



ILLUSTRATION & IMAGE EDITING

Gimp Create a gel effect

Text doesn't have to be flat. **Michael J Hammel** shows you how to use layers, filters, curves and blurs in the *Gimp* to turn the ordinary into the eye-catching. If it worked for Apple...

**LAST
TIME**

I took you through a real-world project – using basic *Gimp* techniques like layers, curves and cloning to improve a smile for use in a print advertisement. If you missed the issue, call 0870 837 4773 or +44 1858 438795 for overseas orders.



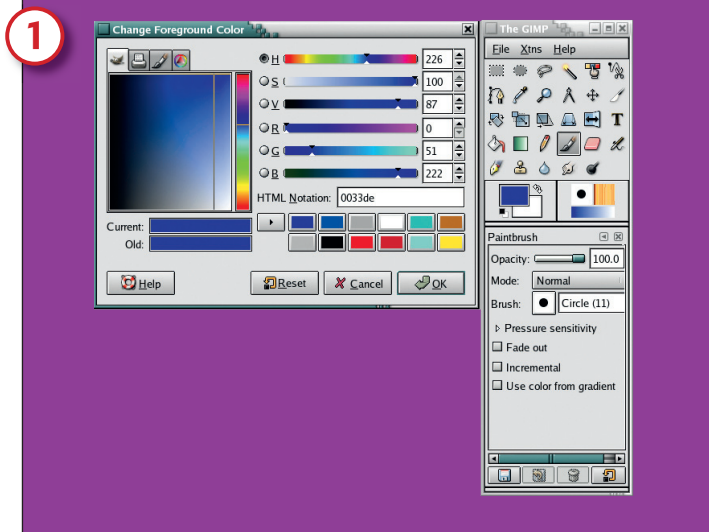
The gel effect is nothing more than soft shadows, smooth surfaces and white reflections. Imagine water in a glass tube and you'll get the idea. This effect has had a big boost from Apple in the last few years, as the Mac OS X user interface uses what Apple calls the Aqua style, which amounts to gel effects in shades of blue.

The basic effect is simple enough to reproduce. In this tutorial we'll be applying the effect to text, but you can apply the gel effect to borders, buttons and just about any surface, using the Emboss filter to provide depth.

Don't expect to get exactly the same image that I've produced. Variations in your settings for the Curves dialog, Light Effects and possibly the Bump Map filter will produce something uniquely yours. What you should take away from this tutorial is the basic process of bump mapping, lighting, and the use of blend modes.

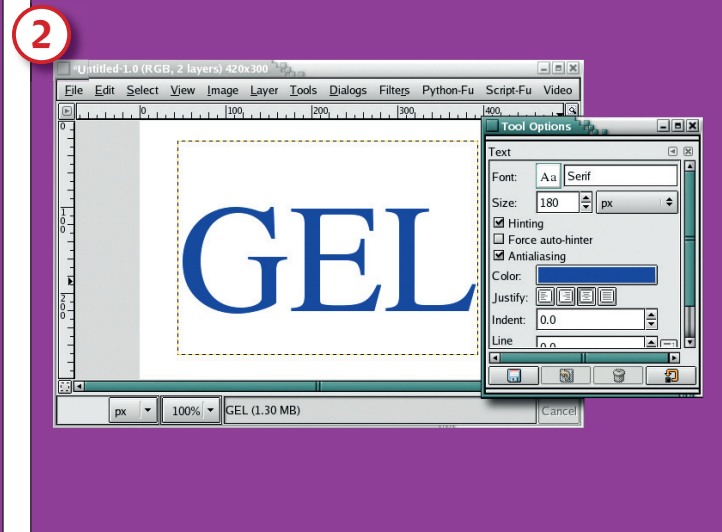
The example that we'll be working on uses a small default canvas size. This works fine for images destined for the web or your desktop (and is even a bit large for those) but isn't suitable for print. If you need to create a print version, make sure your canvas is a suitable resolution by scaling up the canvas and text sizes appropriately (see Image > Scale). The best resolution to use depends on how you're going to output the finished project, but 300dpi will do for pretty much any print quality.

GEL



Pick a colour

Start with a default canvas set to 420x300 pixels in size. Press D to reset the Foreground/Background colours. Click on the Foreground colour box (you might need to double-click on it) to edit the current colour. In the Change Foreground Colour dialog, set the red level to 0, the green level to 51 and the blue level to 222, which will give you a lovely shade of blue.



