» Gimp Open source image-editing software you can get your teeth into

Gimp: iPod fun

Tune in to pop culture with Gimp. **Michael J Hammel** creates an iPod advertisement faster than you can thumb your dial.

Our expert

Michael J Hammel
is a contributor to the *Gimp* project and the author of three books on the subject, including his latest, *The Artist's Guide to Gimp Effects.*

Unlike many geeks, I'm not one to spend big bucks on fancy gadgets. I tend to buy the cheap stuff from online retailers and make it do the fancy stuff by either shoving open source on the device or finding some way to at least make it play nice with open source. My laptop is one such beast. It wasn't the top of the line Acer when I bought it, but four years on both the laptop and its Gimpy owner are still rockin' with Tux.

Despite my cheap nature, I'm not averse to having someone else gift me a fancy gadget. Fortunately for me, I have a wonderful daughter who decided that this year I needed a really nice holiday present. So she plunked down the green and bought me a new iPod nano, an orange one to match my Graphics Muse website, which is way cool (the nano, that is). The daughter is way cool too. At least till we return to the previously postponed gotta-have-a-car-for-college issue. I may be walking to work next year. But at least I have my tunes.

Getting the images

The stock images used in this month's column were purchased from **BigStockPhoto.com:**
» **Dancing With Headphones** (ID 4079419) female
» **The Dancer** (ID 1805891) male

The iPod is the pop culture king these days. That title is due in no small part to the simple yet fantastically fun advertising campaign of silhouetted dancing yahoos with their high-contrast iPods and bouncing earphone wires. What's fun about all this for regular readers of this column is the sheer simplicity of the design. The iPod advertising artwork takes only modest *Gimp* expertise, as long as you (and you know it's coming) start with good stock imagery.

In this month's column I'm going to show you how to take your own dancing fool and iPodicise him (or her) into advertising nerdvana. No fancy tricks this month. All you need for this tutorial is a little straightforward selection and layer experience. So turn up the music and crank up Wilber. Let's do some Gimping.

Selecting a stock image

Finding photos of energetic music lovers on sites like BigStockPhoto or iStockPhoto is no problem. The genre is popular and photos abound. The dancers in the iPod adverts all have one thing in common: their hands and feet are typically recognisable even in silhouette. Keep this in mind while searching online image archives. Another important feature to look for in stock images for this project is solid-coloured backgrounds, preferably white.

The two photos here are good candidates for this tutorial. But take a look at the result of turning the woman into a silhouette. The details of her folded arm and back leg are lost, making the silhouette less recognisable than the man's

> **Folded arms are lost and a back foot just another fold in clothing when placed in silhouette.**

» **Last month** We mixed Gimp up with Inkscape, Scribus and OpenOffice.org.

› **Hands and feet visible in the silhouette make the dancing male photo a better starting point for this project.**

silhouette. In that image, the arms and legs stand out. There will be some cleanup required to enhance the effect, but the man is the better choice.

While the problem of hidden limbs would easily be remedied in a silhouetted video, with the subject's movement making the outline more recognisable, the problem isn't easily fixed in still life while keeping to the simple silhouette. As I've mentioned in previous *Gimp* tutorials, you should try experiments like this on the comp images before you pay for print-size images.

