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JANUARY 2024

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Mark Littlejohn shares his landscape editing technique

PLUS
• Lightroom Mobile
• Create the analogue look
• Why pros love Capture One

Inside this issue

14

22

79

50

76

Welcome

There are those who see any kind of post-capture editing as 'cheating' but, with the sole exception of slide film, photography has always been a two-stage process, with the camera part merely stage one. Every traditional print we own was made in a darkroom. Either by someone using a computerised minilab, or (if b&w) by hand in a home darkroom, with all the manipulation that hand-printing made possible. The darkroom is now a 'lightroom' and lives on our computers, and it has evolved beyond recognition. All kinds of things are possible, and how far you want to go is entirely down to your own preferences. This issue is dedicated to the world of photo editing, whether using free, paid-for or subscription software.

Nigel Atherton, Editor

Our cover shot of model Tracy Joe was taken by April Alexander using a Nikon D810 and was edited and colour-graded using Capture One. Find out why she uses this software on page 54

Connect with us

THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS

ROD LAWTON
Photo-editing expert Rod shows you how you can replicate the analogue film look digitally

MARK LITTLEJOHN
Award-winning photographer Mark on how he creates his lovely split-tone images

JON STAPLEY
Photo specialist Jon reveals the best photo-editing software to download, for all budgets

JAMES PATERSON
Expert columnist James guides you on the ten best AI-powered tools in Adobe Photoshop and Lightroom

APRIL ALEXANDER
Pro beauty and fashion photographer April explains why she uses Capture One

RICHARD SIBLEY
The former AP technical editor recommends some of the best laptops you can buy for photo editing

One of last year's stunning entries, 'Crescent Moon in a Magical Sunset' by Eduardo Schaberger Poupeau

'The Kiss' was a headline attraction at a 2020 Doisneau exhibition in Bologna, Italy

Two big new year contests open

IF YOU'RE lacking motivation in January, why not enter a competition? Two major contests are now open for entries.

First up is Astronomy Photographer of the Year, organised by the Royal Observatory Greenwich. The 16th competition is seeking entries across eight categories – Skyscapes (including landscape and cityscape images of twilight and the night sky); Aurorae; People and Space (nightscapes including a human element); Our Sun; Our Moon; Planets, Comets and Asteroids; Stars and Nebulae; and Galaxies. Up to ten images can be entered for each category. There are also separate prizes for Young Astronomy Photographer of the Year (under 16s) plus The Sir Patrick Moore Prize for Best Newcomer and The Annie Maunder Prize for Image Innovation. The Patrick Moore award is aimed at anyone who's taken up astronomy in the past year and not entered the competition previously, while the Annie Maunder Prize recognises the best photo processed using open-source imagery and sound (material from NASA, for example). Entries close at midday UK time on 5 March, and entry fees apply – full details can be found at apy.rmg.co.uk

Be named a maestro

In addition, the UK round of the 2024 EISA Maestro Photography Contest is open for entries, and this year's theme is Sports and Games. You need to submit a portfolio of five to eight images adhering to the theme, and these can include professional and amateur sports as well as games. In addition, the images must have been taken between 1 May 2023 and 30 April 2024 (EXIF data will be checked as proof), and older portfolios and AI-generated images are excluded. Entrants must also be UK residents (entry is free). Closing date is 1 May. For full entry details and tips for success, see bit.ly/eisa-maestro

A wide range of activities are eligible for entry

Farewell kiss

FRANÇOISE Bornet (née Delbart), who was immortalised in Robert Doisneau's iconic photograph 'The Kiss', has died at the age of 93. Doisneau had spotted Bornet and her then boyfriend, Jacques Carteaud, in a Left Bank café and asked them to stage an 'impromptu' kiss outside the Paris City Hall as part of a commission for *Life* magazine.

There was a lot of legal controversy about the identity of the couple, which was only settled when Bornet produced a print signed by Doisneau (she sold it in 2005 for €155,000). Jacques Carteaud, meanwhile, died in 2006.

The SJCAM features a fast aperture of f/1.3 for shooting images and video at night

Dynamic lens duo?

SJCAM has announced the SJ20 Dual-Lens action camera, featuring two lenses, one for day-time shooting and one for night. The 'night' lens has a fast f/1.3 aperture, and the camera can capture up to 4K video. It also features built-in, 6-axis gyroscope stabilisation, two LCD screens and is waterproof up to a depth of 130ft with a case.

The price of the SJCAM SJ20 Dual Lens action camera is $229 (about £179) and more details about it can be found on the firm's website – see bit.ly/actionduo. The camera's release date has not been specified yet.

Panasonic's Lumix S 100mm F2.8 Macro is less than half the weight of competitors

Mini Lumix 100mm macro

PANASONIC has revealed a remarkably small and lightweight lens for close-up shooting, the Lumix S 100mm F2.8 Macro. At just 82mm long and a mere 298g, it's about half the weight of comparable optics, and two-thirds of the length. Yet it's still capable of delivering life-size magnification at its minimum focus distance of 20.4cm. With its short telephoto focal length, the lens should also be a good choice for portrait photography.

Key features include dust- and splash-resistant construction for worry-free outdoor use, along with freeze-proofing to -10°C. The aperture is made up of 9 curved blades for attractive bokeh. The autofocus system employs a new Dual Phase Linear Motor, which Panasonic says is key to the prime lens's svelte dimensions. Promised benefits include silent focusing during video recording and minimal focus breathing.

Optically, the lens employs 13 elements in 11 groups, including three aspherical, two extra-low dispersion glass, and one ultra-low dispersion glass element to maintain cross-frame sharpness and minimise colour fringing. The lens accepts 67mm filters, and a hood is supplied in the box.

The Panasonic Lumix S 100mm F2.8 Macro is designed for full-frame mirrorless cameras and available for L-mount only. It's due to be available on 24 January for £999.

Nikon pushes image authentication

NIKON has confirmed more details of its efforts to develop technology to prove the authenticity of photographs, as AI-generated imagery becomes more widespread. This is based on the same C2PA (Coalition for Content Provenance and Authenticity) framework as is being used by Sony, Leica and other organisations (see c2pa.org/membership).

Nikon has teamed up with the Agence France-Press (AFP) press agency to incorporate image authentication within photojournalists' workflow, including electronic watermarking, directly within the camera system.

'This means that even if the metadata that is compliant with C2PA specifications is accidentally deleted, the correlation with the original image can still be determined,' said Nikon.

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The AFP headquarters in Paris

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Above: New York City, West 46th Street, 1976

© JOEL MEYEROWITZ

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Left: London, England, 1966

Joel Meyerowitz:
A Question of Color

£20, Thames & Hudson, softcover, 224 pages, ISBN: 9780500297896
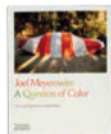
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Early experiments with colour from this masterful photographer sheds light on how Joel Meyerowitz works, says Amy Davies

It wasn't so long ago that colour photography was seen as trashy, the preserve of holiday makers and home-snappers.

Black & white meanwhile was seen as the appropriate choice for artists, serious photographers, reporters and more. Of course, things have changed quite a bit – though perhaps less so in the art world – but it's still a debate that draws plenty of attention today.

One early advocate of colour photography was the noted street and documentary photographer, Joel Meyerowitz, who has been pointing his lens at the changing shape of American society for nearly 60 years.

Above: Lady Godiva, parade, Manhattan, 1968

Above: Disney World, Orlando, Florida, 1969

In the US, switching to colour at a time when the gallerists held black & white in such high esteem was a risky proposition. This book explores the early days of Joel doing exactly that (1962-1966), who found himself asking, 'But why… when the world is in colour?' He had (and has) a fair point. The argument for presenting work in colour is put forward in this interesting book.

It includes 194 photographs, and also has texts by Joel himself, as well as the author Robert Shore. We learn about his early experiments, discussions with other big names of the time and lots more besides.

A particularly useful section is where the same, or very similar, images are compared adjacent to each other – one in black & white, the other in glorious technicolour. Which is better? Perhaps sometimes it's the monochrome version, but it's hard to deny that more life, reality and vibrancy is visible in the colour versions. The people within them seem to be real people, not merely abstract ideas of the historical past.

Aside from the fact that Joel Meyerowitz is such a talented photographer and the images in the book are wonderful to look at, it's also a useful discussion about photography theory – and all in something that you can pick up for under £20, an absolute bargain that comes highly recommended.

Books & exhibitions

The latest and best books and exhibitions from the world of photography
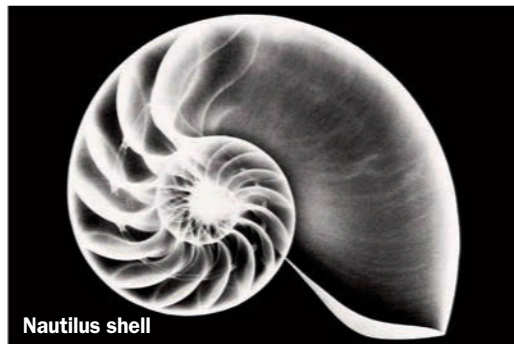
Nautilus shell

Monochrome – Platinum Prints by Peter Dazeley

£42.99, Trope Publishing Co, hardcover, 96 pages, ISBN: 9781951963200

Just to prove that there is still indeed plenty of room for black & white work, this lovely volume by Peter Dazeley shows off the beauty of monochrome in all its glory.

But, these aren't street or documentary pictures. They're images of plants, animals and flowers, with prints produced by hand and made with the original platinotype method devised by William Willis in 1876. The process results in images with a distinctively rich quality that highlight lovely shadow details and display warmth. The pictures are helped by the excellent printing and binding of the book, which has clearly been produced with a huge attention to detail – the paper is very high quality, metallic inks are used and the book is casebound with ribbon.

A beautiful object in its own right, the book would make a great gift but it's also a joy for anyone with an interest in fine art photography.

Tokyo Unseen by Lukasz Palka

£19.95, teNeues, hardcover, 208 pages, ISBN: 9783961714902

Following on from similar volumes covering London, New York and Berlin, the latest 'Unseen' book from teNeues brings together images of another mega city for street shots.

Big city metropolises like Tokyo can be difficult for street photographers who want to capture something new or interesting, but with the 'Unseen' series, photographers attempt to show us perhaps a different side of the city.

Here, Polish artist Lukasz Palka, who has lived and worked in Tokyo since 2008, presents a series of images from countless walks through his adopted city. He says he never searches for the shots, he simply comes across them. This book offers an intriguing insight into a fascinating city and is well worth looking at – along with others from the series.

It's good to share

Our favourite photos posted by readers on our social media channels this week

AP picture of the week

Journey Through the Golden Hills
by Charles Ames

Canon EOS 250D, Canon EF 50mm f/1.8 STM, 1/500sec at f/2.8, ISO 100

'Photography is my escapism, and this impromptu Scottish Highland adventure away from university was no exception. I was incredibly lucky with the golden hour light during the train journey, which highlighted the contours of the hills beautifully. A wider aperture and manual focus helped to contrast the foreground, as well as allowing my camera to "see through" the dirty windows!'

Instagram: @charlesamesphotography

#appicoftheweek
Win!

Wet Winter's Evening at the Theatre by Ben Clark
Google Pixel 6, 1/100sec at f/1.9, ISO 306

'I was exploring the lights and puddles of Milton Keynes and found the light here worked very well with the water on the floor. This was taken when the Christmas lights had not long been switched on. I did some slight edits using Lightroom.'
@acousticchef69

Nature's Symmetry: Perfect Line in the Misty Forest
by Felix Kiss

Sony A7III, Tamron 75-300mm, 1/400sec, ISO 320

'Captured above Tux, Austria, this aerial photograph unveils a captivating scene. A misty forest unfolds, revealing an enchanting boundary where half the woodland disappears into fog. Nature's meticulous artistry is highlighted by a flawless, straight line, separating the ethereal mist from the lush greenery, creating a surreal visual harmony.'

Instagram: @shot_byfelix
Web: capturewithfelix.webnode.page

It's good to share
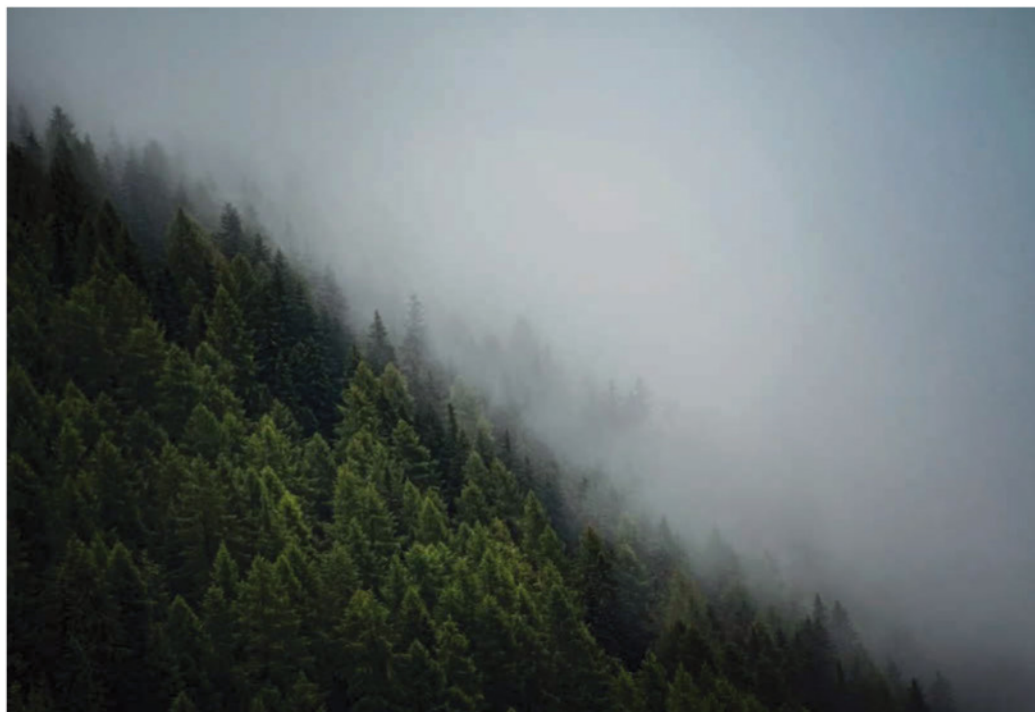
We also liked...

Disegni di Luce (Paint with light)
by Roberta Savi

Nikon FM2, Nikkor 24mm f/2.8D, Film: Ilford HP5 Plus, ASA 400

'The photo was taken in Milan, Italy, from the second floor of the Museo del Novecento at the Palazzo dell'Arengario, in December (you can see the Christmas tree on the left). The film was developed in the darkroom, printed and then scanned.'

Instagram: ro.flug

Want to see your pictures here? Simply share them with our Flickr, Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook communities using the hashtag #appicoftheweek. Or alternatively you can email your best photograph to us at **ap.ed@kelsey.co.uk**. See page 3 for how to find us.

Recreating
analogue effects

Do you miss the look of old analogue films and cameras?
Rod Lawton explains how to replicate that analogue look digitally

Vintage quick fixes

With the arrival of the digital imaging revolution, we might have thought we'd left behind all the flaws, unpredictability and weaknesses of analogue films and processes. And so we did – but it turns out we miss them, and we want them back.

Not everyone feels that way of course, and there will be plenty of photographers who are pleased that photography has become scientific, repeatable and accurate. But there will be plenty more amongst us who miss the particular 'look' of our favourite films. Photography is not just about accurate and literal renderings, but creating moods and emotions too, and while most analogue films lacked the spectral and tonal accuracy we take for granted now, they added their own 'patina' or character, which is what we've lost today.

But film is expensive to buy, hard to get processed and needs cameras that are gradually expiring and disappearing into history. So to stop this turning into a moist-eyed nostalgia trip, let's get down to business and see if we can recreate digitally some of the things we most loved about film.

BEFORE

PHOTO: ANTON MISLAWSKY

AFTER

Creating evocative analogue looks from digital images often means combining several techniques such as fade film effects, light leaks, borders and more

Fujifilm includes a selection of Film Simulations with its cameras. This is Provia (left) and Velvia (right)

Film simulation and their flaws

Fujifilm offers a wide selection of 'film simulations' with its cameras, Olympus/OM System uses 'Art Filters' to recreate the look of grainy black & white, instant film and vintage colours, while Panasonic has introduced L.Monochrom and L.Monochrom D black & white looks for a more classic tonal rendition in its Lumix cameras.

But are in-camera film simulations realistic, effective or even useful? Other photographers may disagree, but personally I find Fujifilm's Velvia film simulation to be a rather watered-down version of actual Velvia film, and while Provia and Astia have small but distinct differences, and Classic Neg and Classic Chrome are interesting, these film simulations don't capture the character of the analogue films they are based on.

In-camera film simulations may help you visualise the look you want while shooting, but they don't properly replicate the grain, contrast, 'grit' and tonal shifts of analogue films. This is where you need the power of photo-editing software.

Analog Efex has plenty of analogue camera effects to choose from

Analogue camera effects in Analog Efex

Analog Efex in the DxO Nik Collection goes further. It adds in vintage camera effects and flaws, like accidental multiple exposures.

DxO Analog Efex does offer some crossover with Lightroom for analogue film effects. It offers different vintage 'films', it can simulate grain and fading, and add vignettes. It goes a whole lot further, though, with light leaks, bokeh/depth of field effects, textures, borders and 'wet plate' overlays.

It can also simulate many of the faults and characteristics of older cameras, including the kind of cheap snapshot cameras used by previous generations. Normally, photographers use software to fix image faults, but Analog Efex takes us in the opposite direction, joyfully re-introducing all the flaws and defects that we miss from the days of analogue photography.

These include accidental multiple exposures from the film not winding on properly, motion blur caused by camera shake, edge softness and colour fringing from cheap plastic lenses.

Vintage profiles and presets in Lightroom

Adobe Lightroom is a great source of inspiration for classic analogue film effects, thanks to the wide selection of preset effects and profiles supplied as standard.

The Presets panel includes an Auto+: Retro category and a Style: Vintage category to experiment with. You can also try out different looks via the Profile drop-down in the Basic panel. Profiles are independent of the editing controls and Lightroom offers Artistic, B&W, Modern and Vintage categories.

The editing tools are where you get the most control. Lightroom's strength is that it can shift colours and tones to simulate old, faded or classic analogue films, it can apply very realistic-looking grain effects and add vignette effects reminiscent of old cameras and lenses. In this respect, though, Lightroom goes nowhere near as far as Analog Efex in the DxO Nik Collection.

Adobe Lightroom Classic comes with Retro and Vintage presets as well as Vintage profiles, and they can be used at the same time

DxO FilmPack 7 Time Machine

DxO FilmPack 7 takes a technical approach with a Time Machine mode that walks you through camera history and offers presets to match the look of specific eras and styles.

DxO has applied rigorous scientific testing of classic films and media to replicate their appearance digitally with as much precision as possible, right down to the character of the film grain and its size in relation to the film format you want to recreate. FilmPack 7 can be used as a plug-in for Lightroom Classic and Photoshop, but it will provide its best simulations when used as a standalone editor working directly with your raw files. It also integrates with DxO PhotoLab, applying its bespoke film renderings directly to images.

PhotoLab 7 has a special Time Machine feature for fans of photographic history. As well as providing an education and inspiration, it offers presets to mimic the look of classic film styles and eras.

PhotoLab 7 has a special Time Machine feature for inspiration

Distressing images

You can get all sorts of border effects including this sprocketed film border, though it's hard to find one with the correct number of sprockets for 35mm film

Adding borders

Many analogue film effects use what serious photographers might consider cheap tricks, by adding digital 'borders' to photos to simulate the look of a filmstrip, the black rebate around a sheet film transparency or the border of an instant print, for example. Back in the film era, that's the first thing we would crop out. Today, this is what we value most as a visual cue for old-fashioned analogue photography.

In digital analogue simulation, you can and should use every trick in the book. It's pretty easy to pick holes in the technical accuracy of digital film effects, but in photography it's the impression that matters most of all, and the right borders and frames can introduce a very evocative and convincing look.

There is just one thing that might drive you mad. It drives me mad, anyway. It's 35mm filmstrip 'borders' with too many sprocket holes. There are eight sprocket holes for each 35mm frame. Anyone who wants to simulate 35mm negatives or transparencies needs to get this right (if only so that I can sleep at night).

Old negatives and prints are often dusty and dirty, and ON1 Photo RAW is particularly good at recreating these effects

Dust and scratches

It's human nature to always want what we haven't got. Anyone who has ever spent time in a darkroom will remember the hours spent spotting out every dust spot on a print, blower-brushing every negative before putting it in the enlarger, ripping up prints with drying marks, visible negative borders, light leaks and any other kind of imperfection and generally cursing the impossibility of making clean, flawless prints.

Now, however, our digital images are clean and flawless – and we don't want that, either. But thanks to digital imaging, we can have the best of both worlds.

There are two key ways of going about this. You can use software that offers dust and scratch 'overlays' where you just choose the effect you want from a menu, or you can photograph your own dusty (scratchy) overlays and add them to images as layers in software like Photoshop or Affinity Photo. Both offer different blend modes to control how the dust and scratches combine with your image and opacity settings to control the strength of the effect.

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Right: You can simulate streaky, uneven wet plate development in Analog Efex, though this works best on 'timeless' images with no obvious modern intrusions

Below: Light leaks were once just a nuisance caused by badly-fitting camera backs, but now they are associated with a hazy, romantic 'analogue' age

Textures and wet plate effects

Textures and wet plate effects in the analogue world are different from dust and scratches, but digitally they can be achieved in similar ways, either using ready-made effects in plug-in software or manually with layers and blend modes.

You can use textures to simulate the effect of printing on textured paper, canvas or other materials. For real-world printing you are better off printing on these materials in the first place, but since so much of what we publish is online, we often need to create the digital effect instead.

Wet plate effects are a little different. This comes from the early days of photography, when photographs were created very literally on wet glass plates in primitive conditions with makeshift agitation that could produce streaks on the image.

Applied to a modern colour image, wet plate effects just look odd. They work best on black & white and sepia-toned images, with 'imperfections' such as edge blurring and vignetting.

Light leaks and flare

It's been so long since any of us used cameras with bad light sealing that we've probably forgotten that this was even a thing. Bad sealing creates light leaks, a hazy wash of colour from the edges of the frame that reduces the overall contrast of the photo.

It's related to lens flare, except that lens flare is caused by a cheap or old lens failing to control internal reflections from shooting into the light. Either way, in the past we would have associated these phenomena with cheap gear and bad cameras.

But they are very evocative. They have a romantic look we now associate with past times, an age of innocence and imperfection.

It all depends on whether you think photography should mean unflinching technical accuracy or whether it's an artistic medium that should touch the emotions not just the intellect.

19

Do-it-yourself analogue
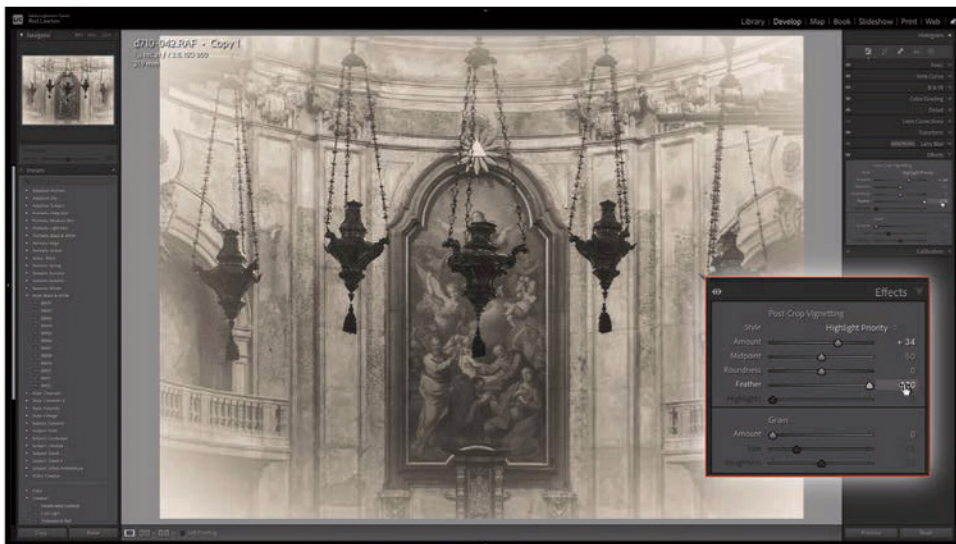
Vignettes don't have to be dark. A vignette that fades to white in the corners can give pictures a real vintage feel – this one also has a sepia Lightroom preset applied

Vintage vignettes

Vignetting is another way of describing 'corner shading' where the corners of a picture become darker because the lens cannot achieve even illumination right across the frame. It's associated with older, cheaper lenses, so that while it's something we try to avoid or correct in modern lenses, it's a useful trick for recreating the look of old analogue cameras.

Many programs offer a 'vignette' effect that adds corner shading to images. It's generally not enough on its own to create a vintage analogue look, but along with grain, film simulations or 'vintage' presets it's enough to complete the analogue 'look'.

But vignetting isn't just about corner darkening. Victorian-era sepia prints often get lighter towards the edges. Again, this is an effect that works best alongside other 'analogue' effects, but fading the edges of the picture to white can create a very convincing old-photo effect.

It might be difficult to see printed on to the page, but Lightroom's Grain effect is extremely good, simulating not just analogue film grain effectively, but the way it breaks up fine detail

Grain that looks real

If you've worked with images in a darkroom or scanning film transparencies, you will know what grain looks like. It's not like digital camera noise, for a start, and it impacts directly on how fine detail is resolved, so any software or plug-ins that 'overlay' grain on to a digital image aren't doing it right.

Real-world grain erodes the edges and fine details in an image. That's anathema to modern digital photographers who want the utmost precision in everything, but if you want your grain to look 'right' you have to accept that the more grain there is, the more the detail will be (and should be) eroded.

Lightroom's Grain effect does this well.

Capture One also has a grain effect which is very realistic. Interestingly, Adobe offers its Grain effect as a retro look, while Capture One regards grain as a natural texture which enhances fine detail.

You don't have to make your retro photographs look like sandpaper. Grain effects can be nuanced too.

Believable bokeh

'Bokeh' and 'blur' are often taken to mean the same thing these days, even though they are not. 'Bokeh' is actually the visual character of the blur, not the degree of blur. Even so, you will often find that software will offer 'bokeh' effects meaning the simulation of depth-of-field blur.

This is something that is quite difficult to achieve digitally. That's because photographs are two-dimensional representations of three-dimensional depth. The photograph no longer has the depth information needed to separate subjects by distance. Smartphones are now incorporating depth information into their images, but regular camera's don't.

Lightroom now has a Lens Blur tool which does a remarkable job of estimating subjects and distances using AI and offers the best software simulation of depth of field yet.

Otherwise, there are two basic techniques you can use to simulate shallow depth of field and background blur. One is to use an elliptical 'bokeh' gadget you place over your main subject. It can be convincing, but it needs the right subject and a degree of skill. The other is to apply 'tilt shift' blur which works best on subjects photographed at an angle, for example street scenes photographed from a tall building.

Lightroom's new Lens Blur tool calculates 'depth' using AI and creating foreground and background blur to simulate shallow depth of field

THE POWER OF CURVES

It's amazing what curves can do. In a world full of presets, plug-ins and ready-made 'vintage' looks, it turns out that a few quick curves adjustments can achieve all this and more.
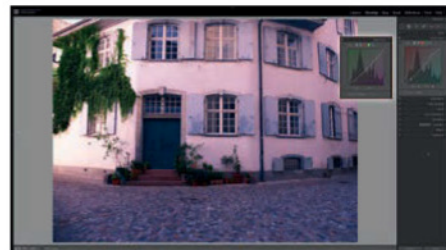
1 An instant 'matt' effect

Many old analogue images have raised shadows that don't go to a solid black. It goes against the grain for digital photographers who always look for a 'full' histogram, but a raised black point can give images a softer look and a distinct 'analogue' feel. If you apply it to one of the colour channels – we've used the blue channel here – you can create a retro colour shift too.

2 Colour shifts with curves

You might be used to applying curves adjustments using the combined RGB colour channels, but it's worth experimenting with the individual colour channels too. Here we've adjusted both the red and green channels here to create a more complex colour shift. You can create all manner of old film or cross-processing effects using this method.

3 Easy toning with curves

Many photo editors have toning and split-toning panels but you can do this with curves, too. Simply choose a colour channel to work with – the blue channel is a good one to experiment with. Now if you drag the blue curves downwards the photo takes on a yellow/sepia tint and if you push it upwards you get a blue tone. If you use an S-curve, you get a yellow-blue split-toning effect.

Split the difference

At what point does the technical process of editing stop and instinct take over? **Mark Littlejohn** reveals how he balances the two, to achieve a result that's more about feeling and less about reality

When I was asked to write a few words on my processing style, I immediately said yes. I quite enjoy writing. It exercises the brain. Although I don't very often write anything that could even remotely be described as technical. Where would I start on an article that had that sort of slant?

And I guess the beginning is a good place. My brief was to talk about split toning, so the first question is not how, but why. When I first took up photography it was a stress break from my work, which at the time was in a serious crime unit examining paedophiles' computers. That work involved sitting in front of a computer screen for up to 60

Above: Eden Valley. I wanted to achieve a look that was magically surreal

Right: Split toning generated a feeling of hot smoke and burning flesh

hours a week – some weeks it was even longer.

While I instantly fell in love with photography, I didn't want to spend my free time adding to those hours spent in front of a screen. I therefore developed a style that meant I only made general alterations. No masks, layers, or any of that complicated palaver. But I still wanted to enhance what it was I felt as I took the image: the atmosphere and mood that permeated the scene and attracted me to it in the first place. For whatever reason, I'd had a little play with the split tone pre-sets that came as standard with Lightroom at the time. I liked them, even though they could be a little surreal. Or even quite a bit more than just a little surreal.

Then, in April 2012, I took a picture of my daughter's horse being shod. All smoke and burning flesh. A pungent smell that invaded my nostrils as the horse's hooves smoked and sizzled. It was an almost three-dimensional experience: sight, smells and sounds. I loved the pictures I'd taken, but they lacked something. The pungent aroma. That atmosphere. I decided to play a little with Lightroom. I looked at how its split-tone panels worked.