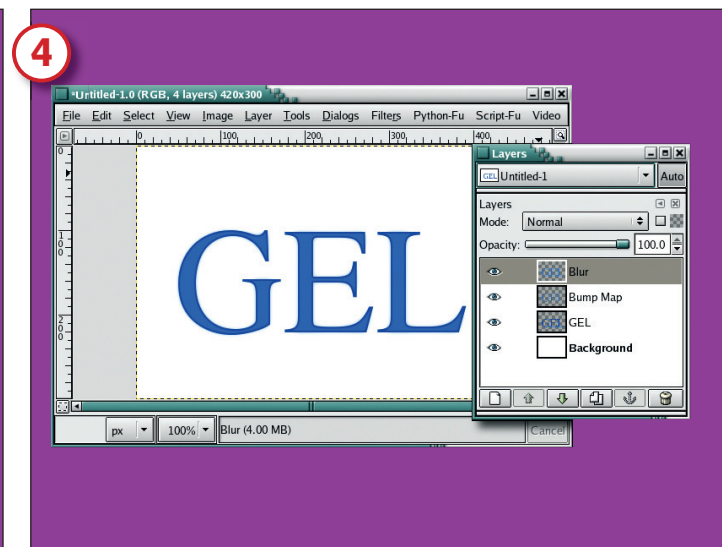
Enter your text

Click on the Text tool in the toolbox to make it active. In the Text Options window, set the font to Serif and the size to 180. Do feel free to experiment with sans serif font styles, but the curvier shape of the more old-fashioned fonts will show off the gel texture to better effect. The text colour setting in the Options window should match the current foreground colour. Click on the canvas window and type the letters GEL in the Editor window, then close that window. Use the Move tool to drag the new layer to the centre of the window. Set the layer size to match the image size (Layer > Layer To Image Size).



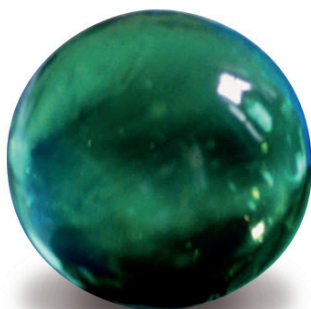
Select the text

Create a selection around the text using Alpha To Selection (Layer > Transparency > Alpha To Selection). Shrink the selection by two pixels (Select > Shrink) and feather it by two pixels (Select > Feather).

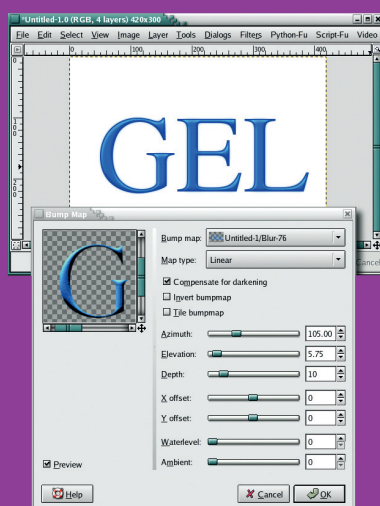


Create a new layer

Set the Foreground colour to red/green/blue = 31/82/255, which is a slightly brighter shade of blue than we used for the text layer. Create a new layer (Layer > New Layer or use the New Layer button in the Layers dialog) and change its name to Bump Map (click on the layer name and type in the new name). With the Bump Map layer active, fill the selection with the foreground colour by dragging the Foreground icon into the selection. Deselect (Select > None), duplicate the layer (Layer > Duplicate) and Gaussian Blur the duplicate layer by ten pixels (Filters > Blur > Gaussian Blur). Set the duplicate layer's name to Blur. ➤



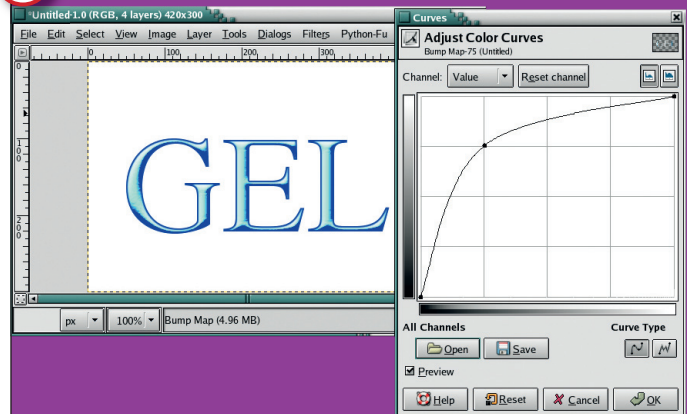
« 5



Introduction to bump mapping

Click on the Bump Map layer to make it active. Open the Bump Map filter (Filters > Map > Bump Map). Set the Azimuth to 105, Elevation to 5.75 and Depth to 10. Set the Map Type to Linear and click on Compensate For Darkening to turn it on. Choose the Blur layer from the Bump Map menu. Click on OK to apply the filter to the Bump Map layer then set the Blend Mode in Bump Map to Addition.

