

Gimp

MAGAZINE



Schroll
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ISSN: 1929-6894
DIGITAL VERSION



AN INTERVIEW WITH CHRISTIAN
SCHROLL

CREATING HDR IMAGES WITH UFRAW,
LUMINANCE, AND GIMP



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



Welcome to Issue #10 of GIMP Magazine! In ten issues we have covered so much ground. We have covered various types of photography, graphic design, digital illustration and even graphic novels/cartoons. We've shown you various techniques in GIMP and other open source software tools (i.e. Inkscape, Scribus, and My Paint) through in-depth tutorials written by amazing experts from around the world. We have shown you what these programs are capable of, and have covered topics such as how to set up and use a stylist. We even covered a comprehensive feature comparison between GIMP and Photoshop. And, best of all, we've featured amazing works from all over the world in our various galleries.

Looking back, what stands out to me is the excellence in finished products created with free and open source software, and the opportunity of meeting artists and learning about their work. Looking forward, I would encourage more submissions around perhaps plug-ins and scripts, or custom tools developed for GIMP. I also hope to see articles about how certain GIMP tools work from the ground up, and articles about using GIMP and other open-source programs in schools. And I encourage more amazing art from everyone! Please submit – it's as easy as visiting <http://gimpmagazine.org/submissions>.

This issue features amazing photography from some amazing places. Christian Schroll takes us on a journey of some pretty cool landscapes and landmarks, and also shares a master-class of how he creates HDR (High Dynamic Range) photography in a multi-page, detailed tutorial.

The team at GIMP Magazine always appreciates how you share our magazine with others. We have grown to over 16,000 followers, over 3 million Google+ views, over 600,000 WordPress views, and a number of comments that we value greatly. By sharing our magazine with others and showcasing the amazing capabilities of GIMP, we can

expand GIMP's user-base, and share the communal spirit of Free/Libre software.

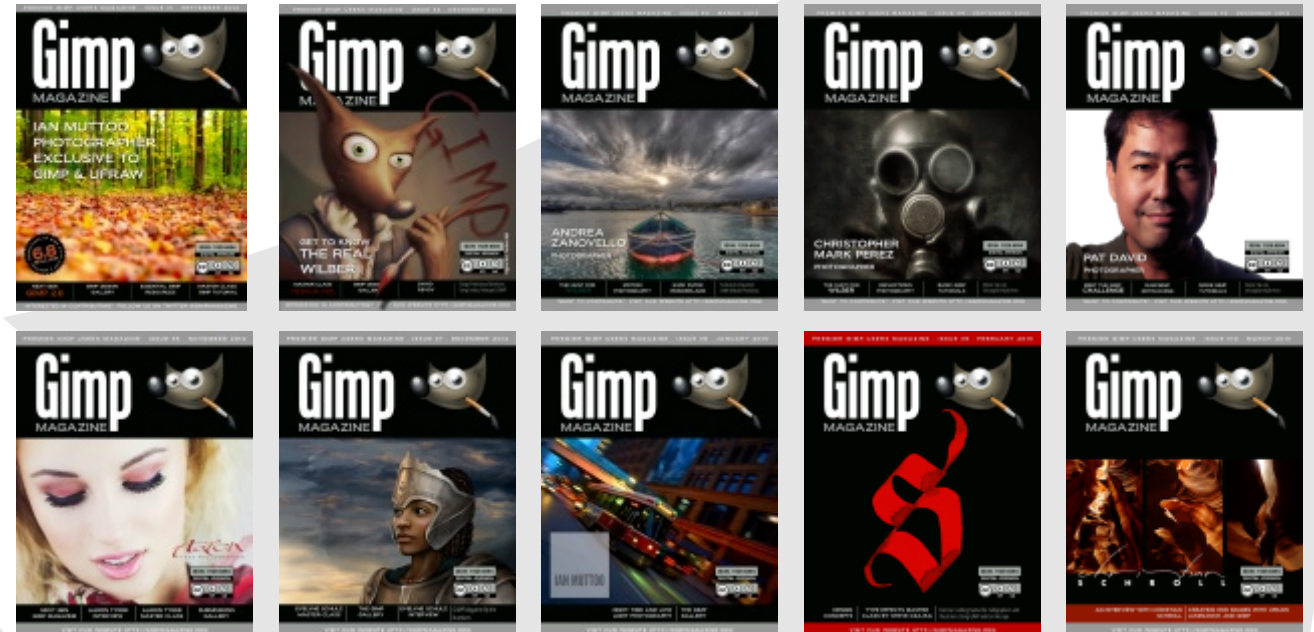
The team at GIMP Magazine proudly presents Issue #10. We thank you so much for being a part of the first ten issues of GIMP Magazine, and look forward to so many more. If you aren't already doing so, please follow us on Twitter, Google+, Issuu, or by email subscription on our website. Also, tell a friend about GIMP and GIMP Magazine, and kindly tweet or blog about us to help spread the word.