The chosen stock photo's white background will make creating a selection easy. There's a light shadow beneath the dancer but this won't affect the complexity of the selection. Keep in mind that the selection doesn't need to be perfect.
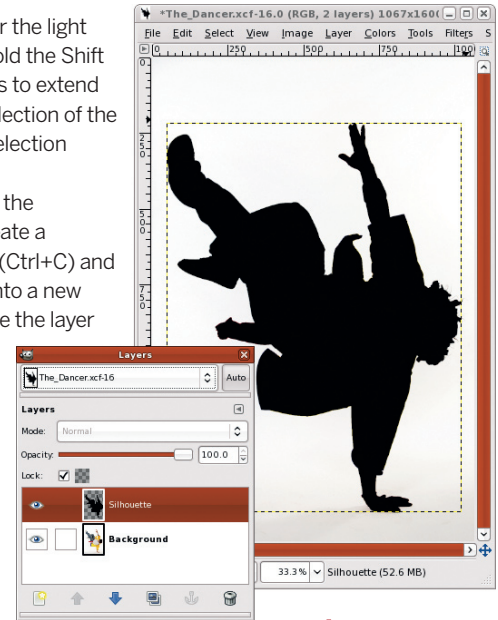
Choose the Fuzzy Select tool from the Toolbox and click on the white background to create an initial selection. For this
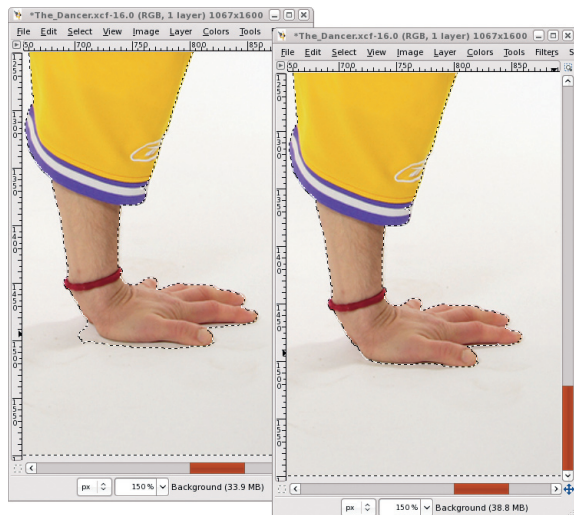
> **"The iPod advertising artwork takes only modest Gimp expertise."**

image the click should be near the light shadow by the lower hand. Hold the Shift key and make additional clicks to extend the selection. Clean up the selection of the background by growing the selection (Select > Grow) by one pixel.

The selection created is of the background, so invert it to create a selection of the dancer. Copy (Ctrl+C) and paste (Ctrl+V) the selection into a new layer (Layer > New), and name the layer 'Silhouette'. Enable the Keep Transparency option for the new layer, then fill the layer with black. Remember that it's better not to modify the original image so it can be used again later if needed, so add a new white layer and move it below the silhouette layer.
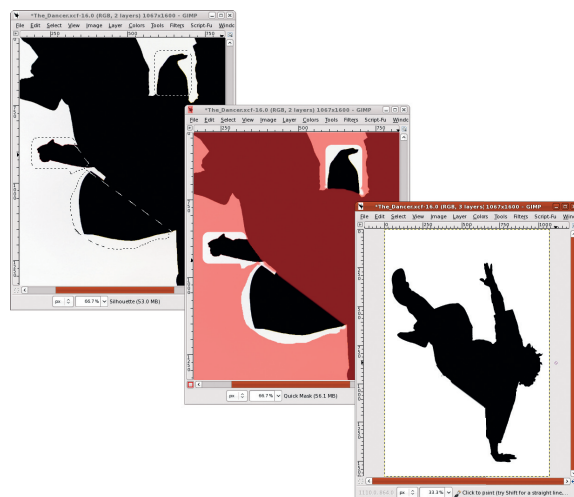
The dancer silhouette needs a little cleanup. Notice where the scarf and jacket fall away from the body in the original picture. In the silhouette these are not helpful features. Use the Free Select tool to drag selections around most of these, then switch to Quick Mask mode to detail the area to be selected using a hard-edged brush. Switch back to selection mode and cut the selections. Don't fill the selection with white! The silhouette is on a layer of its own with transparency around it. Editing here should replace the selected parts of the silhouette with transparency, so you should cut the selections.

The iPod player

Creating the silhouette was simple, and creating the iPod is just as easy. Since there isn't a lot of detail in the device it can be created in a separate image window, copied to the dancer window and then scaled and rotated to fit. Scaling and rotating will blur the detail of the device, but because it's so small and lacks detail this won't be a problem for this project. »

› **Adding a white layer named 'White Background' below the silhouette removes the shadow from the original image.**

› **An accurate selection isn't required for this project, but the silhouette could do with a slight improvement.**

› **Normally a soft-edged brush is used to blend edges into the background, but the iPod style uses hard edges with no blending.**

