



ILLUSTRATION & IMAGE EDITING

Gimp Create a metallic emblem

Learn blending and embossing techniques with **Michael J Hammel**.

**LAST
TIME**

Last month we took a leaf out of OS X's book. Not by crashing, but by giving you the slickest look in town – gel effects. If you missed the issue, call 0870 8374773 or +44 1858 438795.



Whether you're designing a T-shirt, a website or letterhead for the company office, the chances are that you're going to use some kind of identifying symbol. Graphic symbols are an important part of product and corporate design. They define a company or product image, better known in the graphic arts industry as an identity. The identity is the thing that we all know by heart – yellow arches, red hats and penguins.

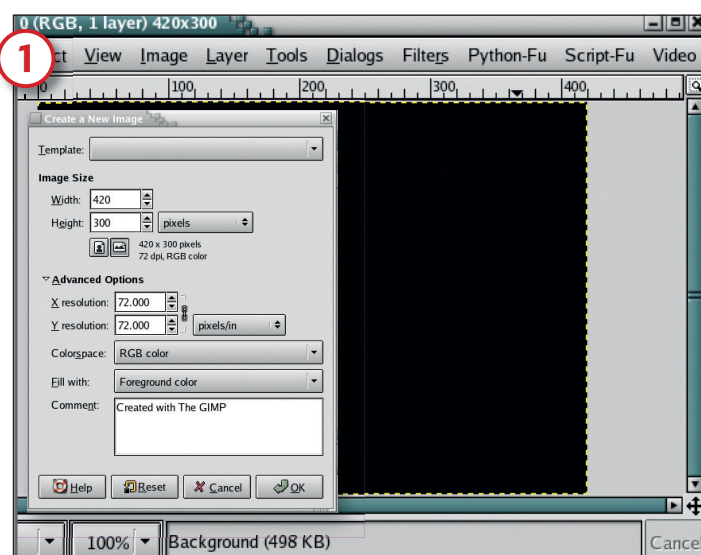
The symbol can be flat and solid coloured, flat and textured or three dimensional with light and shadows. While printed symbols are often easier (and cheaper) to do in solid colours, the web allows us a bit more flexibility. Colour is king on the web, and with high-colour screens the norm, even the smallest organisation can have a fancy multicoloured logo.

Logos are usually type in some distinctive font, often with an altered shape that represents a specific company, group or individual. Logos are often embedded within other symbols to create emblems as part of an overall identity campaign.

One of the easiest emblems to create is a round metallic or glass logo. A glass logo uses soft gradients with little or no grain visible. Various layers of white ovals (or partial ovals) are placed over the logo to simulate reflections. Often these rounded reflections are outlined with distinct edges to simulate a frame in which the glass (or plastic) sits.

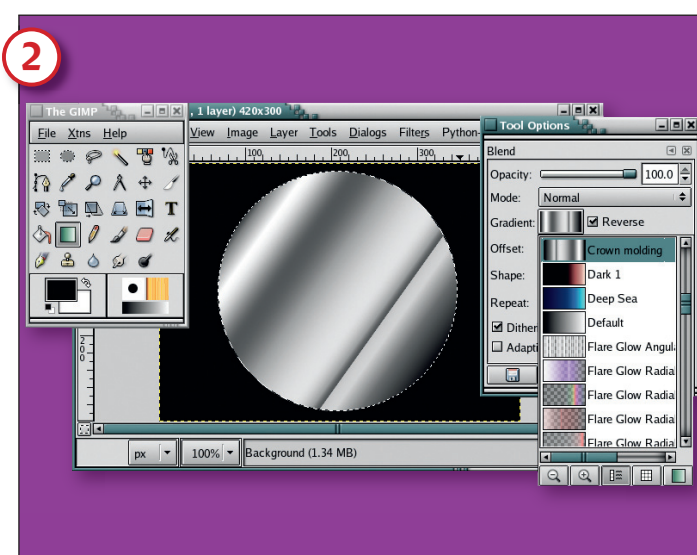
The metallic logo is easier to generate. It is based on the idea that metal reflections have narrow, high contrast areas between light and shadow. The metallic logo can either use the metal as the focal point – as in a belt buckle or lapel pin – or use metallic edges around non-metallic parts.