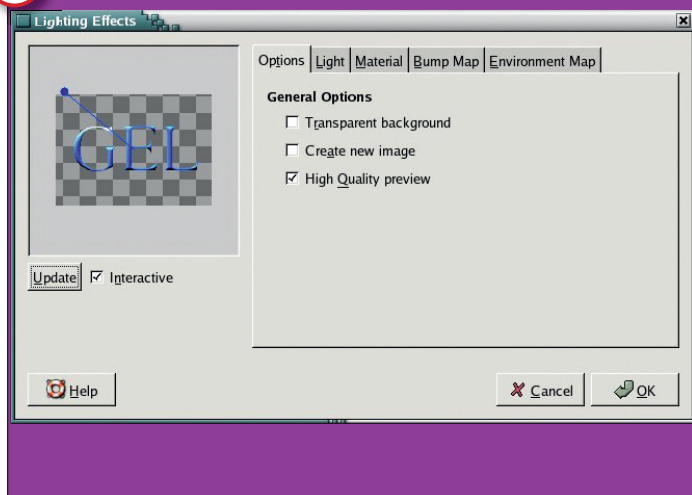
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Brighten up the layer

The Bump Map layer needs a little colour adjustment. Open the Curves dialog (Layer > Colours > Curves) and set the curve similar to the settings shown here. The result is a brighter layer, as shown here with the Blur layer visibility turned off (click on the 'eye' icon to turn off visibility for a layer).

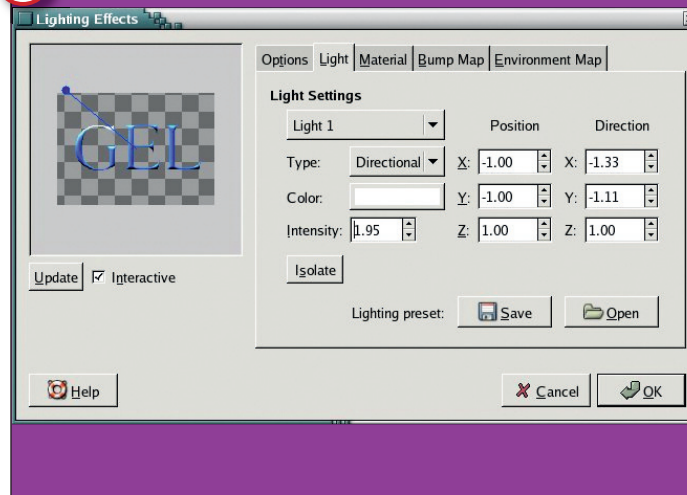
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Choose a light source

The Bump Map layer needs one more filter applied. Open the Lighting Effects filter (Filters > Light Effects > Lighting Effects). There are several pages in this window, but only two need be changed from their default settings. In the Options page, click in the top-left region of the preview. The blue line and dot show the direction of the lighting, and will follow the mouse. You can drag the light source around, though it may jump about a bit wildly so move the mouse slowly. Positioning the blue dot in the Lighting Effects filter will be the hardest thing you do in this tutorial. If you lose the dot, disable this light (see Light page) and create a new one.

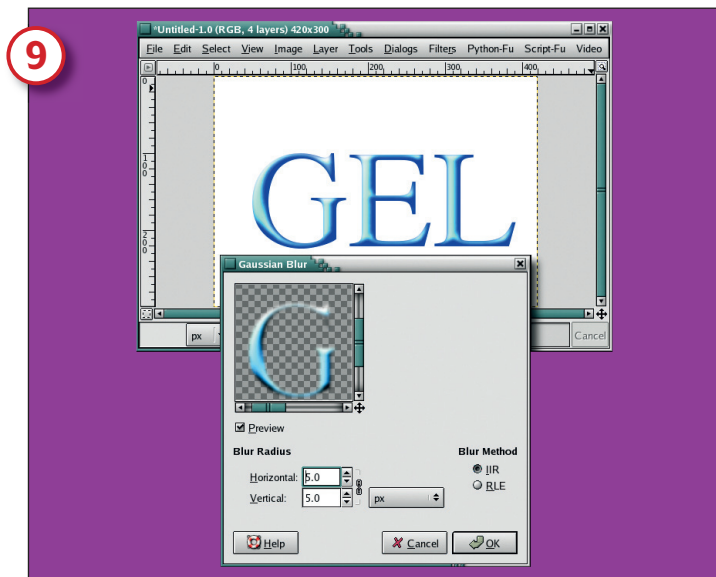
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Alter the light's intensity