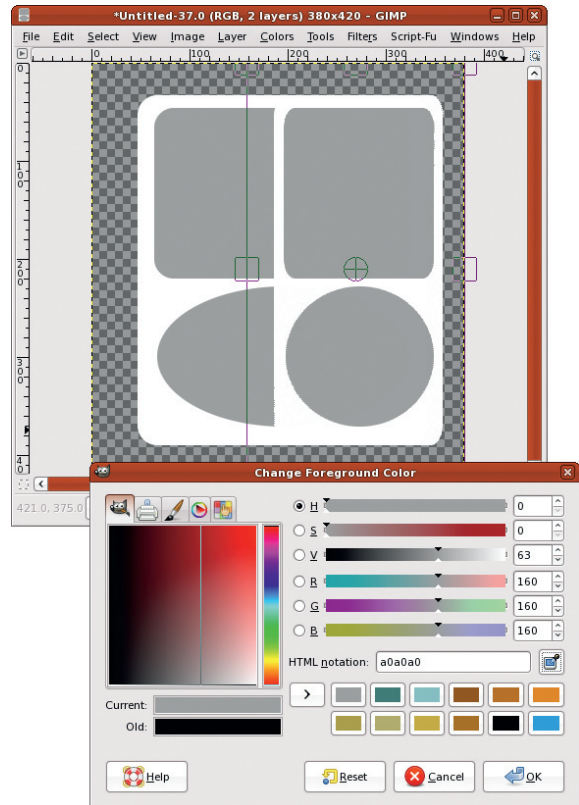> **» If you missed last issue** Call 0870 837 4773 or +44 1858 438795.
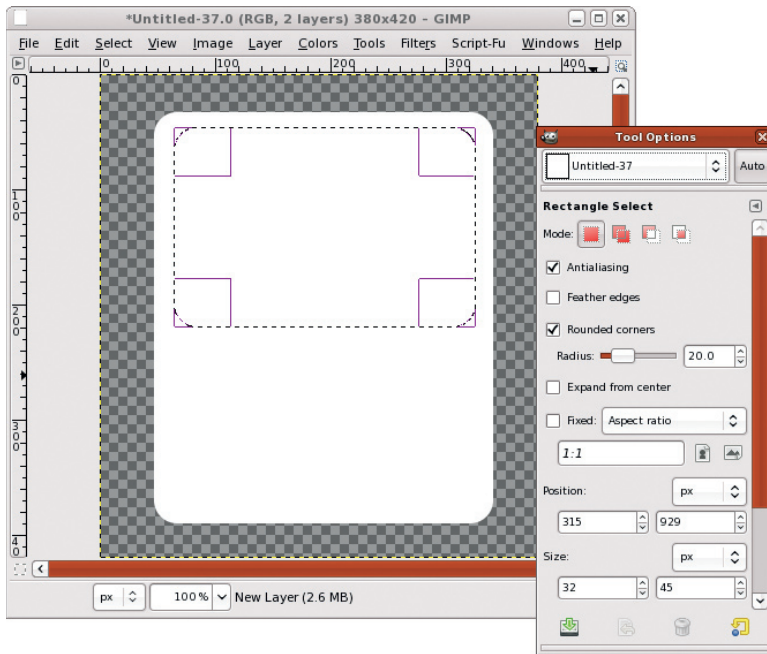
> ❯ **If the selection is no longer in Edit mode but the selection is still active then just click inside the selection to go back into Edit mode.**

» Move the silhouette image out of the way for the moment, but don't close it. Open a new image window (File > New) with a width of 380 and height of 420. The default is to open the window with a background the same colour as the background colour in the Toolbox. This isn't important to this part of the project, so if the background is some other colour, don't sweat it. We'll drop the background layer a little later anyway. For now, turn off the visibility of the background layer in the Layers dialog.

Add a transparent layer to the image window, then choose the Rectangle Select tool from the Toolbox. In the Tool Options dialog, enable the Rounded Corners option. This will display an option to set the radius, which you should set to 20. Drag through the image window to create a selection with rounded corners. The exact dimensions are not important, though the width should be smaller than the height. Reset the foreground and background colours by typing X in the image

