



## IMAGE EDITING

# Gimp: your key to creativity

Linux has some top-class graphics tools, but *Gimp* is probably the only one most people will ever need!



THERE ARE few things as fun as getting a picture and doing terrible things to it. You may think there are some legitimate photo-retouching uses for image software, and you might be right, but it's a lot more enjoyable to draw a virtual moustache on an un-favourite aunty. Whatever you want to do with your images though, you'll find that the *GNU Image Manipulation*

*Program*, to give *Gimp* its full title, is up to the job.

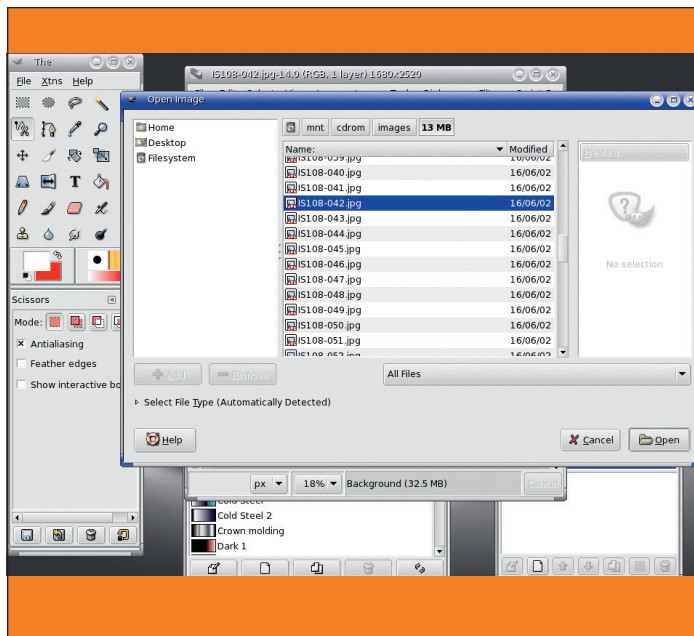
In this tutorial we'll get to see some of its impressive capabilities. On the opposite page some of the tools are explained, but the best way to get started is to dive in. Start *Gimp* by finding it in the Application menu. In Ubuntu, it's in the Graphics sub-menu.

### WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

Visit the *Gimp* homepage at [www.gimp.org](http://www.gimp.org) on the web for more tutorials and downloads. You could also try [www.gimptalk.com](http://www.gimptalk.com), or the Help section of the *Linux Format* forum at [www.linuxformat.co.uk](http://www.linuxformat.co.uk).

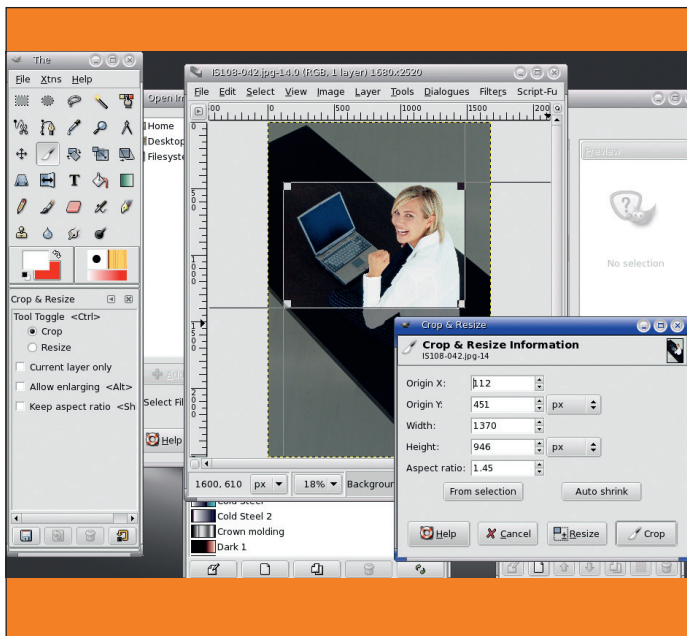
## YOUR MINI GIMP PROJECT

### STEP 1 PREPARE YOUR IMAGES



The first thing you'll need to do is load an image. In this case we are going to use a stock image, but you can use any photograph you may have, or any graphic really. In order to show you some parts of *Gimp*, we are going to paste another image into this one, so it would help if your image includes some rectangular frame, like a TV screen, picture frame or magazine cover. Run *Gimp* and select File > Open. *Gimp* understands lots of different file formats, so it shouldn't matter how yours is saved.

