



**NICK SPENCE**

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Getting to grips with what Photoshop resources are available is made a lot easier with Nick's guide to the best products and services for eager Photoshop users.



**IDA LARSEN**

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Ida is the focus of our Reader's Profile this issue and shares her wonderful creations with us. Turn to page 14 to see how she transforms stock files into Photoshop masterpieces.



**TIM SHELBOURNE**

www.timshelbourne.com



Tim has had plenty of experience with fine art, both traditional and digital, so we could think of no one better to attempt our cover this issue. See how he produced the chalk masterpiece on page 26.



**MATTHEW HENRY**

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Matthew hits us with a double whammy of photo editing this issue. He starts by showing how to remove wrinkles in photos (page 32) and then explains what Camera Raw is all about (page 46).



**HANNAH GAL**

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Hannah brightens up our magazine with her colourful tutorial on page 50. Taking Georgia O'Keefe as her inspiration, she transforms a humble poppy photo into a beautiful oil painting.



**ROBERT ANSELM**

www.chainstyle.com



Robert comes to the aid of anyone who's struggled with their camera's exposure settings by revealing a cunning trick for merging photos to get perfect shots. Turn to page 56 now!



**SIMON RUDD**

www.pompeysworst.co.uk



Simon was featured in issue 11 as our Reader's Profile, and is back to explain how he created one of his featured images. Learn the secrets behind his nebula man on page 58.



**GEORGE CAIRNS**

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George is back once more to fight the evil Photoshop pixies who try their best to scupper you with problems and queries. In short, he's written another Q&A! See page 74.

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IMAGINE PUBLISHING



# Merge photos for better exposure

Learn how to fake a neutral density graduated filter in Photoshop by merging two bracketed photos

Take these images...



OVEREXPOSED



UNDEREXPOSED

## essentials

### SKILL LEVEL

Beginner  
Intermediate  
Expert

### TIME TAKEN

Approximately  
15 minutes

### YOUR EXPERT

Rob Anselmi

### ON THE CD

Over and  
underexposed  
files



In this article we're going to explore a very simple method of balancing out the exposure between two parts of an image

by merging two bracketed photos, and by doing so compensate for a real-world neutral density graduated filter. CS2 users have an automated way of doing this in the shape of the Merge to HDR command (File>Automate>Merge to HDR). But where the Merge to HDR can be finicky about what photos you use and is sometimes a bit hard to handle on the output end, this process is much easier and has the advantage of being able to run in almost any version of Photoshop.

The problem with trying to simulate a neutral density graduated filter in Photoshop is that once you have a blown-out sky, there is very little that will bring back the tone of

the image. Once your image is overexposed it becomes useless, and no amount of Photoshop magic can bring it back.

For example, take an image of an overexposed sky and try adding a grey gradient over the sky area in a new layer. Change the layer to 'Overlay' and watch what happens. Photoshop actually treats the grey as a colour within the image, and this does nothing to enhance your photo. You end up with a washed-out muddy mess that's worse than your original.

So how do you correct this kind of image? As with any good photo, the trick is to step back to the point before you took the image. If you bracket your exposure, you can compensate for any graduated neutral density filter inside Photoshop without having to resort to all those expensive filters.

...and create this!

FINAL IMAGE

## KEY SKILLS COVERED

What you'll learn

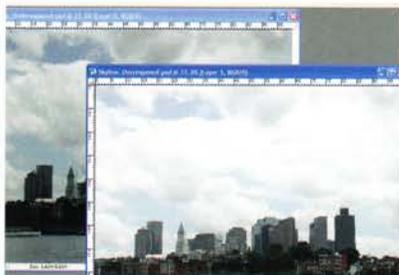
- BLENDING MODES
- LAYER MASKS
- IMPROVE EXPOSURE



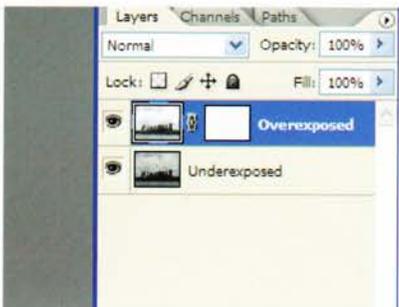
## GET MAXIMUM EXPOSURE

From dodgy to delightful

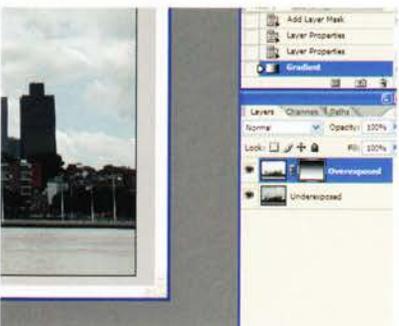
## Resources



**01 Taking your photos** Before starting out in Photoshop, get out your tripod, set your camera to Manual and take two exposures of the exact same image – about a half to one stop apart. The idea is to correct for a drastic difference in exposure. If unsure, take four or five different exposures of the same shot or use the supplied images on the disc.



