PrimeFilm 1800 AFL
Low-Cost 35mm Slide/Film Scanning

Through the end of the 1990s, the cost of flat-bed scanners steadily decreased, making them a common computer accessory. Until recently, however, there was no comparably priced film scanner which could convert a 35mm slide into a high-resolution digital file. Although some flat-bed scanners include a slide attachment, they are often of poor quality, and yield unacceptable results. Traditionally, film scanners have been expensive, reserved for professionals and serious 35mm photographers who had both the need for their output, and the resources to pay for acquiring them. The significant price differential has remained in effect due to the smaller potential market for film scanners, growing smaller with the increased use of digital cameras, and the more precise and complex imaging components used to construct them.

The cross-platform PrimeFilm 1800 AFL,* is priced well under $400, and as its name implies, scans at an optical resolution of 1800 x 1800 dpi. The bit depth is 42-bit for color, and it has a 14-bit gray image depth. The linear array color CCD image sensor responds to its cold cathode fluorescent lamp light source, producing a 12.76 MB scan in about 23 seconds. Although it is an entry-level product, users can yield semi-professional results from this compact (238mm (L) x 103mm (W) x 177mm (H)), and versatile unit. In addition to scanning individual slides, the device will accept film strips, and automatically scan an entire roll unattended. This batch scanning feature is uncommon in a consumer-level film scanner.

The scanner connects using either a USB or Firewire connection (models have one or the other, or both). The hardware installation consists of plugging in the power cord and making the appropriate cable connection. The CyberView software is accessible from within a host application, such as Adobe Photoshop. The user sets the application preferences (FIG. 1) for the prescan resolution setting and advanced auto-color setting, and any other settings

*Pacific Image Electronics, 1830 W. 208th St., Torrance, CA 90501, 310 618-8100, http://www.scanace.com, fax: 310 618-8200.
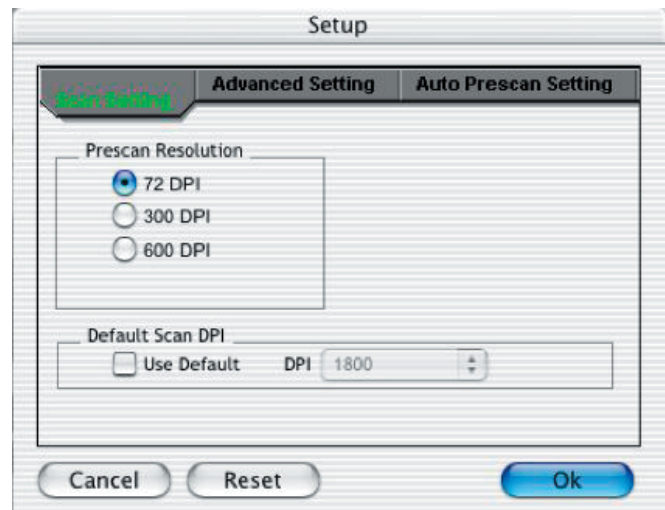

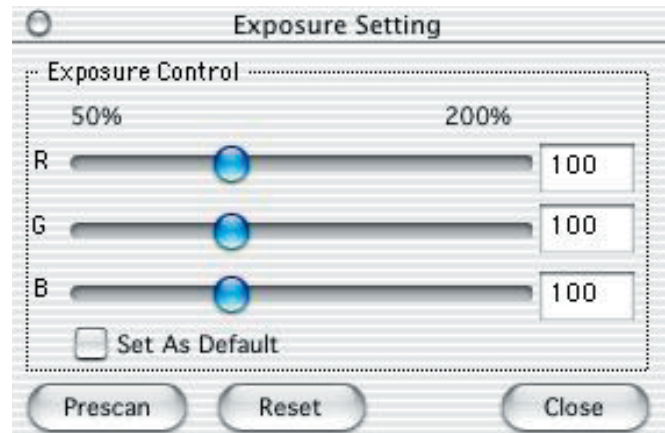FIG. 1. The CyberView Setup dialog box.