They were refreshingly simple. Sliders for hue and saturation in the shadows and the same again in the highlights. I found that the best way to operate was to set the saturation level in the highlights to the high teens. I would then move the hue slider backwards and forwards. I wasn't interested in knowing where the slider was. I didn't even look at the sliders as I moved them. My only concern was the picture. That's all that I was interested in. When I was happy with the tonality, that was it – I stopped. And then I moved on to the highlights, and did the same again. The only other thing I did was to look at the balance between the dark and the light. You can't have nice light unless it's balanced with a little bit of darkness. On that basis, you also need to have good conditions in order to use this approach. It is not an approach that works with flat light. You can't use it to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.

Make the grade

I find that I achieve my most satisfactory results when it isn't exactly clear what it is that I've done. The changes more subtle than surreal. And since those early days,

A typical Harris scene. I used the separate colour controls due to the combination of sea and pastoral sections

'I wasn't interested in knowing where the slider was. I didn't even look at the sliders as I moved them. My only concern was the picture'

I used the Colour Grading spheres to split tone the image for a rich, golden glow

I've moved on slightly further with colour. As has Lightroom, to be honest. Split toning is no longer called split toning – it is now Colour Grading. And instead of sliders for shadows/highlights there are three spheres for shadows, mid tones and highlights. They operate in much the same way as before. Except instead of a linear movement, it's a circular one. Luminosity is in there as a normal 'left is darker, right is lighter' sort of slider. There is also a fourth sphere for 'Global' toning. When using each of the spheres I again just move the cursor randomly within the sphere. I don't know where my finger is taking me as my eyes are glued to the screen. It's the picture that counts. Nothing else.

In addition to these 'split-toning' controls, there is also the colour mixer panel. It used to contain just the one panel, which was the colour mixer itself. I would use this to perhaps make slight changes to the hue and luminosity of certain colours – usually orange/yellow/green/blue, which are traditional landscape colours. This panel has now been joined by

23

another called 'point colour'. Is it fair to say that I haven't fully investigated this yet? Yes, is the answer. It's an easy tool to use, though. Click on an individual colour in your image and you can play with those exact hues to your heart's content, as long as you remain in that particular segment of the rainbow, that is.

Limited options

Do I yearn sometimes for the old days of Lightroom 6? Yes. It was simple. General alterations were the rule. I didn't have to feel like I was back working in computer forensics to make the software work to its full potential. That was the difference between Lightroom and Photoshop. There were more limited options in Lightroom, and limited options make life simpler, more straightforward. And I'm a landscape photographer. I like being out in the landscape. Seeing things that make me go 'ooh' and 'aah' in wonder. I can't recreate those feelings sitting in front of a computer and subscribing to a dozen YouTube channels in an attempt to stay current and au fait with your processing tool of choice.

It could be that the way I work is a form of OCD behaviour. I don't use a tripod. I don't use filters. I only use a single raw file. I don't blend. I don't do selections in software. I don't dodge and burn. I exist within a certain set of rules. But that's not to say that I don't bend these rules when it comes to processing an image. I don't feel constrained by reality. It's an overrated concept, in any event. My colours aren't natural in the truest sense of the word, but they match the way I envisage the scene as I see it in my mind's eye. When I look at a processed image, that's the way I remember it, the way it was. I've forgotten what

'I find that I achieve my most satisfactory results when it isn't exactly clear what it is that I've done'

Left: I wanted to use the toning to highlight the rich warmth of the early morning sun as it hit Wall Holm Island, yet still show the coldness of Place Fell in the background

Below: The early April light was magical. Rich and diffuse. Painters' light. I wanted to capture those soft colours against the majestic backdrop of Beinn Eighe

the reality was. But that suits my photography. It was, after all, an escape from my day-to-day life, and the stresses and strains of it all.

I'm a firm believer in colour matching when it comes to presenting an image. It's no different to the old days when I was a young detective. Picking out a flamboyant tie and matching it to a nice shirt and a swish suit. Colourful socks being the finishing touch. And it can be like that when I'm processing an image. I might pick out a splash of colour that only exists in a small area of the image – the equivalent to my socks or my tie, in other words. The smallest things can make the biggest difference. It's

The original spring blizzard file was stunning as it was

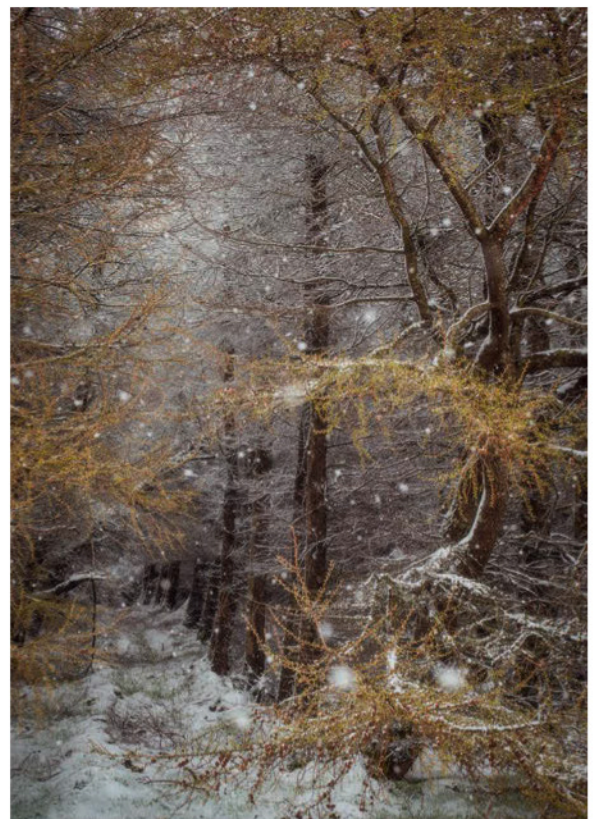When I first processed it, my mind hadn't settled. What was I thinking?

a fact of life that some colours go well with certain other colours. Blue and yellow, for example. A number of my favourite images have an enhanced blue in the shadows and highlights that are tinged with yellow and gold.

Different rules

Split toning is a very personal approach to processing. It isn't ruled by mathematical algorithms but by your heart, your soul. And as such, your results can change from day to day. Your processed images can be cheerfully rose-tinted one day and drearily downtrodden the next. This difference in results can be even more pronounced with the passage of time. The example of the Spring Blizzard images on this page show that. The first was processed that evening. Hopelessly colourful and an image that I now wish I'd never presented. But I love the later version. More restrained? This

approach is not about ensuring that there is an abundance of detail in the shadows, or that you've used careful shading to light a pathway into the image. It's about enhancing a scene that you can sit back from and gaze into. Remembering what it was like to be there. A little half smile playing at the corners of your mouth as you reminisce.

I've been using this simple approach to processing for over a decade now. And I see no reason to change. It isn't suitable for every occasion, but when it works, it really works. I do sometimes wonder whether I should subscribe to one of those fancy YouTube channels, to find out what I'm missing. But I really don't think I am missing anything. I'm putting mood and atmosphere at the forefront. Split toning is an emotional response to the image in front of me, it isn't a cold-hearted, hard-headed, exercise in technical expertise.

'Your processed images can be cheerfully rose-tinted one day and drearily downtrodden the next'

Finally, I settled on a taller crop, realising the scene only needed a nudge instead of being hit with a sledgehammer

The Canon EOS R range: a top deal for hybrid shooters

Canon's EOS R extensive mirrorless range has a model for every type of photographer, from the family snapper and beginner hobbyist to advanced enthusiasts and top-end professionals

There is a lot to be said for versatility, and the stand-out all-rounder in Canon's mirrorless range is the full-frame EOS R6 Mark II. With its mix of still and video skills, high-end imaging performance, packaged in a compact body with superb ergonomics, this is the camera for demanding creatives.

Furthermore, it is keenly priced for the specification and feature set on offer. Indeed, when we tested the EOS R6 Mark II it achieved the ultimate distinction of receiving the coveted AP Five Star Gold Award (see bit.ly/apcanonreview).

© CANON

Full-frame, 24.2 megapixels, cutting-edge AF and awesome still and video capture credentials, make the EOS R6 Mark II a compelling proposition for content creators

Today's creative image-maker needs so much more than a camera that excels in just one field – having a skill set that can deliver sublime results across a wide range of disciplines is a crucial commodity, and the 24.2-megapixel EOS R6 Mark II certainly fits the bill. With so many highlights, picking out a couple is difficult, but two that deserve special praise are the EOS R6 Mark II's autofocusing capabilities and its ISO performance.

Getting sharp focus on static scenes is straightforward for any camera but where the EOS R6 Mark II shows its mettle is its ability to deal with fast-moving subjects of almost every genre. Its Dual Pixel CMOS II AF, 4,897-point system features Canon's latest deep-learning technology and can successfully detect and track focus on humans, animals including birds and horses, and vehicles, from racing cars and motor bikes to aircraft including helicopters.

Couple its AF skills with the camera's ability to shoot lots of pictures very rapidly, and catching the decisive moment has never been easier.

The EOS R6 Mark II can race along at 40fps with AE/AF tracking using the electronic shutter and at 12fps with its mechanical shutter. Plus, there's a 30fps raw burst mode with the option of pre-shooting where you can catch the action up to half-a-second before fully depressing the shutter button.

© ANDY WESTLAKE

Above: The EOS R6 Mark II has remarkable high ISO performance. Shot at ISO 51,200 using the RF 100-500mm F4.5-7.1 L IS USM lens at 500mm (1/2000th sec at f/8)

The sensitive side

The AF system has incredible sensitivity too, being able to perform accurately in incredibly dim conditions, down to -6EV. For an idea of what that means, the light of a half moon is around -5EV, so we are talking very, very gloomy scenes.

In such conditions, normally you would expect to need a tripod for sharp shots, but the EOS R6 Mark II has more tricks up its sleeve. Its in-body image-stabilisation (IBIS) system, which works with lens-based optical IS, gives up to 8-stops of benefit.

Combine IBIS with the EOS R6 Mark II's native ISO range for stills photography which tops out at a remarkable 102,400, it means being able to shoot with a handheld camera in near darkness and still achieve tack-sharp photographs.

High ISO speeds can suffer from excessive digital noise that can severely impact on picture quality but the EOS R6 Mark II's has Canon's newest DIGIC X processor to keep noise down to minimal levels and lessen its impact on picture quality.

Right: You get gimbal-like results when shooting video with the EOS R6 Mark II thanks to its advanced image-stabilising skills that includes Movie IS

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Video star

While the EOS R6 Mark II has exceptional skills in photography, where it stands out above its rivals is that it is equally capable in the video arena, making it truly a hybrid camera of exceptional ability.

The EOS R6 Mark II can shoot full-width 4K footage with no image crop at rates up to 60p with the option of internal 10-bit 4:2:2 recording. Use a compatible Atomos external recorder and it can record ProRes Raw at 6K or 3.7K Raw with a Super35 crop. An enhanced heat-dissipation design means it is possible to film beyond 30 minutes without over-heating.

Of course, the advanced tech of the EOS R6 Mark II used in producing great photographs come into play for video too. So, you can rely on the sensor's excellent high ISO performance and its great autofocusing skills with the subject/eye-detect AF sticking like glue to in-frame subjects. When needed, a Detect AF only option means focus stays locked when the subject moves out of shot.

The camera's 8-stop benefit IBIS means handheld shooting is jar-free even when you're moving to keep up with the action. For video, the benefit of IBIS and optical IS is enhanced by Movie Digital IS giving gimbal-like results. The results have to be seen to be believed. To conclude, the EOS R6 Mark II is a remarkable and truly versatile camera with a feature set that can satisfy the imagination of discerning content creators shooting video and stills. With its portability, the camera is perfectly suited to location and travel photography, and the ever-increasing range of EOS RF lenses means every subject genre can be captured with ease. It is on sale at £2,779.99 (body) with a further £200 off with the Canon Winter Cashback scheme (see bit.ly/canoncashoffer).

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Fab R50

Another great deal for content creators is the Canon EOS R50. Easy to use, portable and equipped for professional-quality stills and videos, the EOS R50 is a powerful camera perfect for creative content creators and sells at a pocket-friendly price too.

For content creators upgrading from a smartphone or those keen to travel light without compromising their creative potential, the Canon EOS R50 is the camera for you. It's a really compact APS-C format camera that weighs in at 375g body only with battery and card. Add the RF-S 18-45mm F4.5-6.3 IS STM standard zoom and the package is just 505g, so it's perfect as a take-everywhere camera.

For video, the EOS R50 can capture UHD 4K at 30p over-sampled from 6K so images are rich in fine detail and resolution, and there's a maximum recording time

Above: The EOS R6 Mark II has separate microphone and headphone sockets and the Multi-Function Shoe offers more audio options

Left: The simple to use but highly specified EOS R50 is a superb camera for today's content creator

Right: With its elegant design and compact footprint, the PIXMA PRO-200 is ideal for home use and gives pro-quality prints up to A3+ size

of one hour, so there is plenty of capacity. The flip-out touchscreen LCD monitor makes shooting at a variety of camera viewpoints a breeze and it can face forward too for selfie shooting.

Featuring Canon's renowned Dual Pixel CMOS Auto Focus II sensor and DIGIC X processor, autofocus is swift, responsive and reliable with the options of subject detect, tracking and touch monitor AF point selection helping to make shooting even easier. If stills are needed from 4K UHD footage, a Frame Grab feature enables you to grab 8.3-megapixel JPEG still images.

Speaking of stills, the EOS R50's 24.2-megapixel CMOS sensor lets you capture raw or JPEG images, and files open out to 6000x4000pixels so big enough for all uses including making large prints. Its native ISO range is 100-32,000, so there is no problem when the light is less than perfect; and image quality, even at high ISOs, is impressively clean and crisp.

The EOS R50 with the RF-S 18-45mm F4.5-6.3 IS STM is priced at £899.99 with a Content Creator Kit available at £949.99 which includes body, lens, DM-E100 stereo microphone with windshield, HG-100TRB tripod grip and a 32GB SD card. You can also save £100 on the EOS R50 via the Canon Winter Cashback Scheme (bit.ly/canoncashoffer).

A great home printing deal

One of the joys of digital photography is being able to make large pro-quality prints at home, rather than using an online printing service or having to take your pictures to a shop. Canon offers a comprehensive range of printers, and one of the very best for enthusiast photographers is the PIXMA PRO-200. The PIXMA PRO-200 is an exceptional inkjet printer capable of producing prints up to A3+ borderless prints (that's 19x13in or 32.9x48.3cm).

The printer is an 8-colour dye-based unit that can output vibrant colour and rich black & white prints on a wide range of paper types including fine art media; it's easy to use too, and includes auto skew correction.

With its sleek design, compact footprint and wireless functionality, the PIXMA PRO-200 will suit most domestic settings. It's currently priced at £459.99.
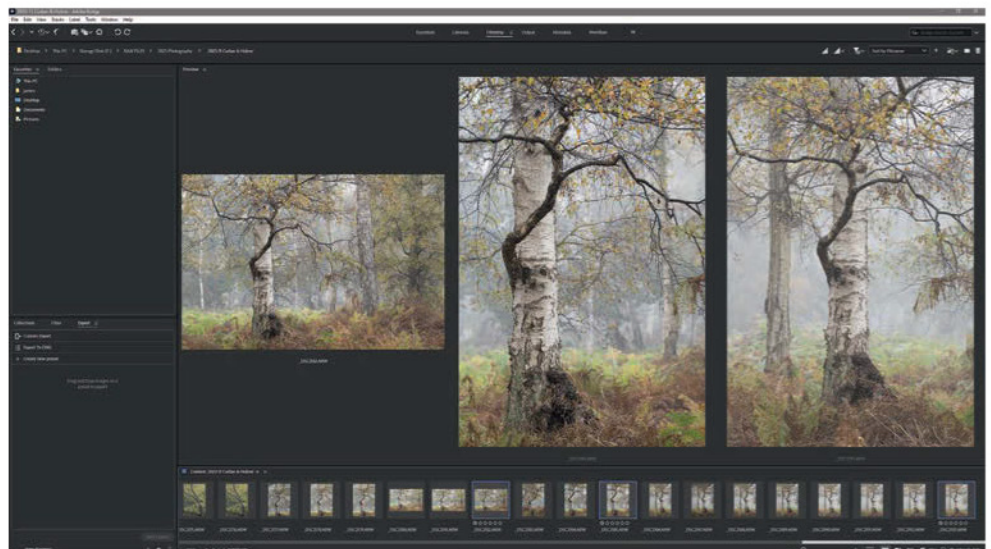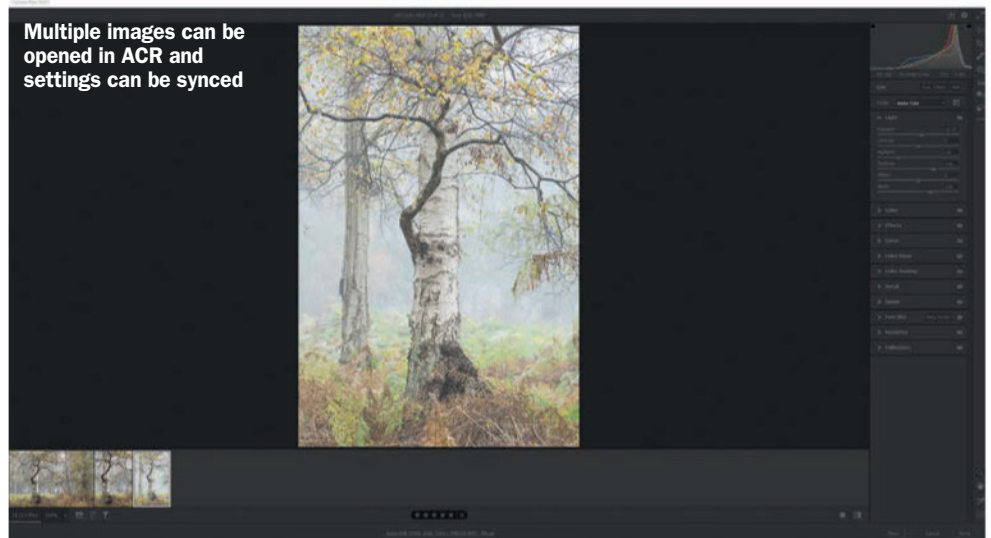

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Are Adobe Camera Raw and Bridge dead?

With both Photoshop and Lightroom being available in the Adobe Creative Cloud Photography Plan, **James Abbott** discusses whether Adobe Camera Raw and Bridge have had their day

W hen I first started using Photoshop seriously while still shooting medium format film and scanning my transparencies in 2005, knowing that digital photography was overtaking analogue, Photoshop CS2 was the current version of the software which was launched that same year. It was a huge upgrade from Photoshop 7, which is what I used to muddle my way around at university where film still reigned supreme compared to what digital cameras could produce in terms of image quality and file size.

The CS2 version of Photoshop and Creative Suite CS2 marked a turning point with the launch of Adobe Bridge, which was digital asset management software, which, for photographers, provided a place where you could organise, view, rate and open raw files in Adobe Camera Raw and other file types in Photoshop with ease, among other functions. It was essentially an early version of the Library Module in Lightroom. Adobe Camera Raw had been introduced with Photoshop CS1 back in 2003, and was finally complemented by a great way to view and manage photos – Bridge was a huge and welcome upgrade.

You may have noticed that I've talked about what Bridge can do in the past tense, and that's not an accident: I don't know any photographers who still use the software. I also can't recall any photographers in the past ten years who have told me that they still use Adobe Camera Raw, whereas many amateur photographers I've met have told me that they only use Lightroom and have no need for Photoshop, despite subscribing to the Photography Plan, which

Multiple images can be opened in ACR and settings can be synced

Bridge allows you to view multiple images and view detail with a digital loupe rather than fully zooming in

includes Photoshop. So, it's this, alongside my own desertion of Bridge and Adobe Camera Raw that got me thinking, are Adobe Camera Raw and Bridge effectively dead and, ultimately, pointless these days? There will, without a doubt, be some

photographers out there using these software options, the law of averages dictates this. But I'm convinced that the numbers are already low in the grand scheme of things and continually dwindling.

Going back to my early Photoshop

Top: Lightroom provides several viewing options in the Library Module when looking at multiple images

Bottom: With a single user interface, Lightroom provides a more fluid workflow than Bridge and Adobe Camera Raw although both approaches essentially do the same thing

days, having Bridge and Adobe Camera Raw provided a great workflow at the time. And I have to confess that even when Lightroom 1.0 was released in 2007, I didn't make the switch to Lightroom until the second version where features improved a little and made it a more worthwhile alternative. That was back in 2008, and since then I, like most photographers, have enjoyed the fluid workflow provided by Lightroom and continually improved features delivered with software updates.

This certainly doesn't mean that Bridge and ACR were obsolete for photographers at this point; they remained useful up until the time when Photoshop and Lightroom became available subscription only. Before the arrival of Creative Cloud after CS6, Lightroom and Photoshop were available separately, so continuing to use Bridge and ACR made perfect financial sense because you essentially had all of the same tools available to you and the same image-processing engine. The main difference is the workflow and the layout of controls in ACR compared to Lightroom.

It was only when Lightroom and Photoshop became available subscription-only that everything changed because although you were still getting Bridge within the Photography Plan, and continue to do so, Lightroom is undoubtedly better than Bridge and ACR. There's

no getting away from the fact that for photographers, Lightroom provides the most streamlined workflow, simply down to the fact that the Library and Develop Modules provide both image management of multiple file types and raw processing in a single interface. You can even process other file types, such as JPEGs, TIFFs and PSDs in the Develop module. Processed raw files can be exported from Lightroom quickly and easily into other formats, with the ability to open them directly in Photoshop, and/or you can open processed raw files in Photoshop where they can then be saved in another format or open several raw files as Layers among other options. You can do this between Bridge, ACR and Photoshop, but some processes can be clunky and far from intuitive.

From my point of view, it's this streamlined workflow and that you're already paying for Lightroom which make it the far superior option. Bridge and ACR once offered the only option, then an alternative money-saving option, but now they're pretty much obsolete for the vast majority of photographers. That doesn't mean it's completely dead in the water though, because for designers and even photographers working across multiple Adobe Creative Cloud apps such as InDesign and Illustrator etc, Bridge still provides a simple solution for managing image assets.

Inbox

Write to the Editor at **ap.ed@kelsey.co.uk** and include your full postal address. Please don't send letters in the post as there is no one in the office to receive them. Replies are from the Editor unless otherwise stated

LETTER OF THE WEEK

Live view and macro photography

Live view (and I assume here that your discerning readers will have loaded the incomparable qDslrDashboard at qDslrDashboard.info, which will give them all its functions from a phone or tablet but with a larger screen) is absolutely essential for tripod macro photography if you own a manual focus rather than an automatic focus lens.

Manual lens focusing stacking through your camera's software is, alas, not possible and focus peaking, though extremely helpful, gets nowhere near the accuracy that's provided by live view when its magnification is set to 200%. It is then very easy to set your own focus points and, allowing a five-second delay from touching the screen to the camera taking the picture, I found

Clive sent in this image that he took using live view

that success is pretty well guaranteed.

The image above, the subject just two inches long – taken with my Nikon Z 5 and a newly acquired used manual Laowa 100mm f2.8 2x ultra macro lens – was processed with Affinity Photo focus stacking and took me just 15 minutes. A fun result for my first ever foray into the macro world made possible by live view.
Clive Thorp

The one you have with you

Mike Dodman and Steve Mason are both right for different reasons. Yes, camera manufacturers should be worried about the relentless march of smartphones (the image quality available is marvellous) but in a digital world I feel that older equipment is still usable.

I have a ten-year-old iPhone 6, and use its camera for posting pictures to Instagram. It is still a usable phone and camera and I won't be updating it just because a trendy 'new and improved' model is available. But plenty of people rush out to buy the newest iPhone, and they get better with every new model. No wonder camera

manufacturers are feeling the pressure. That old adage 'the best camera is the one you have with you' means, for most people, a smartphone, but I believe there will always be a niche market for higher-resolution cameras, and that has always existed.
Don Wood

In support of Liam Hancox's letter 'Embrace Smartphones' in the Christmas issue. I believe in the old saying 'the best camera is the one you have with you' and I expect that most photographers are more likely to have their smartphones with them than their 'proper' cameras.

I attach a picture (see below) I took in December while out walking my dog. I invariably left my 42MP Sony A7R III at home so I captured this image with my Samsung Galaxy S10 smartphone with a 12MP camera. It was just an opportune scene with the frost, the hazy sun and the morning mist. The *only* editing I've done is to shorten one of the reeds in the bottom left of the image which was obtrusively tall. I am not suggesting I'd abandon my camera, but would this photo have been any better if I had taken it with my Sony? I have printed this image on A3 paper and, to my eyes, it looks great.
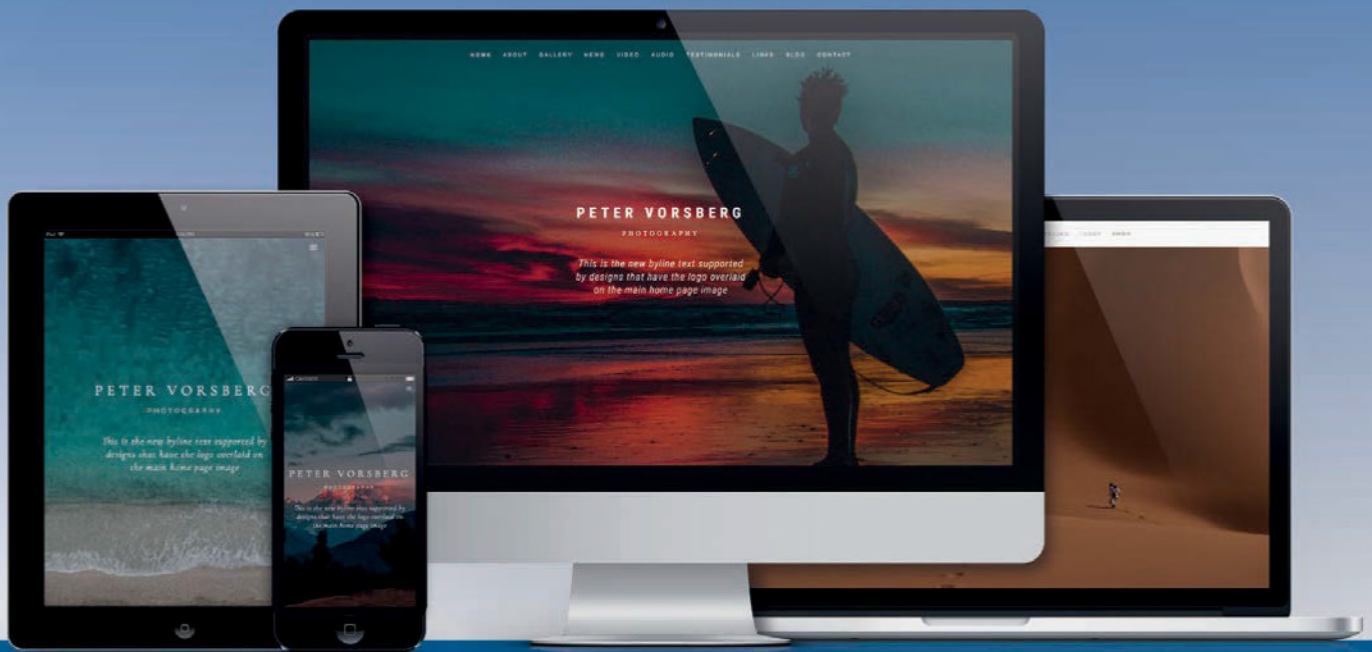**John Vahgtsi**

John Vahgatsi's image

THE EISA PHOTOGRAPHY MAESTRO CONTEST 2024

This year's theme: Sports and Games

Scope and Contest Rules:

Entrants should provide 5-8 photographs on the theme of 'Sports and Games'. Your subject matter may include professional and amateur sports as well as games. All entries must be in digital format (camera or scanned film originals) and must be taken by you between 1 May 2023 and 30 April 2024 (EXIF data will be checked as proof). Older portfolios and AI-generated images are excluded.

1ST PRIZE
€1500 & EISA Maestro Trophy

2ND PRIZE
€1000 & EISA Maestro Trophy

3RD PRIZE
€750 & EISA Maestro Trophy

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NATIONAL DEADLINE: MAY 1ST 2024
AP is running this EISA contest in conjunction with Photocrowd. To enter your portfolio, go to **bit.ly/maestrosport** AP will choose the top 3 and publish them in a June or July issue. The winner will

National Maestro winners will also be published on Facebook at the end of June 2024 for the EISA Public's Choice competition. Prize for the winner: €1000.

receive a one-year digital subscription to AP and go forward to the International round.

INTERNATIONAL JUDGING: JUNE 2024
The winning entries from all 16 participating EISA countries will be judged together at the Association's General Meeting in June 2024. The International results will be celebrated at the EISA Awards Gala in Sept 2024 and revealed, online, alongside the EISA product Awards on 15 August 2024.

