

» **Gimp** Open source image-editing software you can get your teeth into

Gimp: Sin City

Artist and developer **Michael J Hammel** goes all Frank Miller in this month's rainy, grainy Gimp graphics tutorial. One day a real rain's gonna come...



Our expert

Michael J Hammel is a contributor to the *Gimp* project and the author of three books on the subject, including his latest, *The Artist's Guide to Gimp Effects*.

As a child I never spent much time with Marvel or DC Comics in my pocket, preferring instead to idle away my hours with images of Star Trek and moonshots, parked on the front porch with Arthur C Clarke and Isaac Asimov, reaching for the stars with Carl Sagan and hiding under the sheets to listen to Dr. Demento on the radio. I was a weird kid, even by comic book reader standards. But I've grown up since then, and as my wife says I'm far more personable than your average geek. I read less, watch movies more, and perform a reasonable bass on *Guitar Hero*. And I'm still not into comics.

Despite this it is nearly impossible, even for grown but still demented geeks such as myself, to have completely avoided the impact that comics and their darker, brethren Graphic Novels, now have on society. Constantly reaching for ever more bizarre ways to bloody the cast, movie producers have turned to comics for story concepts, most notably to



Before



After

translate the theme of the comic world on to the big screen. Ignoring the hideous adventures that were *Roger Rabbit* and *Spawn*, Hollywood seems to have found its comic groove and is happily embedded in the world of super heroes.

Hats off to the heroes

So it is that this geek must pay homage to the genre. Recent hits such as *Iron Man* and *The Dark Knight* have added a slightly darker tone to the circa 1970s incarnations of Superman and Wonder Woman. *Sin City* and *Watchmen* took this new vision to even darker realms. Fortunately for this *Gimp* fan, *Sin City* left a reasonable graphic mark upon me with its high contrast and splashes of colour. Which leads to this issue's tutorial...

This month we'll use multiple stock photos to show our rugged hero patrolling the bad lands of the city under a rain soaked and miserable night. The whole thing will be black and white with just a single splash of colour. What's fun about working in black and white is that the image is more likely to fit into the gamut of the local ink jet printer. I'll address the one place this might not be the case when we get to the touch of colour.

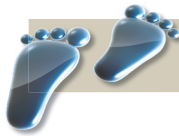
Project resources

» Stock photos:

- Man with Gun www.bigstockphoto.com/photo/view/2123798
- Men with Gun (Red Tie) www.bigstockphoto.com/photo/view/3343608
- Handgun www.bigstockphoto.com/photo/view/2944267
- Building www.morguefile.com/archive/?display=55516

» **Last month** We chilled out with a peace, love and understanding montage.

style

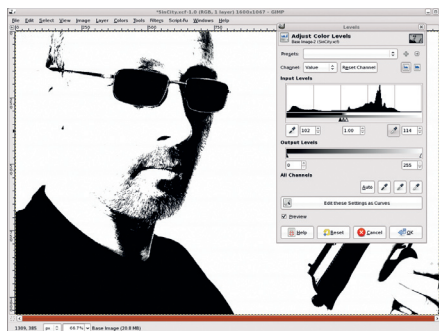


Step by step: Create a gritty noir look



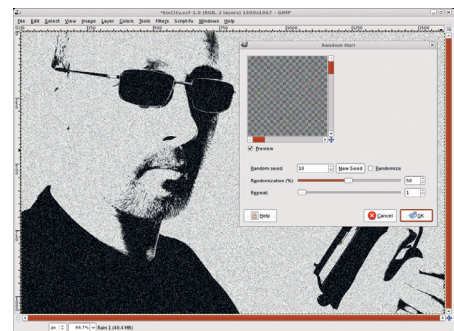
1 Base image

The base image provides our main character, a tough guy with a gun on a solid, light-coloured background, with a resolution of 1600x1067 pixels. Desaturate the image (Colours > Desaturate), then choose the Lightness option, which will let you keep a high contrast between his face and the background.



