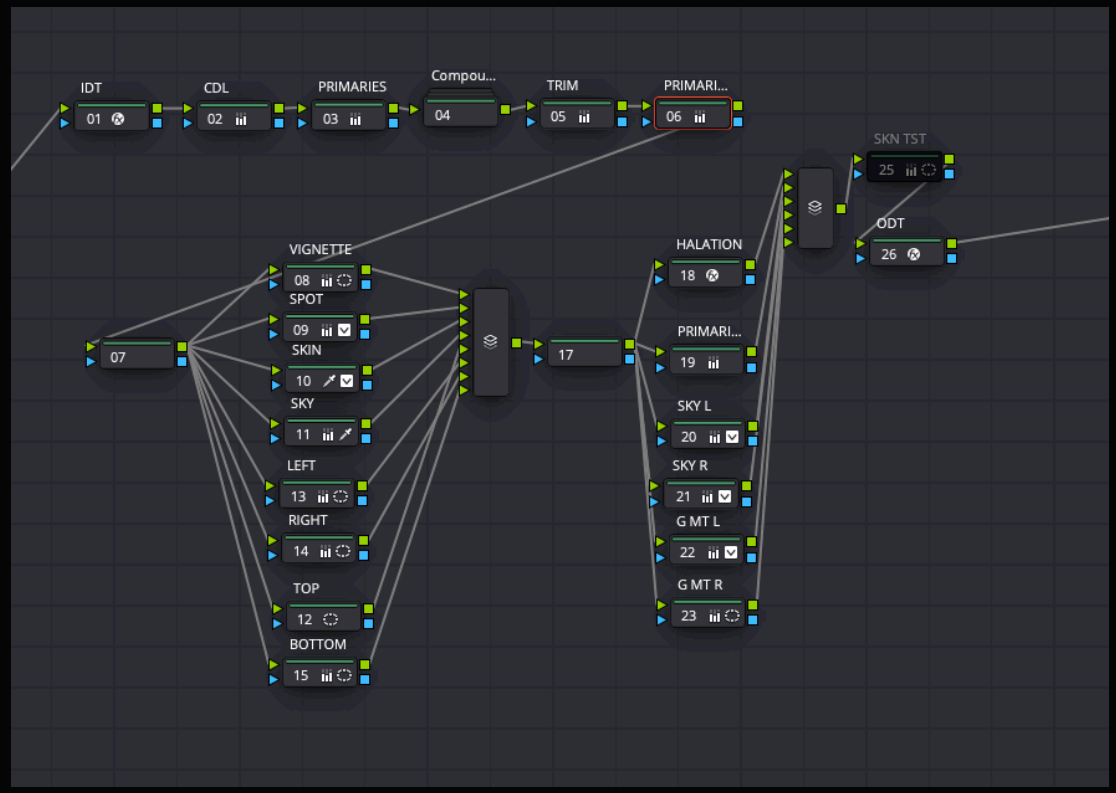
Normalization creates a common foundation. The match still depends on shot-by-shot perceptual balancing.

