



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



What is Urban Night Photography?



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

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

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.

Time of Night



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!



White Balance



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

Recipe for success

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



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?



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

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

Camera and Lens Choices



- 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.

Useful Equipment

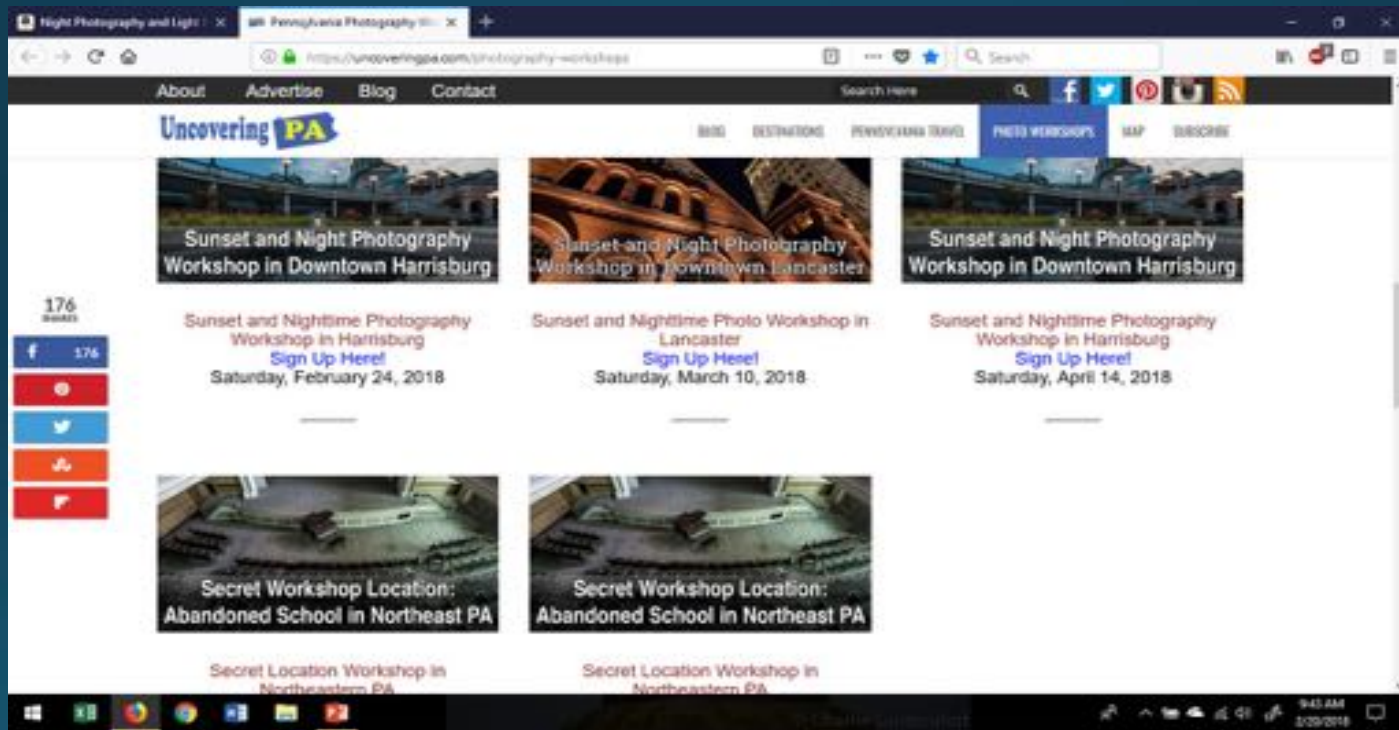
- Tripod
- Remote
- Lens Hood / Rubber Hood & Drape
- Camera Bag
- Headlamp & backup
- Gloves – All Year Long
- No Filters
- Good shoes = No open toed shoes
- Micro Fiber Towel for Condensation
- Spare Batteries
- Snacks and Water
- Safety Gear
- Kneely thing