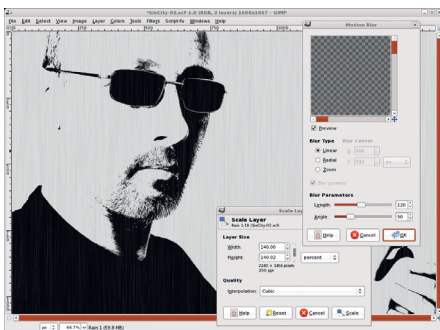
2 Increase contrast

Open the Levels dialog (Colours > Levels), then click on the white-point eye dropper (on the right-hand side beneath the Levels histogram) and click in the upper-right background of the image. This will make the background completely white, with the white-point slider moving to just left of centre of the histogram. Move the black point slider to the right until it is very near the white point. The result will be a nearly completely black and white image.



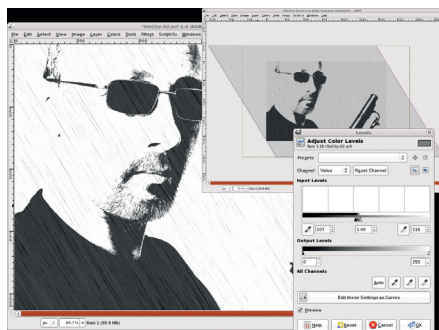
3 First rain: noise

Add a transparent layer (Layer > New). Name this layer Rain 1. Open the Hurl filter (Filters > Noise > Hurl). The default settings are sufficient here: Random Seed = 10, Randomisation % = 50, Repeat = 1. Click OK to render the noise in the Rain 1 layer. The noise will be coloured, so desaturate it. (While we've chosen the Lightness option here, any of the desaturation options will work.)



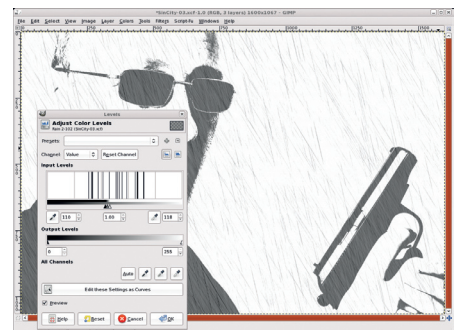
4 First rain: drops

Open the Motion Blur filter (Filters > Blur > Motion Blur) and set the Blur Type to Linear, the Length to 120 pixels and the Angle to 90 degrees. Click on OK to apply the blur to the noise in the Rain 1 layer. Scale the Rain 1 layer (Layer > Scale) by 140%. This is done by changing the Scale Units menu in the Scale Layer dialog to Percent and typing 140 in the Width field. The Height field will automatically adjust to maintain the width-to-height ratio when you press the Scale button.



5 First rain: shear

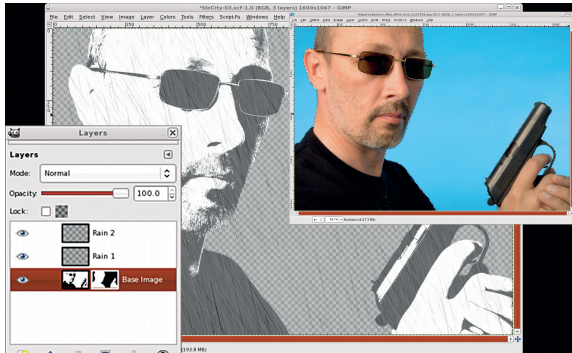
Zoom out to see the layer boundary for the Rain 1 layer, then choose the Shear transformation tool from the Toolbox. Click in the image and drag until the edges of the layer in the shear preview touch the top-right and bottom-left corners of the image window before clicking on the Shear button in the Shear dialog to apply the transformation. Open the Levels dialog and adjust the white point to around 107 and the black point to around 116. Reset the layer to fit the image (Layer > Layer to Image Size).



