

C. Guttendorf-Urban Night Photography

Nightscapes

Overview

- What is urban night photography?
- What are some of the considerations?
- Recommended Equipment
- Tips and Tricks
- Post Processing
- Recommended Reading



2

What is Urban Night Photography?



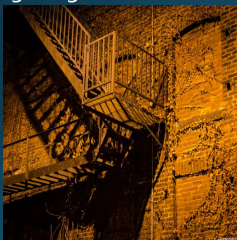
3

Considerations

- Light, color and tone each take on different characteristics in the absence of daylight. Sometimes this will lead to wonderful discoveries.
 - Almost always dealing with multiple types of light sources
- A bit more complicated than traditional landscape photography
 - At the mercy of the available light cast by streetlamps, building lighting and of course vehicle lights....so basically the reason you are out there works against you.
- Lighting, Time, White Balance, & Focusing

4

Lighting



Lance Keimig

- Sunlight – Deep shadows, with mid-tones and bright highlights
- Urban Night – Many different localized light sources creating a “sea of darkness punctuated by pools of light” that produce shadows and highlights of a greater range than the capabilities of the camera

5

Time of Night

- Time of night can be quite important.
- Temptation is to go for the night when the sky is completely black.
 - Minimize the sky's inclusion is an option.
- Earlier in the evening - however the lighting on buildings doesn't appear quite so strong although there might still be some color in the sky which is more appealing.

6

Time of Night



7

Time of Night

- I like shooting 4 – 7 AM
 - Less pedestrians
 - Not a ton of traffic
 - Drunks have made it home
 - Don't usually have to fight for parking or a scenic view
 - Sunrise shots
 - Breakfast!



8

White Balance



9

Focusing

- Live View Mode – I use this more here than any other photography type
 - Battery Hog!
- Manual vs Autofocus
 - In very low light conditions I use manual focus to prevent the lens from searching
 - Infinity
 - Flashlight technique
- Live View → magnifying glass buttons to zoom into your area of focus → Manually focus

10

Recipe for success

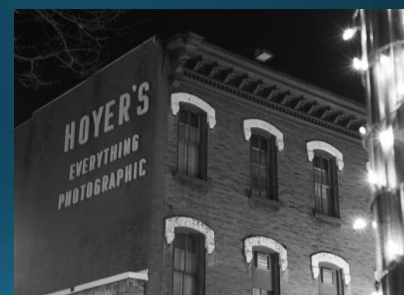
- Do your Homework
- Tripod, Tripod, Tripod
- Cable Release
- Getting there early
- Know your camera
- Organized Gear
- Clean sensor and lens



11

One Night Only

- Do your Research
 - Use Flickr
 - Groups devoted to night photography
 - Lens and settings data
 - Google
 - There are dedicated pages to almost every major city
- One night to get the shots
 - When is the best time?



12

Camera Settings w/Tripod

- ISO = 100
- RAW
- Aperture Mode 85% Shutter Priority 15%
- Bracketing turned on
- Vibration Reduction TURNED OFF
- White Balance
 - Generally on for at least the first shot
 - Generally meter of a white or grey building
 - Raw = Easier to correct for the what I want

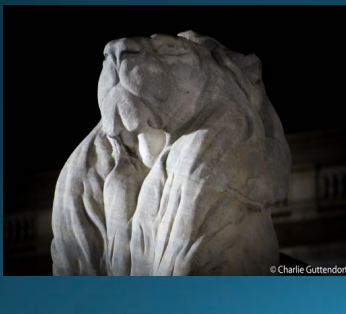
13

But I don't have my tripod

- Raise ISO
- Brace yourself in a good shooting posture
- 5+ images at exactly the same exposure
- Shutter speed high enough to get a good quality image handheld.
- Put the camera on slow or fast continuous shooting mode and fire off the images quickly.
- Image Stacking in Photoshop
- Combining multiple identical images will reduce noise.
- Photoshop will make an attempt to align the slight discrepancies in the position of each image.
- Only works well on relatively static subjects
- Works with JPEG or RAW
- Jason Row

14

Camera and Lens Choices



© Charlie Guttendorf

- Camera
 - Full Frame vs APS-C
 - Tilting Video Display
- Usually use 18-200mm
- Almost never even carry a prime lens for this
 - Fast and light
 - Most of the time I have been only carrying one lens all day.

