

Tuesday 30 January 2024

Amateur Photographer



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Why Leica is a great choice for **landscape photographers**, says Jeremy Walker

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Robert Spangle From LA to Savile Row to Iraq – a photographer's journey



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© MICHAEL TOPHAM



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© ROBERT SPANGLE



© ARTWOLFE



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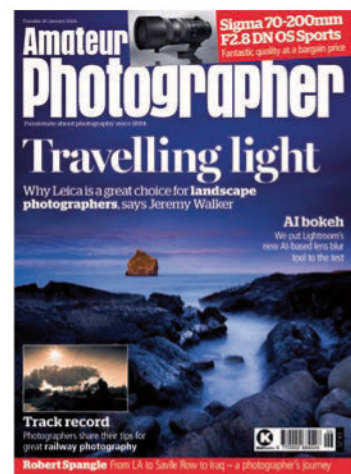
Welcome



Imagine a world without Leica – as well as reminding the world of Europe's noble camera and lens

heritage, the big L gives financially challenged photographers, myself included, something to lust after. Leica gear is not just for channelling your inner Henri Cartier-Bresson out on the street, however; as Jeremy Walker reveals this issue, it can be transformative for landscape photography. Meanwhile we also review the more realistically priced new 70-200mm f/2.8 lens from Sigma, and show you how to get cool lens blur effects with Lightroom. And if you're wondering what to photograph this winter, don't miss our experts' guide to creative railway photography too. Enjoy the issue.

Geoff Harris, Deputy Editor



COVER PICTURE © JEREMY WALKER. INSET PICTURE © MICHAEL TOPHAM

Our cover photo this week was taken in Iceland by top pro Jeremy Walker, with the Leica M11. See page 38 for Jeremy's reflections on using the M11.

THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS



HOLLIE LATHAM HUCKER
Technique Editor

Hollie gathers shooting tips from seasoned railway photographers



PETER DENCH

The AP regular interviews former marine Robert Spangle about his illuminating book, *Afghan Style*



JEREMY WALKER

The pro landscape shooter shares his thoughts after a year working with Leica's rangefinder camera, the M11



JAMES ABBOTT

James investigates Lightroom's Lens Blur to find out how effective it really is for creating bokeh



DAMIEN DEMOLDER

Former AP editor Damien puts the Sigma 70-200mm f/2.8 DG DN OS through its paces



ANGELA NICHOLSON

Expert reviewer Angela tests the impressive 3 Legged Thing Taylor 2.0 monopod

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Another Slovenia win in travel competition

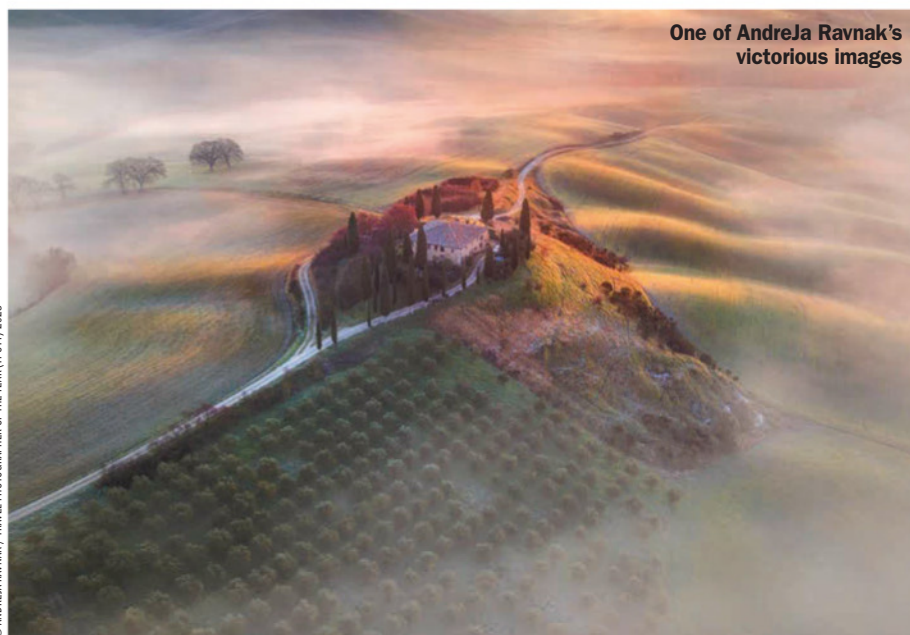
SLOVENIAN photographer AndreJa Ravnak has been named Travel Photographer of the Year 2023, following in the footsteps of her fellow countryman Matjaz Krivic, who took the title in 2022. AndreJa triumphed with images of hop growing in Slovenia and rolling fields in Italy and the Czech Republic.

'There is a subtle elegance about this year's winners,' said TPOTY founder Chris Coe. 'This comes through in both of AndreJa's winning portfolios; one takes us into simple landscapes, with delicate colours and a textural beauty, the other into the hop fields, out of season and undressed ready for the next planting.' Her prizes include a £1,000 bursary, free RPS membership and more.

Caden Shepard Choi (14) from the USA won Young Travel Photographer of the Year, for her

black & white story of how the Navajo people of Chinle, Arizona, use locally produced wool. Matthew Arnett from the UK, meanwhile, was a joint runner-up in the aged 15-18 Young TPOTY category.