6 Second rain

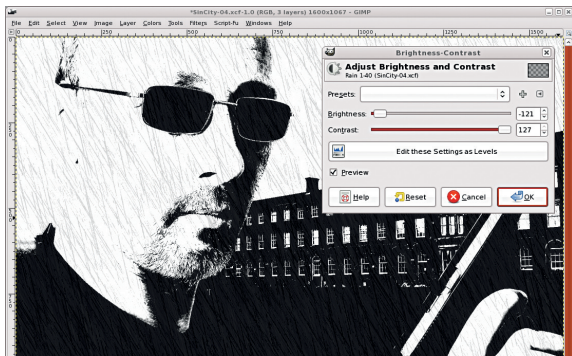
Add a second layer of rain, using the same process as the first layer of rain but with less shear applied so the rain falls more vertically. The Levels adjustment may also be slightly different, again according to taste. Later, because of the contrast changes brought on by adding in background elements, the two rain layers modes and opacity may need to be adjusted. Be sure to name the second rain layer Rain 2.

» If you missed last issue Call 0870 837 4773 or +44 1858 438795.



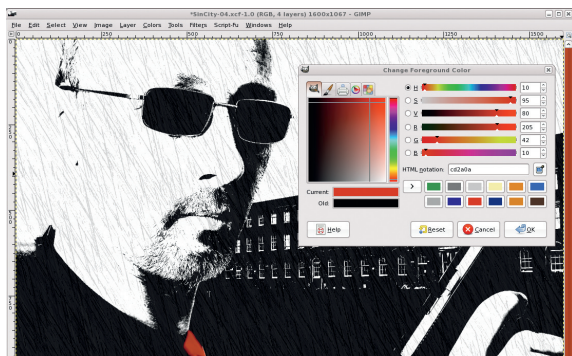
7 Mask the base image

Click on the base image layer to make it the active layer. Add an alpha channel and a white layer mask to the layer, then re-open the original image. Choose the Fuzzy Select tool, set the Threshold to 70 and Shift+click to select the blue areas. Paste this selection into the mask of the base image layer. Use the Levels dialog to set the black point to 254.



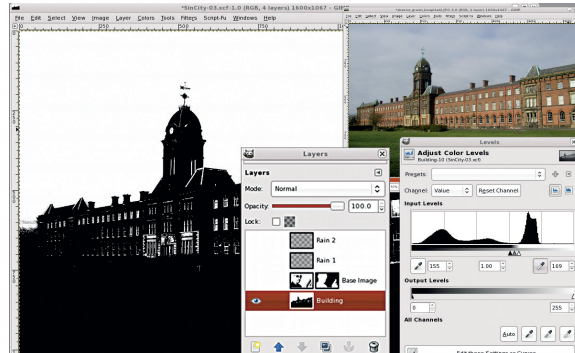
9 Fix the rain layers

In the Layers dialog, reduce the opacity level for each Rain layer to 30%, then merge the two layers (click on the Rain 1 layer and do Layer > Merge Down). Adjust the contrast of the merged layer using the Brightness-Contrast dialog (Colours > Brightness-Contrast) and set the Brightness slider to -121 and the Contrast slider to 127.



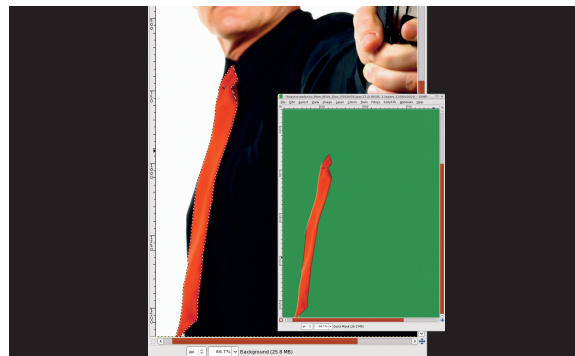
11 Put the tie on

Paste the selection into the base image, it horizontally then desaturate the layer and choose a new red colour. Set the Lock Transparency button in the Layers dialog. Choose the Bucket Fill tool set the Mode to Grain Merge and the Affected Area to Fill Whole Selection. Click in the Red Tie layer to recolour the image.