The workflow evolved from broad corrections to defined responsibilities

BEFORE

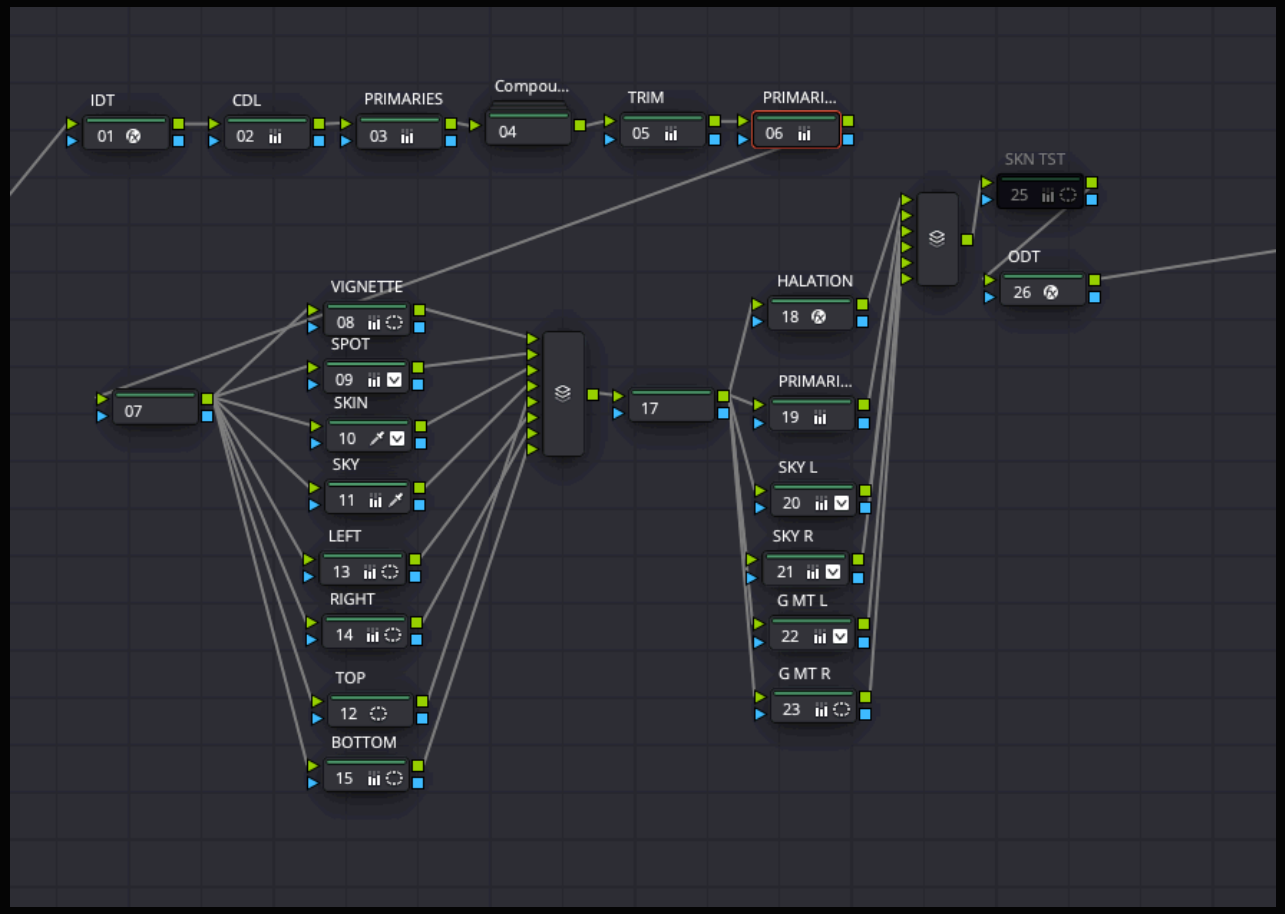


AFTER



Technical transforms, balancing, look design, local shaping, texture, gamut control, skin evaluation, and output are independently testable.

Every node exists to answer a specific question



IDT

What camera space am I starting from?

CDL

Where should contrast and tonal weight begin?

PRIMARIES

What global color balance serves the shot?

LOCAL SHAPING

Where should the viewer look?