Other notable category winners include Greek photographer Athanasios Maloukos' portfolio of shamans in Siberia's frozen Lake Baikal, which won the People and Cultures category, while the UK's Jack Lawson won the Best Single Image award for his image of Nigeria's national amputee football team, the Special Eagles, training on the beach. Tim Bird, a UK photographer now based in Finland, was runner-up in the Landscape & Environment category for his portfolio of images taken near Obama Onsen in Japan. See all the winners at www.tpoty.com



One of AndreJa Ravnak's victorious images

© ANDREJA RAVNAK / TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR (TPOTY) 2023

New X-mount 18mm pancake lens

VOIGTLÄNDER has released the Color-Skopar 18mm F2.8 Aspherical manual-focus pancake lens for Fujifilm X-mount.

Featuring a double-sided aspheric lens and atypical partial-dispersion glass to maximise optical performance, the Color-Skopar also has a lever on the focus ring for precise control. The approximate focus point, set by the lever's rotation, can be determined without looking at the distance scale to help with quick zone-focusing. Other features include a 10-blade iris diaphragm for attractive bokeh, all-metal barrel construction, manual helix for accurate focusing and a

short shooting distance of 0.17m. The price is £469 and you can order from Robert White – visit bit.ly/rwhiteskopar



The 18mm lens is for Fujifilm X-series cameras

Peter Dench,
Photo North
co-curator



Photo North is back

The Photo North Festival is returning to Leeds for a fifth year, with AP as a media partner. The programme includes exhibitions from Martin Parr, plus AP contributors Aneesa Dawoojee, Harry Borden, Carolyn Mendelsohn and Tracy Marshall-Grant, who is curating a show about women in documentary photography.

Co-founder and curator Peter Dench explains: 'Alongside a sensational display of exhibitions, from celebrated and emerging artists, is a stimulating Live Lounge of talks and screenings. In our Market Area you can browse book, zine and print stalls, and students are also a key part of our mission. Festival Friday is Education Day with teaching organisations and students UK-wide, who can benefit from free portfolio reviews and career advice.'

Photo North runs from 12-14 April at Carriageworks Theatre, Millennium Square, Leeds. See www.photonorthfestival.co.uk

The DJI Mic 2 has AI
noise cancellation



Magic mic?

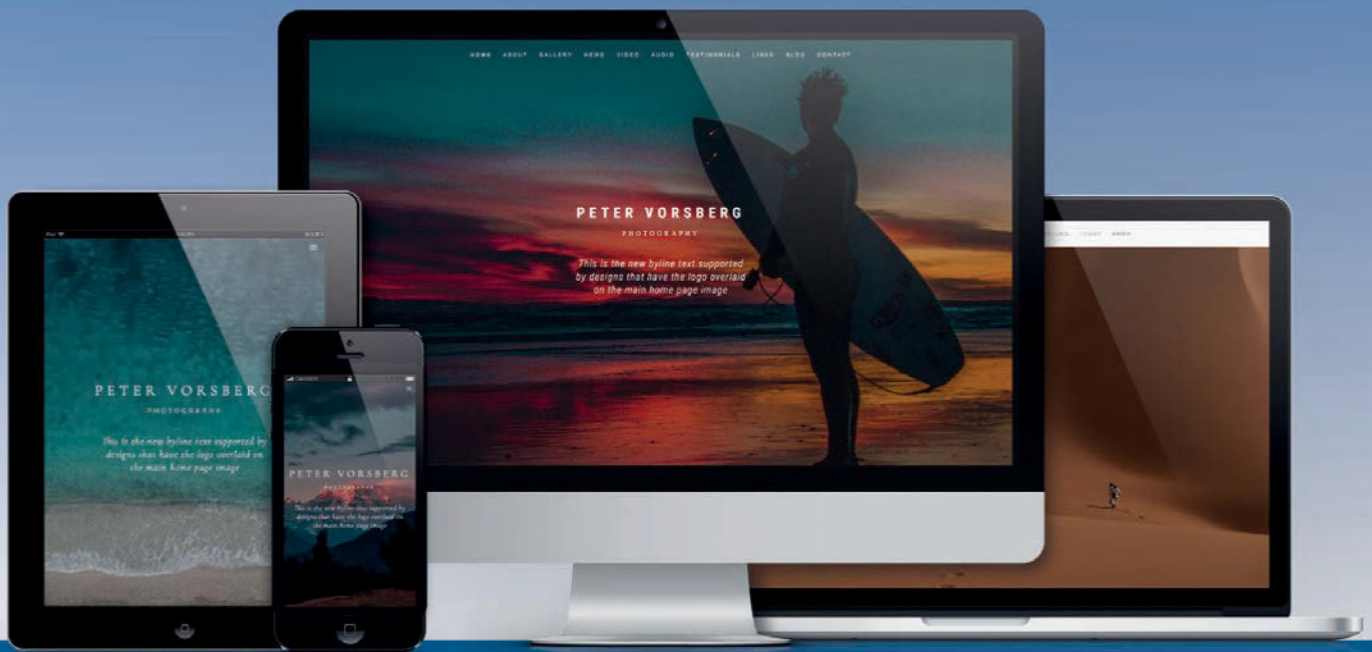
Drone goliath DJI has announced its latest portable wireless mic system, the DJI Mic 2. It has AI noise-cancellation and 32-bit float internal recording in a smaller body with improved battery life, compared to the original DJI Mic, plus a Safety Track which lets you record a second audio track alongside the primary one in case of unexpected audio-level spikes. The mic system also supports Bluetooth pairing with smartphones and DJI's Osmo Pocket 3 and Osmo Action 4. The kit costs £309 from store.dji.com/uk and other retailers.