Don't forget to visit **bit.ly/eisa-maestro** for tips on creating a successful portfolio. The winning International photos will be published in the Sept/Oct issues of all 16 EISA photo magazines/websites. For details, terms & conditions, see **www.eisa.eu/maestro**

Check out Photocrowd and take part in some great photo contests, including APOY24. It's a great way to get your best work seen and appreciated. **www.photocrowd.com**
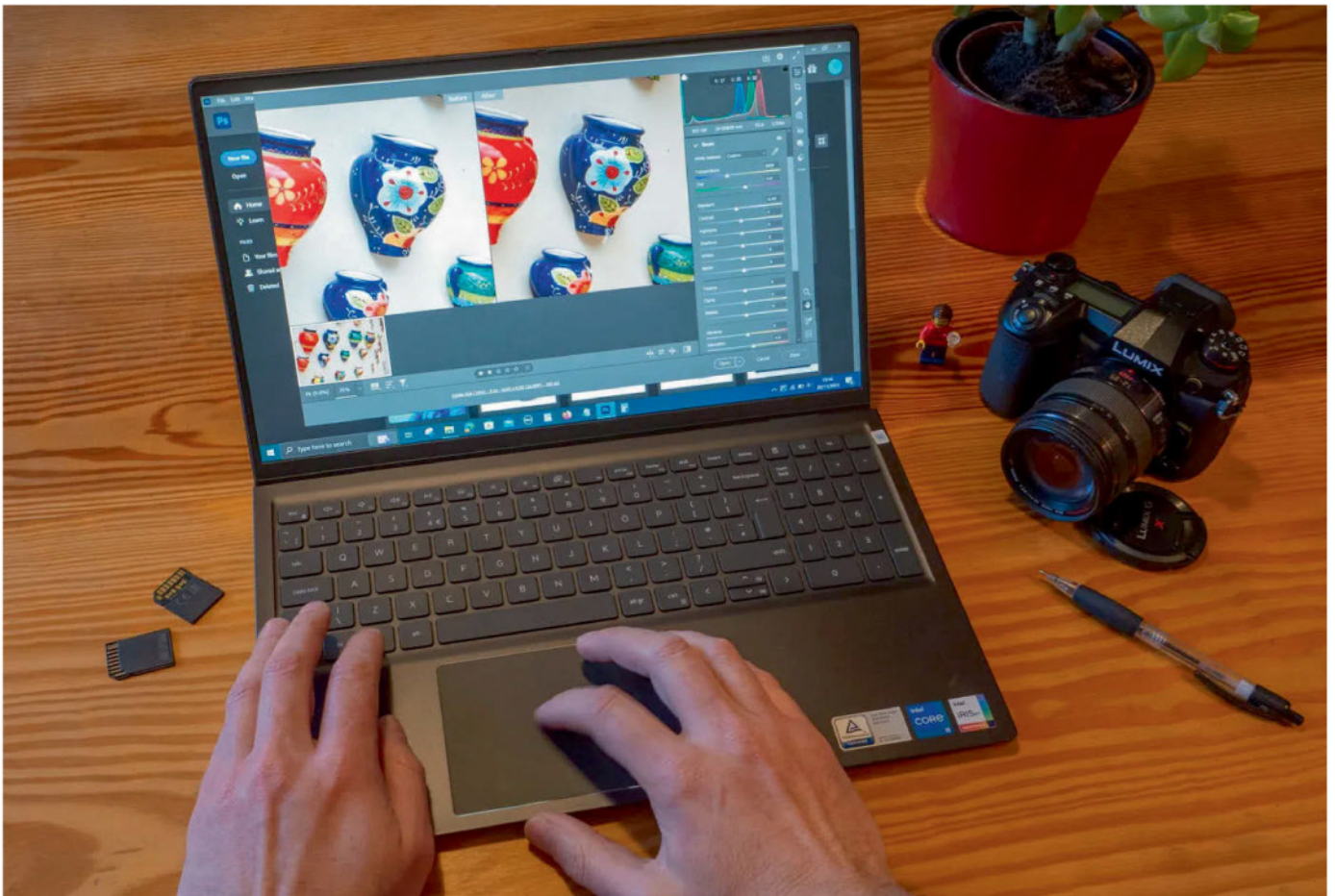
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Best photo-editing
software

Jon Stapley picks the best photo-editing software to download, including subscription-free programs, free software and apps

Photo editing is a hugely important part of most digital photographers' workflows – and that means it's important to pick the best photo-editing software for you. While you might have been led to believe that photo editing starts and ends with Adobe's Photoshop and Lightroom, in truth there are loads of great tools worth considering for photo editing, and depending on your needs, some of them might be better suited to you than others.

At AP we've extensively used many different photo-editing programs, and all of our writers and photographers have their preferred editing workflows. This piece is a run-through of the best photo-editing software we've used and tested, with options for different operating systems and budgets.

We've split this guide up into sections, covering the best subscription services, best subscription-free software, best free editing software and the best photo-editing apps for mobile.

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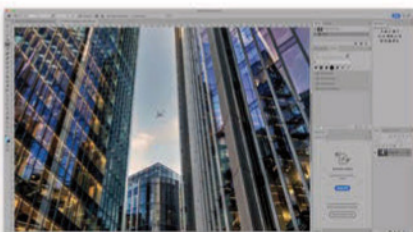
Adobe Photoshop

At a glance

- Photo editing and graphics program
- Windows and Mac
- £9.98 monthly with Lightroom (20GB storage), or £19.97 monthly (1TB storage)
- adobe.com

Adobe Photoshop is a superb piece of photo-editing software. Whether you need to clone out distractions, rescue blown-out highlights, convert to monochrome, process raw files (via the Camera Raw plug-in) or perform any of the other myriad tasks that might befall a photo editor, Photoshop will be well equipped. We reviewed the most recent version of Adobe Photoshop, and its ability to clean up and declutter images has been made faster than ever thanks to new AI-powered object-selection tools.

Newer versions of Photoshop have come loaded with powerful generative AI tools such as Generative Fill and Generative Expand, which allow you to radically transform images with generative content.

The full version of Photoshop is subscription-only. The popular Photography bundle, where you get it together with Lightroom for $9.99/£9.98 per month, is at least decent value – though be warned that cancellation is a more complex affair than you might think. Adobe is infamous for its sneaky 'cancellation fees' that hit users who have the temerity to not want to give them money any more.

Bear in mind that if you do want Photoshop without a subscription, you can get it in the slimmed-down Photoshop Elements package, which is a one-time purchase.

Pros and Cons

+ Powerful image editor equipped for basically any task
+ Smart AI-powered selection tools
+ Neural filters can restore old photos
− AI emphasis won't appeal to everyone
− Subscription only
− Cancellation fees

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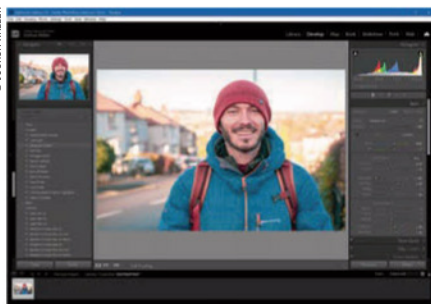
Adobe Lightroom

At a glance

- Workflow, image management and editing program
- Windows and Mac
- £9.98 monthly with Photoshop (20GB storage), or £19.97 monthly (1TB storage)
- adobe.com

If you're subscribed to Photoshop, chances are good that you've got Lightroom too, as the most cost-efficient subscription gives you access to both. While Adobe's Photoshop and Lightroom programs share many features, the key appeal of Lightroom lies in its extensive cataloguing and image-management features. These allow you to use keywording and rating to organise your images and single out the keepers. If you're regularly sifting through large numbers of files, it is an enormous timesaver.

Lightroom is also no slouch when it comes to photo editing. While Photoshop is the more powerful program with a more comprehensive suite of options, Lightroom is still excellent, and many photographers use Lightroom exclusively. Its image-repair and enhancement tools are precise and intuitive, and the highly fine-tunable masking function can be immensely useful. You can also easily copy your changes to multiple images for speedy batch-editing.

Pros and Cons

+ Unmatched image-organisation features
+ Powerful, efficient editing tools
+ Excellent noise reduction from Denoise AI
− Subscription only
− No Layers functionality

© ZONER PHOTO STUDIO

Zoner Photo Studio X

At a glance

- Raw converter, image editor and organiser
- Windows only
- $59 per year / $5.99 per month
- zoner.com

This Windows-only software is designed to be the complete package when it comes to photo editing – so it's also a raw processor, an image organiser and even a photobook designer. It offers plenty of Photoshop-like tools, including Layer adjustments, and the interface is well designed. The program includes plenty of camera and lens correction profiles too, with the option to upload more if needed. This latest version also runs much better than previous iterations of the software, with plenty of bug fixes and performance enhancements having been introduced.

ZPS X doesn't have Adobe's ultra-advanced features like Neural Filters, and its corrections aren't as good as those you'd find in the likes of Photoshop or DxO PhotoLab. However, as a start-to-finish photo-editing program, it does a very good job indeed and is definitely a credible option for those looking for a solid Photoshop alternative.

Pros and Cons

+ All-in-one software
+ Useful modes for creating photobooks and calendars
− Lacks some high-end modern features
− Windows only

BEST SUBSCRIPTION-FREE SOFTWARE

We get it – not everyone wants to be on the hook to a digital landlord. Less than £10 a month for Photoshop and Lightroom may feel like a good deal, but if you plan to use the software for years, you may be better off paying full-price up front for software that's yours to keep. We've compiled some of the best available.

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Affinity Photo 2

At a glance

- Photo editor and illustration program
- Windows, Mac and iPad
- £69.99
- affinity.serif.com

Affinity Photo 2 is probably the best Photoshop alternative for those who want a one-time purchase program for photo editing and other image work. Getting it to use forever is the same price as seven months of Photoshop and Lightroom on the Photography Bundle, and for that you get a sophisticated editor with non-destructive workflow, layer editing, masking controls, and plenty more of the kinds of features photographers expect.

The program isn't the most immediately user-friendly for beginners, and you'll likely experience a bit of a learning curve if you're new to image editing. Once you get used to the way the program wants you to think and swapping between its different 'Personas' depending on the task you're performing, it does get much easier. One thing we particularly appreciated in our review was getting our heads around the adjustment presets, which let you save and re-use your favourite adjustments – a real time-saver for batch-editing.

Pros and Cons
- **+** Brilliant value for money
- **+** Photoshop-like interface and tools
- **–** No Lightroom-like cataloguing tools
- **–** Can be a steep learning curve

DxO PhotoLab

At a glance

- Raw workflow software
- Mac and Windows
- Elite edition $219 / £199; Essential edition $139/ £128
- dxo.com

This powerful software from DxO is especially potent for processing raw files. DxO's de-noising technologies, DeepPRIME and DeepPRIME XD provide huge benefit in terms of rescuing detail in shots that are suffering from a significant amount of digital noise owing to being shot at high ISOs. The process is fast and highly effective, able to turn shots you might have written off as irredeemably compromised into something you can make prints from.

If you're using an older camera that gets noisy very quickly when the ISO is turned up, PhotoLab could be an excellent way to extend its lease of life. We reviewed PhotoLab 6 Elite and were hugely impressed – and in even better news, DxO has just brought out PhotoLab 7 Elite, a new version with improved colour calibration tools. We'll be taking a closer look as soon as we can.

Pros and Cons
- **+** Extremely powerful noise-reduction tools
- **+** Extensive correction profiles for cameras and lenses
- **+** One-time purchase
- **–** Tricky interface

Skylum Luminar NEO

At a glance

- Photo-editing software with AI tools
- Mac and Windows (can also be used as a Photoshop/Lightroom plug-in)
- From $79 / £79 or $275 / £275 one-off
- skylum.com

While Skylum Luminar does have a subscription model, it also offers the option of a one-time-only lifetime purchase of the software. This will ultimately save you money in the long run, and there is a 30-day trial period in which you can get a refund if the software is not to your taste.

Skylum Luminar NEO is the latest iteration of a piece of software that's been around for some time – originally, the developer was named Macphun, and made products exclusively for Apple operating systems. These days, Skylum Luminar NEO is a program aiming to fulfil the roles of both Photoshop and Lightroom, with a full suite of photo-editing and photo-organising tools. It's stuffed with AI-powered tools like background removal and noise reduction, and also offers tons of presets for those who don't mind letting the program make a few editing decisions for them.

Pros and Cons
- **+** Fast AI-powered sky replacement
- **+** Lots of smart one-click adjustments
- **+** Both subscription and one-time-purchase options
- **–** AI tools can be unpredictable
- **–** Limited image-management functionality

BEST FREE PHOTO-EDITING SOFTWARE

If both the monthly subscriptions and one-time costs look out of reach for you, don't worry – there's lots of excellent free software out there for editing your photos.

© JON STAPLEY

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GIMP

At a glance

- Photo-editing and graphics software
- Windows, Mac and Linux
- Free and open-source
- gimp.org

The GNU Image Manipulation Program, commonly known by its acronym GIMP, is a free and open-source image editor that you can download, install and run in barely the time it would take to read this paragraph – no credit card required. GIMP has always been free, and is maintained by a devoted team of enthusiasts. It offers a powerful photo-editing suite to rival Photoshop or Affinity Photo, and there are tons of community-developed plug-ins that allow you to make it your own. It's infamously tricky to get to grips with – though recent updates have made it a lot more user-friendly than it once was.

Pros and Cons
- ✚ Completely free and powerful
- ✚ Highly customisable
- ✚ Regular updates
- ━ Tricky to use at first
- ━ Not many tutorials

RawTherapee

At a glance

- Raw conversion software
- Windows, Mac and Linux
- Free
- rawtherapee.com

When you first boot up RawTherapee, you might be a little overwhelmed at the complexity of what you're looking at. This free raw conversion software is not blessed with the most intuitive of interfaces, with tons of tool panels and a huge array of features. Geeks will be in heaven; normies might feel a bit overwhelmed. However, if you do want to wade into the ins and outs of raw processing and don't have cash to spend, the amount of power you get for free here is incredible. Bear in mind that updates for the software have slowed in recent years, with the last one coming in November 2022 – so if you have a newer camera, the software won't have specific profiles for it.

Pros and Cons
- ✚ Completely free
- ✚ Tons of options for processing raws
- ━ Overwhelming interface
- ━ Slow pace of updates

BEST MOBILE EDITING SOFTWARE

Most of us will take shots on our phone as well as our camera, and there are plenty of apps to help you kick your smartphone photography game up a notch. Here's our top pick for editing your photos on the go.

© ANDY WESTLAKE

Snapseed

At a glance

- Image-editing app
- iOS and Android
- Free
- Google Play / App Store

Snapseed is often regarded as the number one choice for photo editors on mobile, and while there are plenty of competitors out there, truthfully you're unlikely to go wrong with Snapseed. It's great. A completely free, Google-made app, available for both iPhone and Android devices, Snapseed puts a powerful and intuitive editor in the palm of your hand.

As well as standard tools like cropping and rotating images, Snapseed also enables Curves adjustments, with a range of presets available to make things easier. It's perfect both for those who want a streamlined, automated process, and for those who like to dive in deep and get granular with their adjustments. And – need we remind you – it's free!

Pros and Cons
- ✚ Free to use, with no strings
- ✚ Advanced adjustment options
- ✚ Useful presets
- ━ Slightly complex interface (but you'll get used to it)

The ten best
AI-powered tools

Get to know the finest tools Adobe Photoshop and Lightroom has to offer for photo editing in the age of AI. **James Paterson** is your guide

While many of us are rightly concerned about the impact of AI, not just on photography but on many aspects of modern life, there are plenty of ways in which it can aid our photo editing.

Over the past few years Photoshop and Lightroom have benefitted from a range of new AI-powered tools. Many of these employ machine learning to recognise and isolate objects in our photos like people or skies. As tools these are purely functional, speeding up processes that may have once taken us hours. Then there are the newer generative tools. This is probably the point where photography and AI go their separate ways, as generating new objects or scenes is more about prompt-ography than photography. Still, there's much fun and many advantages to be had from mastering the various AI-powered tools in Photoshop and Lightroom.

Here, in no particular order, are ten of the best tools…


BEFORE
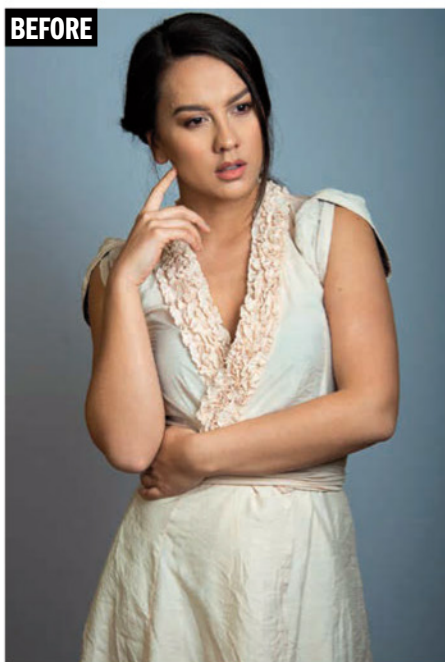
AFTER

AFTER

Generative Fill

Generative Fill is the big one, the first tool Photoshop offers that can generate images in a similar way to MidJourney or Dall-E. But the key difference is that you can work selectively in parts of an image, so you can use the Lasso tool, Quick Selection tool or Object Selection tool to make a rough selection, then simply type a text prompt and choose from three variations. The shape of the selection is important, as it dictates the shape of the object that is generated. Here, for instance, we made a precise selection of the subject's clothing then typed the prompt 'Vintage Red Dress' in the Contextual Toolbar (Window>Contextual Toolbar). Generative FIll is great at some things, like changing a person's clothes or adding accessories, but less so at other things like adding a completely new object to a scene. Sometimes the results are almost reassuringly bad – so much so, that as a photographer you feel that the day AI usurps photography for image creation is still some way away.
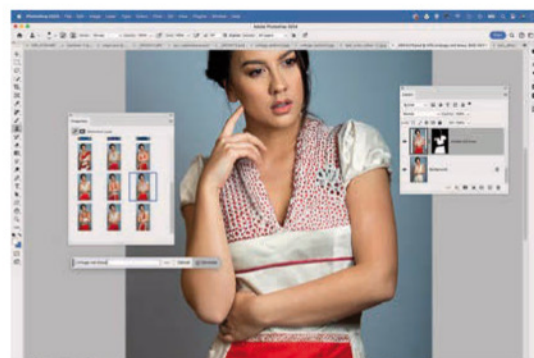
Generative Expand

This could be the one generative AI tool that photographers truly embrace. Have you ever photographed a scene and then, later on, wish that you'd left a little more room around the edges, perhaps for a different crop, or to straighten the horizon, or leave negative space for type? Generative Expand lets you crop outside of the original bounds of the image, and new content is generated to fill in the boundaries. You can either make a tiny adjustment, or experiment with vast expansions. The endless expand game can be fascinating. Simply grab the Crop tool in Photoshop and drag the crop box outside the original image. Set the Fill option to 'Generative Expand' at the top, then either choose one of the three variations generated, or hit the Generate button to try again.


BEFORE

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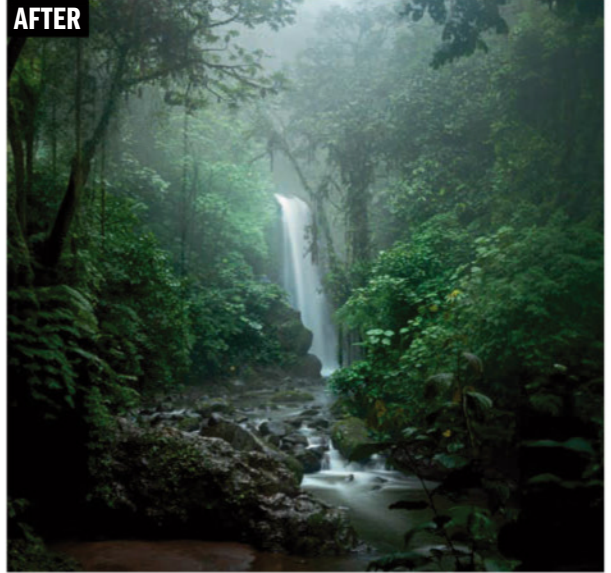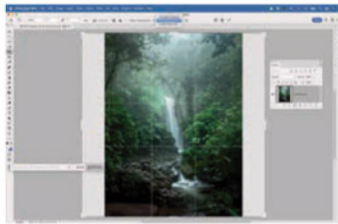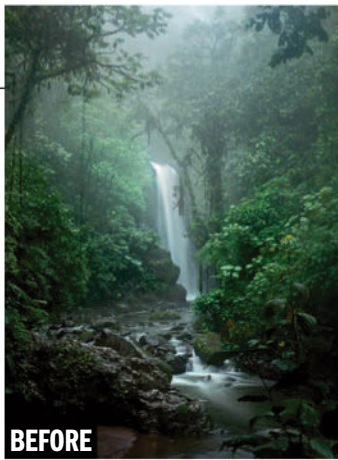
Sky Selection

The imbalance in brightness between land and sky has forever posed a challenge for photographers, but these days it takes mere seconds to correct our outdoor photos thanks to a range of intelligent sky-fixing tools. First there's the Sky Masking feature in Camera Raw/Lightroom Mask Panel. This is one of the best tools for clawing back detail in overexposed skies. Simply make a mask then lower Exposure and Highlights until the sky is improved (it's best to work with raw photos as they hold far greater highlight detail than JPEGs). There's a similar feature in Photoshop (Select>Sky) that automatically makes a selection for you.


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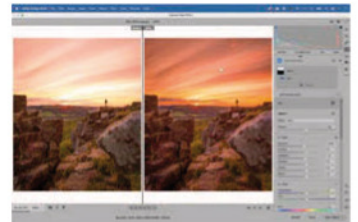
Sky Replacement

As well as sky selection tools there's also the slightly more contentious Sky Replacement feature (Edit>Sky Replacement). This will isolate the original sky for you and drop in a new one. You can choose from a range of default skies in the command, and find a wider selection by clicking the flyout menu and choosing 'Get More Skies'. But these skies will be used by all and sundry, so perhaps you're better off loading in your own original sky images. Click the plus icon in the skies dropdown and choose Import Skies.
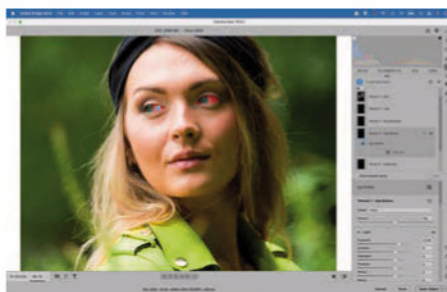

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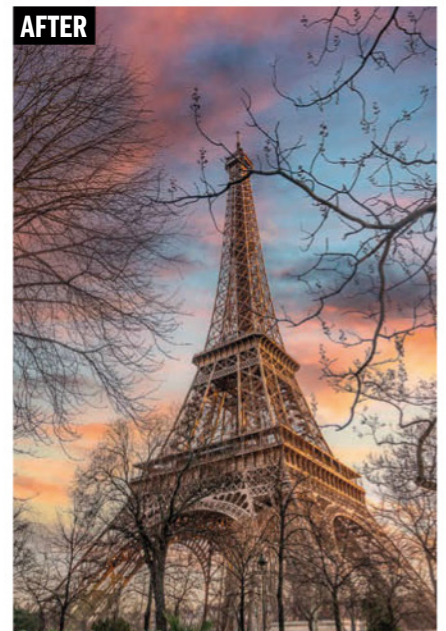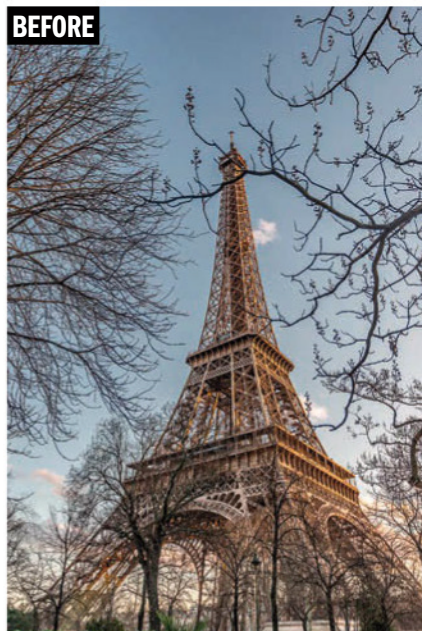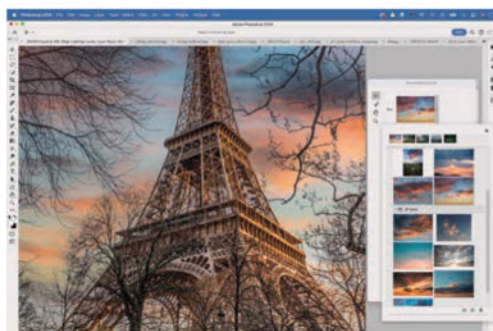
Select Subject

There's nothing sinister or threatening about this particular use of AI, it's just a really fantastic timesaver. No longer do we have to spend hours painstakingly cutting out areas or making precise selections. We just hit the Select Subject button. The button appears whenever a selection tool is active, and you can also go to Select>Subject. Once done, it's worth heading into the Select and Mask command (Select> Select and Mask) to check and improve the selection edge. If you're selecting a person, then try the Refine Hair button within the command. It can give you a much better selection around flyaway hairs and fuzzy edge details. As well as the Select Subject feature in Photoshop, you'll also find subject selection within Lightroom and Camera Raw's Masking tools. These make it a doddle to quickly create a mask over your subject, then make tonal adjustments to boost the area.

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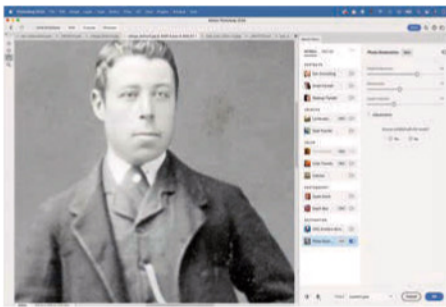

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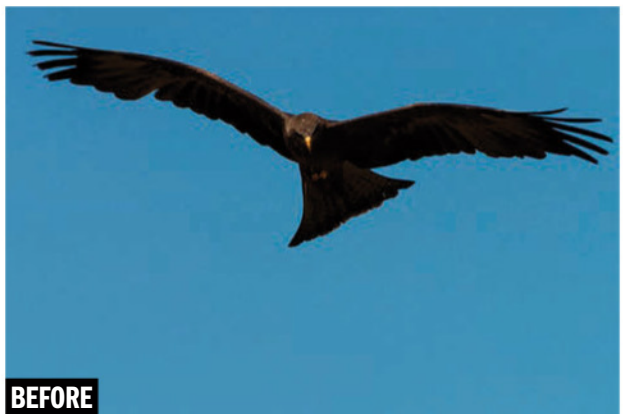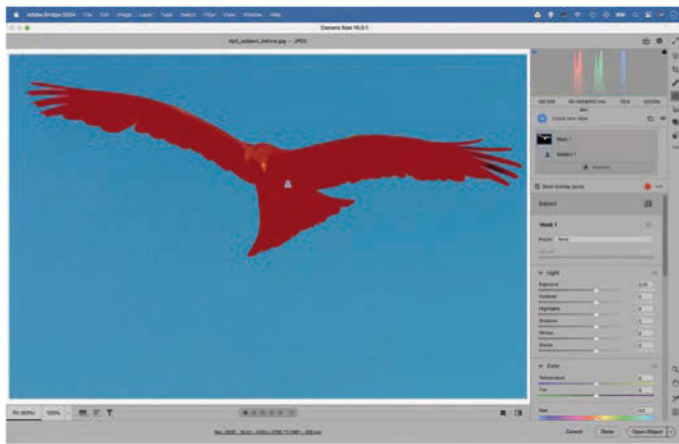
People Masking

Portrait retouching is one of the most monotonous of editing tasks, but thankfully machine-learning tools can speed things up for us. The portrait retoucher often needs to isolate parts of a face in order to make tailored adjustments to different areas, perhaps to lighten the whites of the eyes, soften the skin or add texture to the hair. In this regard the People Masking feature in Camera Raw and Lightroom is a huge timesaver. It automatically creates masks for these different parts of a face, so you can quickly apply tonal adjustments to them. Simply go to the Masks Panel, click on the person's face and choose which masks you want to generate (eg Facial Skin, Body Skin, Eyebrows, Eye Sclera, Iris, Lips, Teeth, Hair, Clothes). A touch of negative Texture can enhance skin but if you want more control, there's also the excellent Skin Soften Neural Filter in Photoshop (Filter>Neural Filters).


AFTER

**BEFORE**

BEFORE

AFTER

Photo Restoration

Few editing tasks are more rewarding than restoring old photos. Photoshop's Photo Restoration Neural Filter is a great aid for restoration work. Scan an old print, open it in Photoshop and go to Filter> Neural Filters then turn on the Photo Restoration filter. The feature is exceptionally good at enhancing facial details (although it's easy to push it too far). The Scratches slider is helpful as it seeks out and fixes dirt and scratches for you, which can save many hours of painful retouching. It's also worth experimenting with the Colorize Neural Filter, which applies an effect akin to hand-colouring in your old monochrome photos.

Adaptive Presets

Presets have long been one of the best things about Lightroom and Camera Raw. They allow you to save a set of adjustments made on one image and apply them to other images with a single click. The recently introduced Adaptive Presets go one step further, by allowing you to build AI-generated masks in your presets. So you can, for instance, make a preset to target and boost colours in a sky then apply it instantly to any other image with a sky. Simply go to the Masks Panel in Camera Raw or Lightroom, generate a mask to isolate something (you can make AI masks for Subject, Sky, Background and facial features). Once done, adjust the area using the tonal sliders, then head to the Preset Panel and click the New Preset icon to create your Adaptive Preset. You'll also find a range of inbuilt Adaptive Presets created by Adobe within the Preset Panel, under the headings Adaptive Portrait, Adaptive Subject and Adaptive Sky.