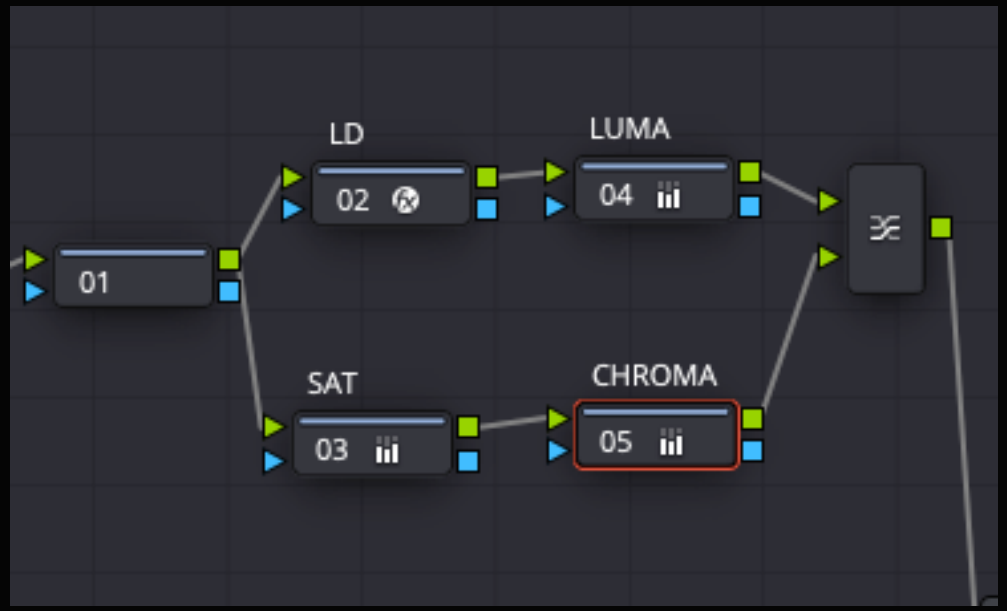
LOOK + TEXTURE

What subtle character supports the story?

ODT

How should the scene reach the Rec.709 display?

The show lut separates color character from tonal structure

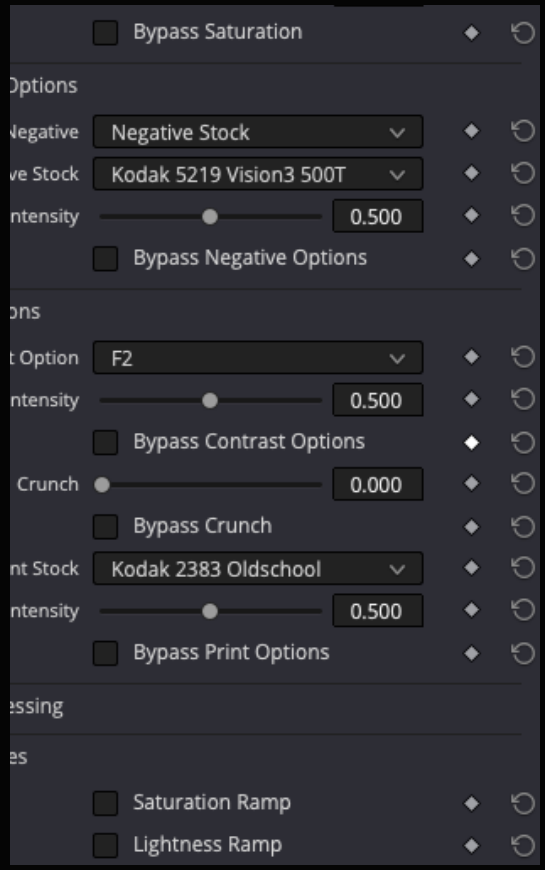


LUMA

Tonal shape remains independently controllable.

CHROMA

Color intensity can be refined without rebuilding contrast.



The branches recombine with Add composite mode. Look Designer supplies restrained film-inspired color relationships—not an overt emulation.

The regrade gives the landscape a clearer tonal hierarchy

Before & After Comparisons

The following frames represent the key visual environments of the film and the primary focus of the regrade. They illustrate the range of lighting conditions, locations, and emotional moments that the color grade must unify into a cohesive visual experience.



Original Grade

Issues:
Sky is grey
Over saturated
Doesn’t match other shots of EV



Masters Regrade

Solutions:
Replaced sky with another shot.
Matched movement of sky, despite parallax effect from drone
Reduced and matched saturation

The vehicle remains legible while terrain, sky, and road feel connected rather than separately treated.

The family portrait shifts attention back to people

Before & After Comparisons



Original Grade

Issues:
Sky was not a consideration
The father subject is darker than everyone else
Lackluster color



Masters Regrade

Solutions:
More intentional with skin tone - created a window to boost skin tones and separate subjects from the background
Separated the sky, ground, and people to control independently
Added saturation

Skin, clothing, grass, and machinery separate more cleanly while the scene retains its rural warmth.