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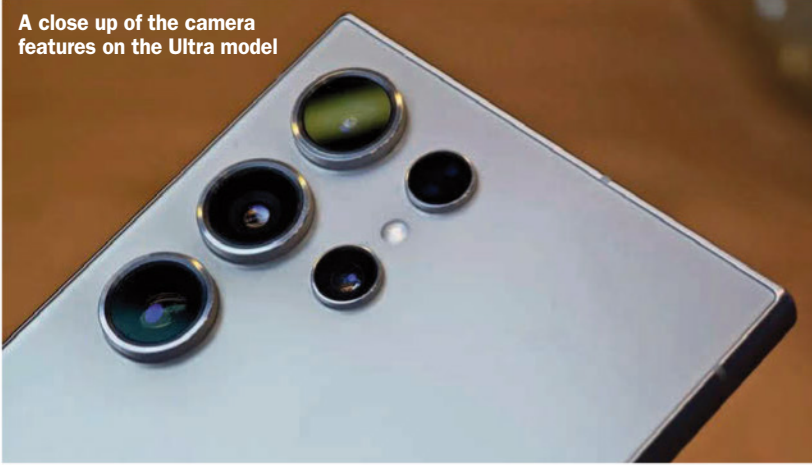
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A close up of the camera features on the Ultra model



New Samsung Galaxy S24 phones pile on AI

SSAMSUNG has announced the Galaxy S24 smartphone series, which include numerous AI photography features. The flagship S24 Ultra has a 200MP f/1.7 main camera with optical image stabilisation (OIS), a 12MP f/2.2 ultra-wideangle camera, a 10MP f/2.4 3x telephoto camera with OIS, and a 50MP f/3.4 5x telephoto camera with OIS.

As with the Google Pixel 8 series, Samsung is implementing AI technology to enhance images as you take them, with a mix of in-phone and cloud-based AI features available when editing. A new AI ProVisual engine, for example, is claimed to improve night photography, noise performance, zoom quality, colour reproduction and HDR (High Dynamic

Range) imaging. Other AI features include the self-explanatory Reflection Removal, and AI can also be used to generate intermediate frames in video, letting you create slow-mo footage from your videos after you've recorded them. Cloud-based AI editing features include removing, moving, and resizing objects, as well as generative fill – if you want to rotate an image, it can then fill in the missing bits, for example.

The S24 and S24 Plus phones have a triple-camera setup and a 12MP selfie camera with autofocus. The AI features are also available on these phones.

Available now, the S24 Ultra costs £1,249, the S24 Plus is £999, and the S24 is £799. See samsung.com/uk

Youth culture

THE World Photography Organisation has announced the Student and Youth competition shortlists in the Sony World Photography Awards 2024. The themes were Home (Student) and Through your Eyes (Youth). The portfolios making the cut in the Student category, included Frederik Rügger's project on the customs of English and Irish traveller communities, and Kazi Arifujjaman's images of communal rice processing sites in Bangladesh. The Youth shortlist included Daniel Murray's evocative image of a lone surfer on an empty beach, and River Lewis-Gosch's project on severe wildfires in the US. The overall winners in the Student, Youth, Open and Professional competitions of the Sony World Photography Awards will be revealed on 18 April. See worldphoto.org



© JOYCE XU, AUSTRALIA, SHORTLIST, YOUTH COMPETITION, THROUGH YOUR EYES, 2024 SONY WORLD PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS



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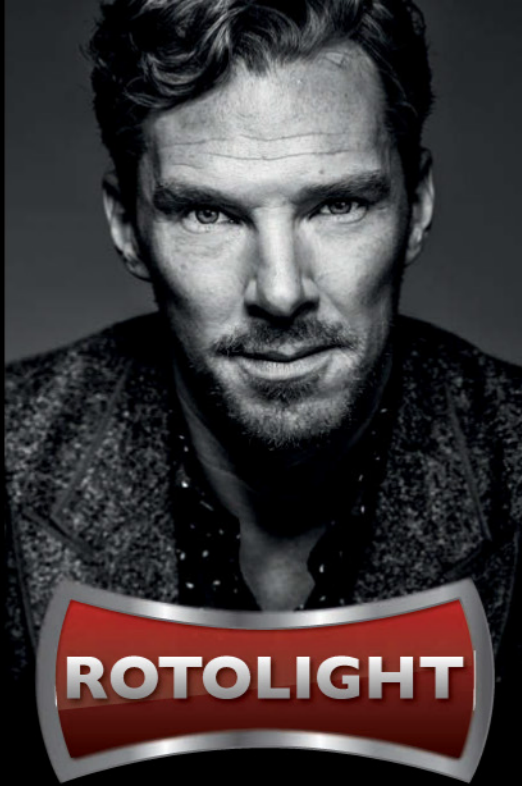
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SOME RECENT VIDEOS