BEFORE

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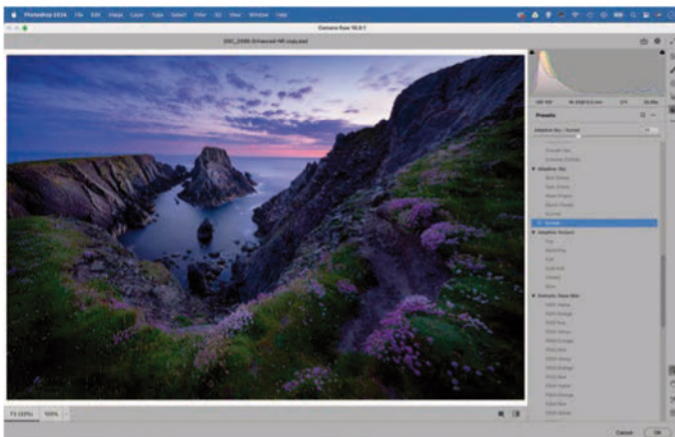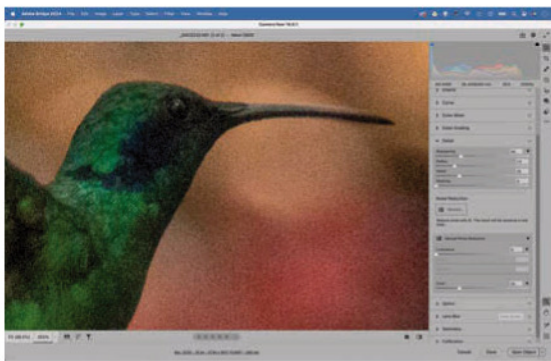
Denoise

Able to clean up noise to an astonishing degree, this is fast becoming my favourite AI-powered tool. If you have images shot at high ISOs then the Denoise button in the Camera Raw/Lightroom Detail Panel can vastly improve them. It goes beyond anything you could achieve with standard noise-reduction tools. Set Denoise going and a new DNG raw file will be generated alongside your original (it only works with raw files). It's especially brilliant when used on older photos. Try it out on an old photo shot at a high ISO like 6400 ISO and you're likely to be blown away by the results.
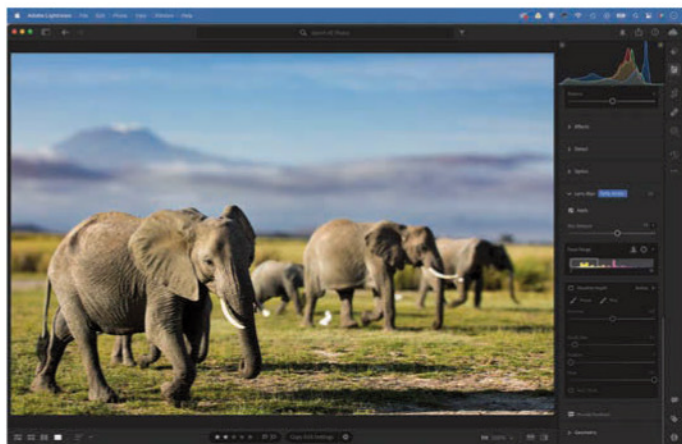
BEFORE

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BEFORE

Lens Blur

At the time of writing, this is Adobe's newest AI-powered photo editing tool. Found in Camera Raw and Lightroom, the new Lens Blur panel allows you to blur the foreground and background in your photos. It automatically creates a depth map for the scene, then applies realistic fall-off in front of and behind the point of focus. By default this point is where your main subject is, but you can target different parts of the scene to be 'in-focus' if you choose. Focal Range controls let you fine-tune the blur, so you can choose to have a very shallow depth of field, or leave more of the scene sharp. Focus and Blur brushes let you manually fine-tune the results.

AFTER

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5-minute **fixes**

Whatever creative styles you want to apply to your photos later, there are some basic fixes you need to do first. **Rod Lawton** explains

There are so many creative directions to choose for photos that it's easy to get lost in a sea of possibilities. But whatever you go on to do with your images, there is a set of basic image fixes that are an ideal starting point, whether or not you go on to do anything else.

There is a difference between creative styles and enhancements, and things that clearly just need fixing. This article is about those basic fixes, why they matter and how to do them. They centre on exposure, contrast and tones, colour (though that can also be a creative choice), geometry, such as image straightening and converging verticals, and clearing up any sensor spots, flaws or unwanted objects. You don't need to do all of these things to every image, and you might not need to do any of them but they are a handy little checklist to go through. Rather than adopting a strict image-fixing workflow, you might want to try a 'worst-things-first' approach instead.

The other advantage of this worst-things-first approach is that it's the quickest way to find out if a photo has the technical quality, composition or visual impact to make it worth taking further.

BEFORE

Shadow and highlight recovery in raw

Raw files have a major advantage over JPEGs – they have extended shadow and highlight detail which you can recover (above right) in programs like Lightroom. This process is not possible with JPEG images because with JPEGs if the detail is not visible, it's been lost for good. If you open a raw file, however, and see perhaps that the brightest parts of the sky are washed out or that the shadows are too dark for any detail to be visible, you can use your software's Highlight and Shadow sliders to bring it back. If you use Lightroom, for example, there's a very quick way to extract extra shadow and highlight detail – use the Auto button in the Basic panel. This is a fast and efficient way to find out if a raw file has the tonal range you need to take it any further. If it does, that's great. If not, it's better to find out right at the start.

White balance blues

Sometimes a camera's white balance set doesn't do the colours in the scene justice, but shooting raw lets you choose a better white balance later, as raw files retain all the colour information captured by the sensor. If you shoot JPEGs, the camera will use the white balance setting you chose on the camera to fix the colours to that setting, but raw files simply record the white balance setting with the file that you can change later. Your image's white balance can be wrong for a couple of reasons. Sometimes the camera's white balance setting doesn't fully correct for different light sources, and sometimes its auto white balance can 'correct' colours that were part of the picture. With a golden sunset or the blue hour before dawn, the colour is essential to the scene. You can even exaggerate it by using a higher white balance colour temperature setting for warmer sunsets or a lower colour temperature for colder dawns.

Images don't always come out of the camera as we'd hoped. This raw file was flat and underexposed, the colours were bad and there was flare and dust spots in the sky. Our five-minute fixes have turned it all around in… well… five minutes

AFTER

Using curves for contrast

A simple S-shaped curves adjustment can transform flat-looking images (above left), boosting contrast and colour at the same time (above right). Digital photos can be an accurate record of the scene, but sometimes they lack any real impact or depth. One of the best tools for fixing this is curves. It's a favourite tool with photographers because of the control it offers. The image curve starts out as a straight line, but you can add control points and change it into different curve shapes. The classic fix for low-contrast images is the 'S' curve – where you add a control point near the bottom of the curve and drag it downwards, and another near the top and drag it upwards. This makes shadows darker and highlights brighter, while making the curve steeper in the centre section where the middle tones of the image are located. Where the curve is steeper, you get an increase in contrast and, as a side effect, in saturation too.
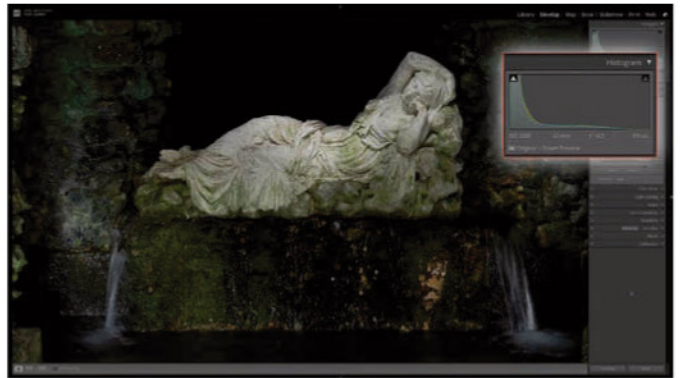
What the histogram can tell you

You can learn a lot from your photo editor's histogram display. In this case, above, it's cut off or 'clipped' at the left-hand (shadow) end of the scale – but for this photo, it's perfectly fine. You'll see histograms everywhere in digital photography, on the back of the camera and in your editing software. The histogram displays a graphical representation of the brightness distribution of the pixels in your image, from the darkest tones at the far left to the brightest at the far right. You can learn a lot from it. If the histogram is cut off abruptly at either end of the scale, it means that shadow or highlight information has been 'clipped', and if shadow and highlight adjustments can't bring it back, it means it's lost for good. Alternatively, if the histogram tails off to zero before reaching the end points of the chart, it means you have extra contrast to play with. You can boost the image contrast, or change the exposure, without 'clipping' any of the tones.

Spots before your eyes?

Dust spots can be a problem with any DSLR or mirrorless camera. They can be cloned out or 'healed' easily in software. Lightroom even has a 'dust visualisation' mode.

Sensor spots have been an issue since the dawn of interchangeable-lens digital cameras. Tiny specks of dust on the sensor can show up as diffuse dark discs on the image. Sometimes they're not visible until you start carrying out more extreme tonal adjustments. Cameras do have in-built dust removal mechanisms but if some dust specks still get through it's easy enough to remove them in a program like Lightroom with its Spot Removal tool, especially with its new content-aware spot removal option. The latest version of Capture One has a very clever AI spot removal tool which can find and blot out spots automatically. Whatever software you use, dust spot removal is usually a pretty simple operation. Even if it seems a bit tedious, it does need doing, and if you have dust spots or – worse still – fibres, over areas of the image where they can't easily be fixed, it's best to find out now.

Straighten up!

If you see an object or scene that should be straight but isn't, that's always going to jar. It's worth spending a couple of minutes straightening horizons and correcting converging verticals.

The difference between a professional-looking image and an amateur one is often quite subtle, and for this we're going to group a bunch of things under the heading of 'geometry'. If a photo has a skewed horizon, that's a pretty obvious geometry error that needs fixing, and any photo editor will have a straightening tool to fix this. But perspective distortion is a subtler geometry problem that can be just as important. You can get converging verticals from tilting the camera to capture a tall building, or skewed horizontals and verticals when you photograph a building facade or any other rectangular object. If you use perspective effects clearly and on purpose as part of the composition, that's fine, but small deviations where things should be perfectly horizontal and vertical can really grate. Fortunately, most photo editors have perspective tools to fix this, and the Transform panel in Lightroom is especially effective because it can identify and fix many perspective issues automatically.

Cut the clutter

If you've got unwanted passers-by in your photo, you can take them out. Cloning and healing tools work well, but Photoshop's latest Generative Fill is spectacularly effective at removing objects as if they had never existed.

We generally have a particular idea about how we want our photos to look and what we want to include in a scene, but the world often has other ideas. Outdoor shots can easily be ruined by signs, passers-by, rubbish bins and other unwanted objects. If you've got an otherwise great image that's spoiled by unwanted intrusions, it's a good idea to see if you can clone them out right at the start. If you can't, then you'll probably be wasting a lot of time on more advanced creative techniques and you might be better off working on a different image. Photoshop's clone stamp tool is an excellent manual option, but these days there are quicker alternatives, such as Affinity Photo's inpainting tool or Photoshop's new Generative Fill options. If you're working in Lightroom, you might be surprised just how effective its Spot Removal options are at removing unwanted objects from your photos.
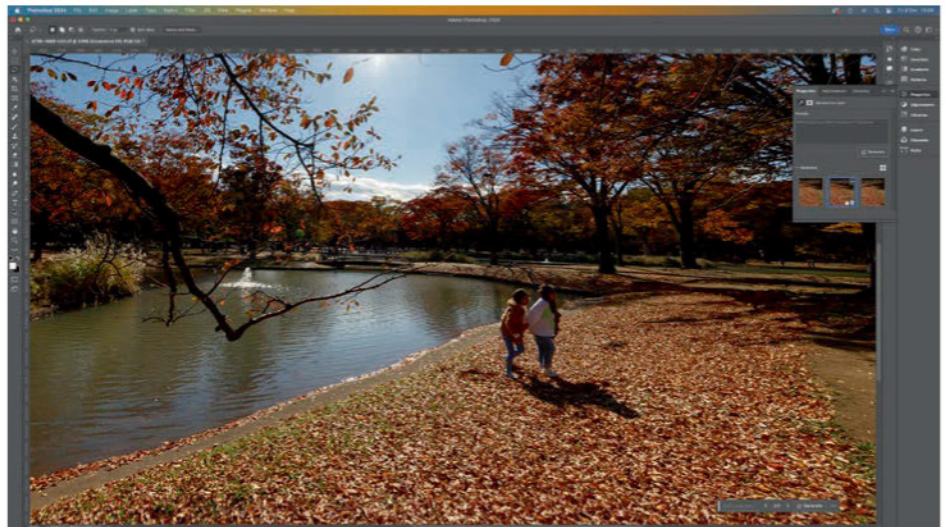
Local issues

Bright skies are a constant issue in landscape photography, but you can use a graduated mask to reduce the exposure for the sky when processing a raw image, recovering the extra brightness data in the file without affecting the rest of the photo.

As a rule, you might want to make any local adjustments to different parts of your photo later on, but sometimes it's pretty obvious that you need to do something right at the start. This happens most often with landscape shots where you have a really bright sky that's several f-stops brighter than the landscape below. Here, you can apply a graduated filter, or mask, to the sky and reduce the exposure just for that area. In a program like Lightroom, where there is no separate raw processing phase, this can wait, but if you are in a program like Photoshop or Affinity Photo, where raw processing is at the start of the workflow, it's best to apply any essential local adjustments right at the start while you still have the raw image data to work with. (Actually, you can embed and keep editing raw images in both programs, but that's getting into more complicated territory.)

This is also another opportunity to check that the photo does have the tonal range you need to turn it into a successful image – and that is a key point for all these five-minute fixes. They don't just fix what needs fixing, they check that the image has the technical quality to make a great photo.

Flawless
retouching

For a seamless workflow, make use of Adobe Bridge to organise your images before retouching your favourites in Photoshop. Fashion and beauty photographer **Jade Keshia Gordon** explains how

BEFORE

Jade Keshia Gordon

Jade is a fashion and beauty photographer based in London. She has 13 years of experience as a photographer and five years' experience as a retoucher. During this time Jade has found a formula that works for her and her line of work. Over the past four years she has developed a love of teaching and offers an array of courses under her masterclass division. See **www.jkgphotography.co.uk**, **www.jkgmasterclass.com** and **Instagram @jkgphotography**

Adobe Bridge and Adobe Photoshop are two integral components of Adobe's Creative Cloud suite, seamlessly working together to streamline the creative workflow photography package which includes Bridge, Photoshop and Lightroom, the holy grail of retouching in my opinion.

When I first started using Bridge the main reason was to sort through my images, which was something that became very hard when I had first purchased a MacBook because it wasn't as simple as deleting images. But I quickly realised that there was so much that could be done with the application. Adobe Bridge serves as a digital asset management platform, providing a hub for organising, browsing, and managing media files. But Adobe Photoshop stands as the photography standard image-editing software, offering a wide variety of powerful tools for graphic design, photo retouching, and creative expression.

Adobe Bridge acts as a digital bridge between various Adobe applications, and it plays a crucial role in managing and organising multimedia assets. With its user-friendly interface, Adobe Bridge allows users to effortlessly browse through folders and preview files before opening them in other Adobe applications. This allows efficiency when locating the right files, saving valuable time. The software supports a wide range of file formats, including images, videos, and Adobe Creative Cloud files, making it usable for all creative professionals. One of the highlight

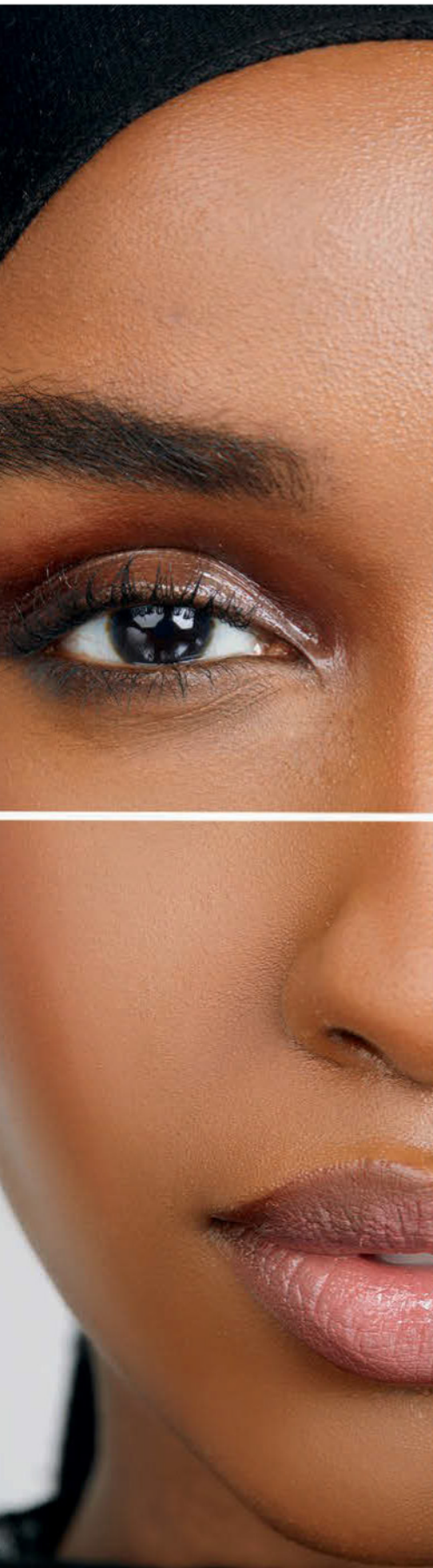**Photoshop offers a variety of powerful tools for beauty portrait retouching**
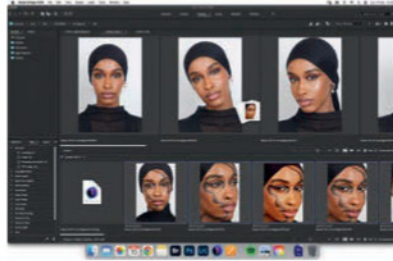Canon EOS 5D Mark IV, 100mm, 1/125sec at f/9, ISO 50

AFTER

GET THE MOST OUT OF ADOBE BRIDGE

Adobe Bridge is a creative asset manager that lets you preview, organise, edit, and publish multiple creative assets quickly and easily. It's also a way to show images to your clients if they want to choose their images straight after the shoot.

Culling

When you have just finished a shoot the first thing that you want to do is go through your images and select the most successful shots. Using an application like Bridge allows you to do that freely, especially on an OS system which makes deleting or rearranging images in the finder difficult.

Rating tool

This is a tool that I truly believe helps speed up your workflow. When you have lots of images to sort through, it helps to star or 'rate' the images in importance value by pressing numbers 1-5. Another great thing about this is that if you star an image on your camera it will show up in Bridge.

Labels

If you are someone who likes to manage your workflow beyond just ratings, then labels would be the next step for you. You can label images for different stages of the editing process. Select is red (CTRL+6/Apple key+6), Second is yellow (7), Approved is green (8), Review is Blue (9), and To Do is Lilac.

Tabs and creating contacts

When working in Bridge it's always helpful to be able to work in tabs – you could be culling in one tab and viewing the rated images in another. If you need to send images to clients before retouching, you can create contact sheets to save you sending hundreds of images over.

Update the metadata

On your camera(s) you can add your copyright information, but there are times when you might forget to set it up, such as borrowing a camera or buying a new one. You can highlight all the images in Bridge and edit the metadata that way. Don't forget to include all your business details, including your website and address.
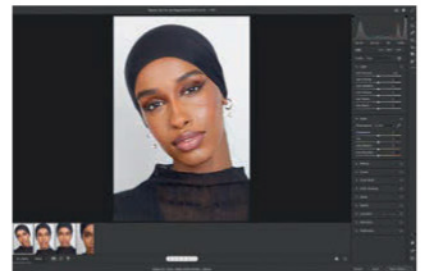
Open images in ACR

Adobe Camera Raw (ACR) is great for flexibility. I tend to use it to apply a basic edit to a batch of images that need to be created into a contact sheet. It's also useful for applying quick corrections to exposure and colour, for example, before opening into Photoshop for more detailed editing if you want to bypass Lightroom.

features of Adobe Bridge is its robust batch-processing capabilities. Users can apply metadata, keywords, and labels to multiple files simultaneously, streamlining the organisation process. This makes it easy to arrange and search for files later.

When it comes to enhancing and manipulating images, Adobe Photoshop is the leader. Known for its array of tools, Photoshop allows users to unleash their creativity and turn their ideas into reality. Whether it's retouching photos, creating detailed digital paintings, Photoshop provides the tools needed to achieve professional results. One of the key things about Photoshop is its versatility. From basic tasks like cropping and resizing to advanced techniques such as compositing, Photoshop caters to the diverse needs of creative professionals. The inclusion of features like Content-Aware Fill and the Healing Brush shows Adobe's commitment to innovation, making complex tasks easier with a click of a button or tool.

In conclusion, Adobe Bridge serves as the organisational platform, simplifying the management of multimedia assets and enhancing collaboration among creative professionals. Meanwhile, Adobe Photoshop stands as the go-to for image editing, providing a rich set of features to bring creative visions to life. Together, these applications form a solid system that encourages users to achieve their creative goals efficiently and with unmatched precision. Whether you're a photographer, designer, or digital artist, the seamless integration of Adobe Bridge and Adobe Photoshop offers a comprehensive solution for all your creative needs.

Frequency separation is a clever retouching technique that separates an image into two layers, one for colour (low) and the other for texture detail (high)
Canon EOS 5D Mark IV, 100mm, 1/125sec at f/10, ISO 50

JADE'S HANDY PHOTOSHOP TIPS
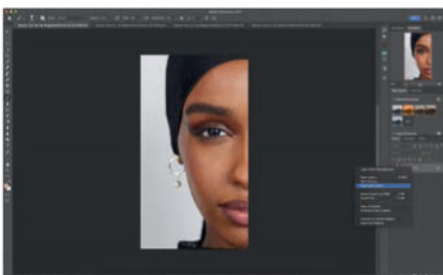
Create a copy
Drag the image(s) you want to work on from Adobe Bridge into Photoshop and begin by creating a copy of the image you're working on by duplicating the layer. This enables you to delete this copied layer if you make a mistake that's not fixable, rather than having to start from scratch. It's a good habit to get into as soon as you start work on any image.
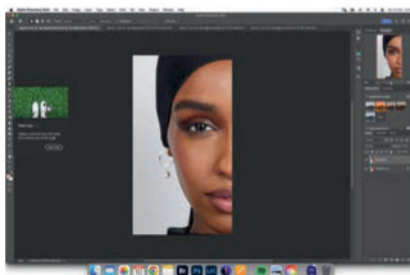
Remove blemishes
In order to have a clean canvas I like to remove any blemishes from the skin and any other distracting marks on the clothing and background. Removing blemishes can be done by using the Patch tool. This tool allows you to drag an area with blemishes to an area that doesn't, which will then replicate on the original section.
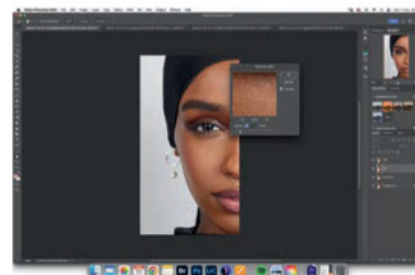
Frequency separation
Create a copy of your working layer and name it 'high' and the original layer, 'low'. Click on the 'low' layer, go to Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur and select 6.0 depending on the sharpness. Select 'high' layer, go to Image>Apply Image>RGB>Blending Subtract>Opacity 100%>Scale 2>Offset 128 (8 bit) and Invert>Blending Add>Scale 2>Offset 0 (16 bit). Set the blend mode to Linear Light and group 'low' and 'high' layers together.
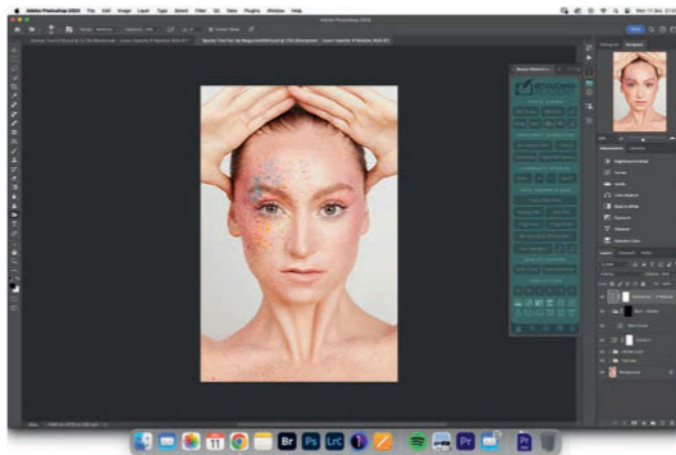
The importance of using Layers

In Adobe Photoshop, using layers is key to achieving precision and flexibility in image editing. Layers act as virtual transparencies stacked on top of each other, allowing users to isolate and manipulate certain elements without affecting the entire image. This approach enables seamless experimentation and adjustments, as each layer preserves the original content. From basic tasks like organising elements to advanced techniques, such as blending modes and opacity adjustments, layers offer unmatched control over the composition. Users can easily rearrange, hide, or apply various effects to individual layers, fostering a dynamic and literative creative process. Whether creating complex graphics, retouching photos, or designing intricate compositions, harnessing the power of layers in Adobe Photoshop is the key to achieving professional and visually compelling results in photography.

The Retouching Academy plug-in in Photoshop helps to speed up your retouching workflow
Canon EOS 5D Mark IV, 100mm, 1/125sec at f/9, ISO 50
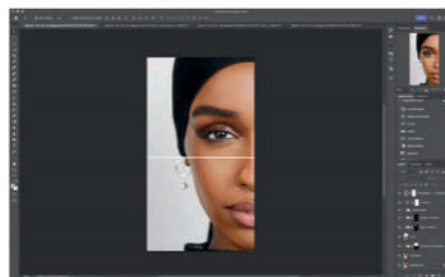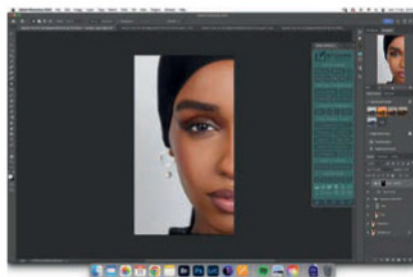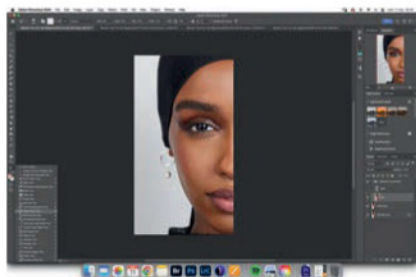
Retouching

Get your mixer brush tool, set opacity to 0 and the other options in this order 9%, 75%, 90%, 100%. Turn off your 'high' layer and the image will be slightly blurry, that's perfectly normal. Zoom into your subject's face and paint over the face being careful not to ruin the contour that's been created by the make-up artist. Keep doing this until the face and body is smooth. Reveal the 'high' layer and you should have a retouched image.

Burn

After retouching you may notice that you've lost some of the darker areas around the face; this where you can use the burn technique to integrate these back into the image. You can either use the Burn tool – ie, Select Range - Midtones and set Exposure to 10% and make sure protect tones is checked. Or you can use the Burn option from Retouching Academy by using the Brush tool to paint those tones back in.

Colour grading

This is probably my favourite step, colour grading your image, as I truly believe this step really brings everything together. I use a helpful plug-in called 'Infinite Tools' which helps you break down each section of colour grading. I would advise you to start colour grading without any plug-ins first, to get used to it. But once you become more experienced, plug-ins are very helpful.

Capture this!

Beauty and fashion photographer April Alexander explains why she uses Capture One for her professional portraiture workflow

If you were to ask a Capture One user why you should use Capture One Pro over any other colour grading software on the market, I'm certain one of the first responses would be because it's 'industry standard'. But what does this mean, does it matter and in a world where we as consumers want more bang for our buck, is it worth the price-tag?

Since Capture One's inception in 1994, the software has undoubtedly remained one of the most sought-after editing programs in the photography industry. This, in my opinion, is largely due to not only its ease of use but also its consistent ability to produce faultless colour grading features that professional as well as hobbyist photographers can take advantage of to enhance their work.

Newcomers to the interface may be a little intimidated by the vast number of toggles and functions available for use. However, I found that after scouring YouTube and finding countless tutorials on how to better optimise Capture One's features and customise its interface for my intended workflow, utilising the software honestly became a walk in the park.

April Alexander

April Alexander is an official Nikon Europe partner based in south-east London. April has a background in portrait, beauty, and fashion photography and has been in the fashion industry for over 15 years. She has had work featured in *Glamour* magazine, Adobe UK and Capture One, and in 2023 was exhibited at The Photography Show and also Fujifilm House of Photography.
Visit **www.aprilalexander.co.uk @byaprilalexander**

So, what does 'Industry Standard' mean anyway?

Generally, this term is code for being the preferred choice in the professional photography industry, especially amongst commercial and studio photographers on set. Most photographic studios are subscribed to Capture One for the advanced raw processing capabilities, colour grading tools and fast-paced tethered shooting features. Some would argue that, should you desire to transition into a working commercial or studio photographer, securing high-end clients, you would need to become familiar with at least the basic Capture One tools. Let's say the client does not have the additional budget needed for a DigiTech – then, the responsibility will indeed fall onto you, the photographer, to be able to deliver any post-processing requests confidently on the day without hiccups or prolonged delays. That's not to say you won't be able to get by in your career without knowing the Capture One software at all, however investing in some knowledge will most definitely be a beneficial asset to your skillset rather than a deterrent.

MODEL: AYESHA MARR

Left and right: Capture One tends to be the software of choice for many commercial and studio photographers

MODEL: AYESHA MARR

MODEL: CURTIS REID

MODEL: CURTIS REID
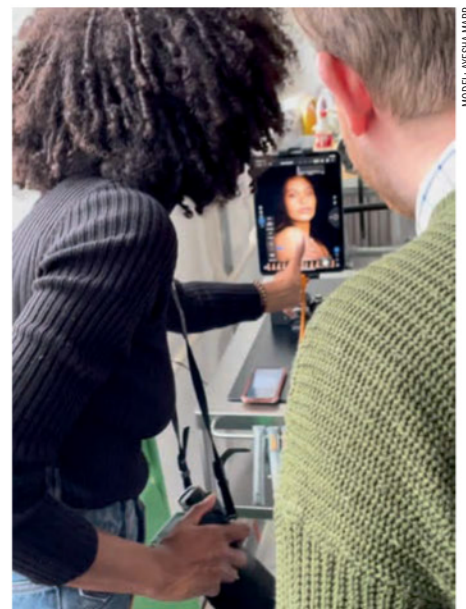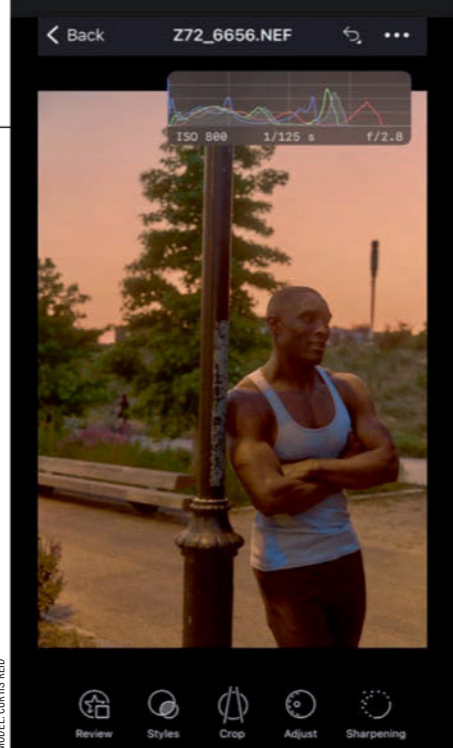
Capture One iOS app

In my opinion the iOS app (sorry, Android users) is a great option for documentary, street, event or even portrait photographers who shoot and edit on the go and need to present edited images to their clients pronto. I used the Capture One for iPhone app for the first time professionally last summer when I was working with Nikon Europe at The Open Championship in Liverpool. I loved being able to have all my own custom Styles in the palm of my hand (which can easily be imported from your desktop simply by airdropping) meanwhile not compromising too much on my usual high-quality edits.

