



← **Clockwise from top left:**  
 A standard exposure will capture the midtone detail.

Underexposing will capture the highlights.

Overexposing will record the dark elements.

Combining all three gives rich color and detail.

## HDR: High dynamic range

### Hyperrealistic, painterly images

#### The Idea

Most landscape scenes have such a wide dynamic range (that is, such a difference between the brightest parts and the darkest shadows), it can't be captured in its entirety, even with a state-of-the-art DSLR camera. What you get is either blown-out highlights in the sky or a foreground that is too dark and with no visible detail.

The idea behind this remedy is to take three exposures—one normally exposed to get the midtone detail, one underexposed to register all the highlights, and one overexposed to capture the wonderful dark elements—and then combine these with the help of image-processing software. The result is an image in which every part has loads of wonderful detail, often resembling a hyperrealistic oil painting.

#### The Ingredients

- ▶ DSLR camera or digital camera with AEB (auto exposure bracketing)
- ▶ Sturdy tripod
- ▶ Remote shutter release (optional, but highly recommended)
- ▶ HDR image-processing software
- ▶ Image-manipulation software (optional, but highly recommended)

#### The Process

This HDR method can be applied to any still-life subject conceivable. Landscapes, cars, machinery, and macro are recurring themes in HDR images. Even scenes which are not entirely still life—coastal rocks with heavy waves beating them, waterfalls, and fields with vegetation moving gently in the wind—can make for very nice images. It's all up to what sparks the photographer's interest. The most common mistake people make is to shoot dull subjects without thinking much about composition or what the image should be about. Neglecting these aspects is guaranteed to produce bad images.

HDR photography provides the greatest advantage in situations where the dynamic range exceeds what your camera can handle. Let's take this example of reflections in a pond with beautiful buildings next to it, against a magnificent sunset. Most equipment would give you either white sky with some detail in the buildings or all the colors in the sky with a silhouette of the building. HDR photography allows you to combine the detail captured with different exposures to render one image in which every detail is clearly visible.

## Preparing for the shot

When you've found something that inspires you, set up your tripod and compose the image by looking through your camera's viewfinder. This is where things start to get a bit technical. Set your camera to Aperture Priority mode because you want the aperture to remain fixed throughout the consecutive exposures. You can, of course, choose any aperture you like. You should also set your camera to AEB (auto exposure bracketing). This tells your camera to take three (or even five or seven if you have a pro camera) consecutive exposures. If you select AEB, your camera will also expect you to select the interval between the f-stop of each exposure. This can be done in increments from  $\frac{1}{3}$  stop up to 2 stops in most camera models. I recommend going the whole hog with 2 stops between exposures. This will enable you to capture more dynamic range and retrieve more information on the tonal values in shadows and highlights.

There are three more camera settings that must be taken care of before you commence your shoot. First, it's great to have the shooting mode set to Burst or Continuous Shooting if possible. This is mostly a matter of convenience—with it you will only have to press the shutter-release button once for each set of exposures you take. Second, set the ISO to 100 or the lowest setting available. This is to make sure that as little noise (graininess) as possible is recorded, as noise tends to increase almost exponentially during the image processing. Third, you should set the camera to write RAW files to your memory card rather than JPEGs, as they store more detail on each pixel than JPEGs do.

Finally, I recommend that you hook a wireless remote or cable shutter-release button to your camera to avoid any movement or shaking. Camera shake can result in the three exposures being imperfectly aligned, which can sometimes be a bit difficult to correct. And now, I think it's time to start shooting.



### ← Left:

*Remains of the Day*  
The use of HDR makes it easy to capture the formation of the snow against the setting sun.

### ↙ Below left :

*Chimneys*  
The saturated colors in this shot were achieved with a circular polarizing filter.

### ↗ Top right:

*Needs Fixin'*  
I have found that abandoned houses make a great subject for HDR images.

### ↗ Top, far right:

*December Sun*  
I used a neutral density filter to get this soft creamy blur of a small waterfall.

### → Right:

*The Perilous Bridge*  
I took this image against strong, low-angle backlight, which illuminated the steam rising from the warm water.



