© *Karim Saad*

Beirut Gigapaned

Karim Saad, *Managing Director of PrintWorks Mediatech Dubai, is a gigapanographer highly passionate about photography and in love with his city, Beirut. In the following interview, Karim explains how he embarked on this GigaPan mega project and what this photography technique is all about.*

Can you explain a bit about the technology used in this GigaPan project?

The GigaPan technology is the process of taking multiple high quality individual shots using the biggest focal lens possible. Later on, on a computer and using a stitching software, all the shots are combined into a huge explorable gigapixel image. This will allow the user to zoom in and out and discover lots of details. Nowadays, there are some robotic heads that will help the photographer to automatically take multiple and accurate overlapping shots.

I personally use the GigaPan robotic head and Canon gear. The most critical and important element for getting such sharp images is the choice of the lens. I only use prime lenses for maximum clarity and accuracy.

For me, the size is important; but quality is my priority. However, this kind of images can be achieved with an entry level camera or even a pocket camera.

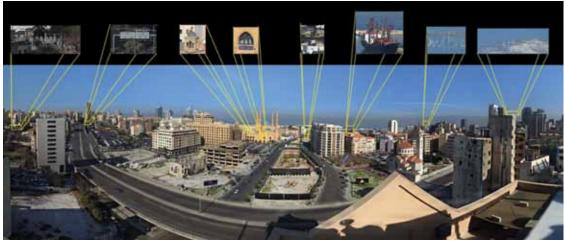**What's your ultimate objective throughout this endeavour?**

What I am trying to do is to take as much as I can of those huge panoramic images and store them for the present and future generation. With the fast growing internet community, I was able to reach more than 170,000 visitors in less than nine months

with the Beirut Central District Gigapan (karimsaad.net/blog/2010/12/bcd).

Indeed, right now, it is the second most popular image on the GigaPan website with an average of 600 visitors per day! How does it make you feel?

First of all, it is a personal achievement to attract so many visitors. Second, I am indirectly promoting my country attracting virtual tourist that may one day convert to real tourists. I am getting a lot of comments, emails and questions about some iconic buildings, monuments, statues... This makes me feel very proud of my country and I take my time answering them and giving them more information. I even had one query about Baalbeck and how to go there! For the future generation, they will have access to a huge amount of "high-quality" information. Today, if I take an old photograph, the first sight will be: *"WOW, look how empty it was!"* Whereas tomorrow, people will say: *"WOW, look at those details!"*

What's your next challenge?

My dream is to be able to have access to Jeitta Grotto and have some nice archiving GigaPans; I also hope to be able to take shots from Murr Tower, if anyone can help me out here...

Technical specs for BCD GigaPan:

Date Taken: December 27, 2010
Capture time: 12:39:49 - 13:41:22
Camera: Canon 550D
Lens: Canon EF200mm f2.8L II
Image size: 5184x3456 (17.9 megapixels)
Focal length (35mm equiv.): 314.6mm
Aperture: f/11
Exposure time: 1/640
ISO: 200
Input images: 988 (52 columns by 19 rows)
Field of view: 191.5 degrees wide by 51.8 degrees high
GigaPan pixel dimensions: 149959 width x 46772 height
File size: 19.6GB
GigaPan size: 7 Gigapixels ∎