### STEP 2 USE THE CROP TOOL



The first thing we're going to do is crop the image – cut off the uninteresting areas around the edges. Plenty of photographs can be improved or made more dramatic with good cropping, so it's a technique worth learning. Select the Crop tool, either from the Tool window or by pressing Shift+C. Now drag out a rectangle on to your image. You can use the requester or drag the handles to resize the crop area, or just enter dimensions as numbers in the relevant boxes. Hit the Crop button or double-click inside the area to perform the edit.





## GIMP AT A GLANCE

The toolbox is where you can choose different editing tools. Hold the mouse over one for a moment, and a description will appear to help if you aren't sure what it does.

Choose brushes, patterns and gradients from here by clicking on the relevant icon.

The colour selector can be used to change the foreground and background colours – just click in the relevant square, or click on the arrow to swap them.

Once you've selected a tool, you can make specific tool settings in this area of the toolbox.

The menus contain a wealth of features. Here are all the regular file options, plus all the tools, selection modes, dialog menus and scripts.

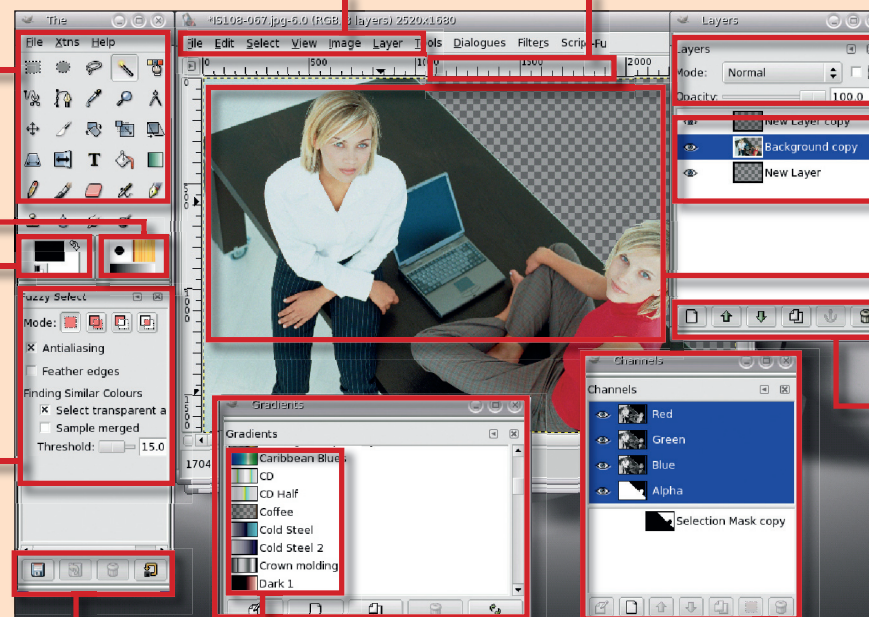
The rulers at the top and side of the image are customisable and help measure specific elements of an image.

In the Layers palette, different modes are available for changing the way image layers combine.

The selected layer is highlighted and can be locked or moved with a few clicks.

An image window. The checked section indicates a transparent area of the image.

Many of the windows also have their own tools at the bottom – again, you can hold the mouse over them for a brief description.



