

Creating a Moonrise Composite Image with GIMP

This tutorial describes how to create a composite image of Moonrise (or Moonset) using GIMP.

WHAT YOU NEED

- (Pre Foreground) A set images before the Moon rises (or before the Moon enters the frame).
- (Moon) A set of images capturing the rising Moon (or setting Moon).
- (Post Foreground) A set of images after the Moon leaves the frame (or after the Moon sets).

This tutorial assume you have images in JPG format. RAW images are beyond the scope.

SOFTWARE

GIMP (GNU Image Manipulation Program)

Down load the free software here: <https://www.gimp.org/downloads/>

STEPS

1. Load the Moon images into separate layers.

2. Composite the Moon layers.

2.1 Ensure the Moon layers are registered. To do this:

- Change the Opacity of layers and use bright spots like buildings lights to see if the layers are registered.
- Use the using the Move Tool with Move the Active Layer set, to move a layer to register it with the another layer.
- Change Opacity to 100% on all layers when finished.

2.2 Set the Mode to "Lighten" on each layer.

2.3 Create a single layer containing all of the Moon images. To do this:

- Right-click on a Moon layer, select Flatten.
- Copy > Undo > Paste as New Layer.
- Rename the Clipboard layer to "Moons".

3. Load the Foreground layers.

3.1 Load a Pre Foreground image into a layer.

3.2 Load a Post Foreground image into a layer, below the Pre Foreground Layer.

3.3 Ensure the Pre Foreground image is registered with Post Foreground image. To do this, change the Opacity of layers and use buildings lights to see if the images are registered. Change Opacity to 100% on the layers when finished.

4. Blend the Foreground Layers

4.1 Use the Curves tool to adjust the Pre and Post Foreground layers to your liking.

4.2 Add a Layer Mask to the Pre Foreground layer. To do this:

- Right-click on Pre Foreground layer, select Add Layer Mask.
- Initialize Layer Mask to White (full opacity) > Add.
- Set the Foreground color to Black.
- Click the Blend tool. Set the Gradient = FG to BG (RGB), Shape = Linear.
- Use the Blend tool to reveal the Post Foreground layer. Blend left to right horizontally or at an angle as required.

5. Composite the Foreground Layers.

5.1 Create a single layer containing the Foreground images. To do this:

- Ensure only the Foreground Layers are visible.
- Right-click on the Pre Foreground layer, select Flatten.
- Copy > Undo > Paste as New Layer.
- Rename the Clipboard layer to "Foregrounds".

6. Composite the Moon and Foreground Layers.

6.1 Ensure the Foregrounds layer is registered with the Moons layer. To do this:

- Change the Opacity of layers and use bright spots like buildings lights to see if the layers are registered.
- Use the using the Move Tool with Move the Active Layer set, to move a layer to register it with the another layer.
- Change Opacity to 100% on all layers when finished.

6.2 Create a single layer containing the Final Composite Image. To do this:

- Ensure only the Moons and Foregrounds layers are visible.
- Right-click on the Moons layer, select Flatten.
- Copy > Undo > Paste as New Layer.
- Rename the Clipboard layer to "Composite".

7. Final adjustments (optional)

- Use the Clone Tool to erase hot spots, if any.
- Use the Curves Tool to adjust the final image.
- Add some punch with the Filters > Enhance > Unsharp Mask. Use the default Radius of 5.0 or if that's too sharp, use a Radius of 3.0.
- - Since layers may have been moved, there may be sections of the canvas near the edges with no image. Use the Crop Tool to crop out black sections or to crop the image to your liking.

10. Export the Composite layer to an image format like JPG.

11. Save the project as an XCF file.