## Post-processing

When the shooting is done, transfer your images to a computer and decide on a software package to do the HDR rendering. There are dozens of packages to choose from, and most vendors offer fully functional trial versions free. Photomatix ([www.hdrsoft.com](http://www.hdrsoft.com)), Photoshop CS2 or higher ([www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com)), and FDR tools ([www.fdrtools.com](http://www.fdrtools.com)) are all fine pieces of software.

The workflow for HDR in these packages is pretty straightforward and can be found in the help dialog. The process of making an HDR image has two parts. The first is the generation of an HDR, and in this there are very few, if any options for you to worry about. The second is tone mapping, which involves a few controls for you to operate. Just play around with the controls until you have something that pleases your eyes.

It's a common misunderstanding that, once the tone mapping is complete, you have a finished image. This is rarely the case. A tone-mapped image requires the same digital processing as any other image shot with a DSLR camera. This can be done in Photoshop, Lightroom, or similar image-processing packages. Sometimes it's enough to increase the contrast, but it might also improve the image to increase saturation, correct colors, dodge, and burn. Try converting your HDR image to black-and-white. You will find that many of them work really well without colors.

HDR photography is a relatively new phenomenon, which has been debated passionately. It is frowned upon by many photographers, while others have welcomed it with open arms. One of the criticisms is that HDR images look unnatural; more like paintings than photographs, but it is likely that digital cameras will handle scenes with high contrast better in the future. Try this type of photography to see if you come up with a new look or style that you want to pursue and develop even further. Don't pay too much attention to those who say that this is not real photography; something like this would never have been possible with film. If you succeed in making images that please your own eyes and you have fun while you're doing it, that's all that matters.



→ **Right:**

*Ice and Fire*

An image taken at dusk with just a little light illuminating the snow against the intensely lit steam. This scene would have been very difficult to capture with one exposure.

↓ **Following page:**

*Summer Night*

A panorama from a total of 12 exposures. I made four HDR images, which I then combined in Photoshop using a panorama stitch utility.



→ **Right:**

*Sunset at the Beach*

Sunset is a great subject for HDR photography.

← **Left:**

*Hólmeberg*

This was taken through a neutral density filter, which enables unusually long exposures. The result is this blurring of the constantly moving water and clouds.







*Cross Walk*  
Zone-focus cameras are great little cameras that you can whip out of your pocket to take a quick snap without having to worry about start-up times and shutter lag.

## Zone-focus

### The Lomo LC-A and friends

#### The Idea

Get to grips with low-tech, zone-focus cameras. A Lomo LC-A is a chunky-looking piece of 1980s Soviet design which takes such magical pictures it sometimes defies belief. After a rough history, including a brief break in production in 2004, it is still being manufactured, though the country of manufacture today is China, where one factory is churning them out for the Lomo-loving masses to enjoy. I could write loads about all the things that make this camera great, but, as with most cameras, what makes the picture is the lens.

I have laid out my top tips for using the LC-A here. These also apply to other cameras from the same era that function in a similar way, including the Cosina CX-2 and the Olympus XA-2.

#### The Ingredients

- ▶ Any zone-focus camera
- ▶ A subject

#### The Process

For the most part the Lomo LC-A is really simple to use—just press the shutter button and wind on the film—but there are a few mistakes I see newbie Lomo users make all the time. Here are my tips for avoiding common Lomo mishaps.

#### Keep the shutter button pressed

One of the most common mistakes you see on a first roll of “Lomo film” is that a lot of frames are either very underexposed (too dark) or blank. This is because the photographer did not follow through with keeping the shutter button pressed down. One of the things I love about this camera is the way it chooses the exposure. With most cameras, when you take a shot the camera will decide what aperture and shutter speed to use. The LC-A will open the shutter and leave it open until the film has had enough light. If you release the shutter button before the film has soaked up enough light, the shutter will close prematurely and the shot will be underexposed. You need to keep your finger on the shutter button until you hear a second click—this is the sound of the shutter closing.

#### Don't be afraid of the dark

If you think it might be too dark to take a shot, you can check by looking through the viewfinder and holding the shutter button halfway down. If a red LED light appears in the right of the viewfinder, it means that the available light is low and you need to make sure the camera is steady or you will get camera shake, which leads to blurring in the photo.