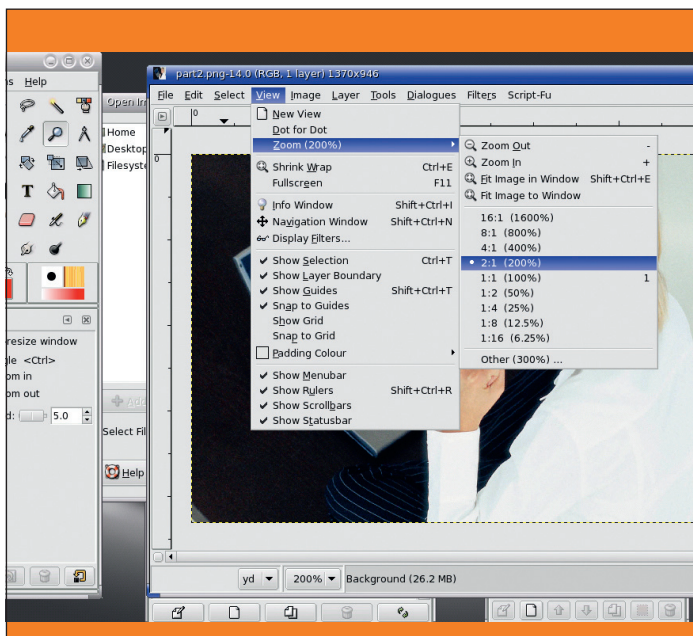
With *Gimp* you can save, load or reset tool options, which is very handy for oft-used procedures.

There are plenty of pre-defined gradient effects – just click on one to start...

... or use the Gradient window to specify gradients for colouring elements of the image.

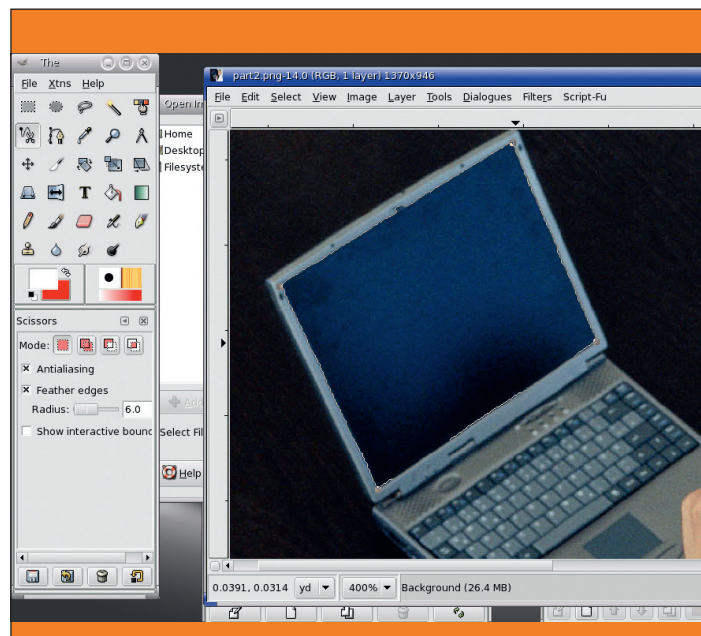
Channel window or dialog shows the image split into channels of colour (red, green and blue in this case). Other channels can be created from selections.

## STEP 3 ADJUST THE VIEW



Now we want to select the screen area in our image. Before you try to do this, it may be an idea to zoom in a little. From the View menu in the menu bar at the top of the image select View > Zoom > 4:1, or whatever you need to see the screen comfortably. Use the scroll bars at the side and bottom of the image to adjust the view so you can see the whole area you will be editing.