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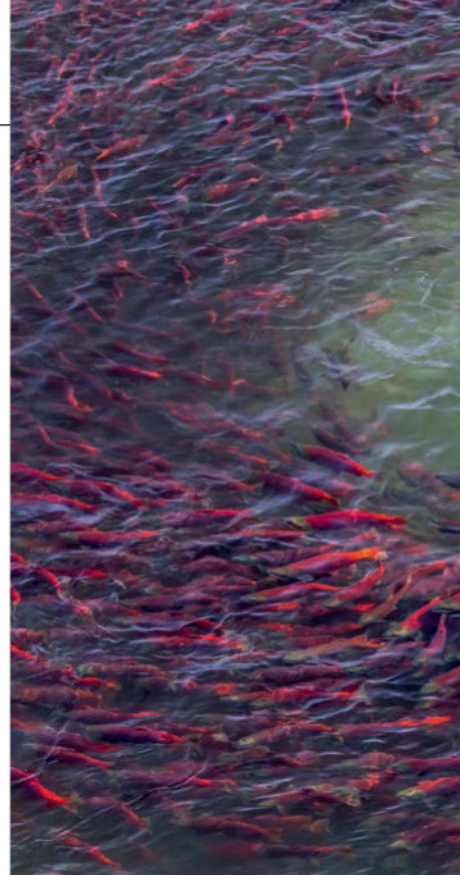


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Wild Lives: The World's Most Extraordinary Wildlife by Art Wolfe

£80 (RRP), Insight Editions, hardback, 352 pages, ISBN: 978-1683830832



Wolfe's latest book shows that the veteran photographer is still at the top of his game and creating exceptional images, says **David Clark**

Art Wolfe has been at the forefront of nature photography for most of his 40-year career. He has produced more than 60 books including landmark collections such as *Migrations* (1994) and *The Living Wild* (2000) and has presented the long-running US TV series *Art Wolfe's Travels to the Edge*.

During that time, the world's wildlife has been under increasing pressure from climate breakdown, the large-scale destruction of natural habitats and poaching. As popular nature documentaries such as *Planet Earth III* increasingly acknowledge, it's no longer enough to simply show pristine environments and amazing species and ignore the fact that large-scale change to the natural world is now happening.

Accordingly, Wolfe's new book, as he



Caption



Far left: A jaguar in Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil

Above: A brown bear fishing for sockeye salmon in Alaska

Middle left: A female brown bear leaps after salmon, Alaska

Left: Adélie penguins approach a glacial crevasse in Antarctica

says in the introduction, is 'a book on how animals are adapting to a rapidly changing climate.' It's divided into ten chapters covering the variety of environments on Earth, including Arctic Tundra, Temperate Forests and Desert. Each chapter includes an essay by biologist and conservationist Gregory Green, who describes the environments and their wildlife along with the conservation challenges that affect them.

Wolfe has a positive, glass-half-full approach that means the emphasis is on celebrating the beauty of nature and the successes of wildlife conservation. The latter includes animals growing in numbers due to conservation work and those species that have been brought back from near-extinction.

The images show over 500 species, photographed in 60 countries, and have mostly been taken in the past ten years. Admirers of Wolfe's photographic style will find much to enjoy, from expansive aerial shots of Alaskan landscapes teeming with caribou to the graphical simplicity of tight close-ups of animals such as porcupines and armadillos.

Wolfe has an unerring eye for impactful, beautifully composed images and his photography revels in the seemingly boundless diversity of wildlife on the planet. Those readers looking for shots chronicling nature's decline won't find them here; this book is a celebration of the wildlife we still have, rather than what is being lost. As such, *Wild Lives* is an outstanding collection of images by a master photographer.

Books & exhibitions

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



© BRENDA PRINCE

Buying an ice cream at Yorkshire Miners' Gala, June 1984

One Year! Photographs from the miners' strike 1984-5

Martin Parr Foundation, Bristol, until 31 March. Free. See martinparrfoundation.org

Anyone who was above a certain age in the 1980s will clearly remember the miners' strike, which ran from March 1984 to March 1985. Divisive, violent and extremely bitter, its ramifications can still be felt in communities in the UK today. Now, 40 years on, the Martin Parr Foundation is commemorating the strike with an exhibition and series of talks that examine the role that photography played in events. Featured photographers include Chris Killip, Brenda Prince, Jenny Matthews and Roger Tiley. Their images are supported by striking miner Philip Winnard's photo albums, as well as ephemera such as plates, posters, and a dart board with a picture of Margaret Thatcher at its centre. For full details of the programme of events, visit the foundation's website.

Dark Peak Photo Festival

Various venues across Glossop, 22-25 February. Visit www.darkpeakphoto.com



A toned cyanotype from Derbyshire Hill Farming by Kate Bellis

Leeming; documentary images from Derbyshire Hill Farming and Community by the award-winning Kate Bellis; and Open Shutters, which celebrates the achievements of people with mental health issues. There are also workshops and talks, including a presentation by regular AP contributor Paul Hill.