Enjoy!



Cheers
Steve

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AN INTERVIEW WITH CHRISTIAN SCHROLL

Edited by Richard Buchanan II

Christian Schroll is a landscape and nature photographer from Maryland, USA. His passion for hiking and nature has taken him throughout North America, from one breathtaking scene to another. You can view his work at https://500px.com/Christian_Schroll and <https://www.flickr.com/people/guine/>.

TELL US ABOUT YOU AND YOUR WORK.

While I would say that I have a broad range of interests, the interests that impact my photography the most are nature, the environment, and conservation. Over the past several years, I have had the opportunity to do a lot of travelling, and was able to spend a significant portion of time in parks throughout the western US. The time spent in those areas definitely focused more on photography, and on trying to show off some of the many amazing wild and undeveloped places that we still have.

WHAT MADE YOU CHOOSE PHOTOGRAPHY AS A CREATIVE OUTLET? WHAT INSPIRES YOUR WORK?

Photography was just something that I started doing on family vacations growing up, and it was something that I've always enjoyed doing. As someone who has never been good at drawing, photography just matched up with my abilities as a way for me to create artwork. Seeing the beauty in nature makes me want to share it, and seeing the work of other landscape and nature artists just makes me want to visit and experience more and more of the amazing places that we have.

SCHROLL



CHRISTIAN
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WHY DID YOU CHOOSE GIMP, UFRaw, AND OTHER OPEN-SOURCE IMAGE EDITORS FOR YOUR WORKFLOW? IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT SETS THESE PROGRAMS APART FROM THEIR PROPRIETARY COUNTERPARTS?

I started using open-source software in general as a result of switching to Linux while I was in college. When I first started doing digital photography in 2006, there weren't as many options for image editing programs, so I basically started with GIMP and UFRaw, since they seemed to be the most popular. Since then, I've tried some other open-source software just to see what else was available, but I always came back to GIMP and UFRaw because I feel they have the best set of tools, the most documentation and support for learning new tricks and techniques, and I just felt comfortable with the tools and workflow of using these programs.

YOUR ONLINE GALLERIES ([HTTPS://500PX.COM/CHRISTIAN_SCHROLL](https://500px.com/christian_schroll) AND [HTTPS://WWW.FLICKR.COM/PEOPLE/GUINE/](https://www.flickr.com/people/guine/)) SHOWCASE A BROAD RANGE OF GENRES, SUCH AS LANDSCAPES, PORTRAITS, ARCHITECTURE, AND WILDLIFE. DOES YOUR APPROACH TO ONE GENRE EVER CONFLICT WITH YOUR APPROACH TO OTHERS? DO YOU HAVE ADVICE FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS AND ARTISTS LOOKING TO WORK WITH A VARIETY OF STYLES AND SUBJECTS?