> ❯ **It's a simple job to resize the iPod for the dancer.**

> ❯ **The iPod was created on a single layer so squeezing it to make the dial circular is a simple operation that can be done just by eyeballing it.**

window, then drag the background colour (white) from the Toolbox into the selection.
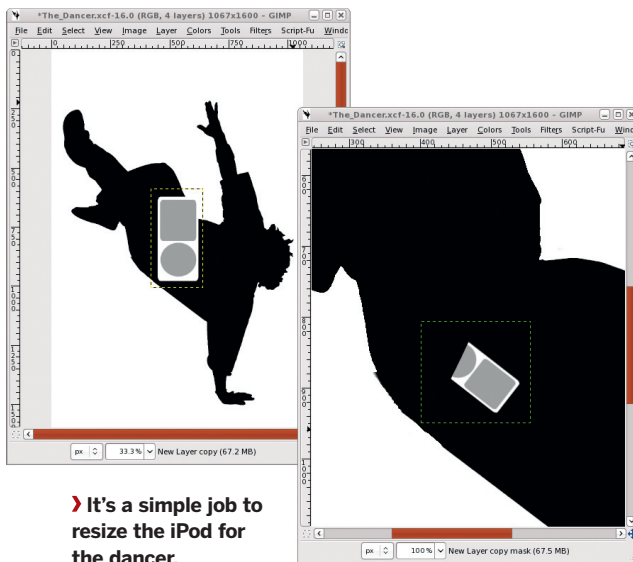
The selection will still be in edit mode at this point, which means that the selection handles can be used to resize the selection. Drag the four sides of the selection inward to form a smaller rectangle centred in the upper half of the original, white-filled rectangle.

Click on the Foreground Colour box in the Toolbox and change the colour to a medium grey, with red, green and blue set to 160. Close the dialog and drag the foreground colour from the Toolbox into the selection in the image window. That creates the iPod display window. Remember that this style is very simple, so no additional detail is required, such as adding depth around the display. Even if depth were added it wouldn't be seen after the iPod is scaled and rotated in the dancer's image.

Use the Ellipse Select tool to drag a circular selection below the display window. The selection should span the width of the display window, even if it's not circular. Drag the selection to position it in the centre of the lower half of the iPod case. Once again, fill the selection with the foreground colour. Clear the selection (Select > None). Use the Scale Tool from the Toolbox to squeeze the iPod until the dial is the familiar circular clickwheel.

Put the iPod in the dancer's pocket
Bring the silhouette image back into view with the iPod image. Drag the iPod layer from the Layers dialog into the silhouette image. Use the Scale tool to shrink the image to fit, then rotate it to align with an imaginary trouser pocket. Hold down

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the Ctrl key while scaling to keep the aspect ratio for the device. Use the Rotate tool to rotate the iPod, then use the Move tool to position near the pocket.

Add a white layer mask to the iPod layer. Use the Paintbrush and a hard-edged brush to black out a small part of the bottom of the iPod, leaving just part of the dial visible. This simulates the iPod being in a pocket (though not for long the way this guy is dancing).

The wires for the earphones come next in this project. Add a transparent layer and name it Earphones. Before drawing the paths, select a brush to draw the wires. The Circle (03) brush works well with an image of this size. The selected brush will be used to stroke the paths. Also, set the foreground colour to white in the Toolbox by typing D followed by X in the image window.

Earphones: stroking paths

Choose the Paths tool from the Toolbox and click near the dancer's left ear (or where that ear should be). Without releasing the mouse button, drag downward in the image window. This extends the handles used to adjust the path. Release the mouse button, then click and drag again where the wire should meet the iPod. Use the handles to adjust the shape of the wire.