This is caused by the camera moving while the shutter is open—the longer the shutter remains open, the more likely it is that you, and therefore your camera, will move and the more blurring you will get. In low light the shutter needs to stay open for longer. To keep your camera still, place it on a level surface—a table or a wall—to take your shot.

If there is nothing to lean on, hold the camera to your face with both hands and rest your elbows against your body to make yourself a tripod. In low light one of my favorite things is to place the camera on the floor to take the shot. The one thing you must remember is to keep your finger on the shutter button until you hear the second click—the vital sound of the shutter closing. But be warned—if it is really dark, the exposure can run to minutes, so get comfortable!



↖ **Above left:**  
*Lying Dog*  
Lens vignetting can really help frame a subject.

← **Left:**  
*Waiting Bride*  
Sometimes it just isn't right to pull out a ruler. On such occasions, when I am focusing at 80cm (c. 2½ft), I point at my subject, as I know my outstretched arm is roughly that length. It's not such an issue when focusing at 1.5m (c. 5ft) and 3m (c. 10ft); with these distances, you have more margin for error.

### Measure up when close up

The minimum focusing distance on a Lomo LC-A is 80cm (c. 2½ft). If you are shooting a close-up shot you can judge this distance by eye, but, depending on the lighting conditions, you need to be accurate to within a few centimeters (about an inch) to make sure your shot will be sharp. I am lucky—if I stretch out my arm and point with my index finger, the distance from my eye (where the camera is) to the tip of my finger is dead on 80cm. For most people, the length of their outstretched arm will be near enough to this, but if you want to get it exact, use a ruler. A fold-up ruler is very handy. A tape measure is also good, but it doesn't have the rigidity of a ruler, which allows you just to point it at your subject.



← **Facing page:**  
*Little Graffiti Men*  
The minimum focus distance on a LOMO LC-A is 80cm (c. 2½in). Depending on the aperture used by the camera, you might have to be accurate to 3m (c. 10ft); I carry a folding ruler so I can measure out my close-up shots.

← **Left:**  
*Rape Field*  
Without post-processing, digital photos tend to be really flat, but shooting with film can give you fantastic colors, depending on what film you use.

↙ **Below left:**  
*City Surfer*  
The size of the LC-A and similar cameras enables you to carry them anywhere, so you never miss a photo op.



### Battery power

Modern cameras refuse to work if their battery runs down, but the Lomo LC-A will try to do the job even when its juice is low. You have to keep an eye on your battery level so you don't unwittingly shoot a whole film with no battery power, which means no light meter and poorly exposed shots, but this is quite simple. If you look through the viewfinder while you press the shutter button halfway you should see a red LED light on the left-hand side. This is the battery indicator light. If it is dim or not on at all, replace the batteries with three shiny new LR44s and you're ready to rock once more.

### Take your LC-A everywhere you go

I have got fantastic shots by taking my LC-A with me when just popping out to get a pint of milk. How are you going to get a shot if you don't have a camera with you? So remember, when you leave the house: check keys, phone, wallet/purse, Lomo. (And this should be applied to whatever camera you own.)

### Have fun

My top tip is just have fun with your Lomo. I have given advice on how to avoid blurred shots, not because blurred shots are bad, but so that you know how to avoid blurring if you want to. All of these tips are just that—tips, not rules.



← **Left:**

*Woolacombe Beach Huts*  
The extent of vignetting can sometimes be unpredictable. In this shot, taken in daylight, the edges on the image are almost solid black.

→ **Right:**

*English Athletes*  
The LC-A is well suited to low-down shots.

↙ **Below left:**

*Rusty Truck*  
Even if you shoot most photos on a super-slick DSLR, think of a small camera as a sketch-book that you have with you all the time.



### Extras

The Lomo LC-A has a single-group, 32mm Minitar lens. In a lot of cameras the lens is composed of several different lenses, known as groups. The fact that the Lomo has only one group means that it doesn't need as much light to get the job done because there is less glass for the light to pass through. The LC-A's lens is known for its vignetting effect—photos taken on it tend to have dark corners. When this is combined with cross-processing, it is exaggerated to the extreme. Some see the vignetting as an imperfection, but I think it's great for adding character and for framing subjects.





*Elin: One Week Later*

Elin is a natural beauty and a fantastic model, but this shoot was all about slowing down and waiting for the moment—the gaze—to really work. This was part of a vanity project shot in available light in my flat. (Model: Elin Amos.)

