

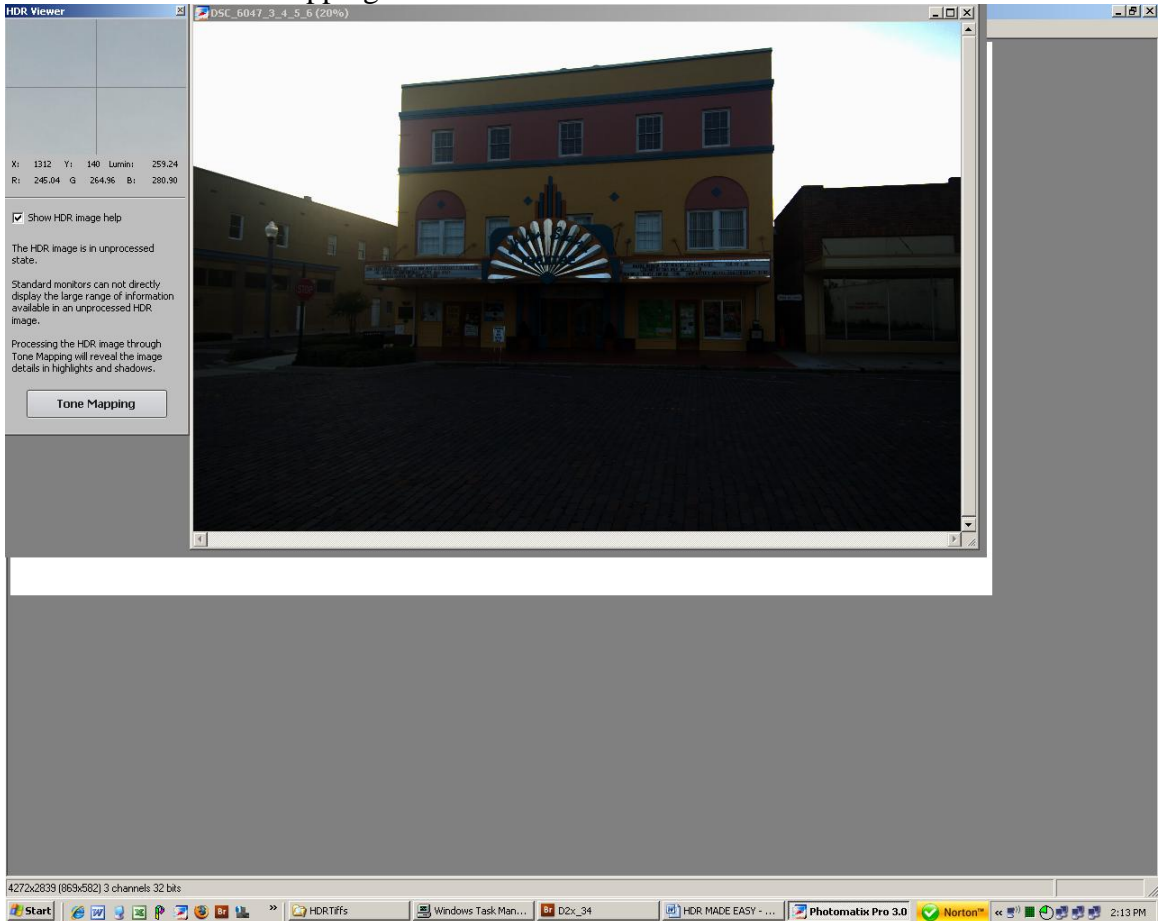
HDR MADE EASY – KIND OF ☺

This tutorial is based on the HDRSoft (<http://www.hdrsoft.com>) PhotoMatix Pro 3.0 (Px). CS3 has HDR processing tools, but I don't know of anyone who uses them.

The first step is to generate a set of images (2, or more) for the HDR software to process. When shooting in normal, outdoor situations I was using three (-1, 0, +1), but am now tending toward 5 (-2, -1, 0, +1, +2). Note that for low light conditions the meter is easily fooled and I start with -2, but as the light comes up increase the over exposed image toward 0 and go down from there. In this example, I used five images from -2 to +2. If you don't use even spacing between images, Px will complain and ask for help. Here are the five images with which I started. Note that the very bright background pushed the images down into the dark a bit.