15

Useful Equipment

- Tripod
- Remote
- Lens Hood / Rubber Hood & Drape
- Camera Bag
- Headlamp & backup
- Gloves – All Year Long
- No Filters
- Good shoes = No open toed shoes
- Micro Fiber Towel for Condensation
- Spare Batteries
- Snacks and Water
- Safety Gear
- Kneely thing

16

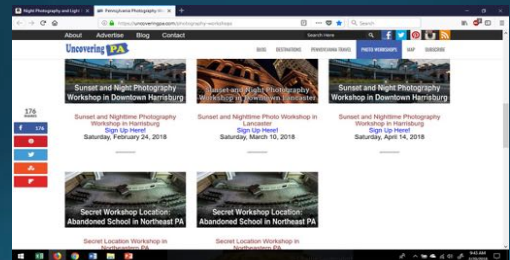
Safety

- Really have not had an issue with people
 - Do your research
- Blinky Light / reflective clothing
- Don't listen to music with ear buds
- Most likely to trip over something = closed toed shoes /car first aid kit
- If going alone let someone know where you will be
- Jim's Uncovering PA workshops



17

Uncovering PA



18

Post Processing



Perspective correction & barrel distortion is vital

More than most other types of photography, cityscapes have an abundance of horizontal and vertical lines.

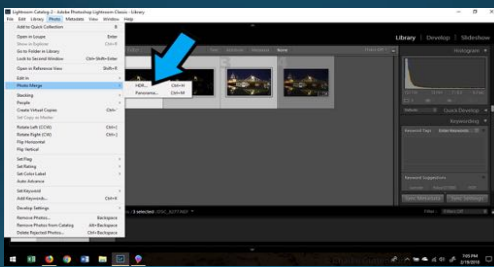
19

Unedited Midrange Shot



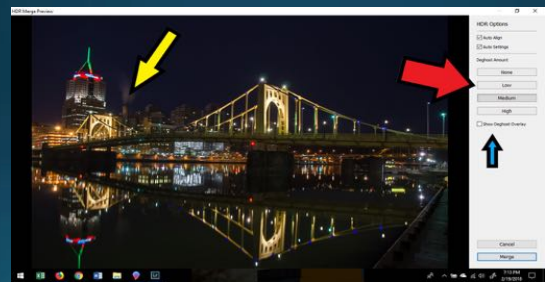
20

How to HDR in Lightroom 1



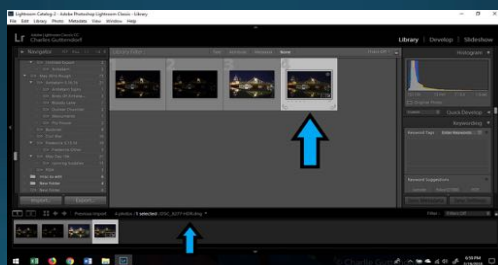
21

How to HDR in Lightroom 2



22

How to HDR in Lightroom 3



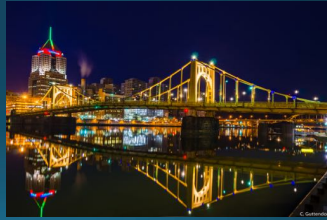
23

Finished Product



24

Regular vs HDR finished product



25

Advanced Techniques

Night photography is a great time to experiment with

- Bokeh
- Starbursts
- Panning
- Light streaks / Light trails
- Eliminating people from shots using long exposure

26

Useful Sources

- <https://www.lightstalking.com/reduce-noise-shooting-multiple-exposures/>
- <https://uncoveringpa.com/photography-workshops>
- **Night Photography and Light Painting: Finding Your Way in the Dark** 2nd edition by Lance Keimig
- **Night Photography: From Snapshots to Great Shots** by Gabriel Biderman

27