## Working with models

### Out with the rule book

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#### The Idea

What is it about working with models that throws everything off? All the rules and all your knowledge goes out the window as you find yourself transfixed by the person in front of you.

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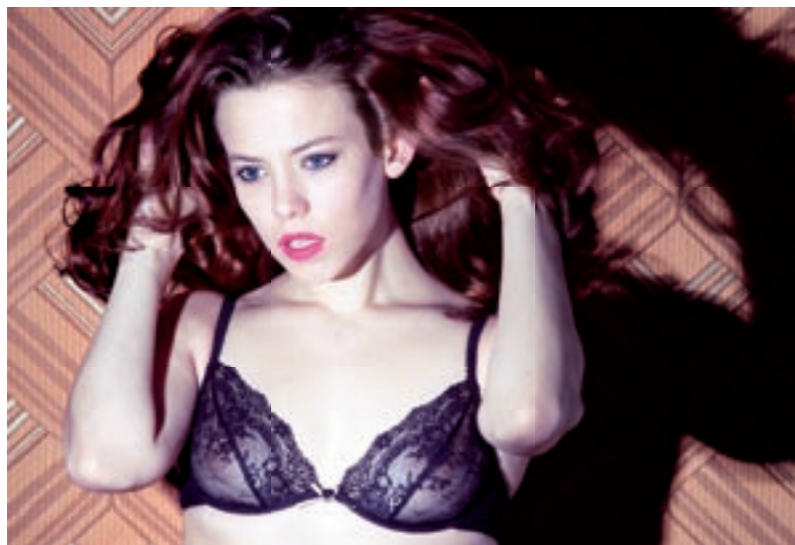
#### The Ingredients

- ▶ Any camera
- ▶ An image concept

#### The Process

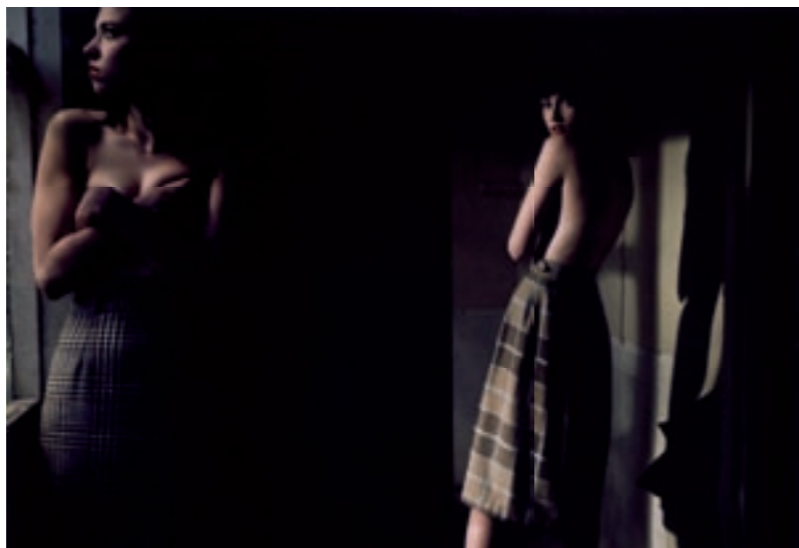
For me, working with a model is all about rapport or control, about achieving an expected outcome or seeing something develop in front of you and taking the shot at the perfect moment. To really make the best of this, you need to know what sort of image you are trying to achieve. Is it a fashion shoot, is it about the model's body shape, about his or her face, their poise, or their attitude? Or is it essentially about you, the photographer, projecting your ideas onto your subject/canvas? You need to think about all of these things while you are considering your shot.

It has taken me years to learn to shoot people, and it feels like the first part of a long journey. Only recently have I begun to drop the idea of a preconceived image and concentrate instead on the individual in front of me. I think there is something intrusive involved with taking someone's photo, and it shouldn't be approached lightly. In the past I tended to obsess about that and build it into my idea before the person even arrived. Now I am learning to make almost all of these decisions and judgments within the time frame of the subject arriving and me taking the shot. The tips that follow are "the pearls" from what I have learnt.