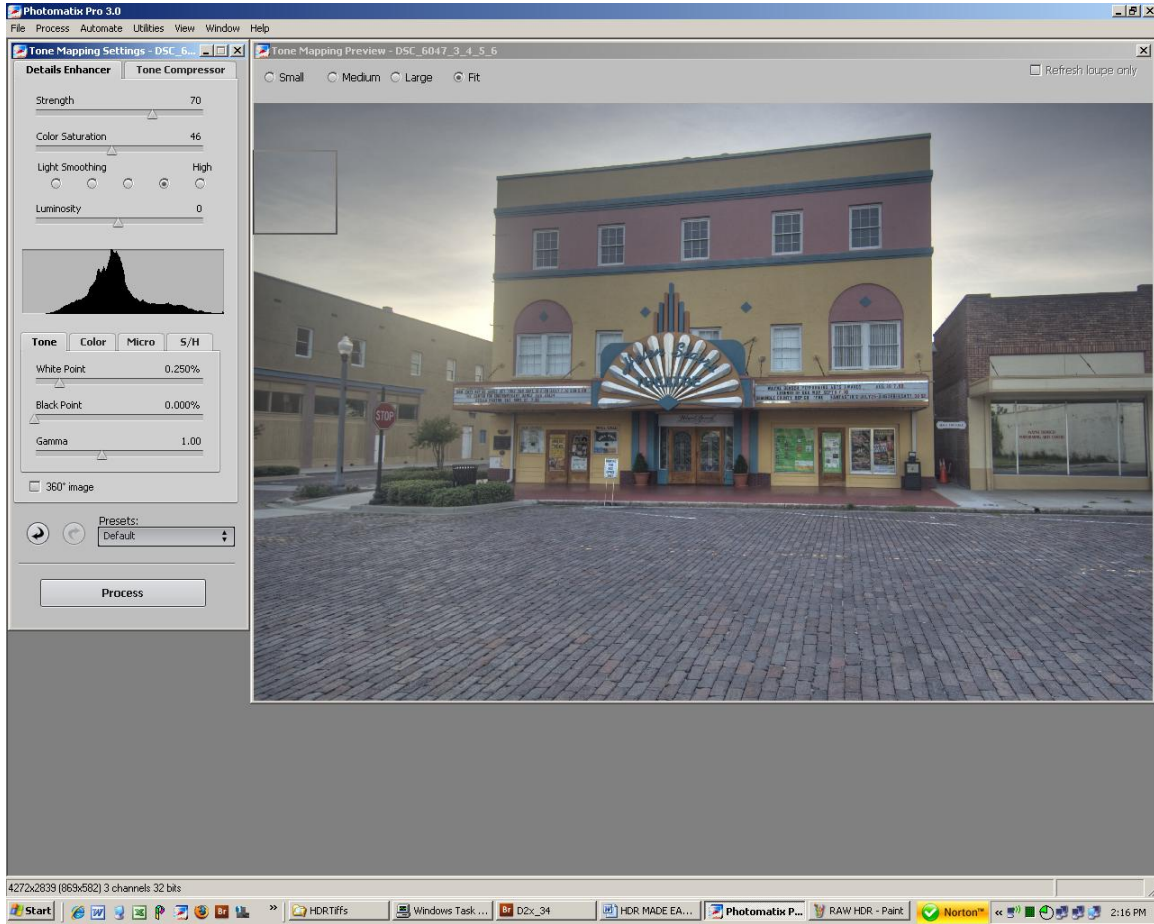


Open PhotoMatix>Generate HDR Image>Browse. Browse to the folder containing the images to be processed. Select the images and enter OK. If you shot from a tripod and were careful, you don't need to let Px align the images. If you shot handheld, one or the other of the Px alignment processes may provide acceptable results – experiment to see which works best. I nearly always use “By Matching Features”. This is the 32 bit version. It looks extreme because there is no way a standard monitor can display the wide range of values. Select Tone Mapping.