I don't feel that working in multiple genres has hurt me in any way, and I've found that photographing new subjects can be fun and challenging. Some genres may lend themselves to some photographic and post-processing techniques more than others, so I would say that trying new things with your work can help you grow (and be invigorating). Especially when you're first starting out, taking pictures of anything and everything can help you learn a lot about photography in general, and find if there's any particular subject that you enjoy photographing the most.

AFTER WORKING WITH A SINGLE GENRE OR SUBJECT FOR TOO LONG, MANY PHOTOGRAPHERS AND ARTISTS STRUGGLE TO FIND NEW WAYS TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES CREATIVELY. DESPITE THIS, YOUR BODY OF LANDSCAPE AND NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY IS ROBUST AND IMPRESSIVE. WHAT ABOUT YOUR CREATIVE APPROACH ALLOWS YOU TO RETURN TO THESE SUBJECTS IN NEW AND INVIGORATING WAYS?

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For me, I enjoy being out in nature and hiking for its own sake. This means that when I'm out, it's not just about taking photos, but also about enjoying the exploration and experiencing of nature. I've had periods where I may not take many pictures for a couple of weeks at a time, but I feel that that since I enjoy more than just taking the picture, it takes the pressure off having to take photos while I'm out (since that's not the only reason why I'm out on a hike). Another thing that I've found can help when I get into a lull is that looking at photos and books by other photographers can help get my inspiration going again.

AS SOMEONE WITH MANY TALENTED HDR PRODUCTIONS, DO YOU PREFER USING HDR OR CONVENTIONAL EXPOSURE METHODS FOR YOUR WORK? WHY?

I'm not sure if I would say I prefer HDR or conventional exposures. Amazing work can be done either way. I more view HDR as a useful tool that can be used to improve some photos, but not something that needs to, or should be, used all the time.

MOUNTAINOUS EXPANSES OCCUPY A PRESTIGIOUS POSITION IN YOUR LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHY. WHAT MOST APPEALS TO YOU ABOUT THESE FORMATIONS? WHAT DO YOU LOOK TO EXPRESS WHEN YOU PHOTOGRAPH THEM?

I feel that mountains, or any scene with elevation changes, tend to make for interesting landscapes, and often produce scenes that can just draw you into them. Another bonus with large mountains is that, with drastic changes in elevation, they can often lead to and produce clouds and weather that may not be happening in the lower elevations around them.

YOUR LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHY SPANS ONE BREATHTAKING LOCATION AFTER ANOTHER. IS THERE A PARTICULAR LOCATION OR PHOTO SHOOT THAT YOU FOUND MORE MEANINGFUL OR MEMORABLE THAN OTHERS? IF SO WHY?



SCHROEDER

While I've loved visiting so many of these places and want to go back to them, in addition to the rapidly growing wish list of places I've never been to that I would like to visit, the two that stand out the most to me are Yosemite and Guatemala. Yosemite is the easy choice just because of how many spectacular and famous views it has, and, having been given Ansel Adams books as presents over the years, it was exciting to finally visit the place where so many of his photographs were taken. With Guatemala, I had the opportunity to visit a number of villages and towns out in the countryside with a mission group several years ago. While I wouldn't say it was one of the best sets of photographs I've ever taken, it was such an amazing experience getting to visit and record a developing nation and what's being done to improve life there.

WHEN YOU PRODUCED YOUR ANTELOPE CANYON SET, YOU TOLD ME THAT YOU HAD TO UNDEREXPOSE YOUR PHOTOGRAPHS TO COMPENSATE FOR WORKING WITHOUT A TRIPOD. WOULD THIS HAVE BEEN AN OPTION IF YOU WEREN'T SHOOTING RAW? DO YOU FEEL THAT THE IMAGE QUALITY YOU ATTAINED WAS COMPARABLE TO THAT WHICH A TRIPOD AND ADJUSTED EXPOSURES WOULD HAVE PROVIDED?

