HDR USING PHOTOMATIX SOFTWARE

HDR stands for **H**igh **D**ynamic **R**ange. HDR photography is one of the great benefits available to us as digital photographers. The process involves taking multiple photos of a scene with different exposures then combining them in a computer to **add detail in highlight and shadow areas**. HDR software also has presets to create special effects. For this lesson we will use Photomatix Essentials software ($39.00) although there are lots of other software choices available.

The first step is to set up your camera for automatic exposure bracketing. All but the simplest digital cameras should be capable of doing this. Check your camera manual and change two settings in bracketing:

1. Number of shots to be bracketed. I suggest **3 shots.**
2. Bracket exposure range. I suggest **2 stops.** Therefore, the three shots will be -2, 0, and +2 stops.

To take the bracketed exposures, select a scene with highlights and/or dark areas where you want to improve detail. White clouds and deep shadows are good examples.

1. I suggest selecting Aperture priority mode so all three photos will have the same f stop.
2. Change shooting mode from single shot to bracketing. (Remember to change it back when through with HDR).
3. Take the three photos holding the camera as still as possible.

Minus 2 f stops

Plus 2 f stops

Detail missing
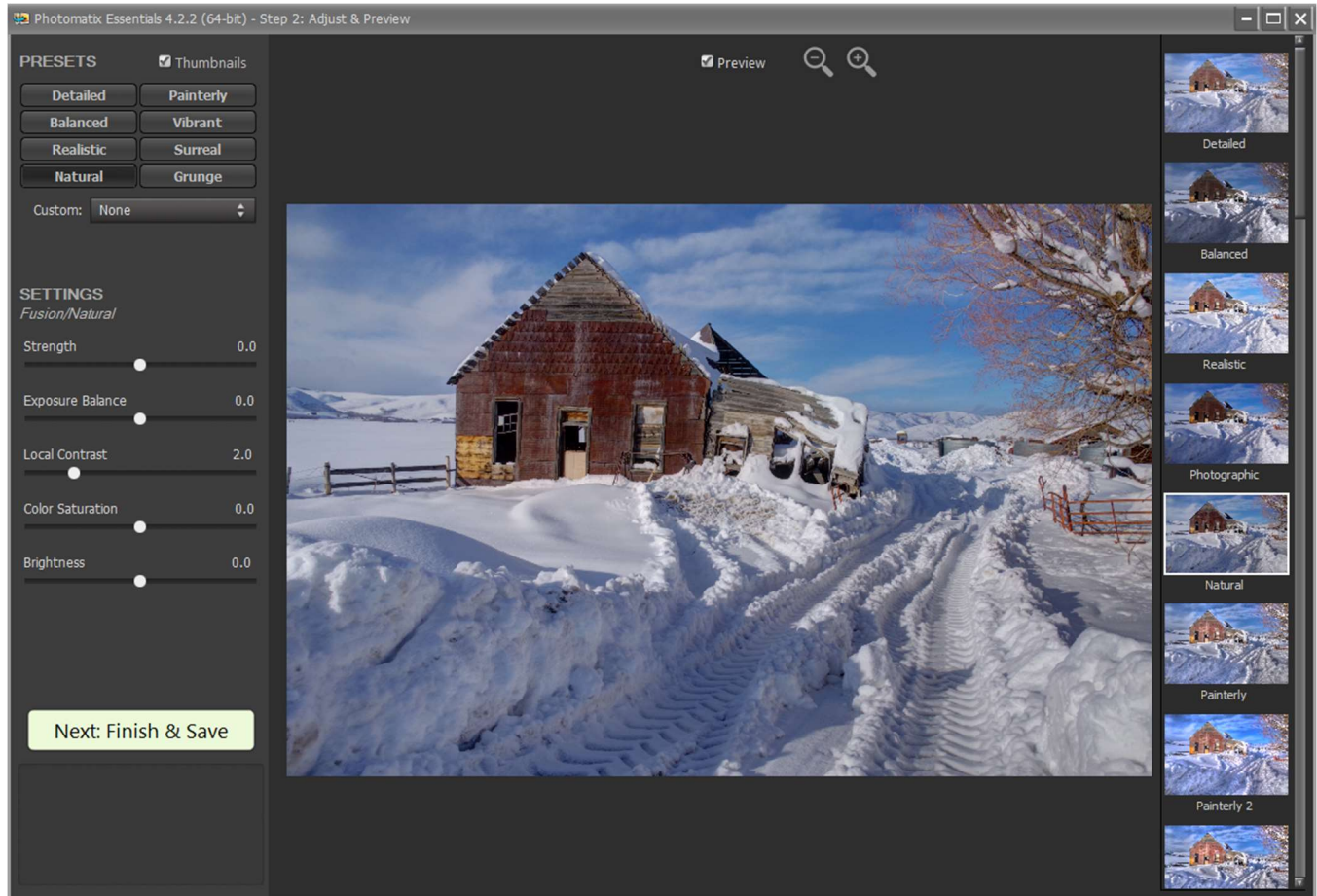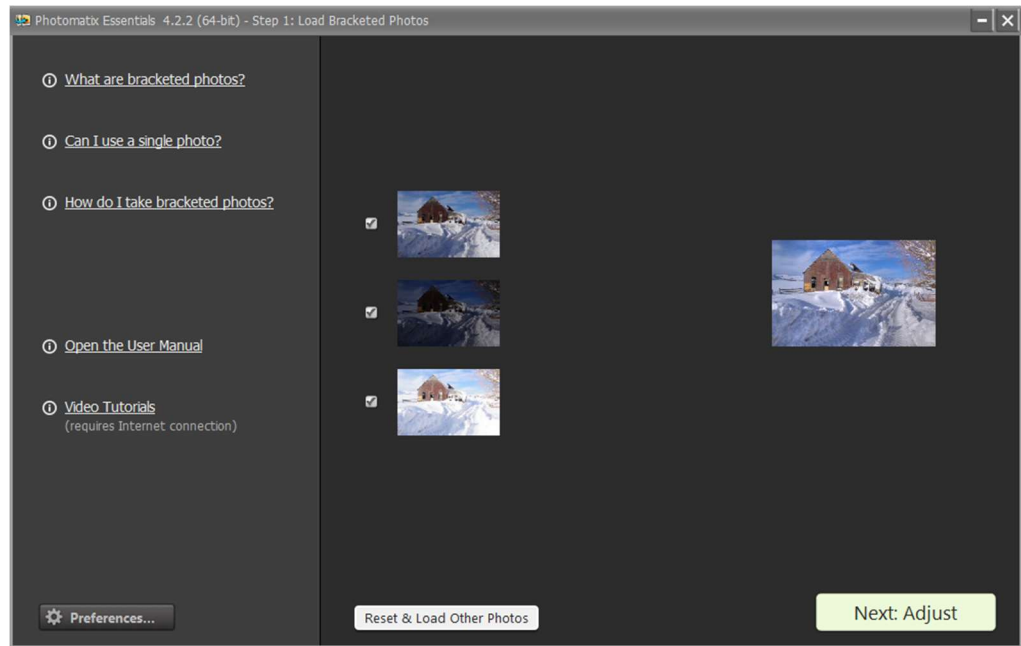
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Start Photomatix and drag all three photos onto the work area.

Click "Adjust".