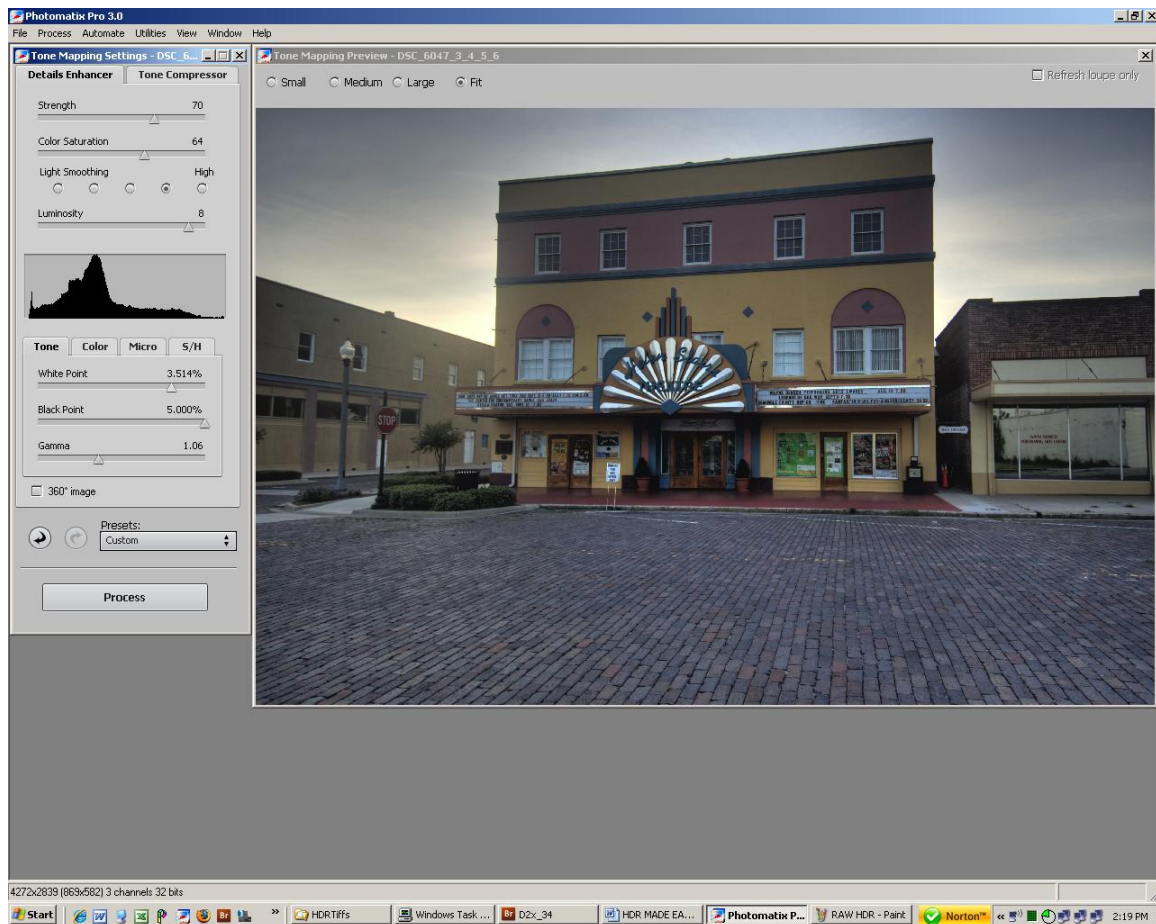
Here is the stacked result, aligned with “By Matching Features”, using default settings.