## STEP 4 SELECT THE SCREEN

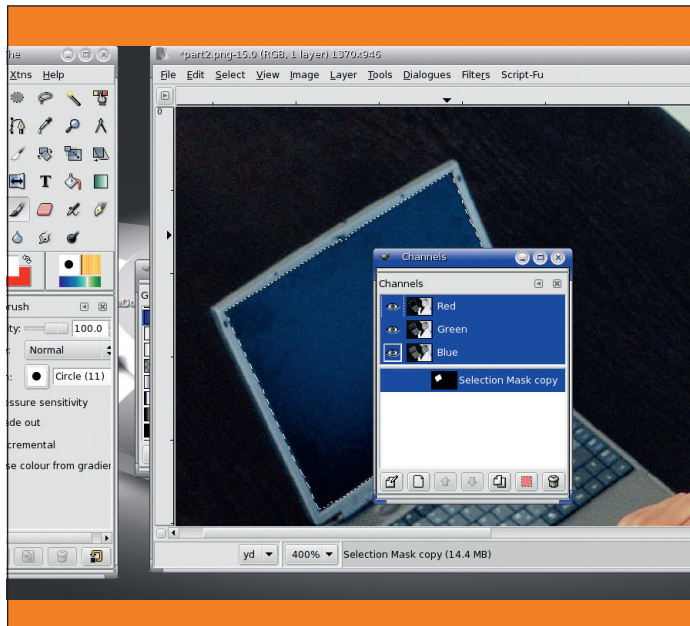


Several tools in *Gimp* can select areas of an image. There are basic ones for pre-defined shapes; and complicated tools like the magic wand, which can select areas of similar colours. For this particular image, we are going to use the Scissors tool. This tries to cut out around the edges of the shape you 'suggest' with the mouse, and generally works very well. Click on the scissors in the Tool palette. Select Feather Edges in the Tool Properties box, and enter a value of 6. Now click in each corner of the laptop's screen, and click once more in the first corner, completing the rectangle. You should see the selection lines being drawn. →



