HDR Demo

Intro & Background:
To reveal the details in darkest of shadows whilst preserving those in the brightest highlights, is often difficult to achieve in a single exposure. Shadows need more exposure to define their detail while highlights often need much less.

One answer is HDR – High Dynamic Range. Sounds complicated but it's not. Just take several images at different exposures, then merge them together using suitable editing software to create a single **High Dynamic Range** image.

Most HDR tuition videos recommend using a tripod for stability in order to create the best quality images. Check out Tony's pdf from the 'Library' page of the VP which explains this clearly and demonstrates exactly how to achieve great results using these tripod HDR techniques:
https://dpg-vp.weebly.com/library.html

Objective of this Demo:
To show how effective HDR images can also be achieved without a tripod.

Camera:
Most modern cameras have a 'bracketed exposure' setting. This will offer a 'burst' of up to seven linked exposures which can be individually pre-adjusted to create the 'bracketed' sequence. If a tripod is used, aperture priority is the most recommended setting along with a fixed ISO, enabling the camera to change the shutter speed for each of the 'bracketed' exposures.

For hand-held HDR, I use shutter priority, and set the ISO to 'Auto'. This allows the camera to vary the exposure by changing the ISO setting to create the different amounts of exposure. Shutter Priority means I can reduce the risk of camera shake, not an issue with a tripod!

Always use RAW format as the sensitivity setting unless your computer struggles to cope with merging RAW files. RAW files always yield more detail than any other format, critical for HDR.

Software:
I use Serif's Affinity Photo which makes merging pics into a single detailed HDR image simplicity itself. It takes care of any 'ghosting' and aligning of images.

In Affinity you simply open a 'New HDR Merge', add your pics, then tick 'Align Images', 'Remove Ghosts', 'Noise Reduction', 'Tone Map HDR Image' and finally 'OK' – Affinity does the rest.

Once the 'merge' is complete, pick a pre-set from those displayed and/or adjust the various sliders to manipulate every aspect to get the precise result you want.

Finally, click 'Apply'. Affinity then transfers the merged HDR image to its main 'Photo Persona' for any additional editing you feel may be necessary.

It is this combination of simple, hand-held, bracketed exposures together with Affinity Photo's straightforward merge facility that takes all the hassle out of the process.

Try it and see if it works for you - good luck!

2 Hand-held HDR examples from our January 2022 Cromer Photoshoot, created in Affinity Photo:

This pic was merged from 3 bracketed exposures: all 1/250 at f8, with ISOs of 250, 500 and 1000.
The people walking up the slopes were 'frozen' by Affinity's 'Remove Ghosts' option.

This one was merged from 5 bracketed exposures:
all 1/500 at f5.6, with ISOs of 125, 250, 500, 1000 & 2000.