Strength	Saturation	Light Smoothing	Luminosity	White Point	Black Point	Gamma
70	46	4	0	.25	0	1



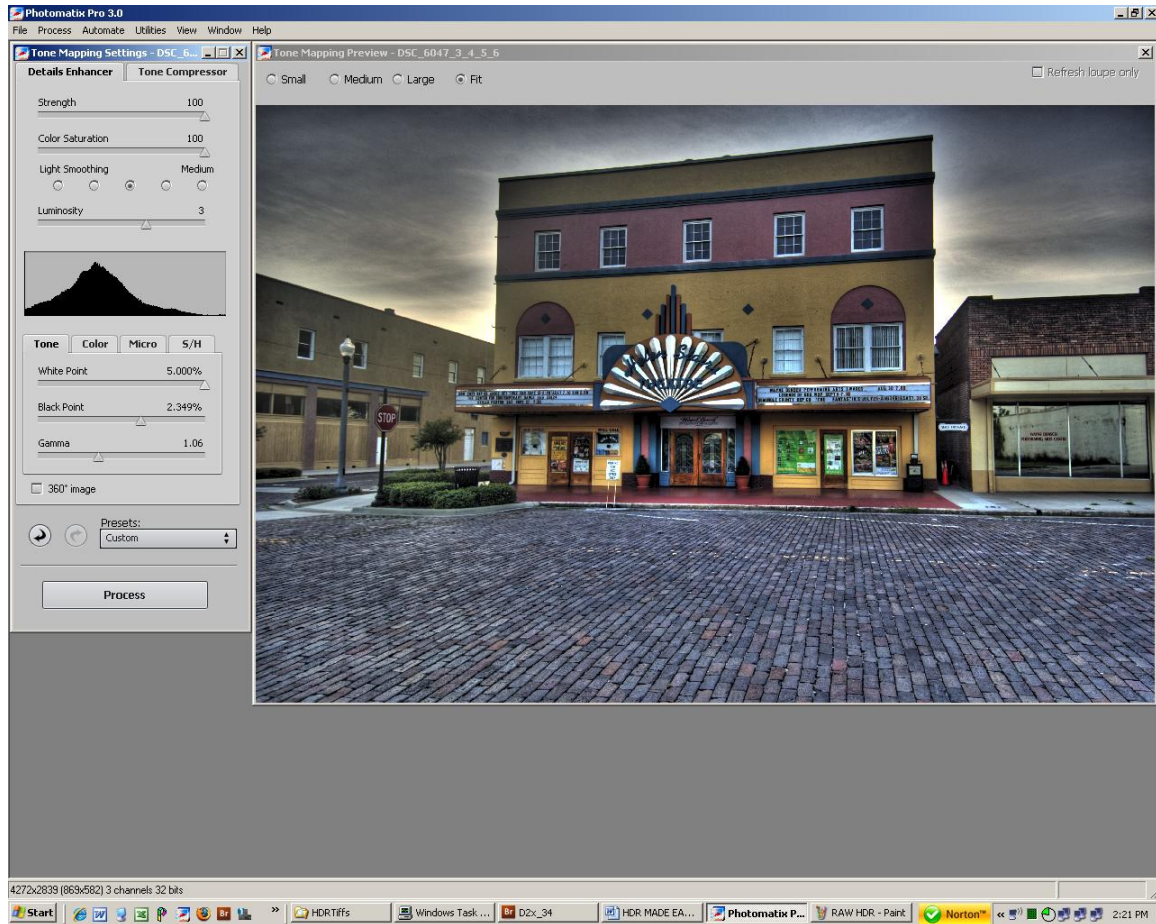
Here is the 'normal' version as I'd probably save it. Note the increase in Luminosity, and changes in Black Point, White Point, and Gamma. There is no logic to these changes. It's 'hunt and peck' until I find a combination that I like.

Strength	Saturation	Light Smoothing	Luminosity	White Point	Black Point	Gamma
70	64	4	8	3.51	5.0	1.06



And, here is the extreme “HDRGrunge” version. The Light Smoothing adjustment is key. Note also the “Micro’ tab. There are a couple of smoothing adjustments there as well.

Strength	Saturation	Light Smoothing	Luminosity	White Point	Black Point	Gamma
100	100	3	3	5.0	2.349	1.06



Keep in mind that none of these are finished. The next step is to select “Process”. When Px completes, save the image and then open it in PhotoShop. The fun has just begun.

To see the final result with this image and others, visit <http://www.hdrgrunge.com> where you will find a discussion of HDR and links to ‘normal’ and ‘extreme’ galleries.