FIG. 2. The CyberView Exposure Settings.

that may be specific to the particular scan. Although it is not required, the image can be pre-scanned and the appropriate image specifications can be set, such as exposure (FIG. 2), variations (FIG. 3), curves (FIG. 4), and color balance (FIG. 5). The scan is executed by selecting the scan button, and can be directed to appear in a window within the host application, or saved directly to a file.
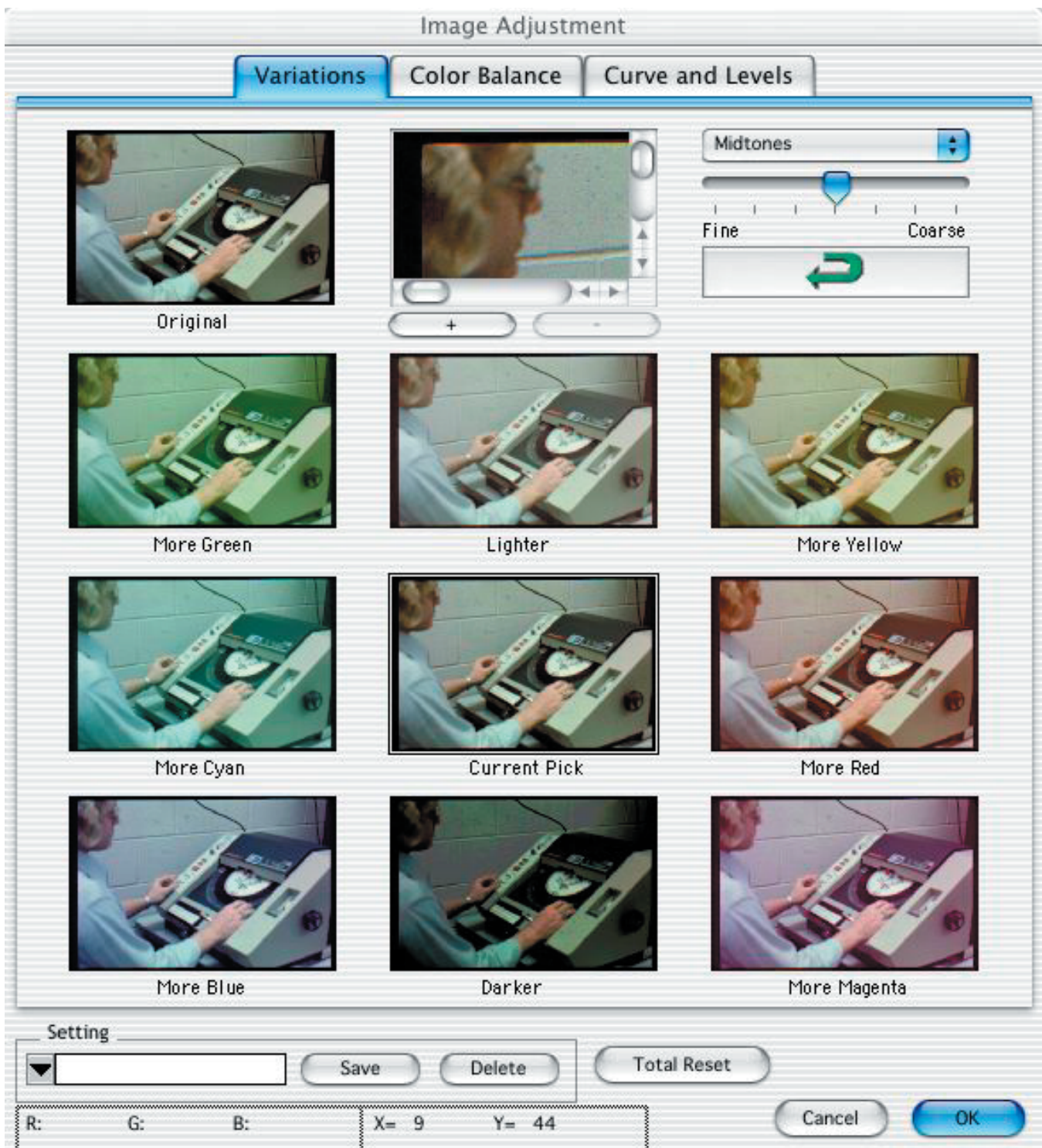
FIG. 3. The CyberViewVariations window provides the