Adding some colour and reflections not only adds some style to your design, it's also extremely easy to do. For this tutorial I'll work within a small canvas to demonstrate the ease with which the technique can be applied. Remember that the raster images we create in *Gimp* or *Photoshop* don't scale up very well, so start with a larger canvas and scale up the *technique* (rather than the image), if you need a bigger emblem.



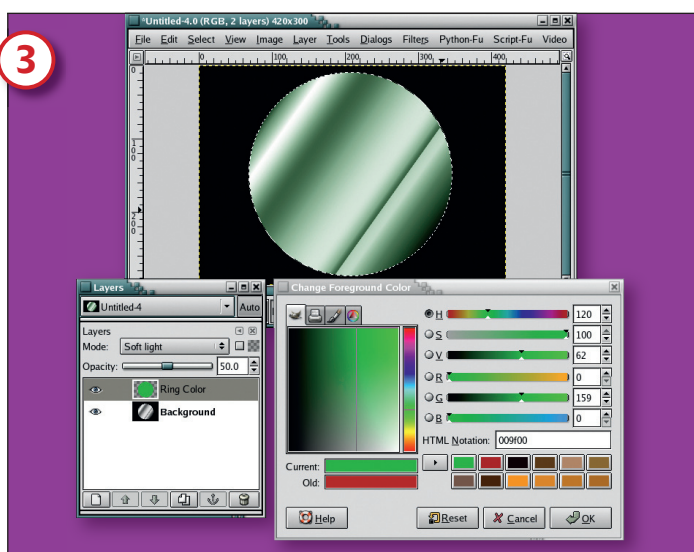
Prepare your canvas

Before starting, type 'D' in the toolbox to reset the foreground and background colours to black and white respectively. Select File > New from the toolbox menus. In the Create A New Image dialog, keep the default 420x300 pixel dimensions, then go into Advanced Options, and set the Fill With menu to Foreground color. This should create a black canvas. Click on the OK button to open the new canvas window.



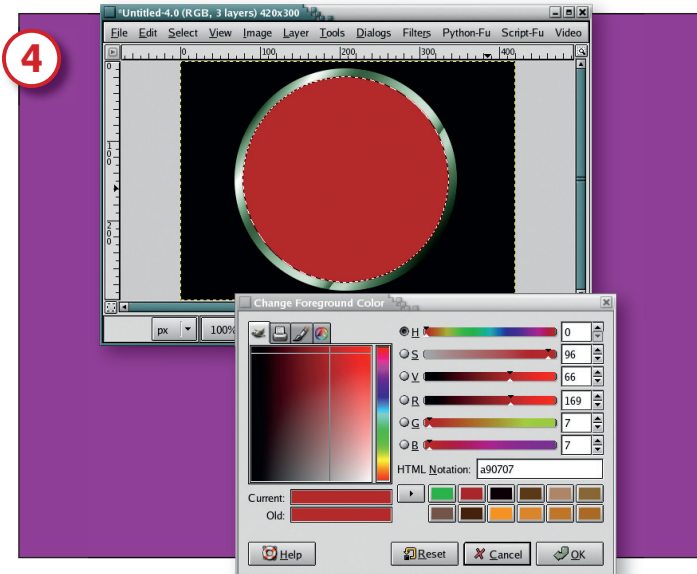
Centre a circle

Select the elliptical selection tool from the toolbox. Hold down the Shift key and click and drag to create a circular selection in the centre of the canvas. If the selection is not exactly centred, hold down the Alt key (possibly with the Shift key as well) to move the selection. The cursor should change to a selection box and the move arrows to show you can reposition the selection. Now click on the gradient tool in the toolbox to activate it. In the Options dialog, choose the Crown Molding gradient. Click and drag from the top-left to the bottom-right of the selection.