Shooting RAW definitely helped me at Antelope Canyon. If I had just been shooting JPEG, I would have needed to kick up the ISO a bunch to compensate for not being able to adjust the photo as much during post-processing, which would have lowered the image quality. Having a tripod would have been beneficial here. Unfortunately, visiting Antelope Canyon was a side stop on a cross country trip, so I couldn't do everything I would have liked, and would love to visit Antelope Canyon again when I have more time.

DO YOU HAVE ANY FUTURE PROJECTS OR ARTISTIC ENDEAVORS YOU'RE WORKING ON?

I'm going to be heading back to California around the beginning of the year so I'll be visiting more parks soon, and will hopefully get to hang out with condors again. This past summer, I started playing around with shooting time-lapse videos, so I'll probably continue playing around with this now that I have little bit better of an idea of what I'm doing. Other than that, I'll just be seeing what other adventures life takes me on. ■

Christian
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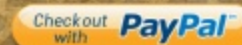
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CREATING HDR IMAGES WITH UFRAW, LUMINANCE, AND GIMP

A Master-Class by Christian Schroll, Edited by Richard Buchanan II

High Dynamic Range photography is something people either love or hate. When people think of HDR photos, they often visualize unrealistic and cartoonish images—some love the crazy things that can be done, while others dislike the lack of realism that is so common with HDR photography. While it has always been possible to over-process images with any image editor, HDR programs make it far easier to do so.

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High-contrast images such as Valley View HDR 850 (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/guine/8110455216/in/set-72157603414906898>) are good for rendering in HDR.

When many people start out with HDR photography, they go overboard with the new tools at their disposal. I certainly did, and enjoyed making over-saturated images (doing this can be useful for discovering the full range of what you can do), but found that it's also possible to make very realistic images by using HDR in moderation. When I make an HDR image now, I try to use HDR to enhance the photo, rather than have it as the defining characteristic. I don't want to make the HDR process obvious to people looking at my images.

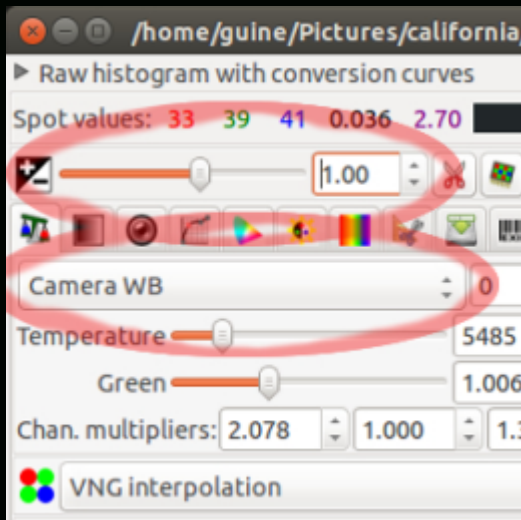
An important part of HDR photography is deciding when to use it. HDR can be a great tool for high-contrast images, but you need to decide if it suits the subjects and intention of your work. There are definitely times when maintaining the contrast of a conventional exposure is more beneficial to the work as a whole. For me, primarily a landscape and nature photographer, having a broader dynamic range is very useful when I'm trying to capture a scene with partially sunlit clouds, and land split between shadows and sunlight. If you photographed an evenly lit object, however, the extra processing may be a waste of time.

When I'm out shooting, I rarely take a photograph knowing I will turn it into an HDR image—I always wait to see the image on my computer before making that decision. As a result, I make almost all of my HDR images from a single RAW file instead of from bracketed exposures. This has an added benefit because most my images are taken while hiking, and I often prefer to take a hiking monopod (instead of a tripod, which is essential for making an HDR image from multiple exposures) to cut down on the gear I carry.

Once you have an image to render in HDR, whether the image is a single RAW file or bracketed exposure, you'll need to correct it in an image editor. The three programs I use are UFRaw, Luminance, and GIMP, which are all open-source and free to download.

To start, do a RAW conversion of your middle exposure (or only exposure if you're just using a single RAW file) using UFRaw. During this, you can do any normal image correction, like change the white balance.