Although the Capture One iOS app doesn't currently have all the features such as masks, levels and layers akin to what the desktop version offers, having the ability to save colour-graded images to the cloud, enabling you to access the files to continue working on them later with all features on the desktop – is such a timesaver.

TETHERING TO CAPTURE ONE DEVICES

With Capture One for iPad and iPhone incorporating tethered shooting as a function to their devices, tethering has just become more accessible on the move. Not to mention, amid the upcoming inclusion of the new ReTether function, those who despise a wired connection but still want to view their images on a larger screen are about to get even more freedom to move and create without being tied down. ReTether will allow photographers to unplug their tethering cables, continue shooting, plug in again and all the in-camera shots will instantly be transferred into Capture One Pro with all previous desktop/in-app adjustments automatically applied. I'm looking forward to utilising this particular feature, as mistakenly tripping over tethering cables is a huge safety risk. At present this feature is available to Nikon and Canon users exclusively.

Capture One's enterprise development

To say that 2023 was an incredibly busy year for the team over at Capture One would be an understatement. They successfully launched the Capture One for iPhone iOS app, Capture One Live remote client collaboration feature and added tethering updates for both Capture One for iPad and iPhone. I was one of the lucky few to test all the new features in their beta subscription, giving my feedback on usability and any functions I believed could do with enhancing before becoming readily available to the mainstream market. Overall, I felt as a portrait and fashion photographer these updates were a well overdue but welcome addition to the family that will make my own and many other photographers' lives easier post pandemic.

Capture One Live

The Capture One Live feature was yet another addition this year that I felt positively impacted professional photographers the most post pandemic. In the past, should an integral member of the team or the client be unable to attend the shoot day, the project most likely would need to be postponed. However, with Capture One Live giving us the ability to connect with our team/clients remotely as we shoot tethered, receiving feedback and instant access to view, rate and tag images as we go, it has made all the difference to general workflow and productivity. Fewer cancelled shoots and more international clients equals added revenue for us – I see that as a win! What's even more impressive about this feature is that your clients do not need to be subscribed to Capture One themselves to be able to access the live session. They will be notified of the session by a direct email invitation link straight from you via the application. Alternatively, you can copy the link in the app, which gives you several permission options to choose from and send it to the client yourself. It's as simple as that!
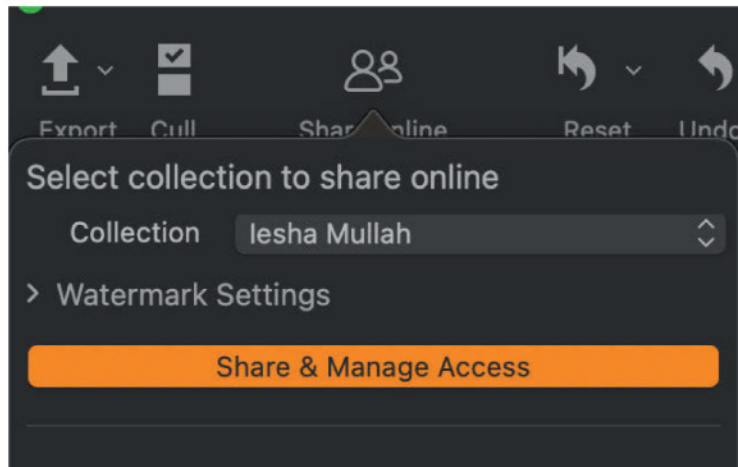
Capture One allows you to share a collection of images with clients

MODEL: IESHA MULLAH

CAPTURE ONE: PRICE PLANS

The All-in-One Bundle subscription, which works out as the best value offered by Capture One, is £21.58 per month (billed yearly) or £34 per month (billed monthly) and includes Capture One Pro on desktop, Capture One mobile (the iPad & iPhone app), Capture One Live Unlimited and priority support.

Then you have Capture One Pro on desktop which is £14.92 per month (billed yearly) or £24 per month (billed monthly). This includes full access to Capture One Pro on desktop, all new feature updates, and simple image sharing with the free version of Capture One Live.

Capture One also offers a Perpetual Licence of Capture One Pro for £299 including a one-time payment to own the latest version of Capture One Pro on desktop, a saving on every new license

purchase and simple image sharing with the free version of Capture One Live.

Alternatively, you could also subscribe to Capture One Mobile (iPad and iPhone) for £4.99 per month but both apps, as mentioned previously, do not include all of the features that Capture One Pro on desktop has, so although it is cheaper, there is a very valid reason for the lower price.

MODEL: IESHA MULLAH

MODEL: IESHA MULLAH
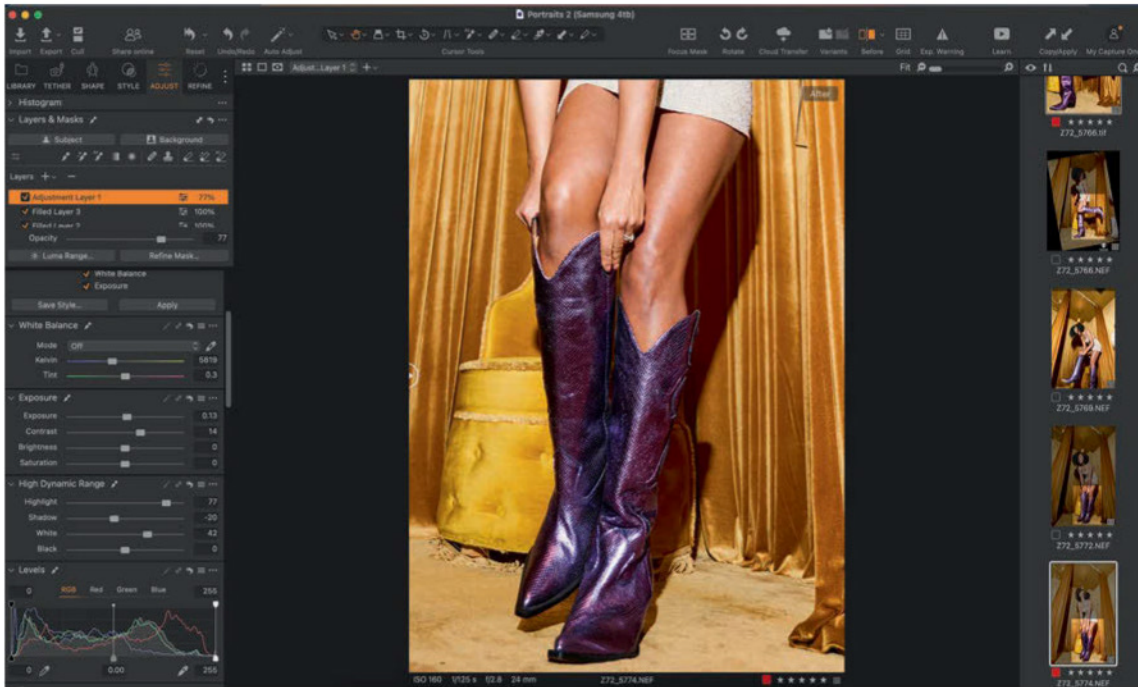
Left, both pictures: Capture One has recently introduced AI masking tools which may attract photographers who were previously reluctant to use the software
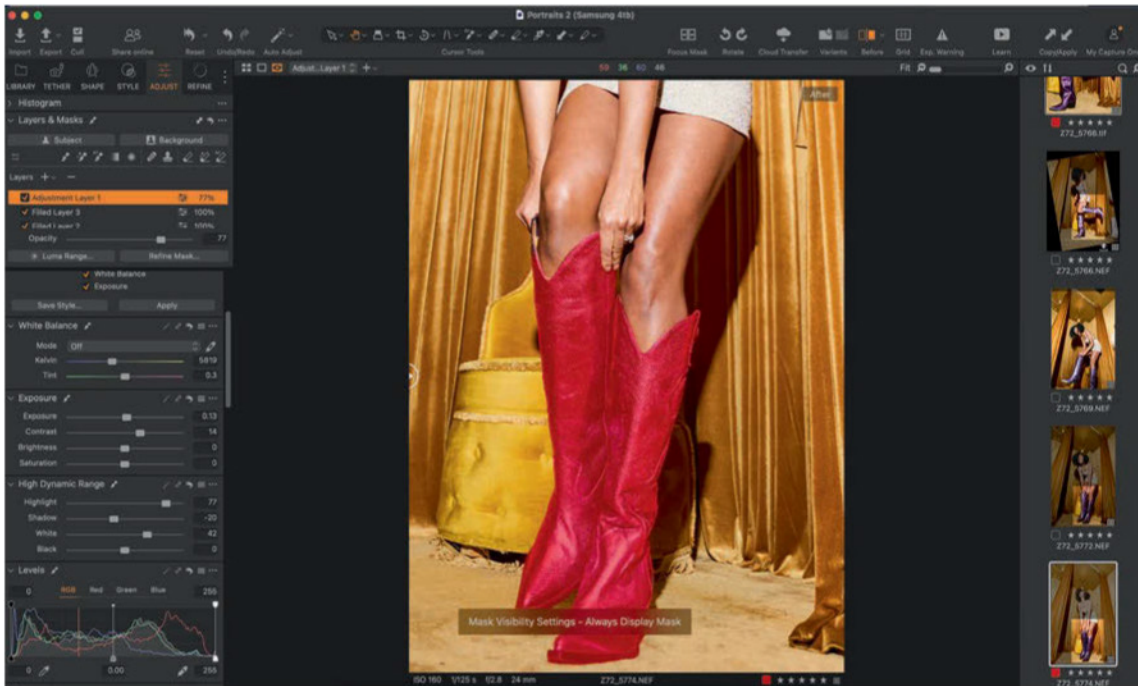
AI Masking and Layers

In my opinion, one reason some photographers have been reluctant to use Capture One is owing to manually adding and removing masks with the brush tool instead of being able to utilise AI. Thankfully, AI masking is finally an option in Capture One and although it's not perfect, it has a lot of promise and I'm intrigued to see where future updates will take this tool. Nevertheless, this addition will cut down editing time for a lot of photographers, who may use a combination of subscriptions to edit their images. Which makes me wonder, are these updates a sign to switch over to Capture One for everything?

After all, Capture One's heal and clone brushes for skin retouching and object removal are incredibly intuitive, one can use Capture One's built-in dodge and burn style brushes and create custom colour-

grading Styles using, in my opinion, the most advanced colour-grading system on the market. An honourable mention has to be for its impressive Smart Adjustment Tool, enabling you to create a consistent look across your collection of images regardless of varied lighting conditions, by automatically adjusting exposure and white balance to create a cohesive-looking story. And finally, it goes without saying that its skin tone editing capabilities give its user complete control when creating true-to-life skin tones, especially for accurate deeper and darker skin types. A lot of photographers forget that there are undertones to all of our skin tones and Capture One allows you to almost break down the colours individually and piece the colours back together to create an incredibly vibrant image that looks enhanced but completely natural if used accurately.
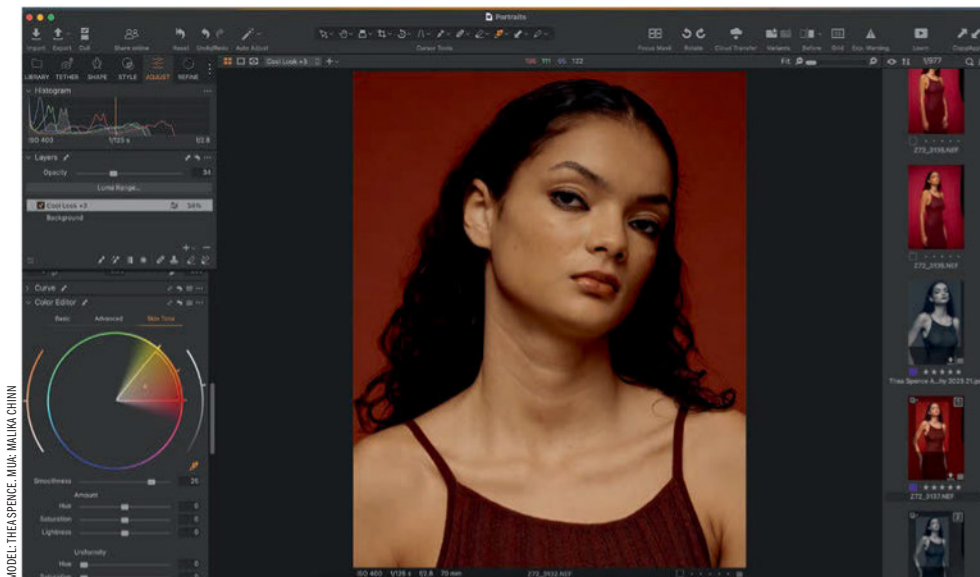
MODEL: THEA SPENCE. MUA: MALIKA CHINN

Colour Grading

When colour-grading darker skin tones the Color Editor tab will be your best friend. I use this section every time I colour grade my clients to ensure that I have more of a customised edit specific to their skin tone. Using the color picker under the Skin Tone tab, click on a section of the skin you wish to correct and then use the Hue, Saturation and Lightness bars to tweak from there. You can move into the Basic or Advanced tabs to have even more distinct colours. Should you want to go a step further and add more dimension to the skin tone, head to the Color Balance section. Here you can add colour to the Midtones, Highlights and Shadows either globally or if you have the skin masked out using the new AI Mask brush, you can add these just to the skin itself.

My Go-to Tools and why I use Capture One

The features in Capture One I find myself gravitating towards to edit and colour grade my images are the Smart Adjustment Tool, Color Editor, Colour Balance and High Dynamic Range features. These tools are my staples to creating the colours that so many of my clients hire me for. I use a variety of these tools in conjunction with one another to add depth and dimension to my images. By mixing unlikely shades together and fundamentally, continuously experimenting, is how I have been able to find what I believe to be my distinctive style.
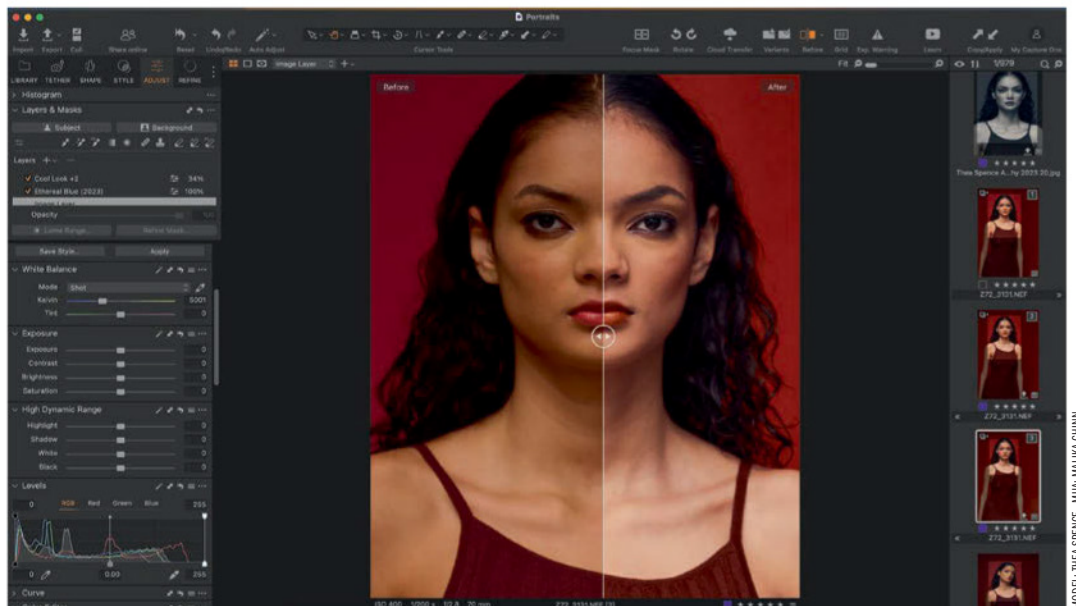
MODEL: THEA SPENCE. MUA: MALIKA CHINN

FINAL THOUGHTS ON CAPTURE ONE...

With all that being said, if you have been deliberating on whether to switch to Capture One over any other editing software, I'd say only invest in yourself if you're ready for the quality of your work to significantly improve. I have been using Capture One since 2018 but I'd say I really grew to understand the vast capabilities that the software had to offer from 2020. Which coincidentally, coincided with when I decided to take my professional photography career to the next level. Since then, I have been able to create a style that elevated my online presence, enabling me to not only work with photography brands I had previously looked up to but also be considered for and book incredible portrait, print and commercial commissions.

Clients buy into how you're able to capture and enhance your subject while still ensuring they look authentically themselves. Personally, I feel the colour profile capabilities Capture One demonstrates, enable you to do just that but on a much more professional level compared to competing software options.

Furthermore, another aspect Capture One has down to a science is its continued and active support to its consumers. And we all know how important it is feeling supported by a community you have readily invested in. Capture One having an engaged social media team who are steadily on hand to support with troubleshooting queries from novices all the way to professional photographers

via its growing online community is incredibly comforting. The online support team upload free tutorials almost weekly and free live seminars on their official YouTube Channel which I fervently exploit. They go into meticulous detail regarding all the new updates and features that have gone live, which for someone who is more of a visual learner, I find incredibly helpful!

So, to conclude, yes, the subscription isn't the cheapest but I feel that – for what you receive in return from Capture One in regards to free online support, multiple device access, professional grade quality and now AI editing – it is well worth the investment!

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Lighten up your workflow

Confused about what Lightroom versions are on offer and which one you need? **Callum McInerney-Riley** explains all you need to know


Callum McInerney-Riley

Callum McInerney-Riley has been a Technical Writer at *Amateur Photographer*, reviewing cameras and accessories. A keen photographer for over 15 years, he now runs a company that creates photography and video content for a host of large brands. **www.primecreative.io**

First released back in 2007, Adobe Lightroom has been with me for almost all of my career as a photographer. Once I realised how much easier Lightroom was compared to opening multiple adjustment layers in Photoshop – I was converted. Also, being able to copy and paste the edit to your next image is just brilliant and allows you to develop your own style. Fast-forward to 2024 and Lightroom is my go-to software for everything photo-related.

Lightroom has evolved with technology and as a result, there are now two desktop versions and a mobile app too. The latest versions are bolstered with technological advancements, including AI, machine learning, and processing power trickery that makes the Lightroom experience better than ever. Let's take a closer look at what each version is, who it's for, and why it's useful.
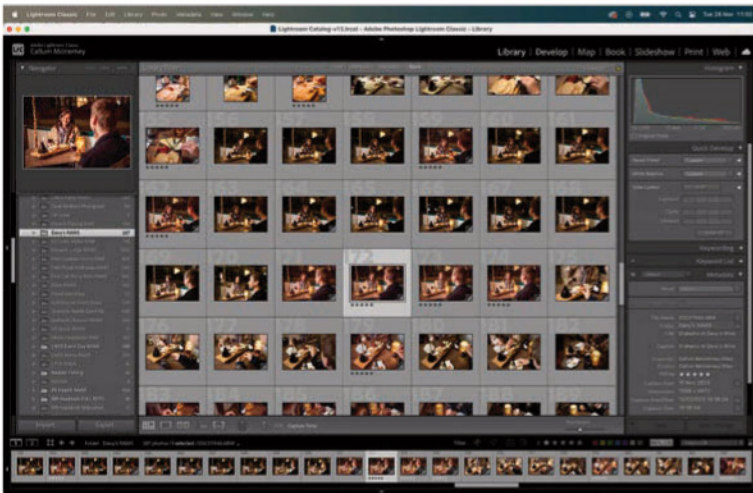
Left: Lightroom Classic
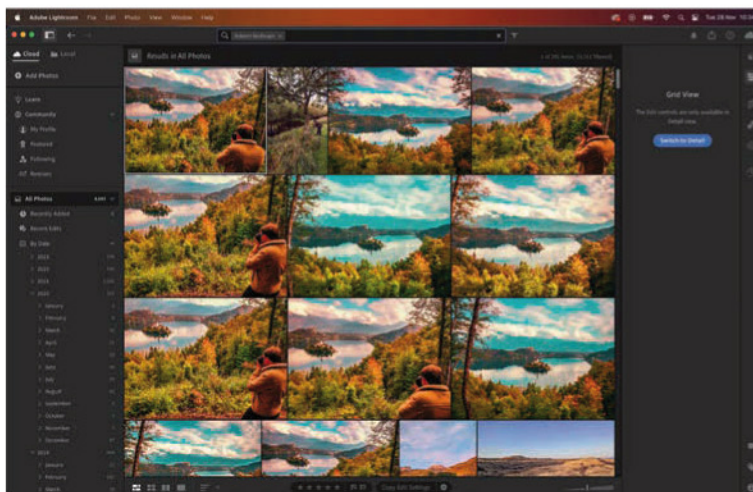
Right: Lightroom

Above: Lightroom mobile

Adobe Lightroom Classic

Adobe Lightroom Classic has been the editor of choice for many photographers who have built extensive catalogues of images. Adobe has made multiple attempts to change things around with Lightroom Classic and they have been met with fierce resistance from photographers who just want it left the way it is. Thankfully, the firm has listened. The main difference between Lightroom Classic and Lightroom is that it is a desktop-based application, with an old, familiar user interface that doesn't sync images via the cloud. It's a digital darkroom that houses all our treasured photos on local drives.

The Classic version is designed for editing, reviewing, cataloguing, printing and exporting your images. You can create albums, review all your files, pick, and reject images and then you can edit and make your images look amazing. To name a few specifics – you have exposure correction sliders, saturation and contrast adjustments, colour balancing, colour grading, noise reduction, sharpening adjustments, lens corrections and image perspective adjustments. As you can tell, it's very comprehensive and replaces Adobe Photoshop in many cases. I now only use Photoshop for very advanced retouching such as skin retouching or removing specific parts of an image.

In October 2022 Adobe added new AI-powered masks that automatically selects people, objects, skies, and backgrounds with just a click. This allows users to adjust specific areas of an image with greater precision. Previously, we only had brushes, radial and linear gradients for adjustments. The word game-changer is frightfully overused, but it really is in this case here.

Lightroom Classic excels in batch processing and detailed editing work. The ability to create and apply presets, sync settings across multiple photos, and the advanced colour correction tools make it an indispensable asset for a photographer's workflow. The Classic version also supports plug-ins and external editors, providing flexibility and expanded creative options.

Lightroom Classic is designed for editing, reviewing, cataloguing, printing and exporting
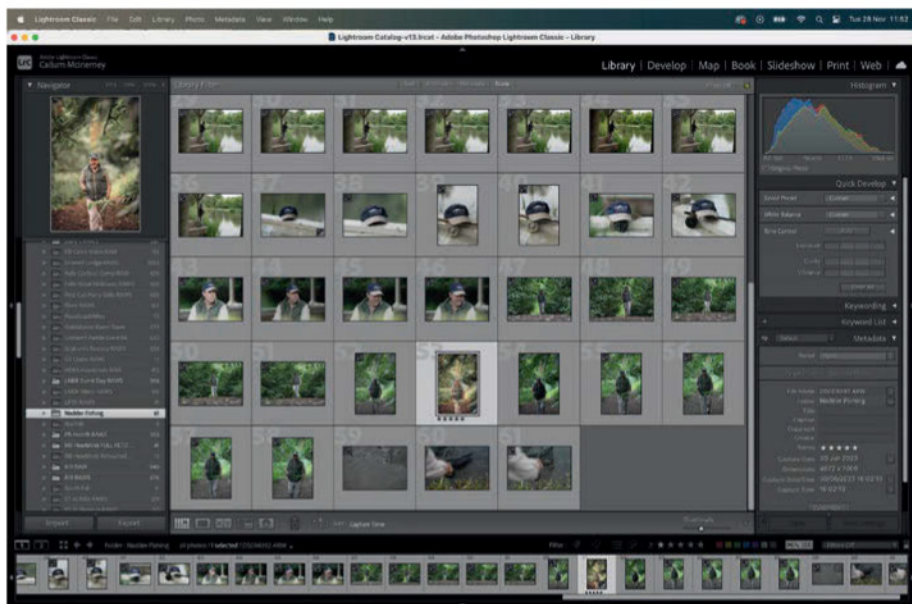
Lightroom Classic remains a desktop-based application with a familiar feel to it
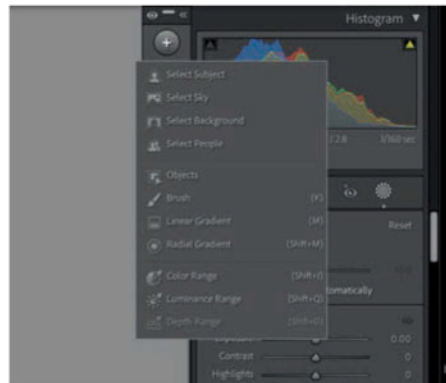
The classic version now has AI-powered masks

AI MASKING SKY PRESETS
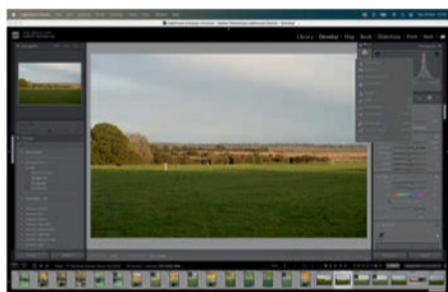
Use AI Adjustment
AI Masking and Subject recognition is a recent addition to Lightroom Classic, and many people don't know you can save these as presets. Head to the masking section in the Develop module and hit the big + icon to add a subject detection mask. Try Select Sky on a landscape image.
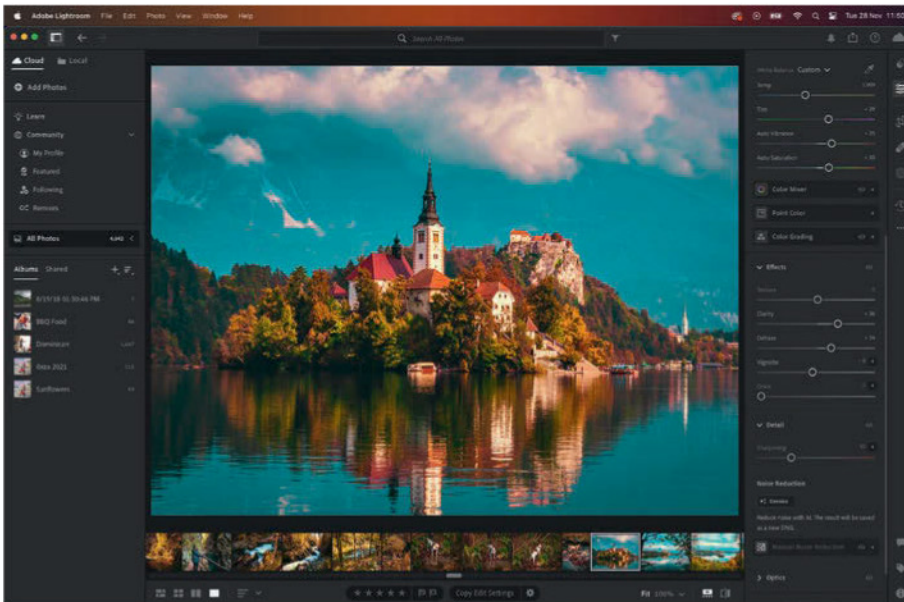

Work on your sky
Overall, Lightroom does a really good job of automatically selecting the sky which you will see in red. If not, you can use the + or - option to add or subtract areas you don't want masked. With your selection created, go to town on editing. I like to bump saturation up, add some contrast or clarity and tweak the white balance too.

Build AI masking presets
With your final adjustments made, hit the + icon in the corner of the presets tab, located on the left side of the develop module. Click Create Preset, then Check None and go back and check your Masking option. You can now reuse this on your next landscape image and if you hover over them, you can preview before you make the change.

Adobe Lightroom features a more streamlined user interface

You can try out other people's presets

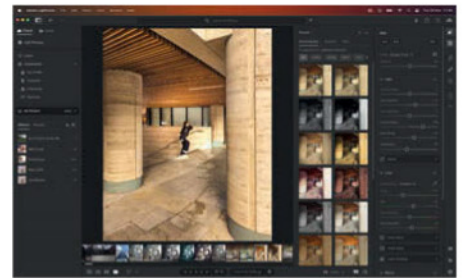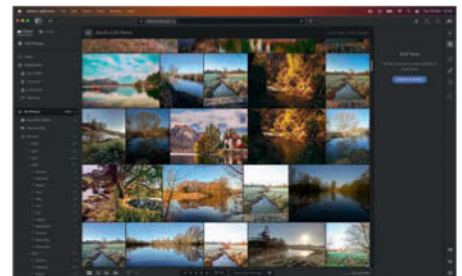**You can easily search for types of images**

Adobe Lightroom

All the editing capabilities outlined in Lightroom Classic are present in Lightroom but it operates differently. Lightroom features a more streamlined user interface that works across mobile and tablet versions too. It syncs your imported images via the cloud which means all your images are accessible from any device, anytime. This is particularly beneficial for photographers on the go or those who don't want the hassle of managing local storage. You can simply upload images from your phone, tablet, or PC and your albums will be available to edit via the app or desktop version of Lightroom.