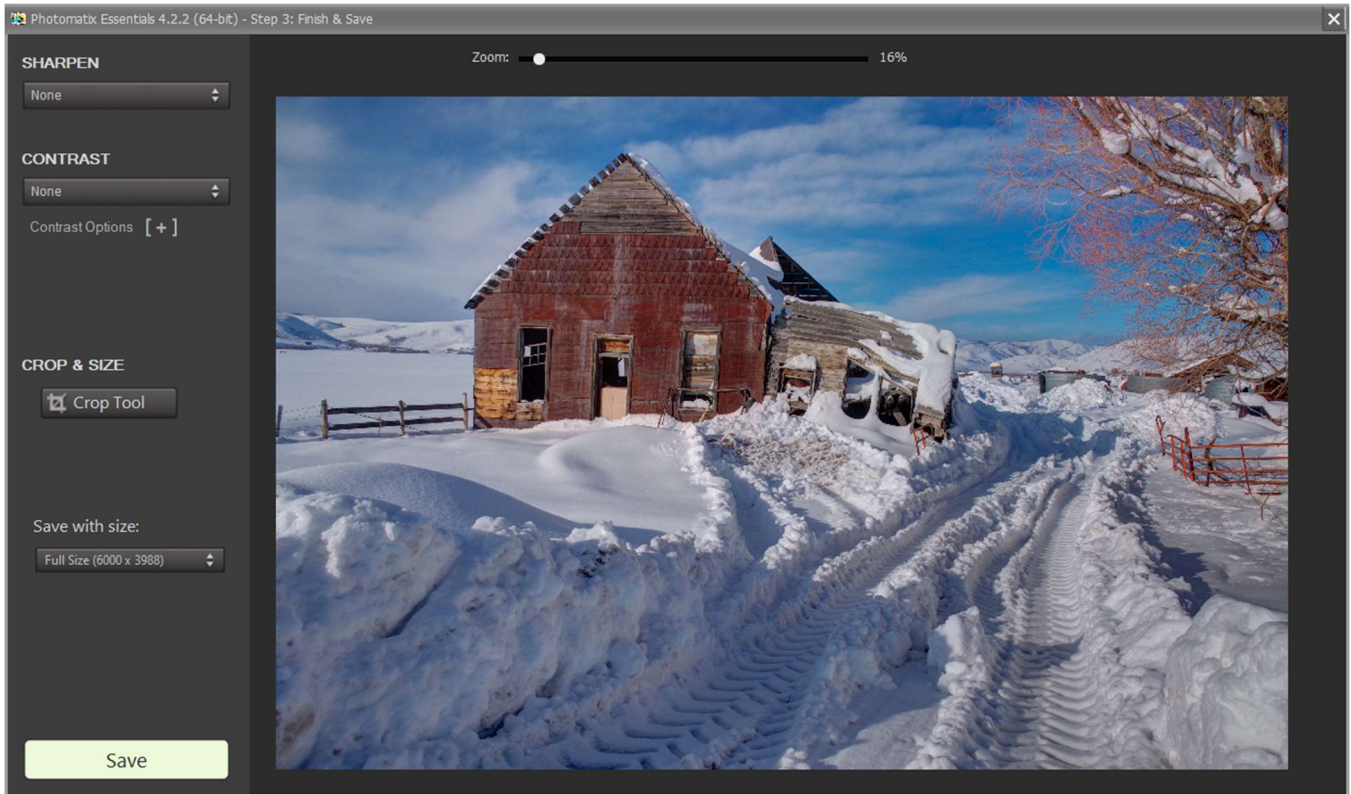A popup will appear with boxes to be checked.

Check "Align bracketed photos" and "Crop aligned images". If there was movement between images, like waves or windblown grass, check "Remove ghosts".

Click OK

A merged photo will appear on a preview screen with several preset options in the upper left and right edge. Choose "Natural" for a normal looking photo or any of the others to preview special effects. Fine adjustments can be made with sliders on the left edge but consider making those adjustments in your favorite photo processing software instead. After deciding which option you want, click "Finish and Save".

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Another screen appears with the merged image in the chosen format. You will be able to make further adjustments here. When done, click "Save". The new image will be in the same folder as the original photos.

This final image was lightened slightly in Photoshop Elements.

More detail

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Other preset options can be used to create special effects. This one was created with the Painterly 4 preset.

Occasionally, you might get better results using just two of the photos, so you can go back to the beginning and uncheck the photo you don't want to use, then repeat these processing steps.

There is a lot of helpful information on the Photomatix website.

Product downloads	https://www.hdrsoft.com/download.html
Store	https://www.hdrsoft.com/order.php
User Manual	https://www.hdrsoft.com/support/doc/PhotomatixEssentials4.2_UserManual_Win.pdf
Bracketing setup for selected cameras	https://www.hdrsoft.com/resources/camera-aeb-selection.html

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