### Tip 1

Until you understand everything you feel you can about natural light, don't start to shoot people or work with models. Put it off as long as you can. Once you can pick the time of day, position, camera, lens, and approach that will make something inert like a phone booth or trash can look interesting, then move onto models. If, when you are talking to someone and they turn, the emotive highlight down the side of their face catches your eye; or you notice how a friend looks different on those heavy, overcast days; if you see how their cheekbones are highlighted by the afternoon sun and it stops you hearing what they are saying so that all you take in is the light and how it shapes them and how that makes you feel, stop reading and start shooting people now.



### ← Above left:

*Sally Can't Dance*  
A harsh 1970s-style flash with strong directional lighting, along with the pose and distance of the model's expression, really sell this image. (Model: Sally Reynolds.)

### ← Left:

*Editorial for GangUp magazine*  
On a shoot there is often tension between models and this can be used to really build a shot. Here the lighting and composition, along with very specific head positions, build a narrative in the image. (Models: Sally Reynolds and Elin Amos.)

### ← Left:

*Editorial for Baroque Jewellery*  
This shot is about emotion and strong eye contact, which we have accentuated with slight letterbox lighting across the face so the eyes and hands draw you in and frame the shot. (Model: Joanne Jackson.)

### → Right:

*Editorial for GangUp magazine*  
I used tights on the lens to create a very soft vintage feel and build on the dreamy aesthetic. Very soft window light builds further on this, and the models worked hard all day on their respective characters in this shoot. (Models: Sophie Munson and Rosy Cherrington.)

### Tip 2

Working with models is about confidence. If you don't have confidence in your skills, you should make up for it with confidence in the way you talk to models and vice versa, but don't get so caught up in the technical detail that you miss the image you are trying to make.

### Tip 3

Remember that no two models are the same. Adapt your response to each person. There isn't one standard approach that can be applied to everyone, but when talking or working with a model, never stop looking. Watch everything about them—how they hold themselves, what they project, the shape of their face—and use all of this detail to inform your images.

### Tip 4

Don't panic and don't rush. If you book a one-hour session with a model, spend 45 minutes just looking and talking, then shoot 10 shots in the last 15 minutes. Take your time, and don't forget what you already know about photography.

### Tip 5

Don't rely on the model to make the image; it's your eye and your vision, so pay attention to every detail. The touch that transforms your work may be as simple as turning out an ankle or lifting a chin. Don't be fearful of giving directions; most models will be relieved that you know what you need or what you want to see.

### Tip 6

Try to "read" your model. Several of the images here have very direct eye contact, which is almost, to use a cliché, piercing. What you are trying to get at is the essence of the person, or an idea of it at least. I tend to set up my shot and wait, and then wait just a little longer until I see that flicker of "something else" on the model's face—that's the moment you take the shot.





### Tip 7

Composition is key. Remember that your frame is dynamic. A great subject should be enough, but sometimes you have to work hard to exploit the frame you use. If you work hard at your composition, the frame should reveal itself to you. This is as true for posed fashion shots as it is for portraits.

### Tip 8

Study the work of others and deconstruct why their images have so much impact. Get as broad a range of inspirational images as you can and challenge



yourself not to replicate, but to go one better. If you can also inspire the model to do this by showing them some of your source material, even better.

### Tip 9

Have passion for what you do. There is something to be said for laboring away, and sometimes good images do result, but if you are not enjoying the shoot, or at least feeling some passion for it, then stop. Go watch TV instead. Or, if you really have passion and want to make an image worth keeping, don't stop. Keep trying and never be satisfied.



### Tip 10

Look around you. Study film, light, people, faces, communication (spoken and unspoken), then find your own way of doing things. If you want your work to stand out, it has to be your own voice and vision.

### The muse

The biggest tip, and it's a classic, is to find a muse—someone who will encourage you and stimulate your mind. Doing this changed my photography more than I could imagine. Shoot and shoot them, just don't drain all their patience. If you do it right, you'll both learn.