“I TRY TO USE HDR TO ENHANCE THE PHOTO, RATHER THAN HAVE IT AS THE DEFINING CHARACTERISTIC.”



It's best to make use of any tools UFRaw has that aren't available in GIMP, like a sophisticated white balance.

Once you've finished your RAW conversion, open your photo in GIMP by clicking UFRaw's Wilber icon in the lower-right.

With any photo that I render in HDR, I always start by editing it as the HDR's middle exposure. Doing this will give you a rough preview of rendering the photo in HDR, and will help you decide if you want to make the additional exposures needed for the following steps. Don't worry about the time spent editing the middle exposure, as it will become useful later in the process.

Edit the photo as you normally would in GIMP. I mainly use Levels, Curves, Hue-saturation, and Unsharp mask, but use whichever techniques and tools you feel are best for your image. One important tip is that if you did any lens distortion corrections during your RAW conversion, wait to crop out the black areas until after making your HDR image to simplify the steps in between.

If you want to render an HDR image after you've finished editing the middle exposure, save the work you've done in GIMP and go back to the original RAW files (we'll return to the edited middle exposure towards the end of the process). If you shot bracketed exposures, you can use UFRaw to convert each into a TIFF or JPEG. If you're rendering a single RAW file in HDR, you'll need to use it to create additional exposures with UFRaw. I typically create five, starting with the proper RAW exposure in the middle, and then making exposures with +/- 1 and +/- 2 stops of exposure compensation.

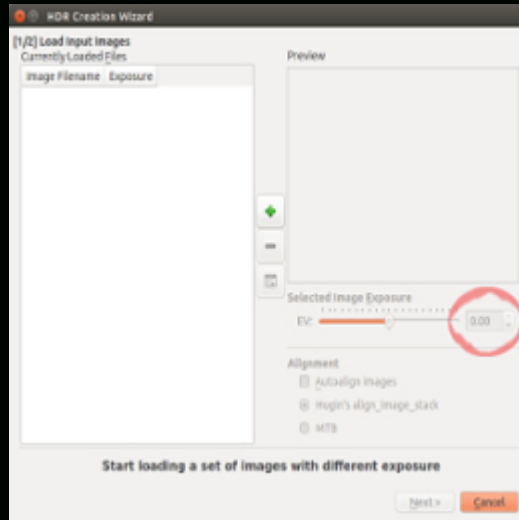
“IF YOU DID ANY LENS DISTORTION CORRECTIONS DURING YOUR RAW CONVERSION, WAIT TO CROP OUT THE BLACK AREAS UNTIL AFTER MAKING YOUR HDR IMAGE”

UFRaw will help you create as many stops above and below the middle exposure as you need.



For extremely high-contrast images, you may want to go up to 3 stops above and below the middle. For images that need just a small increase in dynamic range, you may be able to get away with just +/- 1 stop of exposure compensation. In my experience, using +/- 1 and +/- 2 stops will usually give good results.

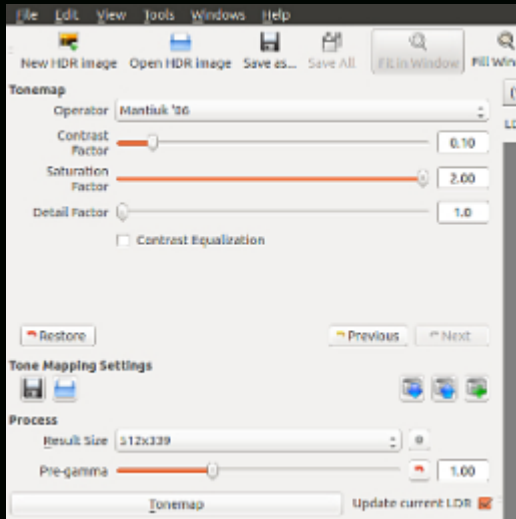
It's now time to create your HDR image using Luminance, which will combine your exposures with its HDR creation wizard.