Your photo storage limit will be capped by your subscription plan. There are a variety of photographer plans available including a Lightroom Only + 1TB storage for £9.98 per month. Recently, Adobe added the ability to edit images from local drives too without using your cloud storage limit, which is a welcome addition. It appears Adobe is adding features from Lightroom Classic gradually while keeping true to its 'on the go' ethos.

In Lightroom Classic, there is a tab labelled Map which is for geotagging images and reviewing your photos using the location on a world map. There is also a specific tab for printing, one for slideshows and another for printing a photobook. These tabs haven't made it over to the latest version of Lightroom, instead replaced with new features such as the ability to share your image with the Adobe Creative Cloud community. You can also export images straight to integrated apps such as Adobe Portfolio or a Smugmug website. You also have the ability to save presets and share those with the community. If you choose to share a preset, people can try out your edit on their photos. You can also play around with other people's editing styles. For my personal work, I love going through those presets and quickly seeing what colour and tone work for a specific image.

Another key difference is how your images are organised. In Lightroom Classic, you often create albums, keyword images, tag places, people and add them to collections. Lightroom employs machine learning and a search bar for most of this. You can search things like 'Spain' or 'Autumn Landscape' and images from your archive appear.

HDR BLENDING IN LIGHTROOM USING A SMARTPHONE

Capture bracketed shots

A smartphone doesn't have a huge sensor with lots of dynamic range like many dedicated cameras. However, you can cheat by shooting multiple images at different exposures and blending them together in Lightroom. Try shooting in raw and taking one correct exposure, one over-exposed, and one under-exposed.
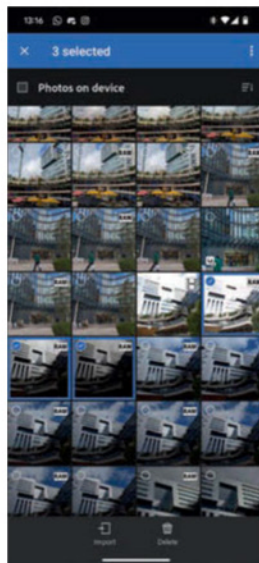

Sync to cloud

Once you have captured your images, find them in your Lightroom Gallery or My Files part of your phone. Select the bracketed shots and tap Import to open into Lightroom. You will need to wait for these to sync with Lightroom, so do ensure you have an internet connection.
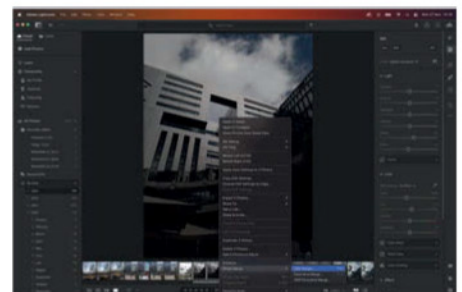
Blend your HDR

By the power of cloud sync, you will find your images are available on your Lightroom Desktop App. Select all three exposures you want to blend, and right-click. Select Photo Merge>HDR Merge and check the boxes appropriate for your shot. Also, it's worthwhile doing this for panoramic scenes too.
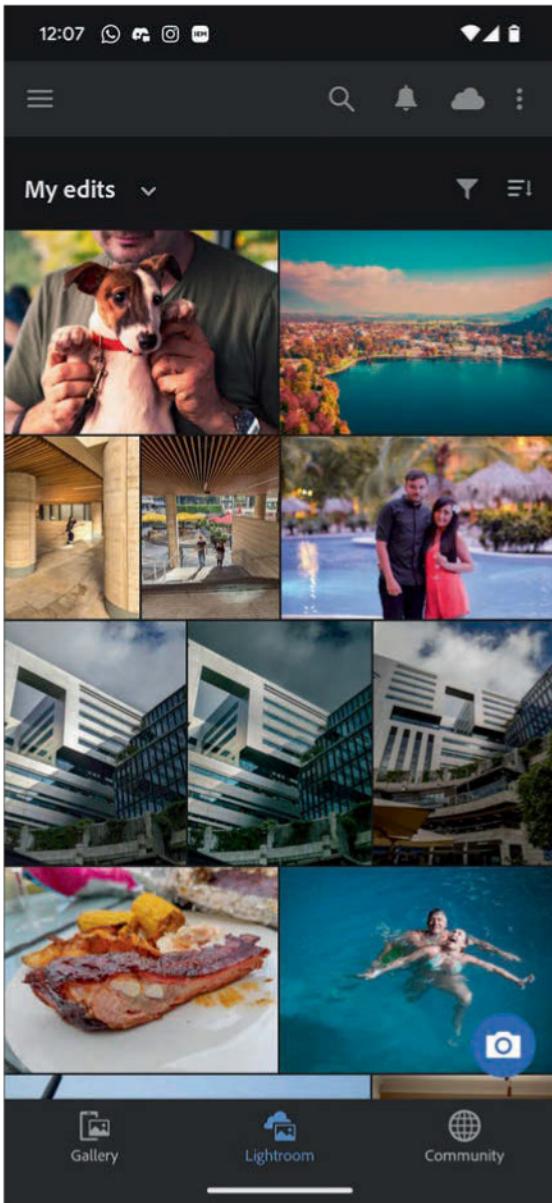
Lightroom Mobile enables you to edit images on the go

Adobe Lightroom Mobile: The Portable Powerhouse

Mobile apps for photo editing are getting increasingly sophisticated and previously, apps like Snapseed offered, arguably, the best editing experience on a smartphone. However, Adobe has caught up quickly. I would now say Adobe Lightroom Mobile is the best mobile editing app available.

What makes me say that? Well, because you have all the sophisticated editing tools such as exposure, curves, advanced colour toning/grading and access to presets in your pocket. What's more, the same AI-powered selective adjustments are available inside the mobile app. Adobe's masterstroke here was, that they offloaded the processing power to the cloud instead of using the hardware of your phone. So, you can mask out a sky and make adjustments in literally seconds using even an older smartphone.

Not all the features from Lightroom are present in the mobile app but there's certainly enough for you to make incredible edits on the go. Things I use often like AI denoise, HDR merging, panorama, and lens corrections aren't available, but this is why it's important that there is a synced desktop version too.

I often transfer images from my camera to my smartphone and go to town on them using the Lightroom Mobile App. It's so easy to use and I can get something looking really good in a couple of minutes. Perfect for social media posts and sharing your photography with others.
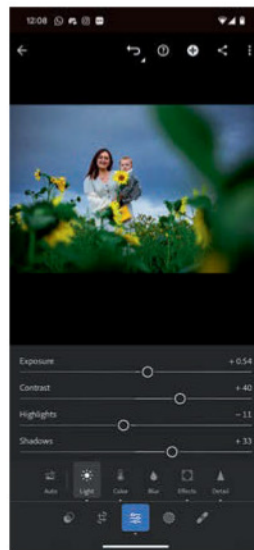
The mobile app offers all the usual editing tools
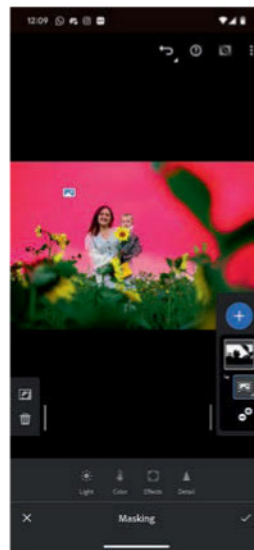
AI-powered selective adjustments are available

It's easy to get great edits in a matter of seconds

LIGHTROOM MOBILE AI PRESET SUGGESTION

Find AI Preset menu

If I'm stuck for inspiration on how to edit, I load up the suggested presets inside the Lightroom Mobile app. Go to the presets icon on the far left of the edit menu. After a few seconds, your photo will be analysed, and you will see a menu of preset options.
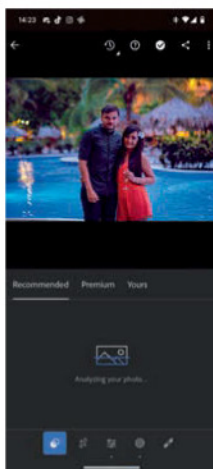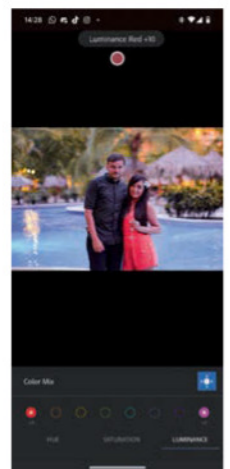

Explore editing styles

You will see all the editing styles Adobe suggests for an image like the one you have taken. If you want to look further into a specific style, you can select 'more like this' from a preset you like or explore the subcategories like Subtle, Strong, Cool, Warm, Dark and Cinematic.
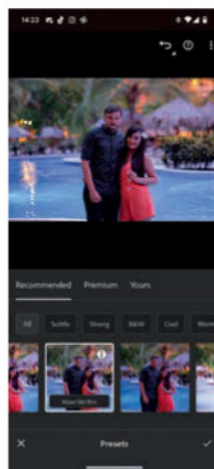
Apply Preset and refine

It's usually not perfect, so I would suggest applying your preset and tweaking it to taste. There are always qualities I like in these presets such as the high contrast looks, or lovely colour grading. Don't be afraid to dig in and refine areas you're not so keen on.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

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Nigel Atherton, *Editor*

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Reader Portfolio

Spotlight on readers' excellent images and how they captured them

1

Paula Wilks, London

About Paula
Paula is an analytics/data science professional with artistic hobbies – music and, of course, photography. See more on Instagram @saxtraction

How did you get into photography?
In 2017 I started carrying an old compact camera around with me to motivate me to walk more. The purpose of my walks quickly became taking photographs.

What do you love about photography?
Searching for compositions helps you to appreciate the surrounding beauty. A lot of the photos I take need patience, so I have to slow down, take my time and be in the moment – it's a great de-stresser.

Where do you find inspiration?
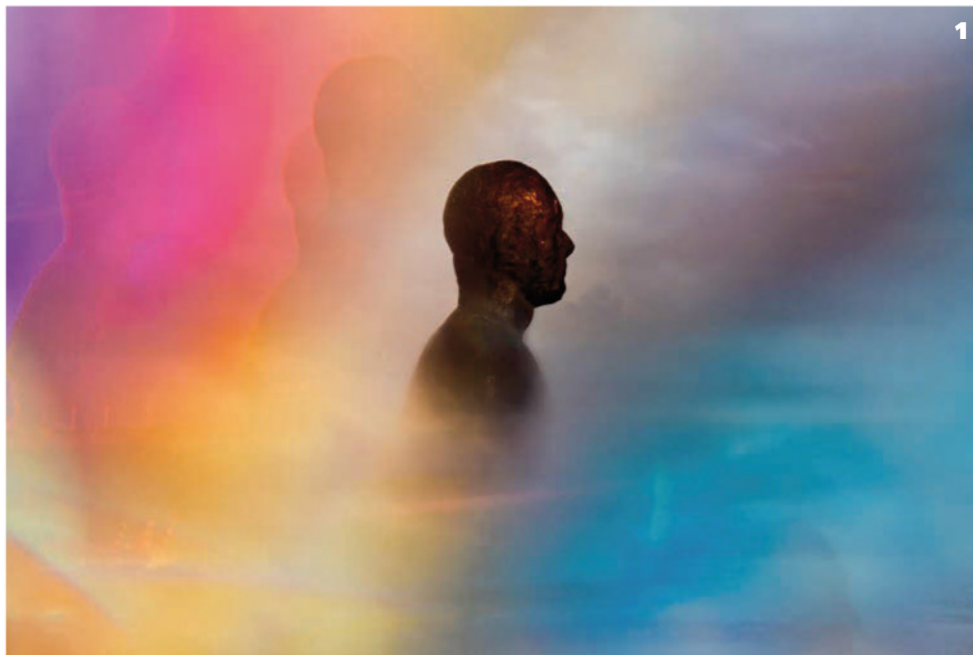The SheClicks website; and to get me in the mood for shooting I listen to the SheClicks podcasts while driving to a location.

Favourite subjects
I love the sea, the feeling of space and the salt in the air. I also have a soft spot for woodland photography, especially early in the mornings.

What was your first camera?
A Panasonic GX80.

Current kit
The Sony Alpha 7R V with a selection of lenses.

Favourite lens
The new Sony 70-200 F4 II with macro capability is a really versatile lens.

Favourite accessory
My Lensbaby Omni kit. I've used it for all of these photos.

Dream purchase
If I had Sony's new 300mm f/2.8 prime, I'm sure my wildlife photography would instantly improve!

What software do you use?
Lightroom and sometimes Photoshop.

Favourite photographers
I love Rachael Talibart's seascapes, and Rachel Bigsby's wildlife shots.

Favourite photography books
Jo Stephen's recent *Wild* book is very beautiful.

Favourite tips
Use various settings on the same view to try out different effects and what works for you.

About your pictures
I was hoping to photograph puffins on Skomer, but it was too windy for the boats to sail. I made the most of being in a beautiful place and took some seascapes using the Lensbaby Omni system to manipulate the light.

Antony Gormley: Portrait of a Portrait

1 This was taken at the Antony Gormley installation 'Another Place' on Crosby Beach. I was mostly watching the light to the north, as that was where the sun was setting, but turned round and took this one with the sun behind me.
Sony A7R V, Sony 50mm f/2.5 G, 1/100sec at f/5, ISO 125

3

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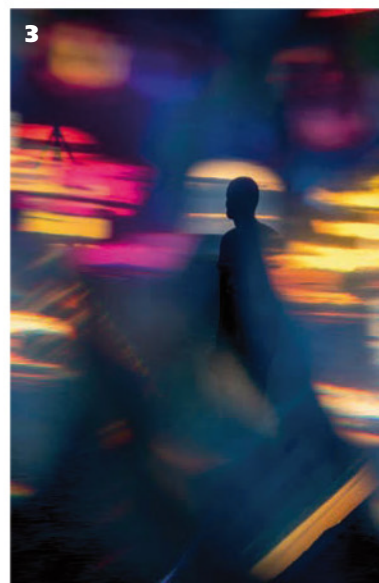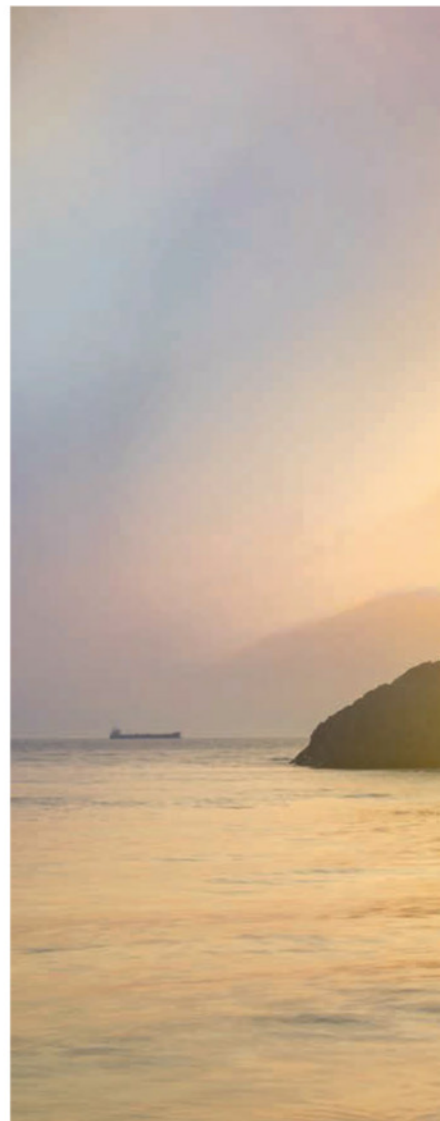
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Broad Haven: Autumnal Palette
2 It's difficult to control exactly what colours you will achieve with the Omni wands – this photo, taken at Broad Haven in Pembrokeshire, was warmed up a little in Lightroom to give autumnal hues. I also used a 10-stop ND filter
Sony A7R V, Sony 40mm f/2.5 G, 0.6sec at f/4, ISO 50

Iron Man Does Disco
3 This was 'one last shot' of the Antony Gormley statue closest to the car park at Crosby Beach. The lights were the headlights of the car behind me illuminating the statue and bouncing off the Omni wands.
Sony A7R V, Sony 70-200mm f/4 Macro at 70mm, 25sec at f/10, ISO 50

Newgale Pastels
4 This was taken at Newgale in Pembrokeshire just after sunset. I used a 10-stop ND filter to smooth out the movement in the water and overexposed for the pastel colours.
Sony A7R V, Sony 50mm f/2.5 G, 4sec at f/4, ISO 100
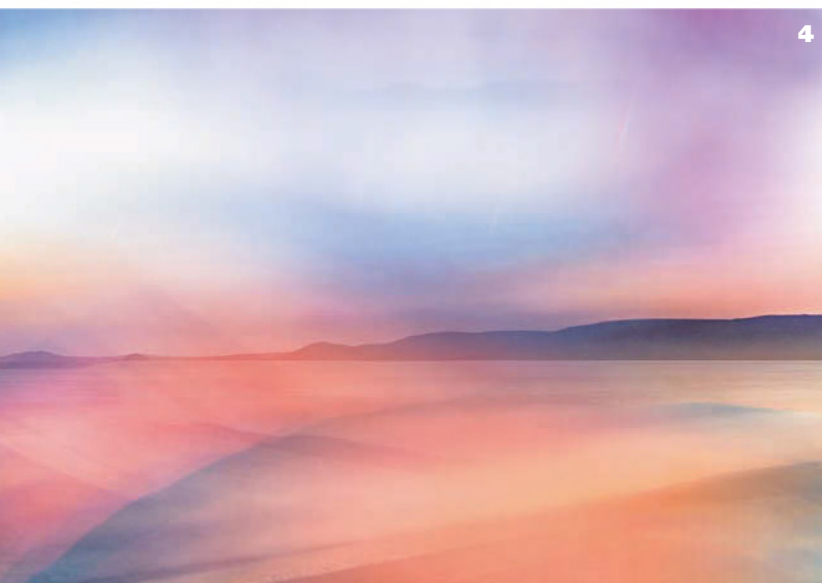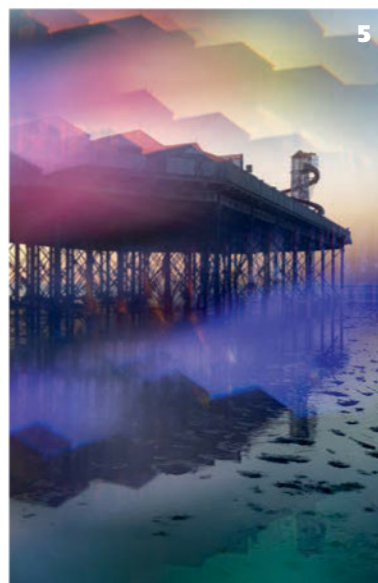
Under Herne Bay Pier
5 For this photo I wanted the structure of the pier and the helter-skelter to be sharp, with the Omni effects added around these. I was using a 10-stop ND filter, but for this view it was probably unnecessary.
Sony A7R V, Sony 50mm f/2.5 G, 5sec at f/3.5, ISO 50

69

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Laptops are ideal for photo editing, but it makes sense to get the best you can afford

Laptops for photo editing

From displays to storage and RAM to card readers, **Richard Sibley** examines what you should look for in a photo-editing laptop and rounds up some of the best options currently available

I t has been a while since a dedicated desktop computer was essential for photo editing, with even the most basic laptop or tablet now powerful enough to edit a few photos. Laptops provide photographers with a portable option for editing on the go and can save needing a dedicated desk and workspace at home. However, when it comes to editing hundreds of images or managing a photo library with thousands of files, you will need a laptop that can handle labour-intensive tasks with ease.

Before we look at some of the best laptops you can buy for photo editing, let's walk through the key features photographers should be looking for. Almost every single component of the computer matters here, including the screen, processor, graphics card, memory, storage, and connector ports.

Display

The laptop screen quality is essential for photographers, and there are two primary considerations – size and resolution. The larger the screen, the easier it is on the eye and the more space you should have to edit images. However, larger screens mean bigger and usually heavier laptops that require larger bags to carry around.

The screen's resolution is also a consideration; the more pixels on a display, the more detailed images will look, and the smaller all those toolbars can be to save space. The result is the pixel density, the number of pixels per inch. Currently, photographers should look for displays above 200ppi, with the more, the better. But just like printing, there are diminishing returns the closer you get to 300ppi. Look for a

resolution of 2560x1600 or more for a 13in or 15in laptop, and possibly 4K for a 15in or 17in screen.

Also vital for photographers is the quality of the display. The leading technologies to look for are in-plane switching (IPS) panels and OLED. Most image-editing laptops, such as Apple's MacBook range, will use IPS panels, but more and more OLED screens are coming to laptops. OLED uses less power and has darker blacks for a better contrast ratio. However, IPS panels are generally brighter, cheaper and don't suffer from image burn-in like OLED panels can.

In terms of colour, both types should be able to reproduce the entire sRGB colour gamut that most photographers will be working with. If you want the most accurate colour, look for a panel close to 100% Adobe

RGB or DCI-P3. This will mean you'll be able to distinguish nuanced differences in colour as best as possible.

Processor
While other features, such as RAM and graphics cards, are equally crucial for photo editing, ultimately it's the processor that powers your laptop. The primary advice here is to look for the most powerful processor you can afford. There are generally just two choices of maker: Intel or AMD. Most manufacturers have similar naming conventions – the higher the number, the more capable the processor, at least in theory. For example, Intel Core i9 or AMD Ryzen 9 are more powerful than their Intel Core i7 or AMD Ryzen 7 counterparts.

Also, look for the number of cores and clock speed. Multiple cores allow the processor to run different tasks at the same time; look for a quad-core processor at least. Meanwhile, the clock speed is measured in GHz. The higher the speed, the faster the processor will work. Look for something above 2.8GHz to keep editing software running smoothly.

Graphics card
Think of the graphics card as a processor for anything visual. Many laptops have integrated graphics processors built into the motherboard, whilst more expensive laptops will have dedicated graphics cards, just like on a desktop computer. Apple's latest MacBook has a graphics processor as part of the central processing chip.

If you aren't buying an Apple MacBook, look for a laptop with a dedicated Nvidia or AMD graphics card with at least 2-6GB of VRAM. The Video RAM (VRAM) is dedicated memory for image processing. For editing photos, getting as much VRAM as possible is optional, but for editing video or anything involving 3D graphics, the more, the better.

RAM
Random Access Memory, or RAM, is an essential component of a photo-editing laptop. The memory serves to store information that may be quickly needed and is much faster than retrieving that information from a disk drive. Suppose you are working on a high-resolution Photoshop image with many layers while an extensive Lightroom library runs in the background. In that case, you will be grateful to have as much RAM as possible.

As previously, get the most RAM you can afford; 8GB is okay, 16GB is ideal, and anything more, and you will see significant increases in efficiency. If you can only afford a laptop with 8GB or 16GB of RAM now, it is worth looking for a computer that will allow you to upgrade (something that you can't do on most current Apple MacBooks, as the RAM is soldered to the motherboard). It is a straightforward task that should only take ten minutes.
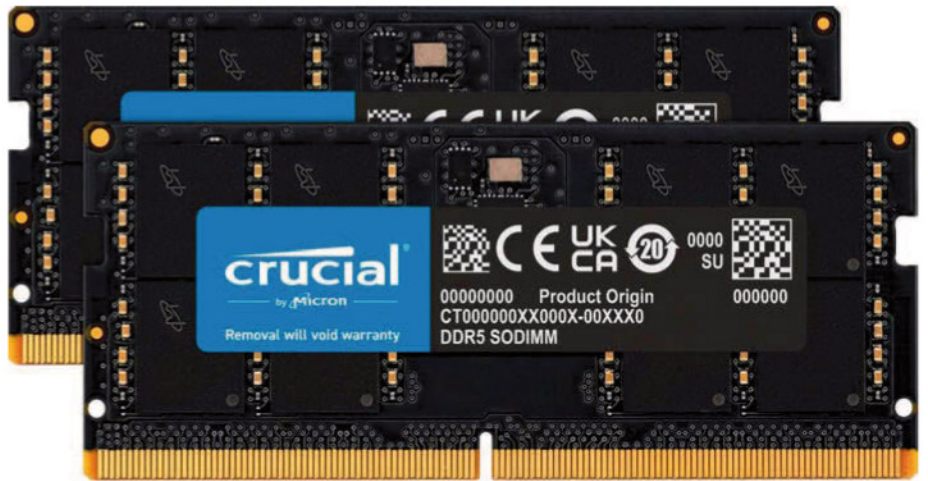
Get as much RAM as you can afford, ideally 16GB or more

For your main drive, it's best to have an NVMe SSD

Storage
Ideally, look for a laptop that has two drives. You will want a fast SSD for the operating system and programs. You will want this drive to be at least 256GB. This storage will most likely take the form of an NVMe SSD drive. This will allow your laptop to run the operating system and editing software quickly.

A handful of laptops will also have the option to have a second internal drive to store all the files you need and will be working on. Ideally, look for at least a 1TB SSD for this second drive. Most laptops won't have the option for a second internal drive, so consider purchasing a 1TB external SSD to keep all the images you are working on. Again, this is a working drive and should not be considered primary storage, as things can and will go wrong. Always store your original files on a storage drive and make regular backups.

Connector ports
If possible, I suggest you get a laptop with two USB-C ports, an HDMI port, and possibly an SD card reader. Your needs will vary; for example, you may not need an SD card reader if your camera doesn't use an SD card. Similarly, you may want to add an external monitor, which can be done using a USB-C to HDMI cable, which reduces the need for an HDMI socket. However, if you have found the perfect laptop for you but need a port or two, don't worry; USB-C hubs can add all the additional ports you need.

If your selected laptop lacks connector ports, a USB-C hub can provide everything you need

Apple MacBook Pro 14in (M3 Pro)

- From £2,099
- apple.com/macbook-pro

Data file

Screen: 14.2in, 3024x1964
Processor: Apple M3 Pro
RAM: 18GB
Storage: 512GB SSD
GPU: Integrated with CPU
Operating System: MacOS 14

Dimensions: 31.3x22.1x1.6cm
Weight: 1.61kg
Connectivity: Wi-Fi; Bluetooth; headphone; 3x Thunderbolt 4; MagSafe 3; HDMI; SD reader

There's a reason that digital creators have favoured Apple MacBook Pro laptops for years: slick design combined with all the power you need in various configurations. We've opted for the version with the M3 Pro processor, which should be more than enough for enthusiast photo and video editing. In truth, even the base model with the standard M3 processor (£1,699) should be good enough for most.

Apple Silicon means that the processing unit has a dedicated graphics processor that is more than capable of photo editing, and the 14in screen provides a nice screen size without much extra size and weight, thanks to the slick design. The mini-LED

IPS screen is one of the best on a laptop, with excellent colour and contrast. There are 3x Thunderbolt/USB 4 sockets for adding accessories and an HDMI port for an external monitor. The cherry on top is a built-in SD card reader, so you never have to worry about leaving yours at home.

If money is no object, there is also a 16in MacBook Pro that can be configured to have up to a M3 Max processor, 128GB memory and 8TB of storage. This can be yours for the not inconsiderable sum of £7,299.

Pros and Cons

+ Excellent performance
+ Superb display
− Premium price
− Not user-friendly to upgrade

Asus Zenbook Pro 14 OLED

- £2,155
- asus.com/uk

Data file

Screen: 14.5in, 2880x1800, OLED
Processor: Intel Core i9-13900H
RAM: 16GB RAM
Storage: 1TB SSD
GPU: Nvidia GeForce RTX 4060

Operating system: Windows 11
Dimensions: 32.2x22.3x1.8cm
Weight: 1.6kg
Connectivity: Thunderbolt 4; USB 3.2 Type-A; USB-C; SD reader; HDMI; headphone

There's no shortage of portable and powerful laptops available, but the Asus Zenbook Pro 14 OLED has to be one of the most well-rounded. It's aimed primarily at creative types, such as photographers and video editors, who can make best use of the dedicated Nvidia GeForce RTX graphics card.

The 14.5in ultraportable weighs much less than 2kg, will easily slip into a backpack, and should last seven or eight hours on battery power alone if you aren't doing anything too demanding. The powerful Intel Core i9 processor and RTX 4060 GPU should make light work of photo-editing tasks, and it has a stunning 14.5in 2K OLED display.

To top it all off, it is the second laptop on this list with a built-in SD card reader.

Pros and Cons

+ Superb performance for a 14in machine
+ Dedicated graphics card and SD card reader
− It gets hot and loud

Dell XPS 13

- £1,239
- dell.com/en-uk

Data file

Screen: 13.4in, 3840x2400, touchscreen
Processor: Intel Core i7, 4.7GHz
RAM: 16GB
Storage: 512GB SSD
GPU: Intel Iris Xe

Operating system: Windows 11 Home
Dimensions: 29.5x19.9x1.4cm
Weight: 1.17kg
Connectivity: Wi-Fi; Bluetooth; 2x Thunderbolt 4; headphone

Dell's XPS machines have dominated the PC premium laptop market, similar to Apple's MacBook Air range. Streamlined by design, the current version of the XPS 13 is super-slim at 1.4cm and relatively lightweight at 1.2kg. However, it only has two Thunderbolt 4 ports, one of which is needed for power, so it will require a hub for adding card readers, drives and external monitors.

This is the most portable of the laptops listed here, but that means it comes with the smallest screen. Indeed, some users might find it a bit too cramped for editing. We'd recommend getting the high-res UHD+ display option,

but you can save some money, and extend battery life too, by going for the FHD+ (1920x1200) version instead. The Intel

processor and GPU should be more than enough for most tasks, although you may want to look elsewhere if you plan to use it to edit hundreds of raw images at a time.