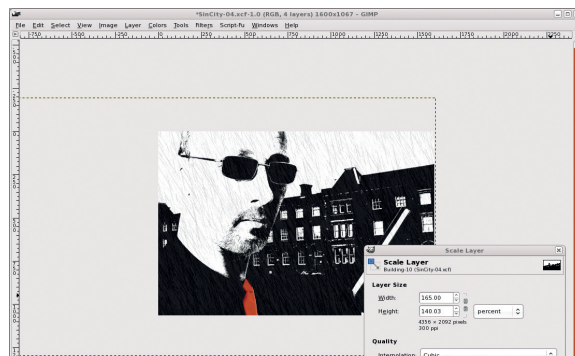
8 Background Building

Scale the image of the background building to fit the size of the base image layer, then paste it into the base image and drag the new layer to the bottom of the layer stack. Turn the visibility of all other layers off to make these next steps easier, then desaturate and adjust the contrast of the image just as we did in step 2.



10 Add a splash of colour

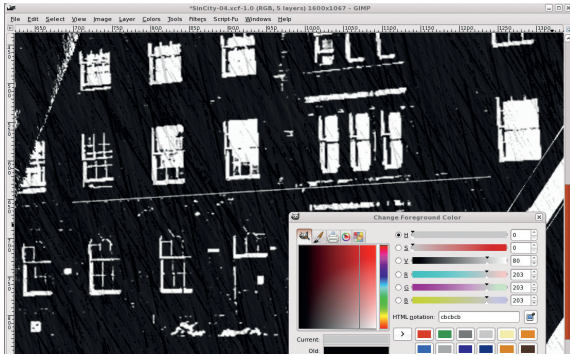
Open the image of the gangster with a red tie. Choose the Fuzzy Select tool and set the Threshold to 95. Click anywhere on the red tie. If there are spots of unselected tie inside the selection, grow the selection by a pixel to pick them up. The inset image shows the selection with Quick Mask enabled and the mask colour set to green. Copy the selection.



12 Update the building

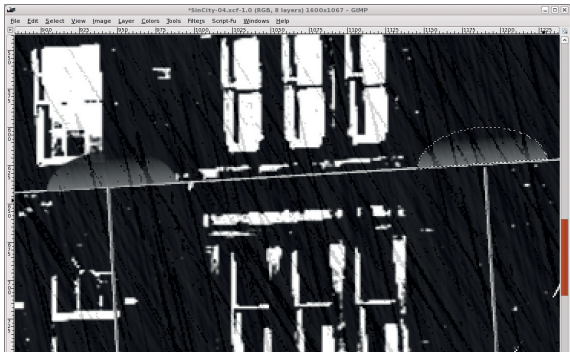
Open the scale dialog (Layer > Scale). Click on the chain link to break it in order to change the aspect ratio of the layer. Scale the Building layer by 165% wide and 140% high. Use the Move tool to drag the layer to the left until the front entrance is to the left of the gun. Reset the layer size to match the image size (Layer > Layer to Image Size).

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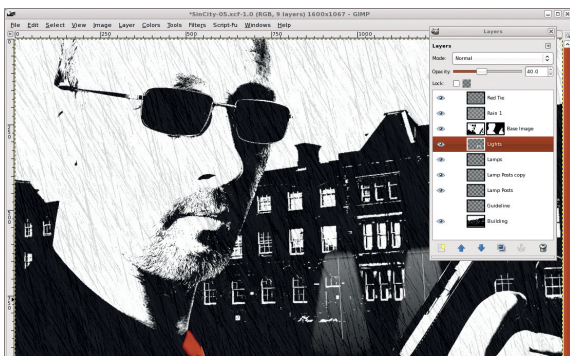
13 Lampposts guideline

Add a transparent layer just above the Building layer. Set the foreground colour to a medium grey (HTML notation cbcbbb). Draw a line from left to right at roughly the height of the top of the first floor of the building. Later, this layer will be removed.