The interview becomes the continuity reference for skin

Before & After Comparisons



Original Grade

Issues:
Background is hot, blowing out the sky and backlighting the subject

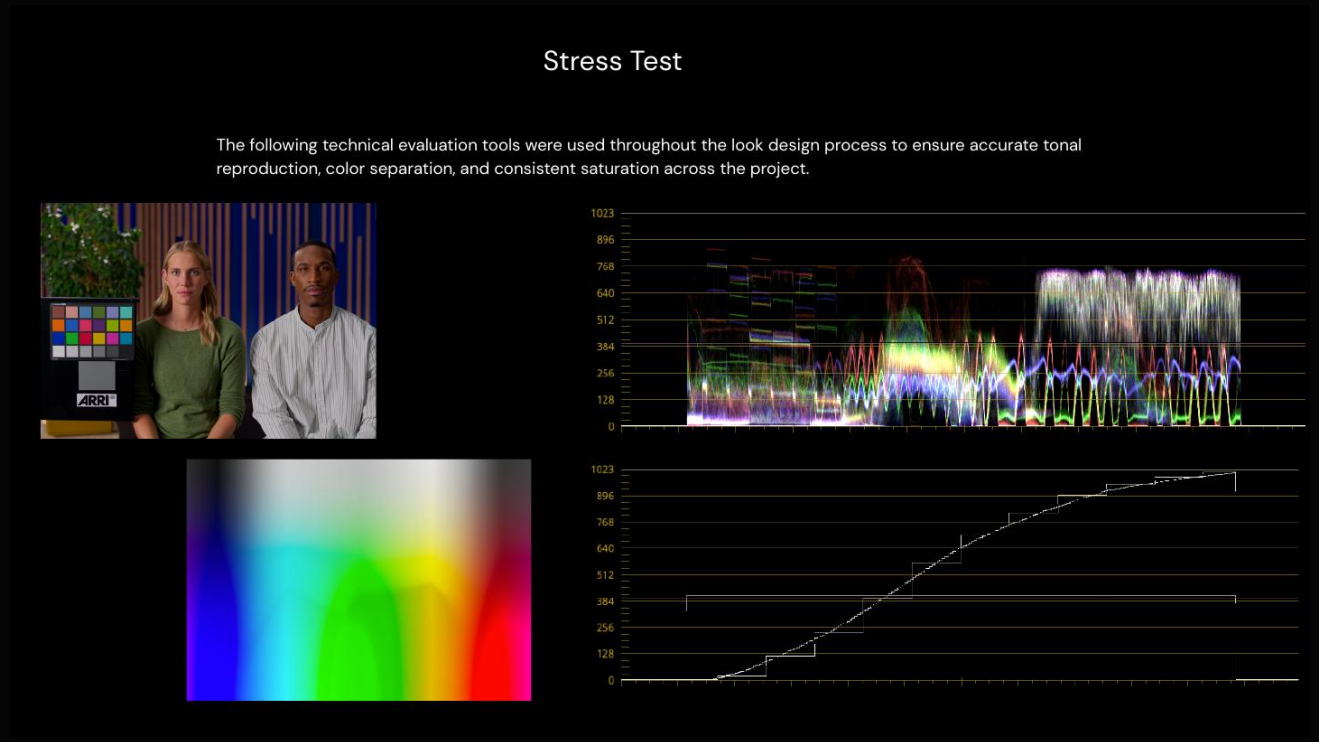


Masters Regrade

Solutions:
Reduced exposure of background
Brought up subject's exposure
Adjusted skin tone using vector scope

A natural, open portrait establishes the human baseline against which uncontrolled scenes can be judged.