Pick a metallic fill

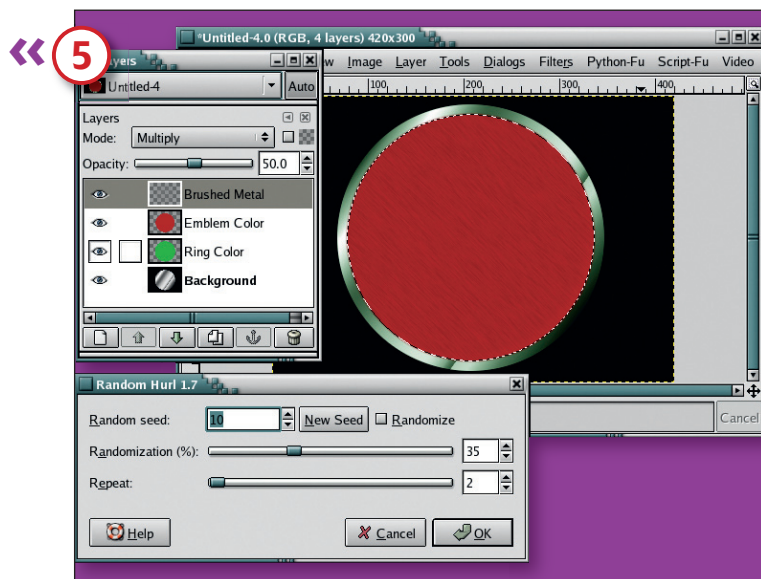
Add a new layer (Layer > New). In the Layers dialog, click on the layer name to name it 'Ring Colour', and click (or double-click) on the foreground colour box in the toolbox to change the colour. In the Change Foreground Color dialog, type 009F00 into the HTML field (for a murky forest green), then click on the OK button to close the dialog. The circular selection should still be active, so just drag the foreground colour box into the selection. Set the layer mode to Soft Light and the Opacity to 50%.



Feather a new layer

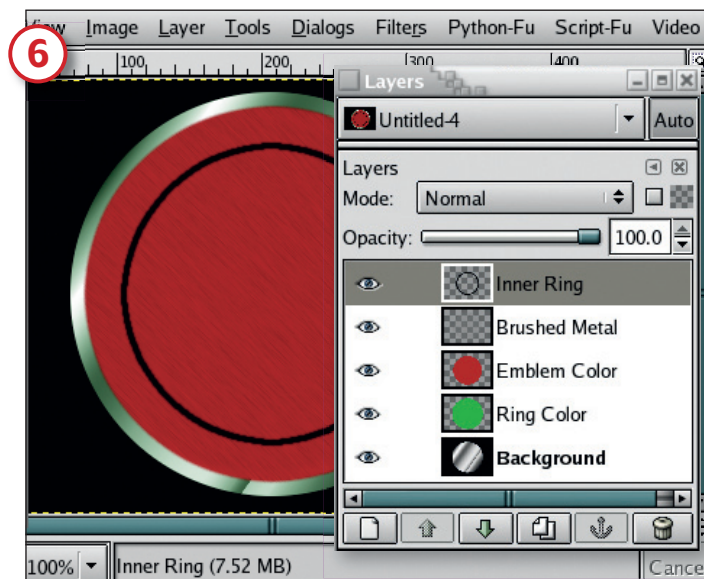
Add another new layer and call this one 'Emblem Colour'. Shrink the selection by ten pixels (Select > Shrink) and feather it (Select > Feather) by 2.5 pixels. Open the Change Foreground Color dialog again and type A90707 into the HTML field (this will give you a nice deep shade of red), then close the dialog. Drag the foreground colour box into the selection.