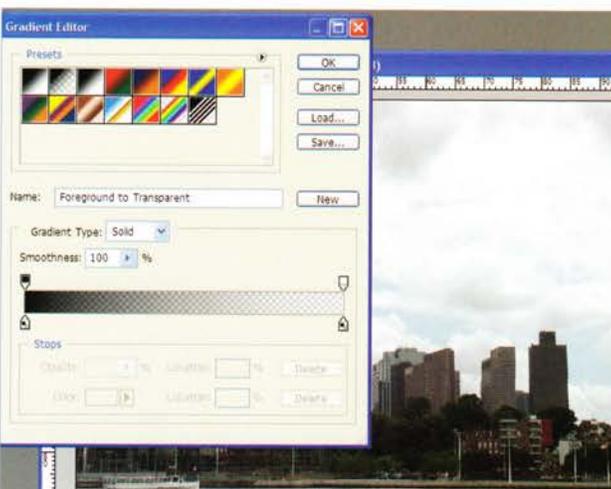
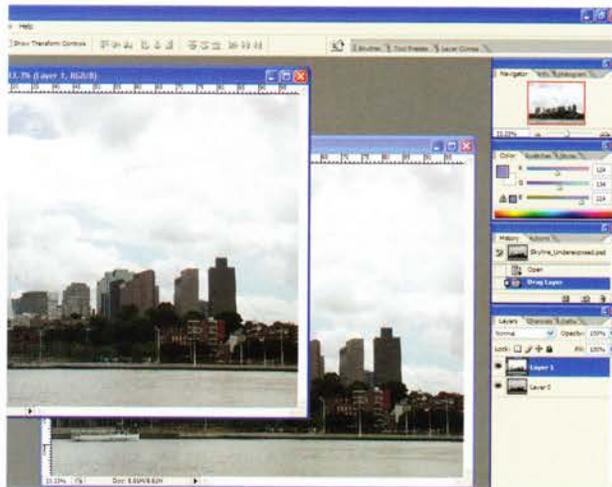
**03 Create a layer mask** Close the overexposed image, as it's not needed any more. In the consolidated document, click the Add Layer Mask button in the Layers palette to create a layer mask on the overexposed layer. Rename the two layers here so you can see which layer is which.



**05 Draw your gradient into the mask** Holding your Shift key down, draw a gradient from the top of the image to the bottom of the image. This has the same effect as applying a neutral density graduated filter to the front of your lens.

## 02

**Consolidate both exposures** Open the two photos in Photoshop, and pick the Move tool. Hold Shift down and drag the lighter (overexposed) image into the darker (underexposed) image window. The lighter image is placed as a layer on the darker one. By holding Shift, the relative location of the image is maintained when placed in the other image window.

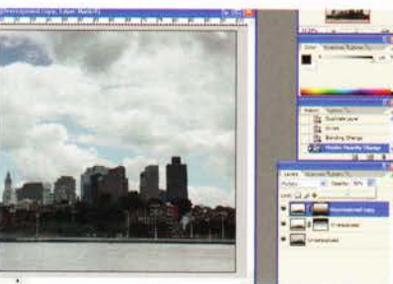


## 04 Add a black to transparent gradient

With the layer mask selected and your foreground colour set to Black, click on the Gradient tool in the Toolbox. Click the Gradient swatch in the Options bar to open the Gradient Editor dialog, and select the Foreground to Transparent gradient. Now click OK to close the dialog.

## Real-world neutral density graduated filters

Neutral density graduated filters transition from grey to transparent. When placed over the camera lens, they help equilibrate the exposure of a scene, eg with an image of a skyline on a bright sunny day you'll almost always end up with a blown-out sky and a properly exposed foreground. Expose for the sky, and you end up with an underexposed (darkened) foreground. Add the neutral density graduated filter and the grey half of the filter blocks out sun coming from the sky, which evens out exposure between both parts of the image. As the filter is partially grey, it doesn't affect image colour, making it a neutral filter.



## 06 Add a bit more pop to the image

Create a duplicate of the top layer, mask and all, by dragging the top layer over the Create a New Layer button on the Layers palette. Select the layer mask and press the Ctrl/Cmd-H keyboard combination. This inverts your layer mask. Then change the layer's blend mode to Multiply and Opacity to 50%.

## The layer structure

Behind the camera

Duplicate

Overexposed

Underexposed

