



In Focus

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President's Message *by Chris Empey*

Welcome to another new year of the Niagara Falls Camera Club. I hope that everyone had a good and productive summer filled with great photography.

This year's program is slated to be a good one. Put together by our Past President and now Program Chair, Terry Babij, it offers a good mixture of informational sessions, hands on workshops and presentations by our own club members as well as outside photographers. It is sure to be one of our best.

I would like to remind everyone of the great activity we have on Facebook. If you have not been to our Facebook page yet, please head over there when you get a chance (<http://www.facebook.com/groups/nfccFB/>). This is a great resource for peer to peer contact and an easy way to share photos with your fellow photographers. Also, stop by www.NiagaraFallsCameraClub.org. It is a great resource for you with monthly results, past issues of In Focus, our program schedule, and downloads of various documents.

Don't forget that as a member of the Niagara Falls Camera Club, you are also a member of the Niagara Frontier Regional Camera Clubs. The NFRCC holds two major events throughout the year, the Annual Fall Seminar and the Spring Convention. This year, the Fall Seminar, held in November, will feature Jay and Varina Patel, two excellent photographers.

One thing we would like to do this year is to feature our monthly 'Judges Choice' winner on our Facebook page. We will ask the winner of each month's Judges Choice award to send us a digital copy of their winning shot and it will be incorporated into our Niagara Falls Camera Club Facebook Cover Photo.

Finally, our club is what it is because of the hard work of our executive committee. Without them, we would not have the club we have today. We are currently looking to fill a few vacancies on the executive committee, so if you have just a little bit of spare time, we could use your help. Open positions currently are Social Committee and Newsletter chair. If you have any questions about these positions, please ask an Executive Committee Member.

-Chris

October Program

Next Month, Niagara Falls Camera Club members will work with Diamond Level members in small groups evaluating and judging images. This will help provide some insight into what the judges are looking for and how you can better judge your own images.

Newsletter Submission

If you are interested in writing a small piece for In Focus, please contact Chris Empey, cempey@NiagaraFallsCameraClub.org. We are always looking for good content that will help our members and provide some informative reading for them.

HDR Photography - an Overview

By Karen Fulham



Simply put, HDR stands for High Dynamic Range. In photography, dynamic range means the difference between the lightest and darkest colour value. The human eye can see details in both the lightest and darkest elements of a scene clearly. A digital camera's sensor isn't able to capture as high a dynamic range as a human eye is able to see; in high contrast scenes, even the most advanced DSLR isn't able to capture detail in both the brightest and the darkest areas simultaneously. HDR photography allows you to produce an image that appears much closer to what the human eye sees as opposed to what your camera's sensor allows.

Expanding an image's dynamic range is not new- previously, darkroom dodging and burning, graduated neutral density filters used at the time of image capture were some of the ways the limitations of our camera equipment were overcome. However, these methods had their own built- in limitations, and the advent of digital colour photography and processing gave rise to new techniques of optimizing your images.

Today's HDR imaging techniques combine the image information from multiple exposures into one image, processed using software programs such as Photomatix and Nik HDR Effects Pro. Enhanced dynamic range can also be achieved in Photoshop with the use of layer masks. So-called "true" HDR is the method of combining multiple shots of a scene with a range of differing exposures, exposing for detail in both the highlights and shadows into one image, and then through a process known as "tonemapping" convert this image into a Jpeg or a TIFF file that can be further displayed, processed, or printed.

The results can range from very realistic to the surreal/painterly and even "cartoon-y". It is because of the images that are at the "surreal" end of the scale that HDR had acquired its detractors. The surge in its popularity as well as the ease with which the HDR software allows its users to create the images has resulted in a glut of poorly executed HDR flooding most photo sharing websites. However, whether you love it or hate it, there's no denying that HDR processing can produce images that are very compelling, and can add an extra visual dimension to a picture. Although HDR can produce an image that is close to what the eye can perceive, it can be said that it can also reveal more than what you thought you have seen, an image rendering that is stunning in its clarity and detail.