Pros and Cons

+ Great design
+ Excellent screen and performance
− Only MicroSD card reader
− Not many port options

Razer Blade 14

- £2,299.99
- razer.com/gb-en

Data file

Screen: 14in, 2560x1440, IPS
Processor: AMD Ryzen 9 8-core, 3.3GHz
RAM: 16GB
Storage: 1TB SSD
GPU: Nvidia GeForce RTX 4060 (8GB VRAM)

Operating System: Windows 11 Home
Dimensions: 31.2x22x1.7cm
Weight: 1.78kg
Connectivity: Wi-Fi; Bluetooth; Headphone; 2x USB-A; 2x USB-C/DisplayPort

Razer's 14in laptop comes with a powerful 8-core AMD Ryzen 9 processor and Nvidia GeForce RTX 4060 graphics card, offering a lot of power in a truly portable laptop. The default display is only QHD resolution, compared to the slightly higher resolution of the Apple 14in Macbook Pro, and the screen is IPS, rather than the better-looking OLED options available out there.

The laptop doesn't scrimp on ports, and whilst it lacks an HDMI or SD card reader, there are 2x USB-C and 2x USB-A ports for extra accessories. Overall, it's a powerful travel laptop for photographers on the move.

Pros and Cons
+ Sleek, slim and light design
+ Dedicated graphics processor
- Screen resolution could be better
- Lacks HDMI port and SD reader

LG Gram 16

- £1,550
- lg.com/uk

Data file

Screen: 16in, 2560x1600, IPS
Processor: Intel Core i7, 4-core, 2.8GHz
RAM: 16GB
Storage: 1TB SSD
GPU: Intel Iris Xe
Operating System: Windows 11 Home

Dimensions 35.5x 24.2x1.7cm
Weight: 1.2kg
Connectivity: Wi-Fi; Bluetooth; headphone; 2x Thunderbolt 4/USB-C; 2x USB-A; microSD

LG's Gram laptops are all about streamlined designs, big screens, and stellar battery life. The Gram 16 delivers in all departments. In fact, at just under 1.2kg, it's the lightest 16in laptop in the world (at the time of writing). There is a good selection of ports on board, but it lacks HDMI, and the card reader is only Micro SD rather than full size.

Overall, the laptop has been designed to provide a large screen in the lightest possible device, which means it lacks performance elsewhere. It is ideal for making quick image edits on the move using a decent-sized screen. However, there are better options for editing multiple images or working on images with many layers in Photoshop.

Pros and Cons
+ Incredible, lightweight design
+ Big display
- The processor isn't the fastest
- Lacks a dedicated graphics processor

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What about a tablet?

A few years ago, the thought of editing on a tablet computer would have been laughed at. However, in 2023, increased processing speeds and the sophistication of tablets and apps mean that it is entirely possible. Apps such as Adobe Photoshop and Lightroom CC mean that you can edit on a smartphone or tablet using essentially the same software you are used to on your main computer, and the cloud functionality means that changes will sync between the two.

The introduction of USB-C ports to tablets also brings the ability to add keyboards, mice, and storage devices such as card readers or disk drives, effectively turning a tablet into a fully fledged computer. Also, there is the option to use a stylus to make tasks like masking, dodging and burning much more straightforward than using a mouse.

One obvious tablet option, the Apple iPad Pro, comes in various configurations, starting at £899. It uses the same Apple M2 processor and screen technology found in many of the firm's laptops. Combine it with some good software, and it can be a great way to edit images on the move. But it's not ideal once you have to start editing hundreds of photos.
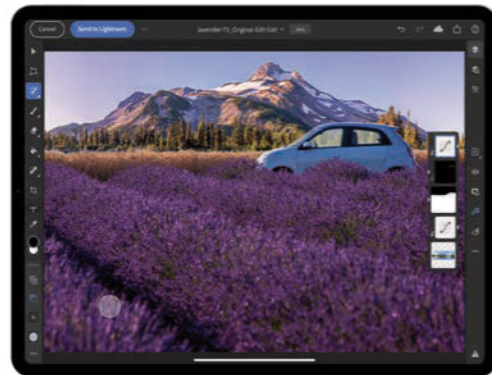
Colour calibration essentials

Colour management can be a daunting topic – starting with whether you even really need it. **Andy Westlake** explains what you need to know and picks out some top products

When it comes to editing your images, one of the most difficult things to get to grips with is the concept of colour management. The idea here is that by creating and using colour profiles for your monitor and other devices, you'll be able to get predictable colour rendition throughout your entire workflow. In other words, what you see on your computer screen will accurately reflect the colours that are present in your image files, and will in turn be closely matched when you come to make a print. It's difficult to argue that this doesn't sound like a good idea.

However, the question is, do you actually need to do this? Some people will, of course,

tell you it's absolutely essential. But the hardware required is costly, and if you're happy with the results you're getting without any specific colour management in place, you could be forgiven for asking whether there's really any point? As is so often the case, the answer is a resounding 'it depends'. Let's take a closer look, starting with how it all works.

How does it work?

To use a colour-managed workflow, first you need a means of measuring the colour response of your monitor and calibrating it against an established standard. This requires a device known as a colorimeter. The calibration process measures exactly

how your monitor displays a wide range of colours, and then uses this information to create a profile. This then adjusts the monitor's output so that it displays colours in a standardised fashion. Some higher-end monitors designed for graphics work come with built-in colorimeters.

It's also possible to profile your camera. In general, cameras are designed to produce attractive-looking image files that are easy to display and print. But this turns out to be a rather different thing to them producing colorimetrically accurate output. The principle behind calibrating a camera is similar; you photograph a test target (usually a standard 24-patch colour chart) and then feed the file into profiling software. Applying the resultant profile during raw processing should enable you to get accurate colour reproduction.

If you make prints at home, you can also profile your printer. Or rather, you can profile your favourite papers; each paper type interacts with the inks to give slightly different colour rendition. Here, the software creates test prints with a large set of colour patches,

which you then measure using a colorimeter. It's important to understand that most monitor calibrators can't be used for this purpose – instead, you'll need a specialist device.

When is it worthwhile?

So, when is colour management genuinely useful? If you have a decent laptop or a monitor made in the last few years, chances are that its display is already pretty accurate. Profiling it should make it technically even better, but the difference may not be huge, or give significantly better results. However, it can be worthwhile if you're struggling with colour accuracy.

Perhaps the biggest advantage of monitor calibration comes when you're using multiple screens. Then you can iron out any differences between them, so you're not left wondering which of their colour renditions is correct. But again, if you've got multiple displays lined up on your desk and they all look the same, there's no problem to solve. It's also important to understand that if you use monitors with different colour gamuts – for example one sRGB, and the other Adobe RGB – you're simply not going to be able to get them to match perfectly. Then, you should use the better display for your colour-critical editing.

As for camera calibration, often this isn't necessary at all. It's probably most important to professionals who need to deliver product photography with genuinely accurate colour rendition. But it might also be useful to those who are using cameras from different brands on the same shoot, to get consistent colour between them.

Where I've personally found profiling most useful is when making prints at home. This is especially true when using third-party papers, for which generic colour profiles may be unsatisfactory, or perhaps not even exist. But by making your own profiles, it's relatively straightforward to get reliable colour output including perfectly neutral greyscales, and therefore much more attractive prints – especially black & white. However, you do still need to be aware of, and work around, the fact that many cheaper printers can only reproduce a relatively restricted colour range. This is why high-end photo printers employ more ink cartridges than just yellow, cyan, magenta and black, often including additional primary colours.

Summary

Colour calibration may look like a tricky topic, but it's really not that complicated. However, it's perhaps not as essential as it's sometimes made out to be. That said, there are specific situations where it's definitely worthwhile.

Datacolor Spyder X2 Elite

- £249
- datacolor.com

This colorimeter makes light work of calibrating your monitors. Designed for both photographers and videographers, it comes with a USB-C connector and USB-A adapter. Datacolor's software is simple to use, and the calibration process is notably speedy, taking less than 90 seconds to complete. There's a Studio Match mode for multiple monitors, and a Display Analysis module for troubleshooting problems.

Calibrite ColorChecker Studio

- £499
- calibrite.com

If you like making prints at home and enjoy experimenting with different paper types, this comprehensive colour management kit might be just what you need. It can profile all your devices: not just monitors and printers, but also scanners, cameras, and projectors, with a standard 24-patch colour target supplied in the box. It's a great all-in-one solution for photographers looking to produce their own prints.

Datacolor Spyder Checkr Photo

- £74
- datacolor.com

This pocket-sized colour target can be used for calibrating your camera, but it's equally useful as a white balance target or just a simple visual sense-check. Alongside a standard 24-patch chart, there's a second target with expanded skin-tone references. The cards are removable, so you shouldn't need to replace the whole thing if they get damaged. It's also relatively affordable.

Nikon Nikkor Z DX 50-250mm f/4.5-6.3 VR

This telephoto zoom for APS-C format Nikon mirrorless cameras is a great-value addition to your kit bag, says **Amy Davies**

Often bundled in as part of a kit package with a Nikon DX mirrorless body and 16-50mm lens, the Nikkor Z DX 50-250mm f/4.5-6.3 VR gives scope to shoot lots of different subjects with your Nikon APS-C camera, including sports, wildlife, portraits, macro, landscapes and much more besides. On its own it has a retail price of £379, but we've found it for sale at under £300 in plenty of places. As part of a kit with DX cameras, it generally adds about £100-£150 to the overall price, depending on which model you choose.

As it's to be used with a DX sensor, the equivalent focal length is 75-375mm, which is the longest available from Nikon's line-up of Z-mount DX lenses. Longer lenses are available which are primarily designed for full-frame models, but most of those would undoubtedly be too big or heavy for most of Nikon's APS-C models. They're generally pretty expensive, too.

Cameras in Nikon's DX range include the Z 50, Z fc and Z 30 – I used both the Z 50 and the Z 30 for this review. It is also possible to use this lens with full-frame cameras, though it's questionable whether you'd want to. You might perhaps consider it as an option for cheaper models such as the Z 5. If you attach it to an FX model, the DX crop mode will automatically kick in and you'll find yourself shooting at a lower resolution. For the Z 5, that means you'll drop from shooting at 24MP down to 10MP. But this might be perfectly fine for smaller prints.

Of course, getting a telephoto zoom in such a small, neat and inexpensive package comes with compromises. Here it's that the maximum aperture is relatively small, starting at f/4.5 at the 50mm end, and going up to f/6.3 at 250mm. At longer focal lengths, you should still be able to create some nice

shallow depth-of-field effects. But it probably won't be your first choice for shooting in low light.

About the only alternative to this lens is the Nikkor Z DX 18-140mm f/3.5-6.3 VR all-in-one zoom. But it's much shorter and more expensive.

A comparison between the 250mm and 50mm ends

Features

The price and the size of this kind of lens generally precludes any complex construction, and that's what we see here. The optical design comprises 16 elements in 12 groups, including one ED element. We don't see any weather-sealing or special coatings, either.

There are seven diaphragm blades for creating out-of-focus blur, which is generally more pronounced at the longer focal lengths. This is not designed as a macro lens, but the focal length makes it suitable for shooting macro-type subjects such as flowers. The maximum reproduction ratio is 0.23x, and you can focus as close as 0.5m at the 50mm end, rising to 1m at 250mm. Remembering that this measurement is taken from the sensor, rather than the end of the lens, you should find that it actually gets you quite close to macro subjects in order to create frame-filling shots.

The lens has an internal focusing system, and crucially given the focal length, it also has built-in optical stabilisation, which Nikon calls Vibration Reduction (VR). This is particularly important as none of Nikon's DX-format cameras includes in-body image stabilisation, so you'll probably find you're relying on the lens's stabilisation if you want to shoot handheld at longer lengths. Nikon claims that the VR in the lens gives you up to 5 stops of compensation. This also potentially makes the lens useful for video work, say if you're a content creator using the Z 30.

Build and handling

Covering a broad focal length range, the 50-250mm is physically quite long compared to Nikon's other DX-format lenses – but of course that's exactly what we'd expect. That said, it can be retracted when not in use, which saves a significant amount of space in your bag. When retracted, it locks into place so it won't accidentally extend when you don't want it to – particularly useful if you're carrying it around your shoulder or neck.

When extended to the shooting position, it's a little unbalanced with smaller models like the Nikon Z 30, but is better with the Z 50 or Z fc, which have a chunkier build overall. This is especially true when it's at the full 250mm extension. Either way, as it's quite light, it's not too difficult to steady the lens. It's worth any slight imbalance for the extra reach you get from it.

The outward design of the lens is relatively simple. Most of the central part of the barrel is taken up with the zoom ring, which is marked with focal lengths of 50, 70, 100, 135, 200 and 250mm to help you quickly move between them by sight alone. There's a good amount of resistance to this ring, enabling smooth and precise changes between the focal

Reasonably shallow depth-of-field effects are possible even at 50mm
Nikon Z 30, 50mm, 1/800sec at f/4.5, ISO 100

Verdict

IF YOU'VE got a Nikon DX-format camera, or you're thinking of buying one, then the 50-250mm lens is likely to be something you're thinking about getting too. It's ideal to pair with the standard 16-50mm kit lens and provides scope for shooting a wider range of subjects. This includes genres such as portraits, wildlife, sports, architecture, macro, and events.

It also makes a lot of sense for travel photography. It's small and light enough to pack into a small bag, while giving you access to those faraway subjects you might not otherwise be able to reach. Arguably, the 18-140mm is a more versatile travel optic. But if you want the longer reach, then this is the one to go for.

You might also want to consider the 50-250mm lens as a 'just in case' option, especially if you don't often shoot subjects that require a long focal length.

At under £400, this is a good-value lens to add to your kit if you're looking to buy it separately. And I'd definitely argue that if you're looking at buying the Z 30 or Z 50 anyway, it's worth looking to get it in a double lens bundle. This only increases the price by about £100, which is a bargain.

In an ideal world, third-party manufacturers would make some telezoom lenses for the Nikon DX format. But for now, the Nikkor 50-250mm is a great-value lens for beginners and enthusiasts looking to round out their kit bag.

lengths without the zoom action being too loose.

Another, much smaller, ring sits behind the zoom mechanism. With this, you can control various functions which are set via the camera's main menu. Settings available here include manual focus, aperture, exposure compensation, and ISO sensitivity. You can also set the ring to control nothing at all, if you're worried about knocking it accidentally.

Otherwise, there are no buttons or switches. If you want to switch off vibration reduction in the lens, you can do that via the camera's menu. Bear in mind that it's not generally necessary any more to switch off VR when using a tripod, so the lack of a dedicated switch isn't particularly annoying.

The lens can be used with 62mm filters, and it is also compatible with the bayonet-fitting HB-90A Hood. Note, though, that this doesn't come included in the box, so if you want one you'll have to purchase it separately for around £35. Much cheaper third-party alternatives are available.

Autofocus
For the most part, autofocus is fairly quick – certainly as quick as we'd expect from a lens of this price and quality and with

the types of cameras you'll be using it on. It might not be able to keep up with the fastest of action subjects, but on the whole it'll do a decent job.

It's also fairly unobtrusive. You can just about hear some focusing noise if you hold the lens close to your ear, but otherwise it works very well in quiet situations. Video work isn't adversely affected by focusing noise, either.

In very low light, the lens has a little more trouble locking onto the subject than in good light. But again, this is to be expected given the small aperture.

Image quality
It's fair to say that a lightweight telephoto zoom like this is unlikely to boast superior image quality, especially for the price. However, it does a good job of creating images with a decent overall impression of sharpness – especially at normal printing and viewing sizes.

That level of sharpness is maintained throughout the focal length range, with images taken at the longest reach only very marginally softer than at the wider end – and only then if you're examining them closely. The relatively close focusing and long focal length make it a good choice for macro-type subjects, where the amount of detail is

certainly good enough for those experimenting with the genre.

Although the maximum aperture of the lens is rather small, it's still possible to create some shallow depth-of-field effects. This can be achieved even at the 50mm f/4.5 setting, but it gets more pronounced as you move through the focal length range. As such, it's a reasonable option for portraits and the like – especially if you don't want to spend big on expensive prime lenses.

Distortion doesn't seem to be a problem here, although it's not something we'd really expect to see on a telephoto lens like this anyway. Vignetting also doesn't seem to show up, even at the largest apertures. Then again, with them not being very wide in the first place, that's probably to be expected.

For the most part, chromatic aberration, in the form of blue or purple fringing, isn't particularly obvious. You might see some against hard-contrast edges in bright conditions if you zoom into your files at 100%, but it's not something that seems to bother most images.

Overall, although this is not a lens you're going to select for superior sharpness, for a travel zoom which covers a lot of subjects, it's a handy addition to your kit bag.

(AP)

Data file

Price £379	**Min focus** 0.5 – 1m
Filter diameter 62mm	**Length** 74mm
Lens elements 16	**Diameter** 110mm
Groups 12	**Weight** 405g
Diaphragm blades 7	**Lens mount** Nikon Z (DX)
Aperture f/4.6-f/6.3 – f/22-f/32	**Included accessories** Front and rear cap

Amateur Photographer Testbench Recommended
★★★★½

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Mobile Pixels Duex Max

Andy Westlake tries out a portable monitor that clips magnetically onto your laptop

● £200 ● mobilepixels.us

If you use a laptop for editing your images, you may well find yourself frustrated by a lack of screen real estate. One solution is to add a portable monitor. The Mobile Pixels Duex Max is a 14.1in LCD screen that clips onto your laptop and slides out to one side for use. This could be particularly handy when desk space is limited (most other similar devices have their own stands).

To make this work, first you have to stick four circular magnets onto the lid of your laptop, using a positioning template that comes in the box. The magnets fix in place firmly, so I never felt the monitor might be at risk of falling off. But they aren't exactly pretty, and I can't imagine it's a great idea if your laptop uses a magnetic hard disc rather than an SSD.

Next, connect the screen to your computer using the supplied cable. One end plugs into a USB-C or USB 3.0 port on your laptop, while the other fits into one of two USB-C ports on the Duex Max. The other port supplies power when using the screen with small devices such as smartphones.

The cable is a metre long, giving plenty of flexibility in terms of setup, but you do need to take care that it doesn't end up dangling precariously. The monitor should then work automatically, with no need to install drivers or use an external power supply. You'll just need to configure it using your computer's display settings. This lets you specify which side of your laptop it's placed and how you want your programs to appear across the two.

In terms of display quality, the Duex Max is competent but not much more. Its colour gamut is rather limited, with distinctly muted cyans and reds; measured using the Datacolor Spyder X2 colorimeter, it covers just 64% of sRGB. That doesn't necessarily mean it's not useful, though; I still found it quite handy for such things as file handling and browsing images in Adobe Bridge. Then for colour-critical processing in Camera Raw or Photoshop, I used my laptop's main screen.

Verdict

Portable monitors can be useful add-ons for laptop users, and the Mobile Pixels Duex Max is an intriguing example. If you can see a specific use for its slide-out design, and don't mind the restricted colour gamut, it's worth considering. However, if you don't want to stick magnets onto your laptop, a freestanding model would be a better choice.

Fixing
The monitor clips in place via four circular magnets, each 2cm in diameter, which you have to stick onto your laptop.

Multi-mode
You can set the screen to slide out either to the left or right of your laptop, or stand it upright alongside.
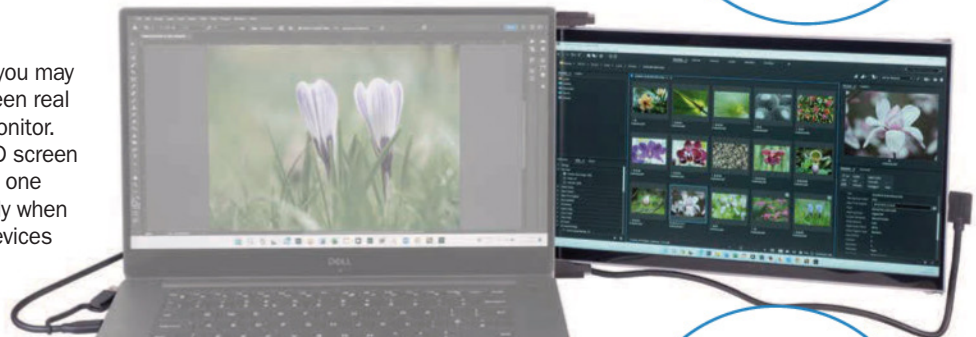
Controls
Three buttons on the unit change settings such as brightness, contrast, saturation and colour temperature.

Compatibility
The monitor works with Windows and Mac PCs, the Nintendo Switch gaming console, and Samsung Galaxy devices (using an external power supply).

Amateur Photographer Testbench ★★★★½

At a glance

● For 14in or larger laptops
● 14.1in LCD, 1920 x 1080, 300 nits brightness
● USB-C or USB 3.0 connection
● 32x22.6x1.5cm, 820g
● 4.5W power consumption

ALSO IN THE RANGE

Mobile Pixels also makes slide-out monitors in 12.5in and 13.3in sizes for smaller laptops, plus a 15.6in one that lifts above the laptop's display. Additionally, it offers a pair of Trio models which add two extra screens. Alternatively, there's a range of standalone single screens (right), in 15.6in and 16in sizes.
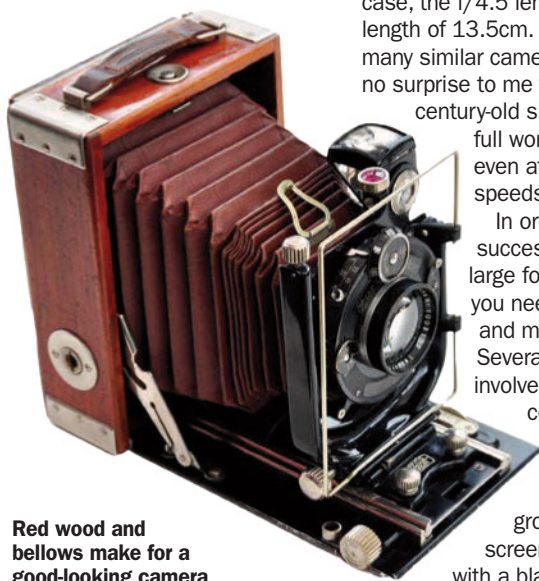
Tony Kemplen on the ...

Tropen Adoro

A handsome tropical camera that's almost a century old, but still in perfect working order

At the time when photography was invented and rapidly growing in popularity, the colonial era was still in full swing, with many European countries having an extensive overseas presence. Travellers to the far-flung outposts were naturally keen to photograph these unfamiliar places, but it soon became clear that the materials used to make cameras in the colder northern climes weren't going to fare well in the tropics. Thus was born the concept of the tropical camera.

Conventionally, folding cameras of this era were made from softwood covered with leather. The tropical versions used hard woods like teak, which is more resistant to warping in high humidity, and where possible they dispensed with the leather, which was prone to attack from insects.

Metal parts made from brass were nickel-plated to improve their resistance to corrosion. Red bellows seem to be more common than black in tropical cameras, but this was a matter of style rather than function. Although it has to be said, it goes nicely with the teak.

This example, a Tropen Adoro, is a tropical version of the Contessa Nettel Adoro. Contessa Nettel was one of four firms that were amalgamated in 1926 under the Zeiss Ikon umbrella. The serial number dates this one to 1929, which explains why it has the Zeiss branding. It was available in four sizes; mine is designed for 9cm x 12cm negatives, but in the absence of sheet film I used a 120 roll film back. In common with hundreds of thousands of cameras from this era, it comes with a Tessar lens in a Compur shutter. In this case, the f/4.5 lens has a focal length of 13.5cm. Having used many similar cameras, it came as no surprise to me that the near century-old shutter is still in full working order, even at the slow speeds.

In order to successfully use large format cameras, you need to be slow and methodical. Several steps are involved, starting with composing the shot and focusing using the ground glass screen; if necessary with a black cloth

Red wood and bellows make for a good-looking camera

Mop waited patiently for his portrait to be taken

draped over your head to add to the drama, and more practically to keep stray light from spoiling the view of the screen.

Once you're satisfied, the shutter is closed and the focusing screen is removed and replaced with either a plate holder or roll-film back. The dark slide is removed allowing light to reach the emulsion, then at long last the shutter is fired. Finally the dark slide is replaced and the back removed. All the while, the camera must remain in exactly the same spot, and the subject must wait patiently as the process unfolds in front of them. Much as I love my grandchildren, it would have been unrealistic to expect a toddler to comply with these requirements. So instead I turned to Mop, my ventriloquist's dummy. He's happy to remain motionless for as long as it takes, and all he asks in return is the odd 'gottle o' geer'. Cheers!

Tony Kemplen's love of photography began as a teenager and ever since he has been collecting cameras with a view to testing as many as he can. You can follow his progress on his 52 Cameras blog at **52cameras.blogspot.co.uk**.
See more photos from the Tropen Adoro at **www.flickr.com/tony_kemplen/sets/72157684488918432**.

Best Buys

A round-up of the AP testing team's favourite and most highly rated kit, including both cameras and all kinds of accessories, across a wide range of price points

OM System Tough TG-7
● £499 ● explore.omsystem.com

This is the latest in a long line of cameras that have become well established as the leaders of their class. It's waterproof to 15m, shockproof against a 2.1m drop, crushproof and freezeproof. The 25-100mm equivalent lens is paired with a 12MP sensor, with in-body stabilisation to combat shake. Viewing is via a 3in LCD. This is also one of the few rugged cameras that can record raw files.

Canon PowerShot G1 X Mark III
● £1,139 ● www.canon.co.uk

This unique zoom compact offers excellent image quality by employing the same 24.2MP APS-C sensor as several of Canon's DSLRs and mirrorless cameras, along with a 24-72mm equivalent lens. A central viewfinder, fully articulated touchscreen and comprehensive external controls round off a superb little camera for enthusiast photographers.

★★★★★
Reviewed 3 Feb 2018

Fujifilm X100V
● £1,349 ● www.fujifilm.eu/uk

Fujifilm's charismatic rangefinder-styled compact employs a fixed 23mm f/2 lens, APS-C sensor, traditional analogue controls and a unique hybrid optical / electronic viewfinder. In this latest version the lens has been redesigned for improved sharpness, and the back is now adorned with a tilting screen. It's a truly gorgeous little camera.

★★★★★ **Reviewed 25 Apr 2020**

Ricoh GR III
● £949 ● ricohgr.eu/en-gb

A favourite of street photographers, the GR III combines a 24MP APS-C sensor and a sharp 28mm equivalent f/2.8 lens in a slim, pocketable body. It offers sensitivities up to ISO 102,400 and 4fps shooting, while in-body image stabilisation helps keeps image sharp. Viewing is via a fixed 3in rear LCD or an optional optical viewfinder that slots onto the hot shoe.

★★★★★
Reviewed 3 Aug 2019

Sony RX100 VII
● £1,049 ● www.sony.co.uk

Sony has somehow crammed a 24-200mm equivalent zoom, pop-up electronic viewfinder, tilting screen, 20fps shooting and 4K video recording into a body that you can slip into a jacket pocket. With the firm's latest AF technology also on board, it's without doubt the most accomplished pocket camera on the market.

★★★★★
Reviewed 5 Oct 2019

Sony RX10 IV
● £1,499 ● www.sony.co.uk

This sets a new standard for superzoom cameras, with a 24-600mm equivalent lens, 20MP 1in sensor, and 24fps continuous shooting. Its SLR-shaped body hosts a large electronic viewfinder and a decent set of physical controls. It's the best all-in-one camera for wildlife or travel photography that you can buy right now.

★★★★★
Reviewed 2 Dec 2017

Canon EOS 250D

● £649 with 18-55mm IS lens ● www.canon.co.uk

One of the smallest DSLRs around, the EOS 250D strikes a great balance between portability and usability. It's equipped with a novice-friendly Guided Mode, while Canon's Dual Pixel CMOS sensor provides excellent autofocus in live view. Image quality is very good, delivering vibrant colours and plenty of fine detail.

★★★★☆
Reviewed 7 Sep 2019

Olympus OM-D E-M10 Mark IV

● £749 with 14-42mm lens ● www.olympus.co.uk

With a charismatic retro design, fine handling, highly effective in-body stabilisation and attractive JPEG output, Olympus has made a camera that's more pleasant to use than its entry-level competitors. Its 20MP sensor delivers good results up to ISO 3200 at least, and its tilting screen can be set to face forwards beneath the camera. The 16MP Mark III is also still a great buy.

★★★★☆
Reviewed 26 Sep 2020

Fujifilm X-T5

● £1,699 body only ● www.fujifilm.eu/uk

Fujifilm's latest X-T model is a great choice for serious enthusiast photographers. It boasts a 40MP APS-C sensor housed in a retro-styled body covered with traditional analogue control dials. Subject-detection autofocus, in-body stabilisation and Fujifilm's lovely colour modes round off an extremely desirable package.

★★★★★
Reviewed 3 Jan 2023

Canon EOS M50 Mark II

● £649 with 15-45mm lens ● www.canon.co.uk

This likeable little camera is simple and approachable for novices, while offering plenty of manual control for enthusiasts. Its central electronic viewfinder is joined by a fully articulated touchscreen, autofocus is fast and accurate, and it's capable of producing consistently fine images. The updated Mark II version adds a few minor extra features.

★★★★☆
Reviewed 22 May 2021

Fujifilm X-T30 II

● £899 with 15-45mm lens ● www.fujifilm.eu/uk

This lovely little camera provides excellent performance, while preserving the charm and charisma of the X-series. It's a great all-rounder, and handles exceptionally well thanks to an intuitive interface based around traditional analogue dials. Image quality is superb in both raw and JPEG, aided by Fujifilm's peerless Film Simulation modes.

★★★★★
Reviewed 8 Feb 2022

Panasonic Lumix GH6

● £1,949 body only ● www.panasonic.com/uk

Panasonic's flagship Micro Four Thirds camera is aimed at videographers, but holds its own when capturing stills as well. Its 25MP sensor delivers plenty of detail, while enabling 5.7K recording at 60fps, or 4K at 120fps. Pro-spec video functionality and highly effective in-body stabilisation round off a fine package for content creators.

★★★★☆
Reviewed 26 Apr 2022

Fujifilm X-S10

● £999 with 15-45mm lens ● www.fujifilm.eu/uk

Fujifilm's X-S10 brings a distinct change in design. It looks much like a conventional DSLR, with electronic dials for changing exposure settings. But you still get Fujifilm's signature fine image quality, along with in-body image stabilisation. The result is a camera that's perfect for APS-C DSLR users looking to upgrade to mirrorless.