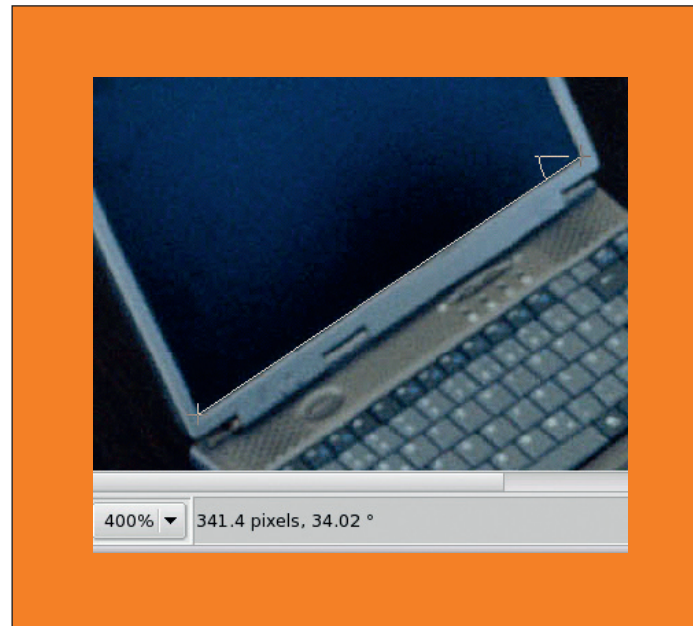


## STEP 5 SAVE YOUR SELECTION



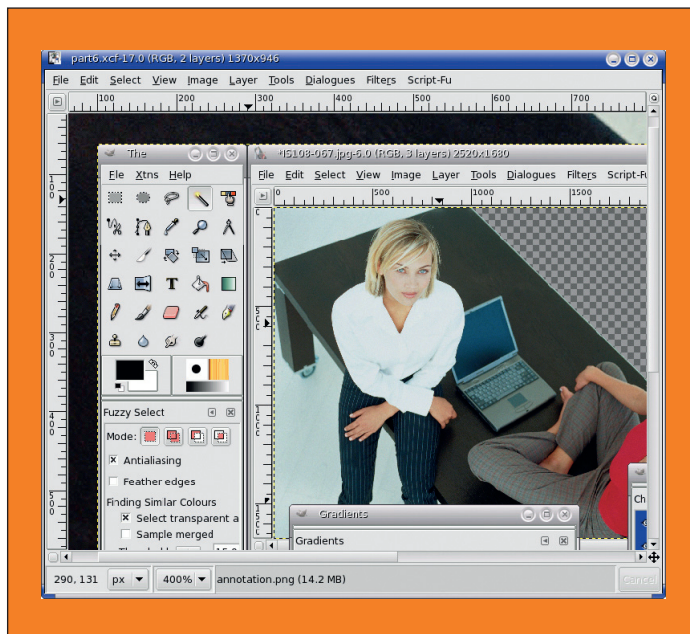
Click again in the centre of the area to activate the selection. When you have an area selected, most tools will only affect this region of the image. This selection may come in useful later on too, so we should save it now. Choose **Select > Save To Channel** from the menu. The Channel dialog window will appear, and below the usual RGB channels, you'll see the new selection. Click on the square red icon at the bottom of this window to turn the selected channel into the current area selection. It's probably a good idea to save your work too. Choose **File > Save As** from the menu and give the file a new name, ending in `.xcf`. This is the extension used by *Gimp*, and it will allow the program to save layer info.

## STEP 6 THE MEASURING TOOL



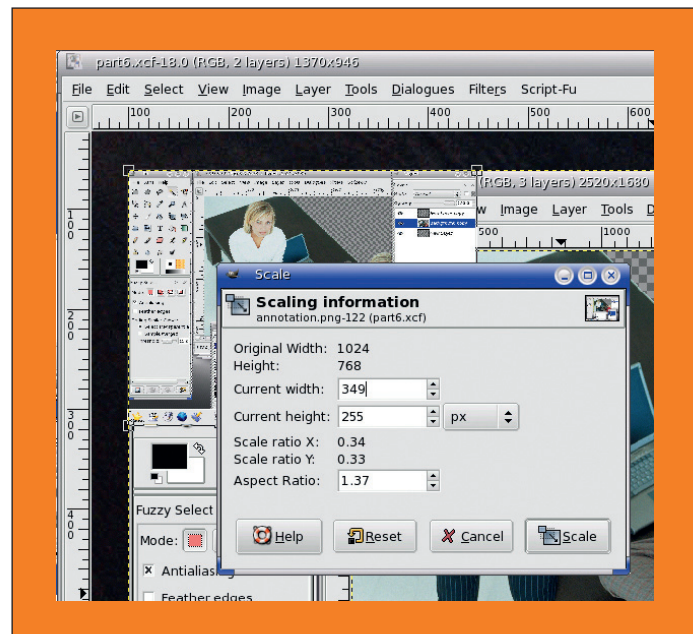
Now press **Shift+Ctrl+A** to remove the selection. This will make it a bit easier for the next stage. Like all good decorators, before we begin our job we want to measure up. Choose the Measuring tool (second row down, at the end). Click in the bottom-right corner of the screen in the image, and, holding the mouse button down, drag the pointer to the bottom-left corner. The status bar at the bottom of the image will tell us the length in pixels and the angle of the line. Repeat this for one side of the screen and note down the results.

## STEP 7 PASTE INTO A NEW LAYER



Next, we need to open our second image to paste it in. You can open it just as you did the first one, but it's more complicated to cut and paste between images that way. The sensible thing to do is open the image as a layer. Choose **File > Open As Layer** from the menu on the opened image, and select the second file in the requester. The new image will load on top of the existing one, with a dotted yellow line around it. This indicates the size of the layer. Wiggle it around with the Move tool (M) and you'll see the other image behind it.