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



Uncovering PA



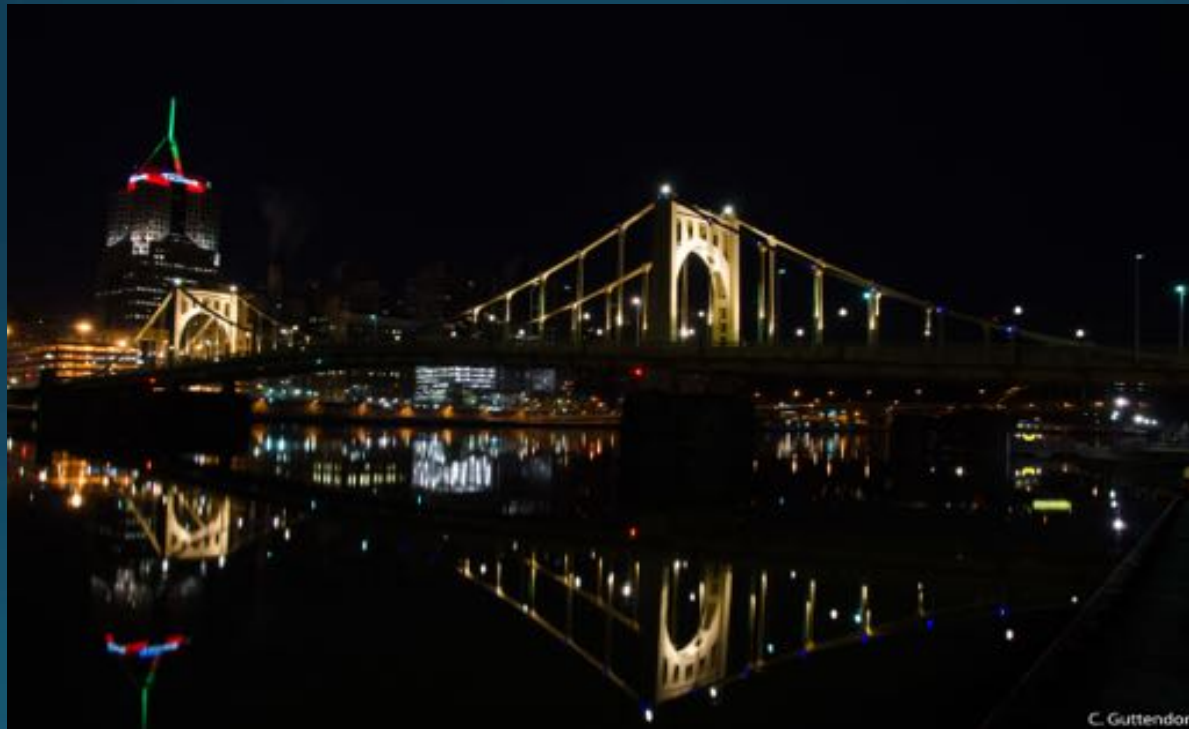
Post Processing



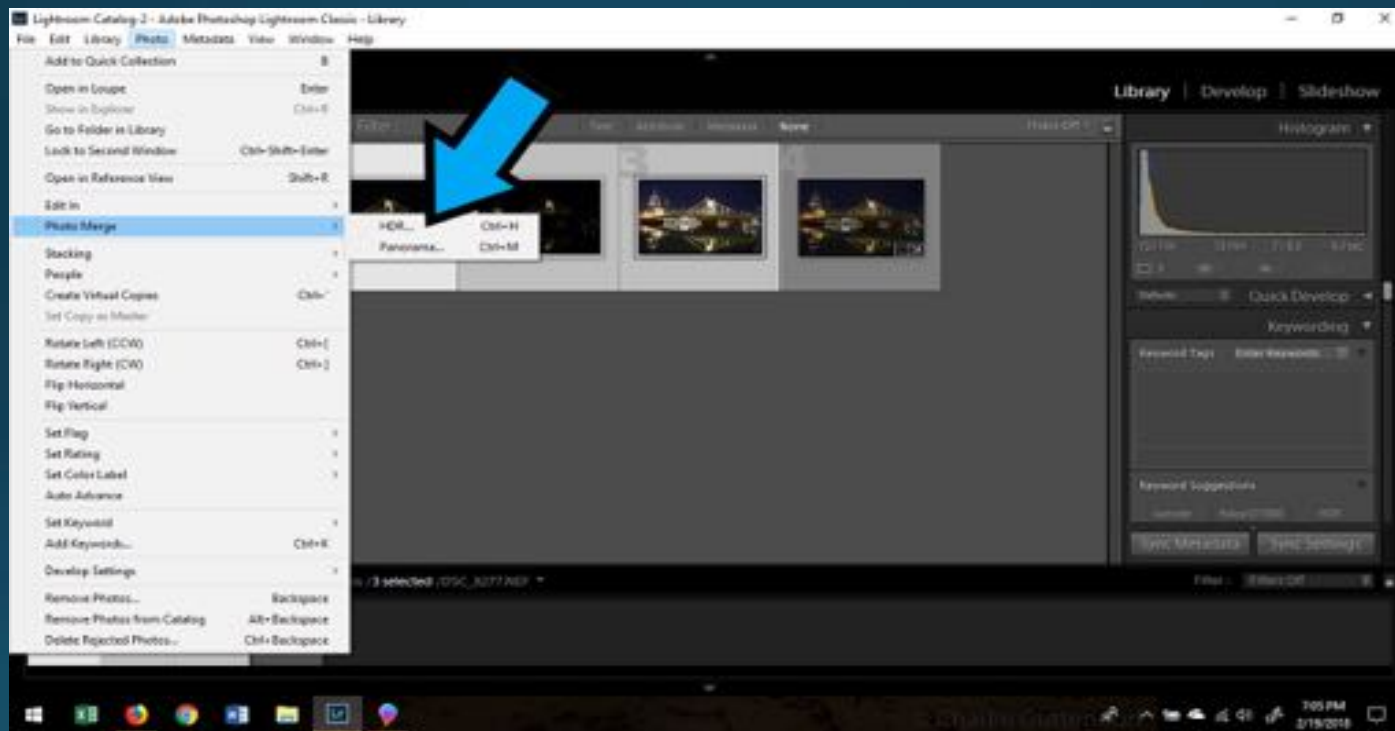
Perspective correction & barrel distortion is vital