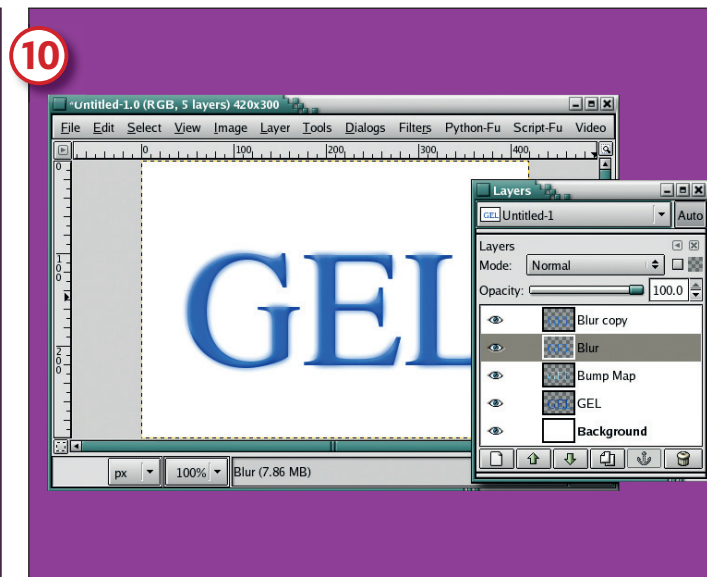
On the Light page, change the type to Directional, then set the intensity to 1.45. The intensity setting will have a great impact on the overall effect, as do the changes you made to the Curves dialog. If the effect doesn't look right, try again with variations in either or both.





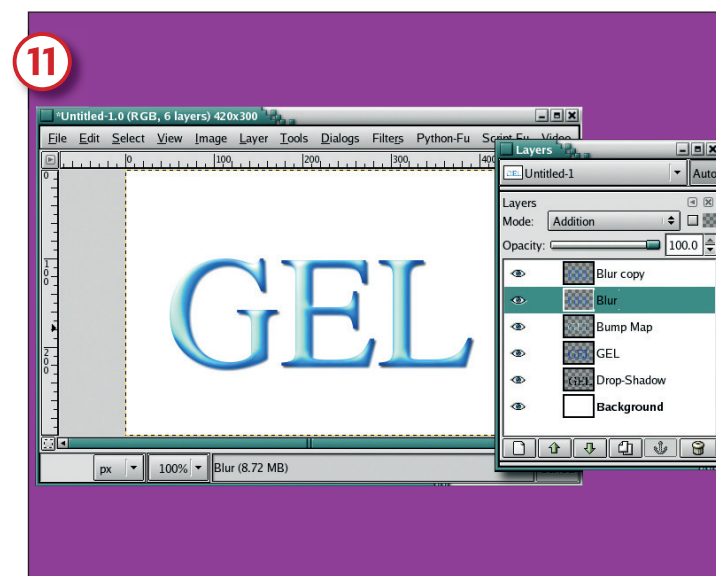
Offset and blur

With the lighting effects applied, offset the Bump Map layer (Layer > Transform > Offset). Set both the X and Y values to -2 pixels each. Then open the Gaussian Blur filter and set the Blur Radius for both the Horizontal and Vertical fields to five pixels.



Format the Blur layer

If you turned off the visibility of the Blur layer, make sure that it's visible once again. Activate the Blur layer in the Layers dialog by clicking on its name in the Layers dialog, then duplicate this layer (it will be named Blur Copy by default). Offset the Blur Copy layer by two pixels in both X and Y. Click on the Blur layer and offset it by -2 pixels in both X and Y.



Add a shadow

Set the Blur Layer's blend mode to Addition. Set the Blur Copy layer to Screen. Click on the Gel text layer, and add a drop shadow (Script-Fu > Shadows > Drop Shadow) offset by two pixels and blurred by three pixels. You're finished! [LXF](#)

QUICK TIPS

Techniques with text

■ **Edit.** Text layers in *Gimp* can be edited after effects are applied, but you will lose the effects. It helps to plan your text content ahead of time so you don't have to reproduce the effects after an edit.

■ **Small is good.** *Gimp* can't do much with paragraphs because it doesn't have any real typographical controls. But it does work quite well with short phrases. You don't often apply effects to long sentences anyway.

■ **Add depth.** The Bump Map and Emboss filters will do wonders with a lightly-blurred text layer applied against an unaltered text layer.

■ **Add more depth.** Duplicating a text layer and blurring, then offsetting slightly and modifying the layer blend mode will also enhance the 3D appearance of an embossed or bump mapped text layer.

■ **Check your fonts.** Many free fonts are poorly designed and, subsequently, cause *Gimp* to push the layer boundary up against the text. These fonts require you to add some space between the boundary and the text before applying effects. Simple answer: Layer > Layer To Image Size. Problem solved.

BUTTON MAGIC

This is a simple effect, but done right it can look really sophisticated. Just take a look at OS X and check out how prevalent this effect is. People pay a premium for the good design and flashy looks of Apple's software, and now you can get a large part of that yourself with *Gimp*.



NEXT MONTH

I'll stay with text effects by showing you how to create a reflective, metallic emblem.