★★★★★
Reviewed 23 Jan 2021

OM System OM-5

● £1,199 body only ● explore.omsystem.com

This small, fully featured and weather-sealed mirrorless camera is both a pleasure to use, and capable of great results. Its petite body finds space for an extensive complement of controls, along with class-leading 5-axis in-body image stabilisation, yet weighs in at just 414g. On-chip phase detection enables fast, decisive autofocus.

★★★★★
Reviewed 13 Dec 2022

OM System OM-1

● £1,979 body only ● explore.omsystem.com

It may be nostalgically named after a classic 35mm SLR, but there's nothing old-fashioned about this high-speed powerhouse. It's capable of shooting at 120fps with focus fixed, or 50fps with AF. AI subject detection recognises vehicles, animals and birds. It's also rugged, with IP53-rated weather-sealing, and includes class-leading stabilisation.

★★★★★
Reviewed 15 Mar 2022

Nikon Z 6II

- £2,079 body only ● www.nikon.co.uk

This upgraded full-frame mirrorless all-rounder boasts a 24.5MP sensor, 273-point autofocus and rapid 14fps burst shooting. It also gains an SD card slot, alongside XQD/CFexpress. Its excellent viewfinder is complemented by a tilting screen, and both image quality and handling are superb. The older Z 6 remains a good buy for £500 less.

★★★★⯨
Reviewed 9 Jan 2021

Sony Alpha 7 IV

- £2,399 body only ● www.sony.co.uk

Sony's enthusiast-focused full-frame mirrorless model sets a new standard in its class. Its 33MP full-frame sensor delivers excellent image quality, and it can shoot at up to 10fps. Its practically foolproof subject-detection AF can now recognise birds as well as humans and animals. A large, clear viewfinder and fully articulated touchscreen round off the package.

★★★★★
Reviewed 11 Dec 2021

Nikon D850

- £2,699 body only ● www.nikon.co.uk

This brilliant professional all-rounder provides a winning combination of high resolution and speed. Its 45.7MP sensor produces fine results at high ISOs, and the autofocus is incredibly responsive and accurate. Build quality and handling should satisfy the most demanding of users. It's an absolutely sensational camera capable of tackling any type of subject.

★★★★★
Reviewed 21 Oct 2017

Nikon Z 7II

- £2,999 body only ● www.nikon.co.uk

Nikon has delivered a sensible update to its flagship high-res model, with an additional SD card slot and slightly faster shooting. As before, its 45.7MP sensor gives stunning image quality, backed up by 5-axis in-body image stabilisation and fast, accurate autofocus. The viewfinder is superb, and F-mount SLR lenses can be used via the FTZ adapter.

★★★★⯨
Reviewed 6 Feb 2021

Nikon Z 8

- £3,999 body only ● www.nikon.co.uk

This stunning camera takes all the best bits of Nikon's flagship Z 9 and places them in a smaller, less-expensive body. Combining high resolution, rapid speed, cutting-edge autofocus and pro-level build, it's capable of shooting 45.7MP raw files at 20fps. It can also record 8K video. With its superb viewfinder and tilting rear screen, it's a stunningly capable camera.

★★★★★
Reviewed 11 Jul 2023

Canon EOS R6 Mark II

- £2,779 body only ● www.canon.co.uk

Based around a 24MP full-frame sensor, this brilliant all-rounder will do almost anything you might ask it to. It combines reliable subject-detection AF, rapid continuous shooting, and effective image stabilisation in a body that handles well and gives great results. It also works well with adapted EF-mount DSLR lenses.

★★★★★
Reviewed 21 Mar 2023

Sony Alpha 7R V

- £3,999 body only ● www.sony.co.uk

With its 61MP full-frame sensor, the A7R V provides class-leading image quality while adding a whole array of improvements over its predecessor. These include subject-detection AF, a larger, more detailed viewfinder, and a more flexible rear LCD design. For those whose needs are more about image quality than speed, it's probably the best full-frame camera you can buy.

★★★★★
Reviewed 17 Jan 2023

Leica M11

- £7,699 body only ● uk.leica-camera.com

Leica's 60MP full-frame rangefinder is a beautful anachronism - a camera type that has been obsolete for decades, yet which still remains an object of desire for many photographers. This elegant mix of the old and the modern offers triple resolution raw recording, including 36MP and 18MP options, and vastly improved battery life. It's a really lovely camera that can deliver stunning results.

★★★★⯨
Reviewed 8 Mar 2022

Fujifilm GFX100S

- £5,499 body only ● www.fujifilm.eu/uk

Fujifilm's second-generation super-high resolution camera places a 102MP medium-format sensor in a body the size of a full-frame DSLR. On-chip phase detection provides rapid autofocus; in-body image stabilisation allows the camera to be used handheld with confidence. It's perfect if you need to shoot in the field without compromising on image quality.

★★★★★
Reviewed May 2021
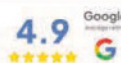
Billingham Hadley Pro 2020

● £293 ● www.billingham.co.uk

The latest model in this iconic line of British-made satchel-style bags includes some well-considered updates, such as a detachable shoulder strap. It's impeccably constructed from premium materials to keep your kit protected, including Billingham's signature triple-layer canvas that's impermeable to water. It's pricey, but will last for decades.

★★★★★ **Reviewed 5 Oct 2019**

Vanguard Veo Select 49

● £160 ● www.vanguardworld.co.uk

This cleverly designed bag comes with both a backpack harness and a shoulder strap, and can be switched between the two carrying modes quickly and easily. There's space for one or two cameras and 3-5 extra lenses, along with a separate compartment for a 15in laptop and a tablet.

★★★★★
Reviewed 6 Jul 2019

Gitzo Adventury 30L

● £239 ● www.gitzo.com/uk-en

This sizeable backpack will hold a pro-spec DSLR with a 70-200mm lens attached and a second body plus up to 4 lenses. An expandable roll top provides plenty of space for personal items, and the bag also boasts tablet and laptop compartments. It's comfortable to carry fully loaded and offers first-class protection.

★★★★★
Reviewed 8 Sep 2018

Essential Film Holder Kit

● £90 ● www.clifforth.co.uk

Many photographers either still enjoy shooting film, or have old negatives and slides that they'd like to digitise. Probably the best way to do this is to copy them using a DSLR or mirrorless camera. This easy-to-use device holds film flat over a lightbox for copying. It gives excellent results and is much quicker than using a scanner. ★★★★★

Reviewed 29 Aug 2020

NiSi Bluetooth Remote Control

● £29.90 ● www.nisioptics.co.uk

If you use strong neutral density filters, this device makes it much easier to work with the long exposures required. It connects to your smartphone by Bluetooth and is controlled by NiSi's free ND Calculator app. Camera connection cables cost £5.90 each.

★★★★☆ **Reviewed 11 Jan 2022**

Novo Mantis T3 Mini Travel Tripod

● £70 ● www.ukdigital.co.uk

This neat 27cm-tall mini tripod has two-section carbon-fibre legs that can be set to three different angles, and chunky rubber feet that unscrew to reveal ground spikes. The matched MBH-25 ball head (£60) provides impressive strength, and an optional centre column is available for £30.

★★★★★
Reviewed 6 Feb 2021

Manfrotto 190 Go! MT190GOC4

● £299 ● www.manfrotto.com/uk-en

With 4-section carbon fibre legs that can each be set to four angles, this sturdy, versatile tripod achieves a maximum height of 147cm while folding down to 45cm, and weighs 1.35kg. But its party trick is a centre column that can be set horizontally for overhead or low-level shooting.

★★★★★
Reviewed 1 Jun 2019

Benro GD3WH

● £169 ● www.benroeu.com

This relatively lightweight and portable geared head employs an Arca Swiss type quick release. Three large control knobs, one for each axis of movement, drive the camera directly in the corresponding direction, allowing highly accurate setting of composition. With its sturdy magnesium alloy construction, it's rated to support a 6kg load.

★★★★★ **Reviewed 26 May 2018**

Vanguard VEO 2S AM-264TR

● £99 ● www.vanguardworld.co.uk

This unusual monopod boasts an extended height of 1630mm, a folded height of 565mm and a maximum load capacity of 6kg. Three foldable legs at the base provide a tri-stand platform, and are linked to the four-section carbon fibre leg via a ball joint that allows smooth panning and tilting motions.

★★★★★
Reviewed 30 May 2015

Adaptalux Studio Nature LED Macro Combo Pack

● £372 ● www.adaptalux.com

This clever modular LED system is perfect for lighting small subjects creatively. The pack includes a control pod with a built-in rechargeable battery, four flexible lighting arms (two white, one blue and one green), plus three diffusers and two colour filters. Always-on LED lighting makes it easy to visualise the results in real time.

★★★★★
Reviewed 20 Sep 2022

RØDE VideoMicro

● £59 ● en.rode.com

RØDE has a strong reputation for its high-end microphones. Its VideoMicro is a directional unit that primarily picks up sounds from in front of the camera, and is designed to match small mirrorless cameras. It uses 'plug-in power' that's supplied by many cameras, and as there's no battery it's short and light. It comes complete with a Rycote shock mount and a large furry windshield.

★★★★★
Reviewed 21 May 2016

Tenba Tools Cable Duo 4

● £20 ● uk.tenba.com

Not all handy accessories have to cost a fortune. This well-designed tech organiser pouch features a dual-compartment layout, with a shallow space on one side for cables, and a deeper one on the other for such things as battery chargers or computer mice. The simple rectangular design fits easily into a bag and the tough transparent covers make it easy to see what's inside.

★★★★★
Reviewed 20 Sep 2022

Formatt Hitech Onyx 85mm Seascape Kit

● £345 ● www.formatt-hitech.com

This 85mm filter kit is ideal for APS-C or Micro Four Thirds users. It includes a polariser, 6-stop neutral density, and 3-stop soft-edge and hard-edge ND grads. It'll fit filter threads up to 77mm, with step rings for 72mm, 67mm and 58mm supplied in the box.

★★★★☆
Reviewed 6 Feb 2021

Calibrite ColorChecker Studio

● £500 ● www.colourconfidence.com

Previously known as X-Rite i1 Studio, this kit enables users to adopt a completely colour-managed workflow, from capture through display to print. It allows profiling of cameras, scanners, monitors, projectors and printers, and works with both Mac and Windows computers. It's a great tool for any photographer who likes to print at home.

★★★★★ **Reviewed 19 Jan 2019**

Kase Revolution Magnetic Circular Entry Level Kit

● £230-£285 ● www.kasefilters.com

These clever kits include circular polarising, 3-stop and 6-stop neutral density filters that snap magnetically onto adapters that screw into your lens. This considerably speeds up the process of using filters and encourages you to use them creatively. Kits are available in 77mm, 82mm, and 95mm sizes, with adapter rings from 49mm up.

★★★★★
Reviewed 21 Feb 2023

Epson Expression Photo XP970

● £219 ● www.epson.co.uk

An update to the XP960, which won our coveted gold award, this impressive multifunctional unit provides A3 printing ability while retaining a compact footprint. Along with a conventional USB connection, it can print over Wi-Fi, or directly from an SD card or USB stick, controlled using the excellent colour LCD touchscreen. Other useful features include an A4 scanner and double-sided document printing.

★★★★★

Biolite Charge 80 PD

● £70 ● uk.bioliteenergy.com

Powerbanks can be invaluable when you want to keep shooting for longer. This device houses a 20,000mAh Li-ion battery, which is capable of replenishing the average camera battery up to ten times. It can also be used to power certain cameras directly.

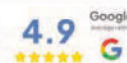★★★★★ **Reviewed 10 Jul 2021**

Fujifilm Instax Mini Link 2

● £115 ● www.instax.co.uk

Powered by a built-in rechargeable battery, this smart little printer connects to your smartphone via Bluetooth and is controlled using an attractively designed and intuitive app. It's small enough to slip into a coat pocket or bag, and delivers gorgeous little prints with fine detail and vivid colour.

★★★★★
Reviewed 30 Aug 2022

QUALITY USED EQUIPMENT - Checked, Tested and Warrantied. More on website - www.mifsuds.com.

Used Canon

R3 body box — **£3999**
R5 body box — **£2799**
R6 body box — **£1299**

Used Canon

RF 14-35 F4 L IS USM box — **£1199**
RF 15-35mm F2.8 IS USM L — **£1499**
RF 50mm F1.2 L USM box — **£1899**

Used Canon

RF 70-200mm F4 L IS box — **£1299**
RF 100-500mm F4.5/7.1 L IS USM — **£2299**
RF 600mm F11 IS STM box — **£499**

CANON R MIRRORLESS USED	
R3 body box	£3999
R5 body box	£2799
R6 body box	£1299
R body box	£899
RF 14-35 F4 L IS USM box	£1199
RF 15-35 F2.8 L IS USM box	£1499
RF 18-45 F4.5/6.3 IS STM box	£249
RF 24 F1.8 STM macro box	£549
RF 24-105 F4 L IS box	£1099
RF 35 F1.8 IS STM box	£399
RF 50 F1.2 L USM box	£1899
RF 70-200 F2.8 L IS box	£2229
RF 70-200 F4 L IS box	£1299
RF 85 F2 IS macro box	£699
RF 100 F2.8 L IS USM macro	£1099
RF 100-500 F4.5/7.1 L IS USM	£2299
RF 600 F11 IS STM box	£499
BG-R10 grip fits R5	£279

CANON DSLR USED	
1DX MKII body box	£1499
7D MKII body box	£599
6D MKII body £899 6D body	£599
5D MKIV body box	£999/1699
5D MKIII body	£599
6D body £299 80D body	£599
90D body £899 760D body	£369
650D body £299 BG-E20	£149
BG-E16 £99 BG-E14	£99
BG-E11 £99 BG-E7	£49

CANON M MIRRORLESS USED	
M6 body	£299
M3 + 15-45 F3.5/6.3 IS STM	£199
EF-M 11-22 F4/5.6 IS STM	£299
EF-M 15-45 F3.5/6.3 IS STM	£79
EF-M 22 F2 STM box	£179
EF-M 55-200 F4.5/6.3 IS STM	£249
EF-M adapter	£89

CANON AF LENSES USED	
8-15 F4 L USM	£799
10-18 F4.5/5.6 IS STM EFS	£149
10-22 F3.5/4.5 USM EFS	£149
11-24 F4 L USM	£1399
14 F2.8 USM LII	£799
15-85 F3.5/5.6 EFS	£199
16-35 F2.8 USM LIII	£899
16-35 F4 USM IS L box	£499
17 F4 TSE box	£1199
17-40 F4 L USM	£299
17-55 F2.8 IS USM box EFS	£399
18-55 F3.5/5.6 IS USM STM EFS	£99
18-135 F3.5/5.6 IS EFS	£149
18-200 F3.5/5.6 IS EFS	£299
24 F3.5 TSE II box	£1199
24-70 F2.8 USM LII box	£999
24-70 F4 IS USM L	£399
24-105 F4 IS USM LII	£799

24-105 F4 IS USM L	£499
28-135 F3.5/5.6 IS USM	£199
35 F1.4 USM LII box	£1199
40 F2.8 STM	£149
50 F1.2 L USM box	£599
50 F1.4 USM box	£249
50 F1.8 STM	£99
55-250 F4/5.6 IS EFS	£149
60 F2.8 macro EFS	£349
70-200 F2.8 USM LIII	£1199
70-200 F2.8 IS USM LII	£899
70-300 F4/5.6 IS USM L box	£599
70-300 F4/5.6 IS USM II Nano	£349
70-300 F4/5.6 IS USM	£249
75-300 F4.5/5.6	£99
85 F1.2 USM LII box	£599
85 F1.8 USM	£249
100 F2.8 IS USM L macro box	£699
100 F2.8 USM macro box	£299

NIKON AUTOFOCUS CAMERAS, LENSES, FLASH, ACCESSORIES ETC USED	

NIKON Z MIRRORLESS USED	
Z9 body box	£3999
Z8 body box	£3199
Z7 MKII body box	£1799
Z7 body box	£1199
Z6 MKII body box	£1499
Z50 body	£599
14-24 F2.8 S box	£1699
16-50 F3.5/6.3 S VR DX	£199
24-70 F4 S box	£1699
24-70 F4 S	£399
35 F1.8 S box	£899
50 F1.2 S box	£1699
50 F1.8 S	£449
50-250 F4.5/6.3 S DX	£299
70-200 F2.8 VR S box	£1899
85 F1.8 Z box	£599
100-400 F4.5/5.6 VR S box	£1999
105 F2.8 VR macro box	£999
400 F4.5 VR S Mint box	£2699
FTZ adapter II box	£149
FTZ adapter box	£199

NIKON DSLR USED	
D5 body box	£1999
D4 body box	£899
D850 body Mint box	£1799
D850 body	£1499
D810 body	£499/799
D800 body box	£299/599
D780 body Mint box	£1599
D750 body box	£799
D610 body box	£399
D500 body box	£1299
D7500 body box	£899
D7200 body box	£649
D7100 body box	£449
D7000 body	£299
D5300 body box	£299
D90 or D80 body each	£149
MBD-18 (D850)	£269
MBD-17 £199 MBD-16 (D750)	£149
MBD-15 (D7100/7200)	£69
MBD-12 (D800/810)	£149
MBD-10 or MBD-80 grip each	£99

NIKON AF LENSES USED	
10.5 F2.8 fisheye box	£249
10-20 F4.5/5.6 AF-P DX VR	£239
10-24 F3.5/4.5 AFS box	£399
14-24 F2.8 AFS	£699
16 F2.8 AFD fisheye	£299
16-35 F4 AFS VR box	£399
16-80 F2.8/4 VR DX	£499
16-85 F3.5/5.6 AFS VR	£149
18-35 F3.5/4.5 AFS box	£399
18-35 F3.5/4.5 AFD	£99
18-55 F3.5/5.6 AF VR DX	£99
18-105 F3.5/5.6 VR DX AFS	£149
18-140 F3.5/5.6 AFS VR box	£149
18-200 F3.5/5.6 VR DX MKII	£299
18-300 F3.5/5.6 VR DX	£599
20 F1.8 AFS box	£599
20 F2.8 AFD box	£199
24 F1.4 G AFS Mint box	£699
24 F2.8 AFD box	£279
24-70 F2.8 AFS VR box	£1399
24-70 F2.8 AFS box	£499

24-120 F4 AFS VR	£399
28-300 F3.5/5.6 VR box	£599
35 F1.4 AFS	£999
35 F1.8 AFS G DX	£149
35 F1.8 AFS ED	£299
35 F2.8 AFD	£299
50 F1.4 AFS G box	£299
50 F1.8 AFS box	£149
55-200 F4.5/5.6 AFS VR box	£149
60 F2.8 AFS	£249
60 F2.8 AFD	£249
70-200 F2.8 E FL AFS box	£1399
70-200 F2.8 AFS VRII box	£699
70-300 F4.5/5.6 E AF P VR	£549
70-300 F4.5/5.6 AFS VR box	£299
70-300 F4.5/5.6 AFD	£199
80-400 F4.5/5.6 AFS VR box	£999
85 F1.4 G AFS box	£499
85 F1.8 AFS box	£339
105 F1.4 E AFS box	£1299
105 F2.8 AFS VR macro box	£399

200 F4 AFD macro box	£999
200-500 F5.6 E ED AFS VR box	£999
300 F4 E PF ED VR box	£699
400 F2.8 E FL AFS VR serviced	£4999
500 F4 E FL ED AFS VR serviced	£4499
500 F4 E FL ED AFS VR	£3499
500 F5.6 E PF VR AFS box	£2499
TC14-EIII box	£349
TC14-EII box	£299
TC17-EII box	£149
TC20-EIII box	£299

SIGMA NAF USED	
10-20 F3.5 DC box	£199
12-24 F4.5/5.6 II HSM	£399
18-300 F3.5/6.3 OS HSM	£299
24-105 F4 DG OS	£499
35 F1.4 DG Art	£499
50 F1.4 DG HSM Art	£499
70-200 F2.8 EX DG OS HSM	£399
85 F1.4 Art box	£799
105 F2.8 EX DG HSM OS	£299
120-300 F2.8 DG OS HSM Sport	£1699

150 F2.8 EX DG OS HSM box	£499
150-600 F5/6.3 DG OS sport	£749
150-600 F5/6.3 DG OS contem	£749
180 F2.8 DG OS mac box	£699
500 F4 DG OS HSM Sport box	£1999
TC-1401 extender	£169

OTHER NAF USED	
TAM 15-30 F2.8 Di USD	£399
TAM 16-300 F3.5/6.3 II VC	£399
TAM 24-70 F2.8 USD VC box	£399
TAM 90 F2.8 macro	£149
TAM 150-600 F5/6.3 Di VC	£499

FLASH / ACCESSORIES USED	
SB-700	£149
SB-900	£99
SB-910	£199
SU-800 commander	£199
DR-6 or DR-5 angle finder each	£139
DR-4 angle finder	£79
MC-36A remote	£99
MC-30A remote	£59
SC-19/SC-28 cable each	£49

FUJI, MINOLTA/SONY, OLYMPUS, PANASONIC ETC. DIGITAL USED	

GITZO CF TRIPODS/HEADS USED	
GT3541LS £499 GT3542	£499
GT5532S	£499
GT5540LS	£499
GH3750QR head	£299
GH3780QD head	£299
GH5380SQR head	£149
GS3750 DQR panoramic head	£149

FUJI X DIGITAL USED	
XH-2 body Mint box	£1599
X-T5 body black Mint box	£1299
X-T1 body	£199
X-T30 MKII + 15-45 box	£799
VG-XT4 grip £199 VG-XT1 grip	£49
VPB-XH1 grip £99 VPB-XT2 grip	£99

SONY DIGITAL USED	
A9 MKII body box	£2299
A7R MKV	£2999
A7R MKIV box	£1799
RX10 MKIV box	£1199

SONY FE MOUNT AF USED	
FE 16-35 F4 ZA	£699
FE 24-70 F2.8 GM	£1199
FE 24-70 F2.8 ZA OSS	£499
FE 24-105 F4 G OSS box	£699
FE 35 F1.4 ZA OSS box	£599
FE 35 F2.8 box £499 FE 55 F1.8	£499
FE 70-200 F2.8 G OSS II box	£2299
FE 100 F2.8 GM OSS box	£899
FE 200-600 F5.6/6.3	£1399

OLYMPUS MICRO 4/3 USED	
OM-1 body Mint box	£1599
EM1 MKII body box	£599
EM10 MKIII S body	£349
EM10 MKII body	£299
8 F1.8 Pro	£499
7-14 F2.8 ED Pro box	£749
9-18 F4/5.6 ED box	£299
12-40 F2.8 Pro box	£349
12-40 F2.8 £399 12-45 F4 Pro	£349
40-150 F2.8 Pro	£849
40-150 F4.5/5.6	£149
60 F2.8 mac	£399
75-300 F4.8/6.7 MSCII	£399
MC20 converter	£299

PANASONIC DIGITAL USED	
G9 body	£699
GH5 body box	£599
GH4 body	£499
GX-7 body black box	£299
7-14 F4 box	£499
8 F3.5 box	£449
12-60 F3.5/5.6	£299
14-42 F3.5/5.6	£99
14-45 F3.5/5.6	£149
25 F1.7	£119
42.5 F1.2 DG	£699
45-175 F4.5/5.6	£149
45-200 F4.5/5.6 box	£149
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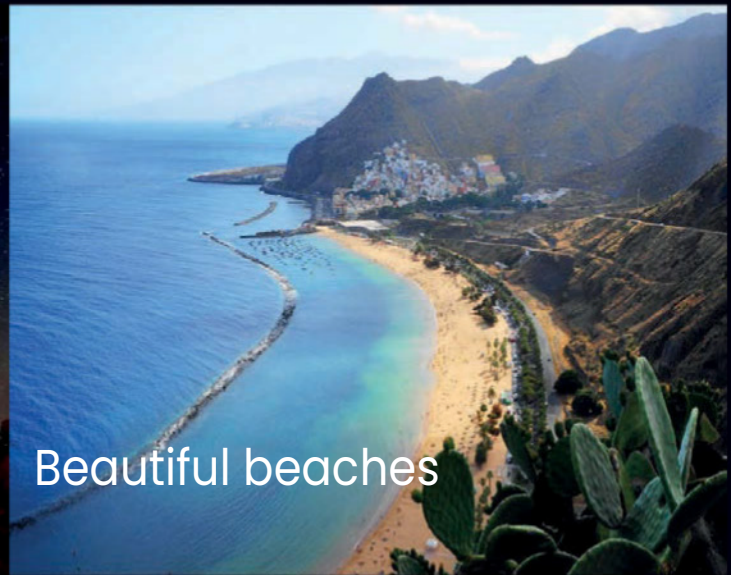
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Final Analysis

Damien Demolder considers…
Prince and Princess of Wales Christmas Card 2023, by Josh Shinner

There is a big difference between photographing a thing, an animal or a landscape, and photographing a person. You probably know this, but I'm establishing my position. Things, places and buildings don't think, don't have expectations, and don't lose patience. Animals can do, but somehow we can accept that without taking it personally.

The default situation inside my head when photographing people is one of multiple thoughts whizzing around in chaos. This state pervades as I attempt to simultaneously concentrate on being creatively perceptive and technically astute, while at the same time trying to get on with it before the sitter rumbles that I have no idea what I'm doing.

Fortunately, with practice and a significant build-up of evidence accumulated over the years, I have come to understand that I can actually take a decent portrait, and that, on the balance of experience, the subject will be very pleased with the result. But that doesn't mean I don't get a moment of anxiety when shooting people I don't know well.

All and sundry

Imagine though getting a call from Kensington Palace enquiring if you are free to shoot a family portrait of the Prince and Princess of Wales for their Christmas card – a picture that will inevitably be closely scrutinised by all and sundry worldwide. How much sleep would you get between that call and the moment you could reassure yourself on your monitor that you had found focus in the images and that everyone had their eyes open?

I'd jump at the chance, but I'd certainly suffer for my art in the lead-up to the shoot. And, in this case, five people are in the shot – all different heights and shapes. I can arrange three neatly, or a group of 50 at a wedding, but five is just awkward. And then can you imagine all the people in the studio during the shoot, making useful suggestions, and those looking at the clock to make sure the next engagement would be met on time?

I wonder too how much control photographer Josh Shinner had over what they wore and the overall feel of the shot. As the named photographer, the world will assume it's all his own work, and that perhaps it was him who suggested they should all look as though they are an everyday family that's just stepped into a High Street photo studio.

Who decided which of them got to sit down?
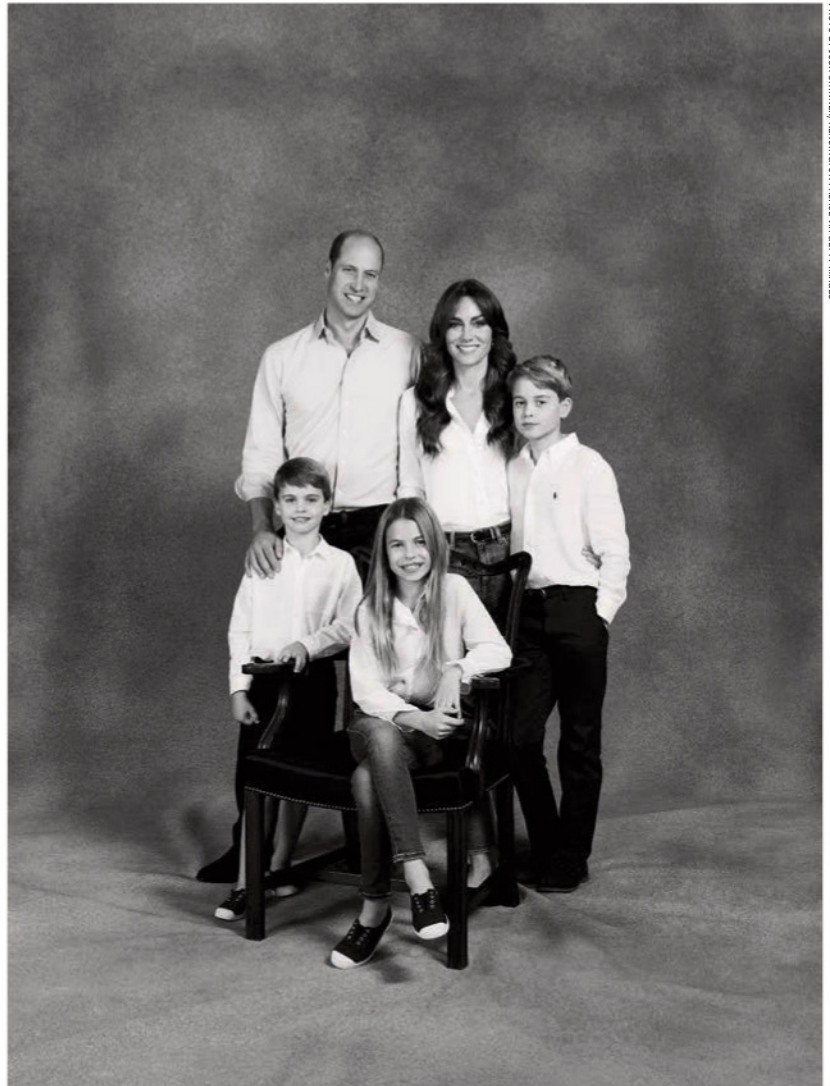
Maybe they took it in turns or perhaps Josh spent a week trying different compositions in his head to imagine how they would look and whether the heads needed to cascade in height or perhaps create a neat V shape. Maybe they all turned up and it just fell into place with no planning or stress.

Either way, he's done a cracking job.

The result is a very friendly and informal formal picture that makes us feel as though the Wales family is just like ours – normal, approachable folk, but with better teeth. I'm sure they are all very good at putting the people around them at ease, but I wonder if Josh was as relaxed as his subjects appear to be in the picture.

AP

Photographer and journalist Damien Demolder has worked in the photographic publishing industry since 1997 and is the former editor of *Amateur Photographer*. He writes regularly about photography for a number of leading publications and has also been a judge on a number of prestigious international photo competitions. See his website at **www.damiendemolder.com**

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