It's good to share

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

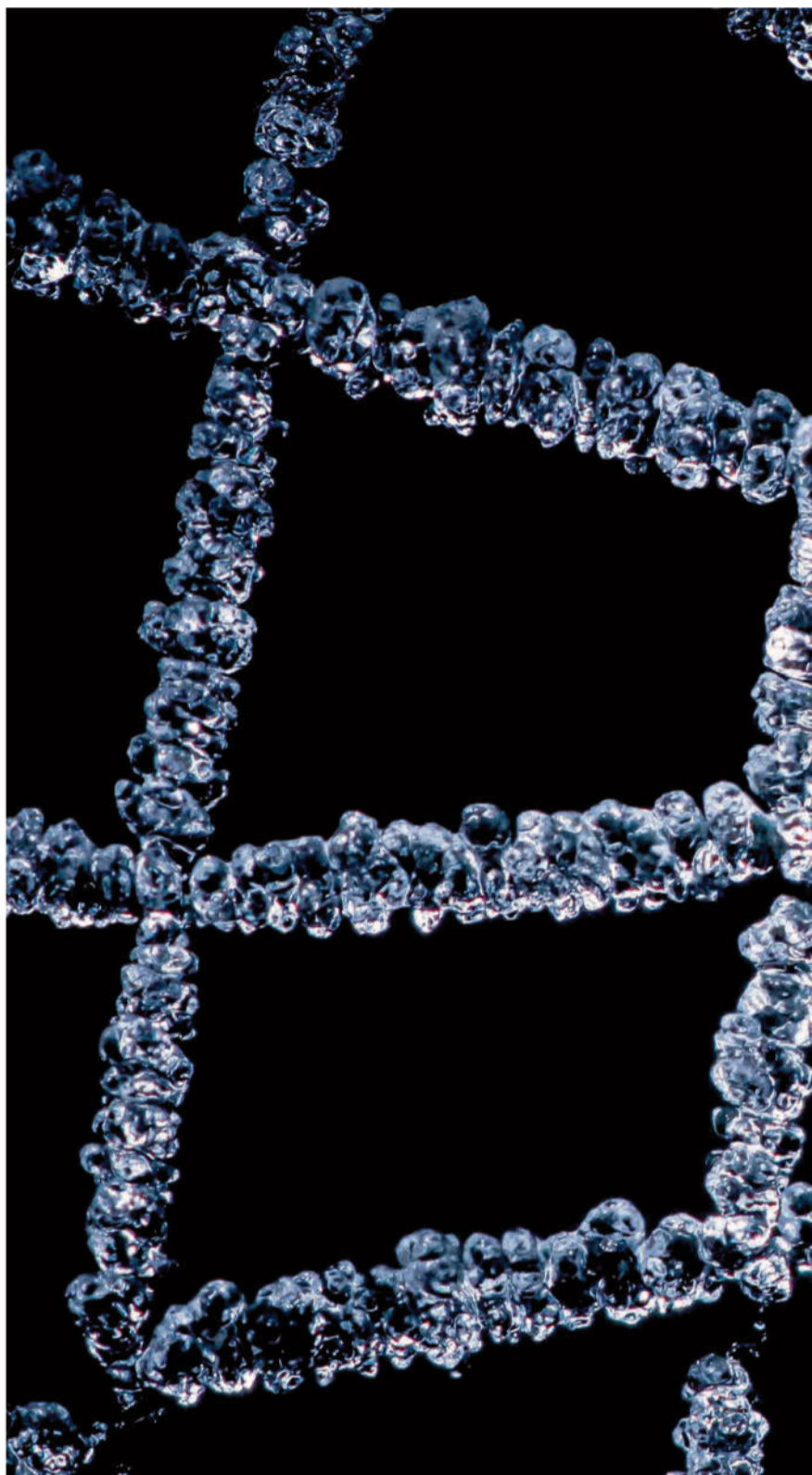
AP picture of the week

Morning Frost by Kieran Morgan

Canon EOS 77D, Canon EF 100mm f/2.8 Macro USM + extension tube, 1/200sec at f/8, ISO 1600

'My usual subjects are insects, which become very scarce in the winter months, so I took advantage of the morning frost in my garden. I was aiming to photograph the delicate ice crystals formed on this spider's web. Picking a moment to fire the shutter when the wind was calm enough.'

Instagram: @kdm_macro



#appicoftheweek

Win!



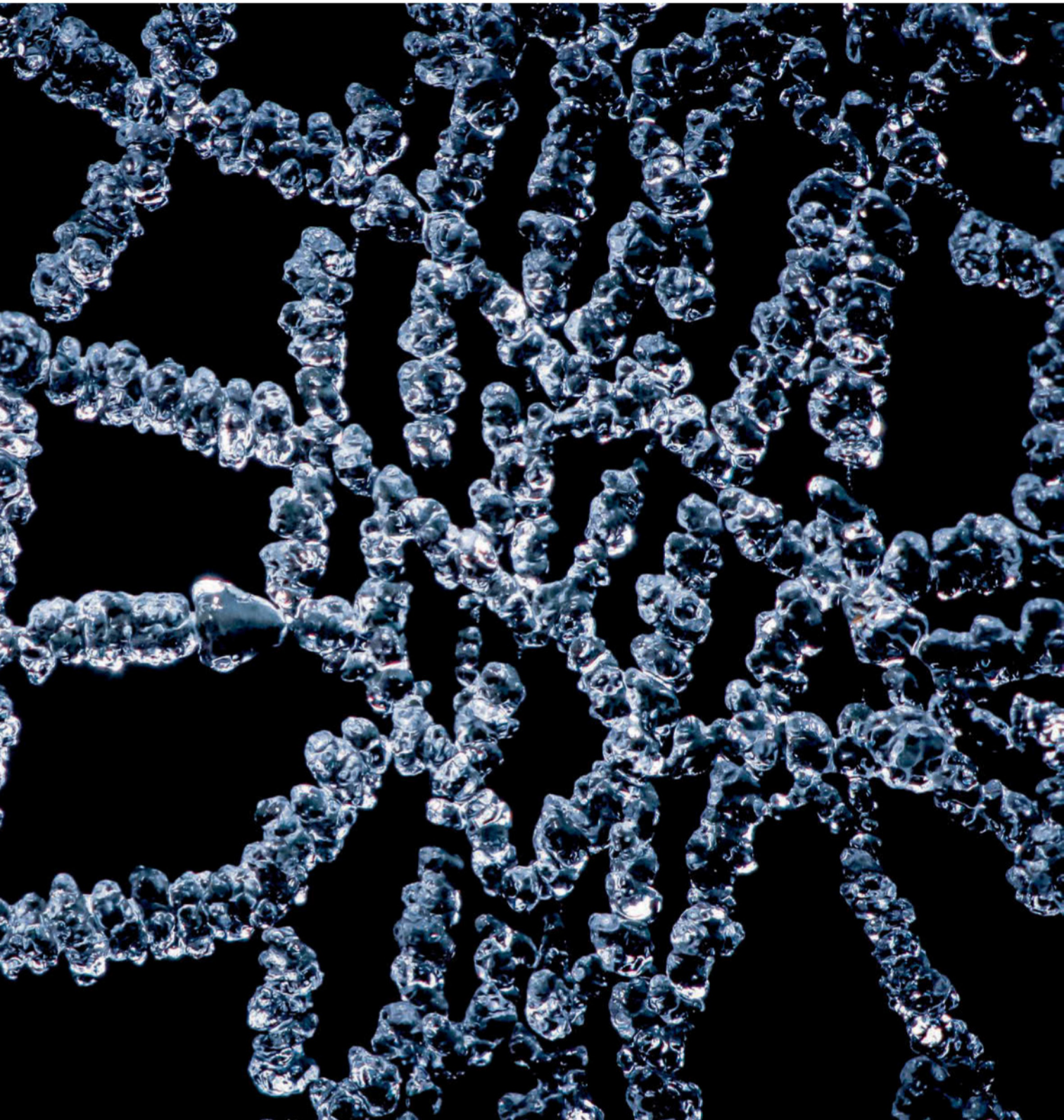
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It's good
to share