Technical evaluation protects the creative intention



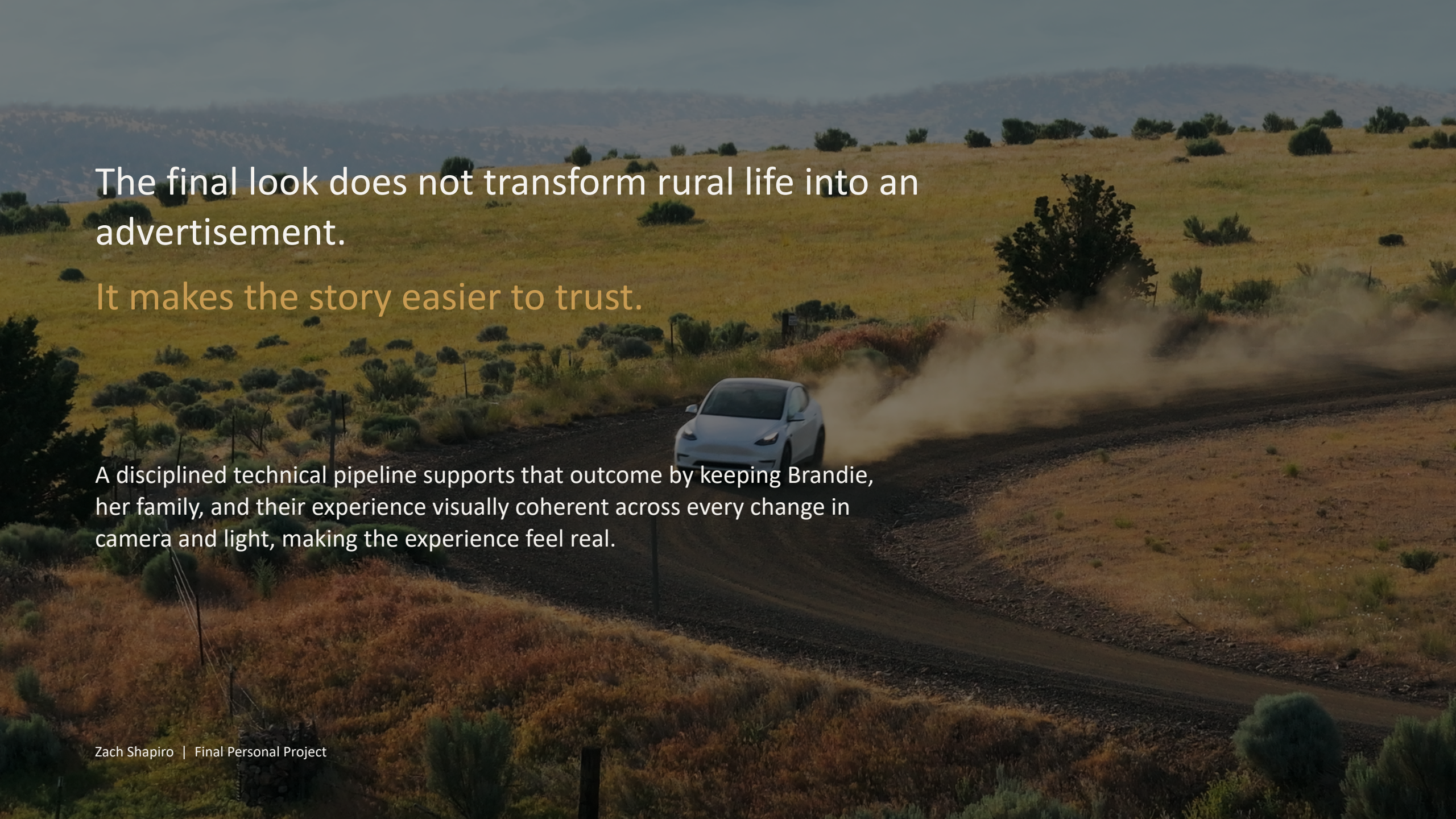
STRESS TEST

Charts, ramps, and scopes reveal tonal discontinuities, channel separation, clipping, and saturation behavior that may be hidden by a pleasing hero frame.

MONITORING LIMITATION

A 2021 MacBook Pro clean feed required conservative decisions and made final-path verification essential.

The limitation is acknowledged—not disguised—and informs the QC plan.



The final look does not transform rural life into an advertisement.

It makes the story easier to trust.

A disciplined technical pipeline supports that outcome by keeping Brandie, her family, and their experience visually coherent across every change in camera and light, making the experience feel real.