The challenge for the photographer is to know when and when not to employ this technique as every image will not always benefit from it. While it can certainly increase the impact of most subject matter it will not turn a bad photograph into a great one. There is no substitute for an interesting subject, photographed in good light, with a good sense of composition. My rule? Find the subject, the light, compose it effectively and get the best possible exposure you can for that

scene- then go ahead, take a range of differing exposures for a possible HDR image. (That one best exposure will be the starting point for your HDR image!) It has been said that the best HDR is when you can't tell it's HDR. That's entirely true if your intent is to create a photorealistic, natural looking image. However, if your intention is to create an artistic, painterly, or dreamlike image, you have to give yourself permission to seek to create that. You have to let yourself feel free to experiment without someone else's prejudices affecting your creative decisions. After all, isn't photography both an art form and a technology capable of faithfully recording visual reality?

Tips for producing HDR images:

- Three images is usually all you will need to produce an HDR image - however, the number of exposures will depend on the lighting conditions. Extreme differences in highlights and shadows will call for more exposures to cover the range of lights and darks. It must be noted, however, that the more images stacked together, the more chances of "ghosting" caused by movement of objects or camera.
- It is advisable to use a tripod for your exposures; the less camera movement the better your results will be. Slight shifts in camera position will cause "ghosting" in the final image- additionally, moving foliage caused by wind, even slight breezes, or rapidly moving clouds, will do this as well. It is for this reason that static subjects work best for HDR. The exception to the rule is moving water; HDR can add a dreamy effect which can be quite appealing. To minimize camera movement, a cable release or self-timer is recommended; use mirror lock-up if available.
- Higher ISO numbers will add digital noise to your results- ISO 100 yields the best quality.
- Do not change your aperture when making your exposures- change shutter speeds only. (Aperture Priority). Select exposure increments of +/-2. Your camera's auto-bracketing feature is useful here. Set your auto focus and then turn the switch on your lens to Manual focusing to prevent your focus point from moving and changing with each exposure.
- Best results are achieved using RAW images; however, JPEGs can also be used although there will be less information in the digital files to work with.
- Topaz Adjust is a plug-in for Lightroom and Photoshop that can be another useful item in your HDR toolbox. It allows you to produce an HDR-like image from one photo which will open up all kinds of possibilities using moving subjects, people, etc. It also contains a noise-suppression feature which can be very useful when processing HDR. The software contains various presets for many types of artistic effects that can be adjusted for their intensity.

Useful links for HDR techniques:

<http://www.hdrsoft.com/resources/dri.html>

Dave Wilson Photography <http://www.stuckincustoms.com/>

Rick Sammon's Digital Imaging Diaries <http://beforethecoffee.com/photomatix-tutorial/>

Niagara Falls Camera Club

2012 - 2013 Schedule

September 2012

- 10. Program: "Designing a Photograph" by Juraj Dolanjski, Hamilton
- 17. Everything You Wanted to Know about Digital Photography - NFCC Members
- 24. Monthly Projected Images and Print Competition #1

October 2012

- 1. Workshop: "Critiquing" by NFCC Members
- 15. Monthly Projected Images and Print Competition #2

November 2012

- 5. Program: "Classic One Light Portraiture" Presented by Doug Hansgate, TCCC
- 10. NFRCC Fall Seminar with Jay and Varina Patel
- 19. Monthly Projected Images and Print Competition #3

December 2012

- 3. Workshop: "One Light Portraiture" by NFCC Members - Bring your camera
- 17. Monthly Projected Images and Competition #4 and Christmas Potluck Dinner

January 2013

- 7. Program "Early Morning Photography" by Scott Simons, NFCC
- 21. Monthly Projected Images and Print Competition #5

February 2013

- 4. Workshop: "Table Top, Studio Setup and Software Options" by NFCC Members
- 25. Monthly Projected Images and Print Competition #6

March 2013

- 4. Members Night
- 15 - 17. NFRCC Convention - Niagara Falls Conference Center, Niagara Falls, NY
- 18. Projected Image and Print of the Year Competition. Camera Club

April 2013

- 9. 24th Rainbow Competition between Niagara Falls Camera Club and Twin Cities Camera Club: Hosted by Twin Cities
- 27. NFCC Annual Awards Banquet at Betty's Restaurant

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