Hatsumōde - New Beginnings by Rabs

Sony A7 III, Sony FE 40mm F2.5 G,
1/800sec at f/3.2, ISO 100

'On New Year's, Sensō-ji Tokyo's oldest temple, sees crowds flocking for the first shrine visit – Hatsumōde – to seek blessings and good fortune! The vibrant atmosphere, made up of thousands of people from several generations, and the traditional rituals made it an unforgettable experience.'

Instagram: @ShotByRabs



We also
liked...



The Sign by Simon Steiner

Leica Q2, Summilux 28mm f/1.7
ASPH, 1/250sec at f/2.8, ISO 100

'The photo is a close-up of a taxi sign of an American taxi parked in front of a hotel near Paris. The blue hour light was great that day, so I was able to take several close-ups of details of the car. In the end, I liked this version best with the interplay of the iconic sign, the colours and the reflection.'

Instagram: @simon.steiner.photo

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

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LETTER OF THE WEEK

This great 'bucket list' shot was captured by Mark Corns



Moon flight

I greatly enjoyed the brilliant photo of the plane next to the moon by Lee Clark in your recent issue (*It's good to share*, AP 9 January), and I thought I would share my own shot from April of a British Airways airplane transecting the moon.

Like Lee's, my photo was a bit of a coincidence. I had just returned home from photographing some local wildlife, and with a clear sky I looked up and saw a fabulous almost full moon with an easyJet plane passing just by it – but I couldn't get the

camera out of my bag in time to take the shot.

A bit gutted, I decided to take a shot of the moon anyway. I'm so glad I did because I saw a tiny speck approaching the moon. Max zoom engaged (thank goodness for my 200-600mm lens!), I fired a burst of shots and caught the plane approaching and then passing the moon. Seconds later, and I would have missed it. One shot off the bucket list!

Mark Corns

A great capture, Mark, and a reminder to always keep trying.

Win! SAMSUNG

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Revisiting Ricoh

Further to my letter published in the 5 December issue, and following a house move, I have located a collection of old APs with a number

of camera tests. One is specifically on the Ricoh Singlex from October 1964 and it confirms the very favourable review the camera received at the time; though, when I had

mine in later years, I recall it being rather 'clunky' in respect of mirror/shutter movement. I also fondly remember emulating one of Victor Blackman's guides to photographing

models, which I tried with my girlfriend, using a Petri Flex V with a 350mm F5.5 Ina lens – though her patience wore a bit thin as I was shouting instructions from some distance with the background noise of Atlantic breakers!

Paul Cooper

Photoshop killed photography

People are moaning about AI killing photography but in my opinion, it was already in a coma and has been so since Photoshop was invented in the 1990s. Our trust that what we see in a photo is the unadulterated truth died then. With Adobe now adding AI to the latest versions of Photoshop, the dishonesty has come full circle.

Bill Arnett

We'd refer you to the *Complete Self-Instructing Library of Practical Photography*, originally published in 1909 and now available online. There's lots in this pre-Photoshop tome about retouching and even removing unwanted areas from a photograph. It's at bit.ly/oldretouching



Above: AI is certainly a worry but photographers were tweaking 'the unadulterated truth' long before Photoshop, as this old book shows

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All aboard!