Click on the stroke button at the bottom of the Paths dialog. This will open the Stroke Path dialog. Choose to stroke using the Paintbrush, which will use the brush selected earlier. For added effect, click on the Enable Brush Dynamics option. This causes the brush stroke to fade in and out at both ends of the path. Finally, click on the Stroke button to apply the brush stroke along the path. Repeat this process for a wire coming from the right ear and connecting to the first wire at the chest.
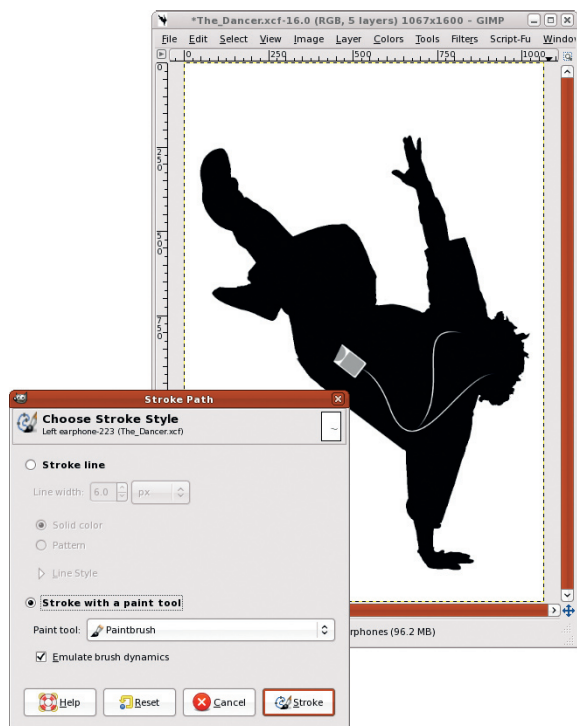
Perspective tool tips

The Perspective tool will open a dialog when you click on the image window, but this dialog is of little value to most users. It shows a transformation matrix which is nifty if you're into math but of little help to this type of design work. Ignore the dialog and just drag the handles in the image window. Then hit the Enter key to accept the changes.

Also, the drag handles are not bound to the viewable dimensions of the image. Zoom out on the image window to drag handles outside the visible edge of the canvas. This will allow the perspective layer to flow out to the edge of the image and beyond. Of course, what flows outside the visible edge of the image won't be included in the final image, but that's the designer's prerogative.
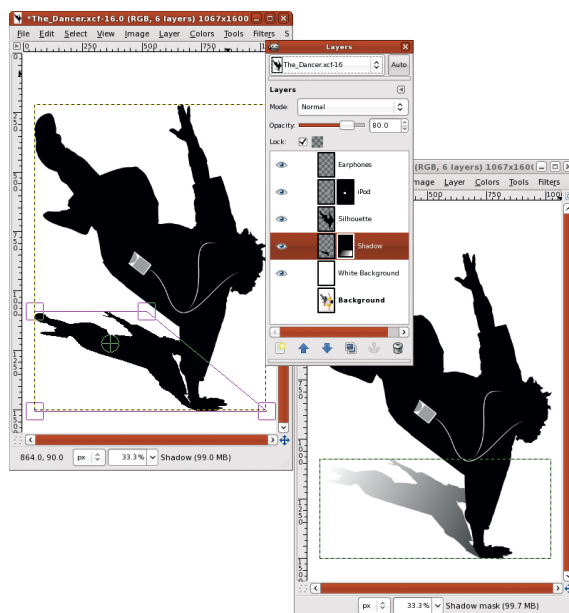
The shadow in this project didn't flow to the image borders but there is no reason it couldn't. In fact, adjusting the shadow provides a very specific feel to the design because it lets the viewer know where the light is coming from.

The last major component of this design is a shadow under the dancer. Like the silhouette, shadows in iPod ads have hard edges. As it turns out, that makes it easy to create the shadow.

In the Layers dialog, duplicate the silhouette layer and rename the duplicate layer 'Shadow'. Move this layer below the Silhouette layer in the Layers dialog. Select the Perspective tool from the Toolbox and click in the image window to display the drag handles. Drag the upper-left handle straight down and the upper-right handle down and to the left, then hit the Enter key to accept the changes.

Add a white layer mask to the shadow layer, then type D in the image window to reset the foreground colour to black. Choose the Gradient tool from the Toolbox and in the Tool Options dialog make sure the Gradient Reverse button is set so that the gradient flows from white to black. Drag in the image window from the dancer's hand to near the upper-left of the shadow layer to apply a fade out to the shadow. Finally, reduce the opacity of the shadow layer to 80%.

That's it. You can splash a little colour into this by adding colour to the white background. In the end the simplicity of the iPod style is what makes it both easy to identify with and, for *Gimp* users, easy to reproduce. **LXF**

❯ **The wires will probably require more fine tuning than anything else in this project, since they and the iPod are the most identifiable features.**

❯ **You may need to move the shadow layer slightly after applying the perspective so that it matches up with the dancer's hand.**

❯ **Next month** We'll turn up the heat for some hair flippin' Gimp effects.