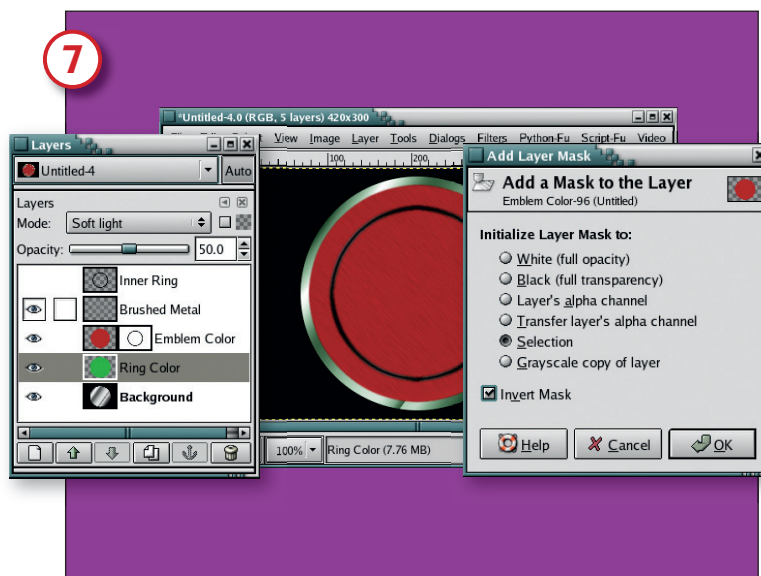
Create a brushed metal effect

At this point you have the basic metallic emblem. The rest of the tutorial shows you how to get creative with this basic shape. We start with a subtle brushed metal effect. Add a new transparent layer called 'Brushed Metal'. Open the Hurl filter (Filters > Blur > Noise). Set the Random Seed to 10, the Randomization to 35% and the Repeat to 2. Click OK to apply this to the new layer. Set the layer mode to Multiply and the opacity to 50% in the Layers dialog.



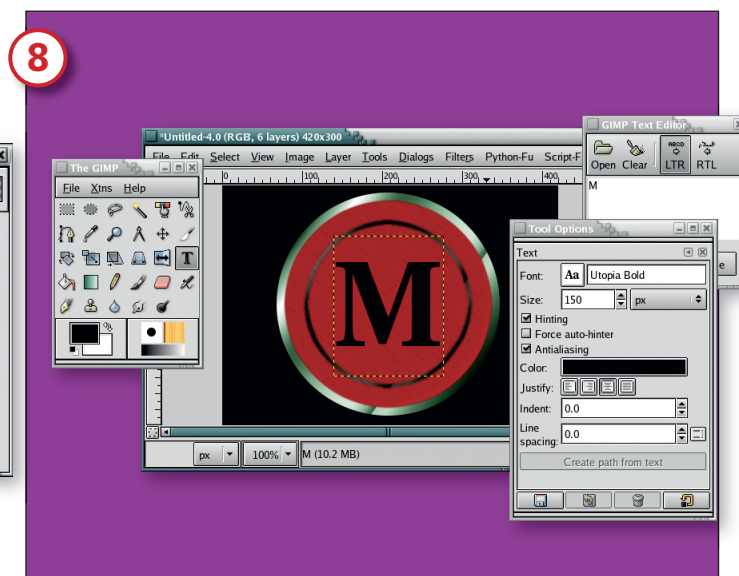
Get cutting

Add a new layer and call it 'Inner Ring'. Shrink the selection by 25 pixels (Select > Shrink). Type 'D' in the Toolbox to reset the colour boxes. Fill the selection with black by dragging the foreground colour box into the selection. Shrink the selection by four more pixels. Type Ctrl+X to cut the selection from the Inner Ring layer. This process leaves a thin, black ring in this layer.



Add a mask

Now open the Gaussian Blur filter (Filters > Blur > Gaussian Blur). Set the blur radius for both the horizontal and vertical directions to three pixels and apply it to the layer. Create a selection from this layer (Layer > Transparency > Alpha To Selection), then add a layer mask (Layer > Masks > Add Layer Mask) to the emblem colour layer. In the Add Layer Mask dialog choose the Selection and Invert Mask options. This process automatically creates a mask with the black ring shape applied to it.



