

I thought it might be useful to send out a practical support for 'Focus Stacking' since although Steven Galvin showed us his stacked images and recommended its use to us, he didn't really tell or show us the nuts and bolts of how to do it with Photoshop.

This technique works well with MACRO photography where the focal plane is a small sliver of the subject being shot – the rest being out of focus.

Essential equipment:

- Sturdy tripod;
- Remote shutter
- Lens – macro/ capable of close-up

Technique:

- Use only **MANUAL FOCUS**: start with the nearest focal plane on the subject, then move focal ring slightly further and further back taking shots at every point until you have shot all elements of the subject(s) being photographed. It make take up to 10 – 15 shots (or more).
- Ensure the tripod, and camera itself stay still. Only the focus ring can move. The images will not align if the camera moves.

PROCESSING – STACKING FILES IN PHOTOSHOP

- Go to **FILE > SCRIPTS > LOAD FILES INTO STACK**
- (opens a dialogue box) > **Use Files > Browse** > find the series of shots you want to use in the stack from your files/folders.
- Once you have located them, **select all the files you want for the image**. (It will load raw or jpg files)
- Tick '**Attempt to Automatically Align**' in the open dialogue box
- Hit **OPEN** (this will bring all the images into Photoshop as individual layers (Photoshop will bring them all together into one long stack, and at this point you can work on individual layers to adjust them as usual.)
- **Select ALL LAYERS** (select top layer, hit shift button and click bottom layer – it will automatically select all layers for you)
- **EDIT > AUTO BLEND LAYERS** ... this is where the actual focus stacking happens
- Dialogue box opens ; two options
 - Panorama
 - **Stack images – select this**
- It is recommended to tick the box titled: '**Seamless tones and colours**' in this dialogue box
- **Hit OK**. It will start to process all images/layers and return inverted (black) masks with all the different in-focus areas on every layer, to make the overall image as perfect as is possible from your images. Photoshop is calculating which areas on each layer are in focus and masking them in – it makes just those areas visible.
- To make any global adjustments, select all layers, r-click and select '**merge visible**' from the drop-down menu.
- Once this is done, you can rename layer, add a stroke and flatten to save.
- VOILA!
- And Good Luck!