There are many elements to consider when shooting trains. Three railway experts share their tips on how to capture the perfect shot



Michael Topham

Michael is a full-time cricket groundsman and freelance wedding photographer from Tonbridge, Kent. In his spare time, he enjoys the challenge of capturing striking railway images. His photographs can often be found gracing the pages of steam railway magazines and railway touring company brochures. He's online at www.michaeltopham.co.uk or on Instagram @michaeltophamphotography

Railway photography is a pastime passed down from my father, and one I took up from a very young age. We'd spend hours travelling to railways the length and breadth of the country in search of the winning combination of steam and sunshine. I still fondly remember capturing my first respectable image of a freight steam loco emerging through the mist on a glorious sunny winter morning in Hampshire. Since then, my passion for attempting to shoot the finest and most unique steam railway images has grown; however I'm still yet to trump the magnificent sight of a double-headed steam train crossing Ribbleshead Viaduct at sunset, which to this day remains my favourite shot I've taken in 25 years of photographing trains.



Learn your locations

Anyone can rock up at a preserved railway and take an ordinary photograph of a steam train simmering in a station, but to capture the type of shot that stands out from others you'll want to do some homework first. Study an Ordnance Survey map for footpaths that run close to the railway as well as possible foot crossings from where you may find an excellent vantage point at a safe distance to the track. An uphill gradient also means the steam locomotive has to emit steam to its cylinders, in turn creating better steam effects from the chimney. You'll find that some locations work better at different times of the year. In summer you may find tree foliage ruins the composition whereas in winter you get a clearer, unobstructed view. Building up knowledge of different locations and when best to visit them takes time, but for me this is half the fun of being a railway photographer. When the perfect location, train and weather all come together simultaneously and you bag the shot, it's a great feeling and one that you can say you worked hard to get.



Think outside the box

While there are instances when I like to shoot a front three-quarter shot with the sun over my shoulder to maximise the amount of light on the front and side of the train, I try to think more creatively when it comes to lighting and composition. Early morning and late evening creates great opportunities to capture striking silhouettes. The key to photographing the best railway silhouettes is to shoot from distance, often with a telephoto lens, and not so close that you struggle to keep the entire train in the frame or the locomotive appears distorted. Bridges, viaducts, trees and embankments will all help to give your railway silhouette context and can make them much more dramatic, as illustrated in this example taken at the renowned Ribbleshead Viaduct on the picturesque Settle-Carlisle railway.





RECOMMENDED KIT

Walking boots

If you're going to be walking long distances or be out on your feet for hours, a comfortable pair of walking boots are a must. Look for a lightweight Gore-Tex pair that are weather-ready and offer plenty of grip.

Ladder / pole

You can pick up a high-quality 2-step folding ladder for under £50. Look for non-slip feet for a secure grip, and padded handles for a comfortable hold.

Thermos flask

A hot drink while waiting for a train in the cold and the middle of nowhere is a good way to lift your spirits. Highly recommended with a slice of flapjack to keep your energy levels up.



Gain extra elevation

It can be extremely frustrating to arrive at an excellent location, only to find you can't elevate yourself enough to shoot over a fence, railway sign or other obstacle. You may also prefer the composition that an extra couple of feet on a step ladder offers. I make a point of putting my portable step stool in the car just in case some extra elevation is required and tend to find myself using it on location more often than not. Lightweight aluminium folding steps are best if you plan on walking long distances to a location.



Don't miss the 'rods down' moment

Once you've framed up your shot, you'll want to try to envisage how far into the frame you want the locomotive to be before you fire the shutter. Try to identify something, be it a tree, telegraph pole or other obvious marker in the frame so you know exactly when to starting shooting as the train approaches. I find this can be very beneficial when photographing trains that are travelling at high speeds on the national network. Setting your camera to shoot a burst of shots in its high-speed continuous shooting mode is also highly recommended if you'd like to improve your chances of capturing the steam locomotive's connecting rods at their lowest position, which is judged the most attractive position by railway purists.

Access all areas

There are some shots that only those who work on the railway are able to capture. These include taking photographs on the footplate while the train is moving, accessing the loco sheds or shooting close to the lineside. By joining your local railway and becoming a regular volunteer you'll be in the know of what's happening when; so you're less likely to miss out on a photo opportunity. As part of joining a railway you'll need to undertake safety courses to show you're competent at working safely and capable of obeying rules and regulations.





Andrew Shenton

Andrew is the vice-chairman of the Phoenix Railway Photographic Circle; his passion is creative railway photography. You can find links to his [YouTube channel](#), [Instagram](#) and [Flickr](#) at www.andrewshenton.co.uk

I've always been fascinated by trains, thanks to my dad's passion for railways. I'm a member of the 1Z10 and Phoenix Railway Photographic Circle photography groups, and here we challenge our creativity. I love to use the light, seasons and inclement weather, with low light and night photography being a special favourite of mine. It's not just about the train – I find that the most interesting railway photography captures the scene and tells a story by capturing the train in its environment.

Achieving that perfect shot requires patience and luck, but when everything aligns – the right location, train and weather conditions – it's a truly satisfying moment of accomplishment.