Import or remove images with the + and – symbols.
Exposure values can be changed with the slider or circled
number.

You may need to tell Luminance the exposure values of each image, but naming your images with how many stops above or below the middle exposure they are will make this easy. There is also an alignment option for Luminance to align each exposure, but it shouldn't matter if you're starting from a single RAW file (or are using bracketed exposures shot with a tripod). I usually leave the alignment options on their default settings.

While I recommend playing with all of these just to see what's possible, I strongly lean on the Mantiuk '08 operator. All of the operators provide a number of options to change the output, and an option to tell Luminance how large you want the result size to be.



You can experiment with different operators and their options at this stage, and quickly preview them by selecting a small result size.

You can play with other editing options as you move through the HDR creation wizard, but I typically leave them and keep moving along until the wizard is finished. You can also save your work as an EXR file at this point, which will make it easier to come back and quickly tonemap the image later. Tonemapping in Luminance involves a number of different operators, and their results vary greatly in realism.

Though less realistic than others, these operators may complement your work in surprising ways.

Ashikhmin



Drago



Durand



Depending on the computer's power, I would initially set a small to medium result size to see output details without slowing down image processing. This will let you change and quickly review the results of other settings. I try to get as broad of a dynamic range as possible while keeping the image reasonably realistic.

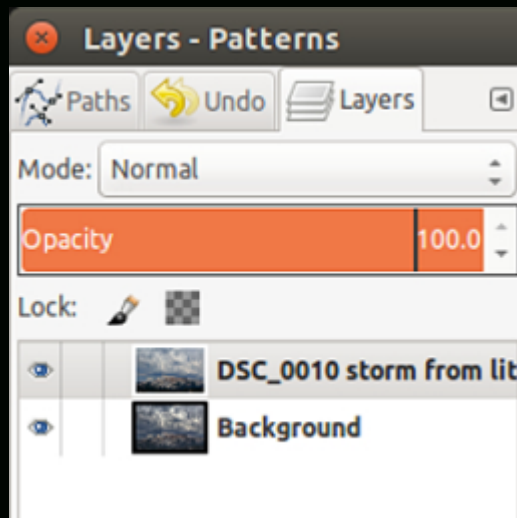
Once you've chosen your settings, tonemap the image one last time with the output size at its max value.



The difference between the Mantiuk '06 tonemap (above) and my original middle exposure edit (below) is striking.

If you like your result, save your image as an LDR file. This will allow your image to be displayed online or be edited in a far wider range of programs than an EXR file.

Open GIMP and load your tonemapped image from Luminance and your edited middle exposure in separate layers.



Load your HDR files as new layers in GIMP and order them however you see fit.



While testing operators in Luminance, you may have found some that looked good for select parts of your image. Tonemaps created from these different operators can be added in extra layers to target specific elements. I only use one operator for the most part, but I add Mantiuk '06 to some images to bring out extra details in the clouds.

Once you have all the images in separate layers, combine them however you prefer. I typically adjust the opacity levels of each layer to get the balance of dynamic range and realism that I want, but you can also erase within the layers, or paint within layer masks, to emphasize only some of the layer's contents. Flatten the layers when you're satisfied with them and make any last touchups. I typically use all the tools from my normal editing process again, but with the adjustments applied to a much lesser extent. At this point, you should have a realistic-looking image with a greater dynamic range than it started with.

Every photo will be different. Sometimes, your middle exposure will be a majority of what is shown, with the tonemapped layers providing extra highlight and shadow detail. Other times, your final product will be almost entirely the tonemapped layers, with some of the middle exposure adding contrast.

As you make HDR images, feel free to play with this process and try other things—like most photography techniques, there are multiple ways to get an end result. I hope this has given you some new ideas for your work. Have fun and keep on shooting. ■

"TONEMAPS CREATED FROM THESE DIFFERENT OPERATORS CAN BE ADDED IN EXTRA LAYERS TO TARGET SPECIFIC ELEMENTS"

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