## STEP 8 RESIZE THE LAYER

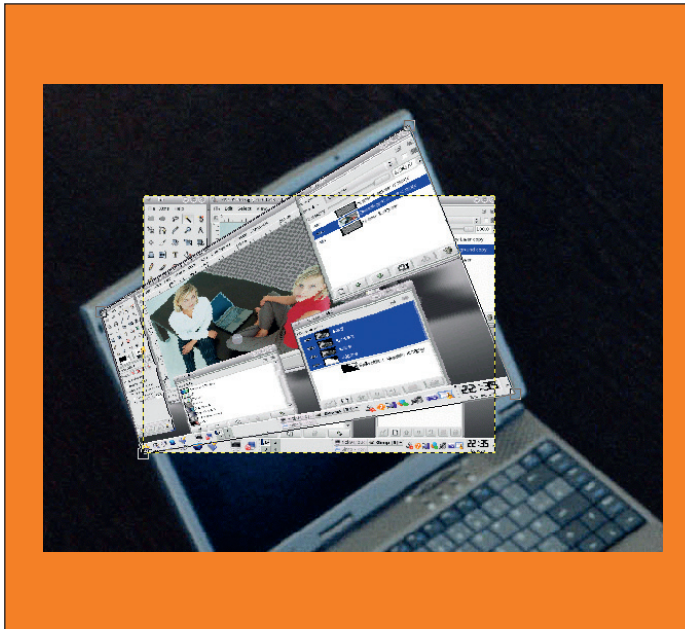


Choose the Scale tool, either from the toolbox or with **Shift+T**. This will open a requester enabling you to rescale the whole layer of the new image. We don't really need to do this at this stage, because the tool we will use in a moment does this too, but it's useful to know and it gets the image into the right basic shape. In the requester enter the width and height values you measured and press the Scale button. Select the Move tool and move the image so it doesn't obscure the corners of the screen.