user with a highly visual assessment of the relative appearance of the same image.
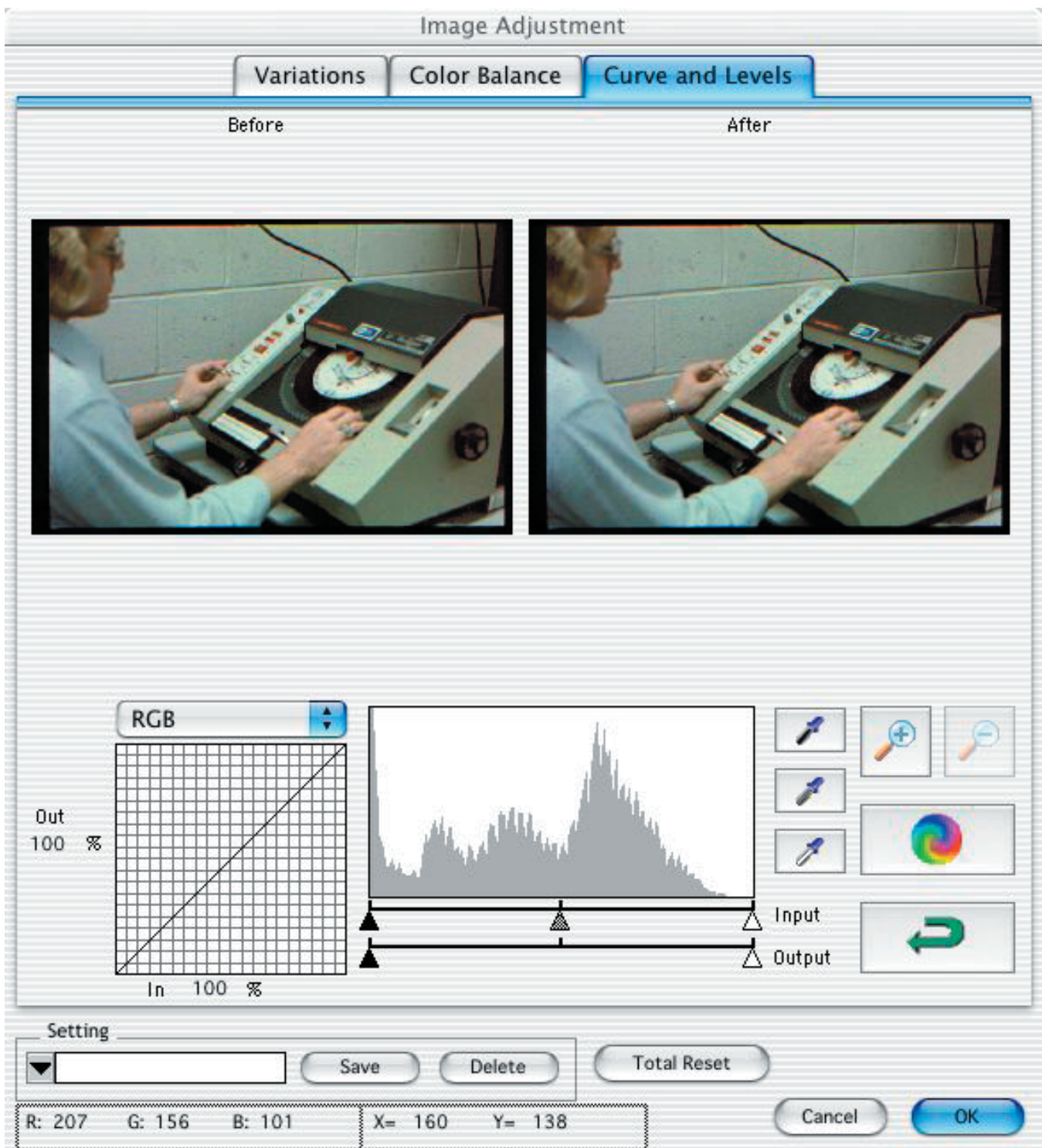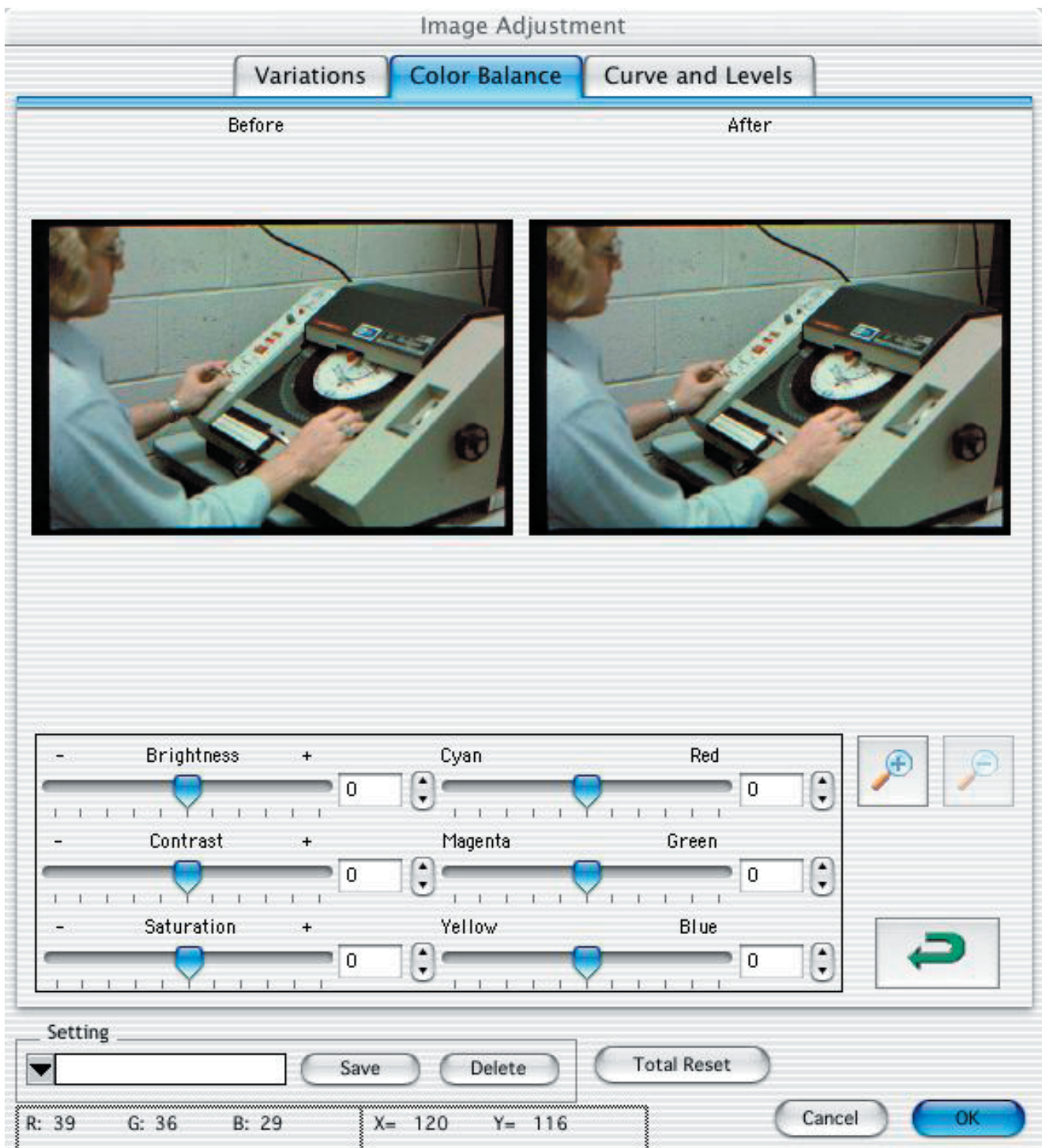
FIG. 4. The CyberView Curve and Levels controls.

FIG.5. The CyberView Color Balance adjustment window.