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

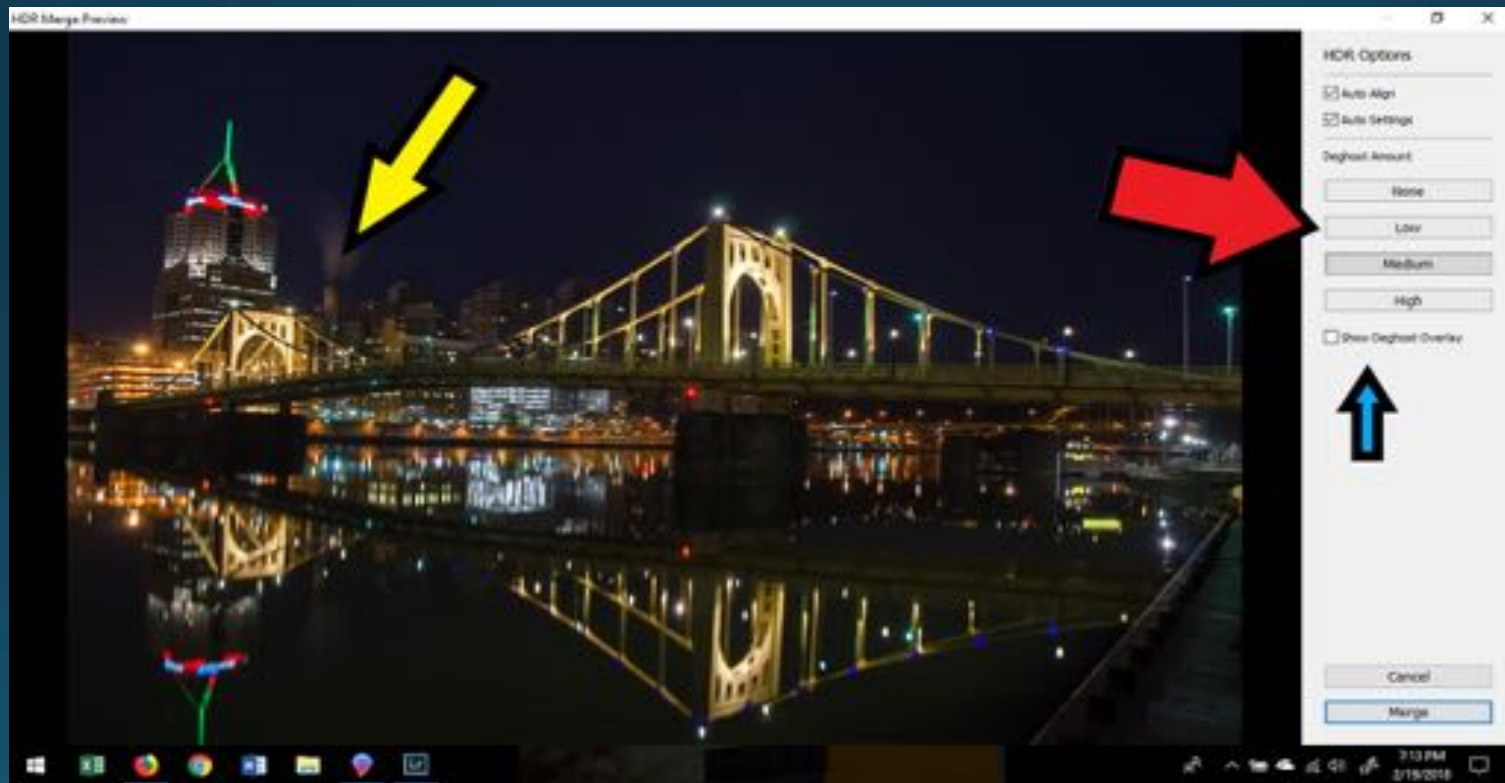
Unedited Midrange Shot



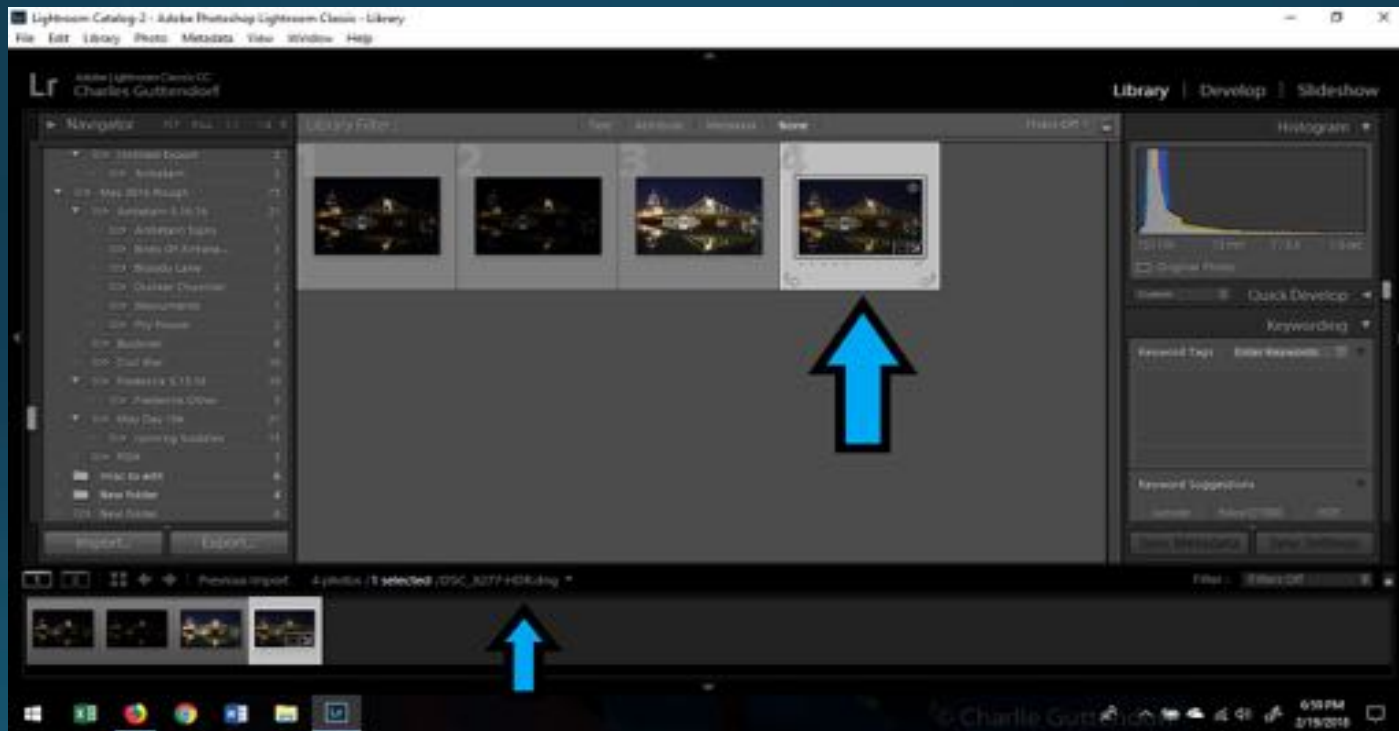
How to HDR in Lightroom 1



How to HDR in Lightroom 2



How to HDR in Lightroom 3



Finished Product



Regular vs HDR finished product



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

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**