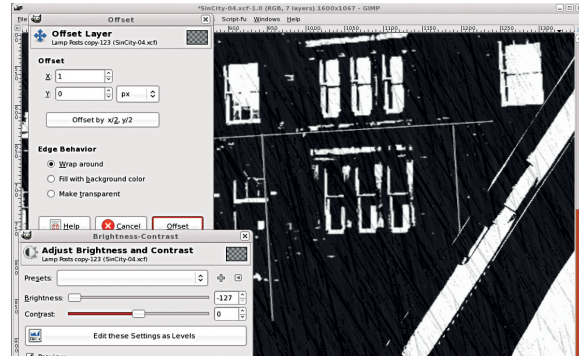
15 Lamps

Create an oval selection in a new layer, then cut out the bottom half of the selection. Position the selection over the left lamp post. Choose the Blend tool and drag a linear gradient from black to grey starting at the top of the selection down to the straight edge. Repeat for the other lamppost, then clear the selection (Select > None).



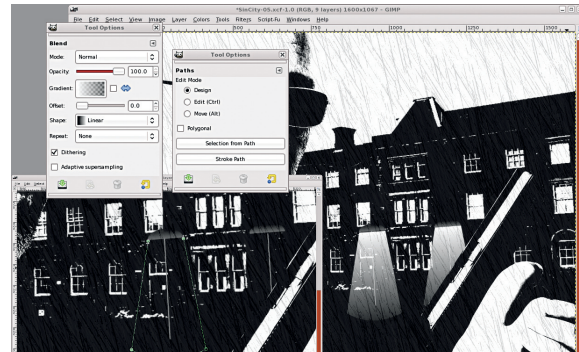
17 Adjust the lampposts

Open the Gaussian Blur filter (Filters > Blur > Gaussian Blur) and apply a 10-pixel blur in both the X and Y directions to the Lights layer. Set the layer Opacity to between 35 and 40%. At this point you can delete the guideline layer, or simply turn off its visibility in the Layers dialog.



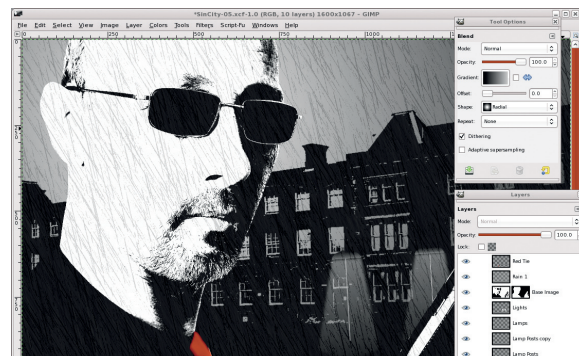
14 Draw the lampposts

Add a transparent layer above the Guideline layer, and with a small-radius paintbrush draw a line on the left of the front entrance of the building from the guideline down to the bottom of the building. Repeat the process for the right side of the entrance. Duplicate this layer and offset it by 1 pixel in the X direction. Reduce the Brightness to -127.



16 Lamp lights

Create a transparent layer beneath the Lamps layer in the Layers dialog. Use the Paths tool to outline a box below the left lamp, then convert the path to a selection. In the selection, apply a white-to-transparent gradient from the top to the bottom, and repeat for the other lamp. Clear the selection.



18 Final effect

To darken the background, add a transparent layer just above the Building layer. Fill this layer with black, add a layer mask and choose the Blend tool. Configure a Radial shape that runs from Black to grey, then click in the middle of the man's face and drag toward the index finger on the gun to draw the radial, black-to-grey mask. **LXF**

» **Next month** We'll add polish to your desktop with some OS X-like icons.