Enter your initial

Click on the Inner Ring layer and invert its colours (Layer > Colours Invert). Set its layer mode to Grain Extract, then select the text tool from the Toolbox. In the Tool Options dialog, choose a large, thick font: we're using Utopia Bold set to a size of 150 pixels. Click in the canvas to open the Text Editor dialog. Type the letter 'M' in the dialog, then close it. Manually align the text layer using the Move tool.



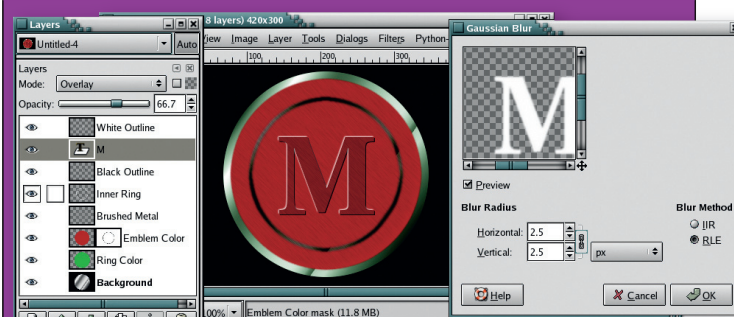
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Make the letter 3D

To create a white highlight and dark shadow for the letter, duplicate the text layer and invert its colour, making it white. Call this duplicate 'White Outline'. Offset the layer (Layer > Transform > Offset) by -1 pixel in both the X and Y directions. Duplicate the original text layer again, calling this new duplicate 'Black Outline' and this time offset the duplicate by +1 pixel in both X and Y. Raise the original text layer so that it's between the white and black outline layers.

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Improve the emboss effect

Gaussian Blur the White Outline layer by 2.5 pixels. Set it to match the image size (Layer > Layer To Image Size), then click on the original text layer and create a selection (Layer > Transparency > Alpha To Selection). Click on the White Outline layer again, cut the selection from it (Ctrl+X), then click on the original text layer once more and create another selection. Now click on the Black Outline layer to make it active, and cut the selection from it. Set the original text layer mode to Overlay and its opacity to 66.7%.

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Finish it off with highlighting

Make another selection of the original text layer, and set the foreground colour to ACACAC. Click on the Emblem Color layer mask to make it active, then drag the Foreground Colour box from the Toolbox into the selection and deselect (Shift+Ctrl+A). We're finished – now go further by trying some of the suggestions in the box at right. **LXF**

QUICK TIP

Use your eyes

When designing these emblems it helps to look closely at real-world items like glass buttons or silver spoons. Look at the way light reflects off them. One trick to seeing the light and not the texture is to blur your eyes a little – try to see the light and colours without seeing the shape. Then try to reproduce the effect with Gimp.

HOW TO GIMP UP YOUR LOGO

- **Use light and shadows.** 3D effects are just simulated light and shadows. First determine the direction of lighting, then add light to the sides facing the light and decrease the light on the sides facing away.
- **Texturise it.** No surface is completely devoid of texture, not even glass. Wood grains, brushed metal and scratches can all be created with the noise filters mixed with a little motion blur.
- **Blend it.** Layer blend modes will merge white reflections with textures. Try Overlay to darken or Soft Light and Grain Merge to lighten.
- **Reflect on a gradient.** Gradients in a box don't look too impressive, but a gradient applied across circles, frames and other shapes can look like a reflection. Play with the gradients available in *Gimp* – there are many that can produce reflective effects.
- **Simplify the embossing.** There are two emboss filters (Filters > Distorts > Emboss and Filters > Map > Bump Map). Both work quite well, but text emboss effects are so easy that you're better off doing them manually. Duplicate, offset, blur, cut. And the blur and cut are optional.
- **Mask it.** A black stroked circle can look like a one-sided shadow with a judiciously applied layer mask. Duplicate, invert the colours and then flip it (horizontally or vertically) and you get the lit side as a bonus!