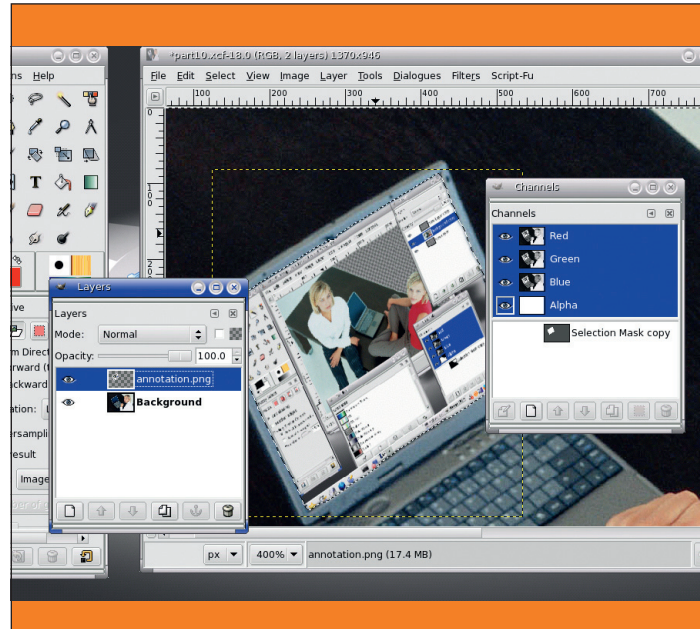


## STEP 9 DRAG TO FIT



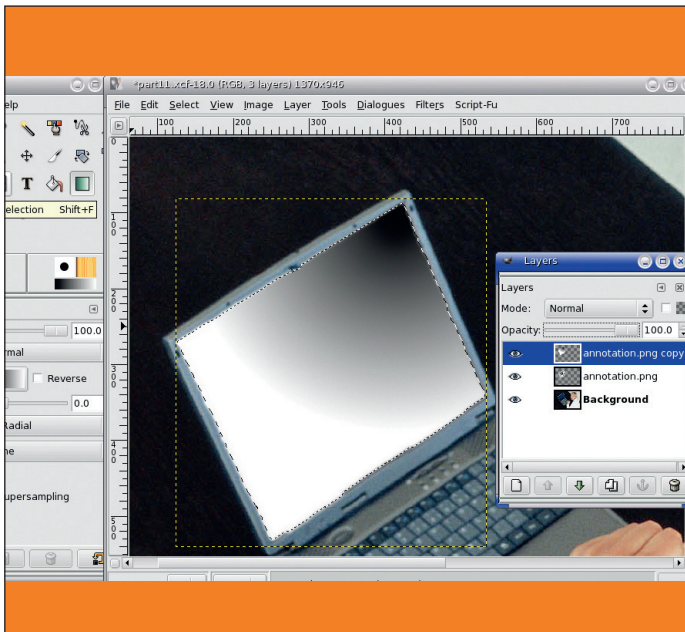
Now select the Perspective tool (Shift+P). This will make square 'handles' appear in the corners of the selected area. Click and drag the corners to the relevant corners of the screen. The image will be distorted in real time as you do this so you can see the result of the effect. Try to be precise – you want to cover all the areas of the screen and not lose too much of the image. Hit the Transform button in the requester when you are satisfied.

## STEP 10 NEATEN THE EDGES



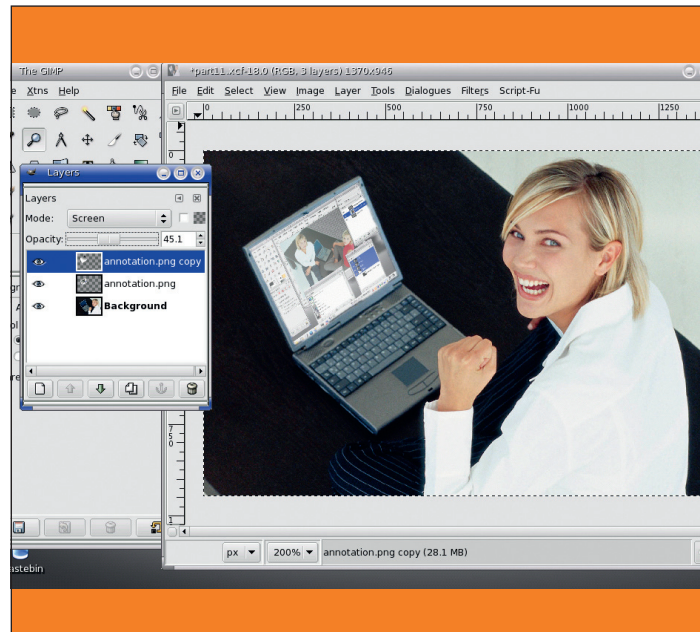
Now we have the image in the laptop screen, but it doesn't look too realistic. The first thing we can do is make it look as though it's inside the boundaries of the screen rather than painted on top. Choose Dialogues > Channels to open the list of channels for the image. Click on the one called Selection Mask Copy, and click on the square red icon at the bottom to turn it into the current selection. We want to remove everything outside this selection, so choose Select > Invert from the menu. Open Dialogues > Layers and click on the topmost layer (our placed image), then press Control+K to erase the selection. This should trim the edges nicely.

## STEP 11 ADD A GRADIENT



The image still looks a little unreal though, so we'll add a gradient. Open Dialogues > Layers, select the top image and duplicate it (use the Copy button at the bottom of the window). Invert the selection again (Control+I) so that we only have the screen shape, and select the Gradient tool (L). Now click on the gradient in the Tool Properties box and choose the default one, but set the type to Radial. Next, click and drag the tool on the image to draw a gradient over the screen area.

## STEP 12 PLAY WITH LAYERS AND SAVE



Finally, we get to use the Layers menu properly. You haven't lost your nice image, it's just behind the gradient. In the Layers window, select the topmost layer (the gradient) and change the settings at the top. Set the opacity to about 45% and the mode to Screen. This will create the effect of not looking at the image directly, and simulating some shimmer from the laptop's screen. Experiment with the effect to get just what you want. Zoom out, and our work here is done. Remember to save the image! ●