#### ← Far left:

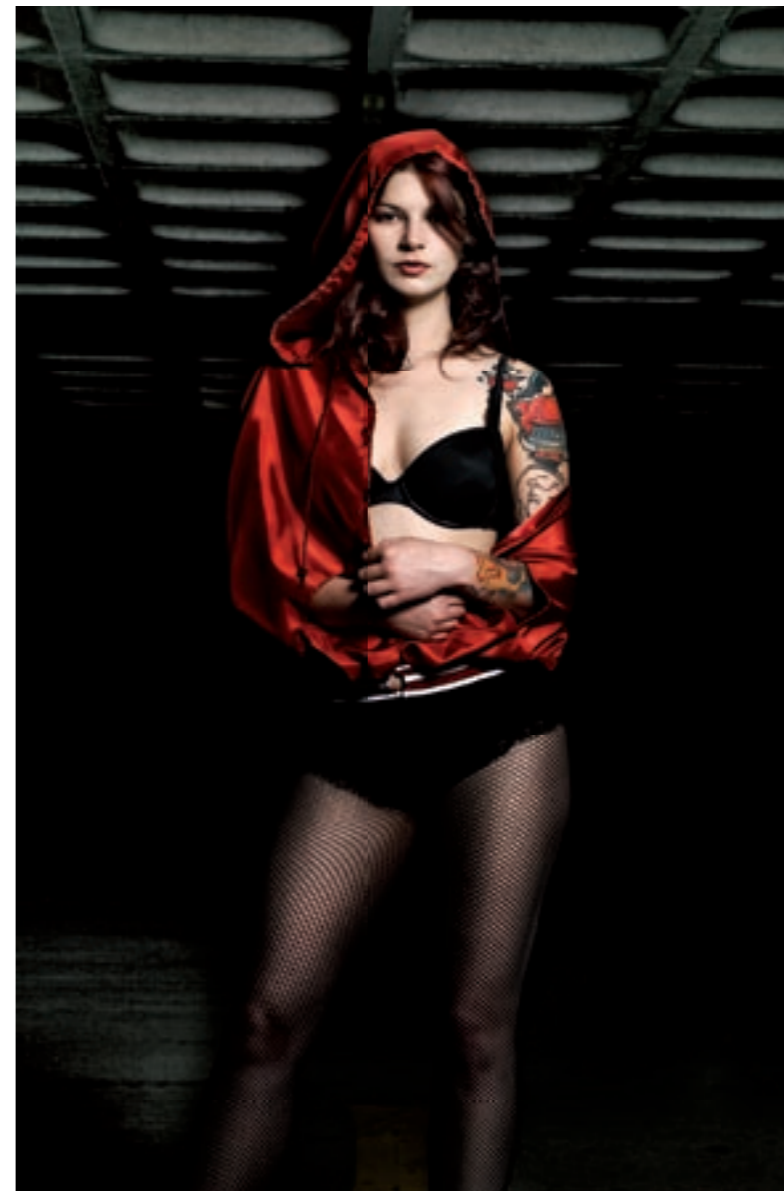
*Commercial Shoot for Delarge T-shirts*  
Sally was my muse for four years, and this T-shirt shoot took only 20 minutes before we had what we needed. She is incredibly relaxed and fun in front of the camera, with bursts of activity, so it was a case of controlling that and pulling out her character. I love this shot. (Model: Sally Reynolds.)

#### ← Left:

*Your Life is My Vanity Project: Week 6*  
This project is all about waiting and constructed encounters with a fantastic model. It is constantly evolving, both in the hour we meet and over the weeks. These four shots would have been taken during the last 20 minutes of a one-hour session. Georgie has a stunning directness and incredible range. (Model: Georgie Hobday.)

#### → Right:

*Toots VonFury*  
I had the cape made especially for the shoot, which I also styled. The colors complement each other, but the key factor is the strength of the model, Kelly, who draws you in, but also holds something back. She is a wonderful girl to know and shoot with. (Model: Toots VonFury, aka Kelly.)



### The story

You'll want your image to be more than just a literal representation of someone. In fact, that's the last thing you'll want it to be. Instead, to really grab the viewer, your image should have a story, a narrative, a background that the viewer feels they have uncovered through their own insight. Don't hand everything to your viewer on a plate; don't expose your subject without allowing them to keep a piece of themselves back.

### The commitment

Make an image that you want to look at again and again. It's the hardest thing to find a voice that is yours and unique, but persistence really does pay off. Take time to master the technical and never ever stop looking. Frame everything, even if only in your mind, from waking to sleeping.