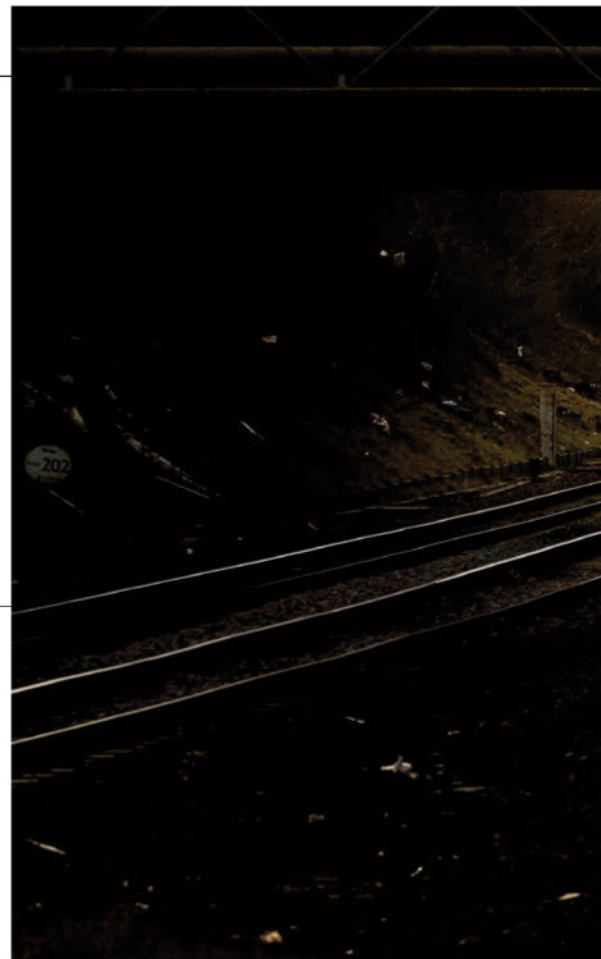
Use the light

Use the available light or lack of it to create some stunning railway photography; it doesn't have to be a bright day with the sun over your shoulder. Challenge your photography skills to capture a moving train in low light – try first light or a low winter sun reflecting off the rolling stock. I love finding locations where the railway aligns with the setting sun, either with the sun behind a clear embankment for a dramatic train silhouette against a stunning sunset, or a location where the low setting sun will glint against the rolling stock. In my compositions I like to leave room for the train to breathe, showing the train in its environment and allowing space for the train. For a more satisfying composition try allowing space, so railway infrastructure doesn't get too close to the edge of your frame.



Shutter speed

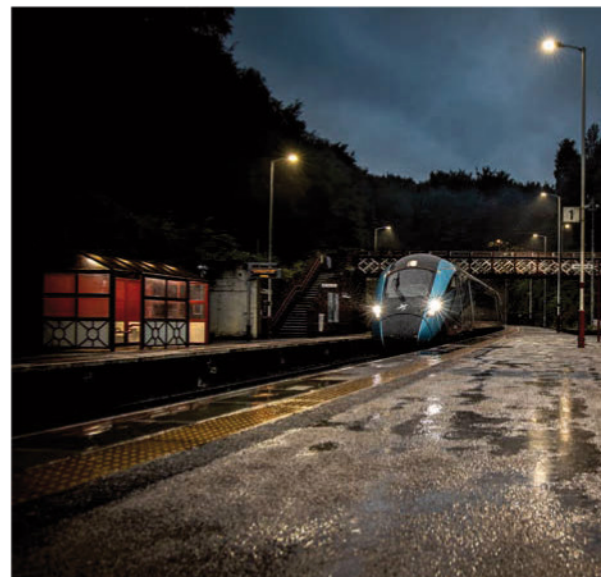
Generally, a shutter speed of 1/1000sec will freeze the action of a 100mph train, although this can vary depending on the composition. If the train is approaching, a slower shutter speed might be more useful in lower light situations. Alternatively, if the train is closer and moving across the frame, a higher shutter speed is necessary. But your shots don't always have to be super-sharp. Experiment with a slower shutter speed to capture some motion blur and convey a sense of movement. Another technique is panning, effective when there's a background of trees or buildings. Set a focus point anticipating the front of the train, shoot a quick burst at high speed as the train passes, use a shutter speed around 1/30sec. Keep the camera steady and move smoothly to follow the train. This technique takes some practice, especially in getting the hang of the passing train's speed.



Adverse weather

Don't let chilly and damp conditions deter you; instead, use the opportunities that adverse weather provides. The mysteries of fog or the brilliance of a vividly coloured train against a backdrop of pristine snow – these weather

phenomena may be rare, but they have the potential to turn normal into exceptional railway photography. Rain, often seen as a nuisance, can become your artistic ally, so use the drama of stormy skies or explore the reflective possibilities of a rain-soaked landscape. I love a wet

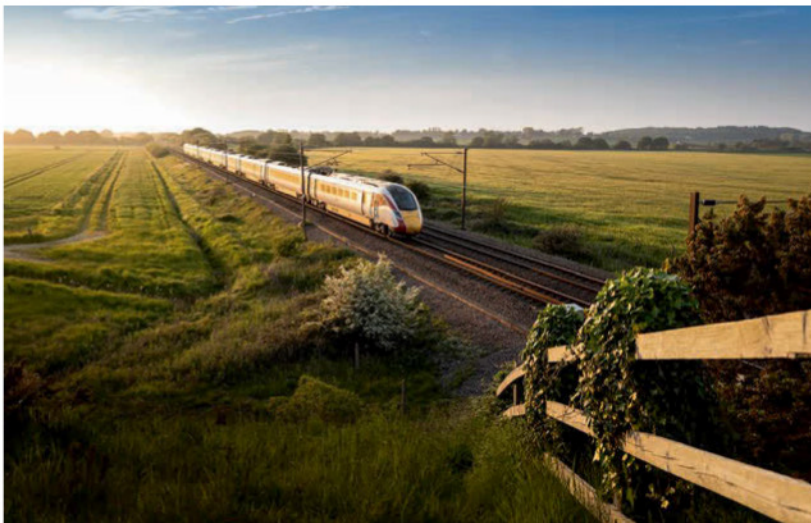




Be creative - challenge the front three-quarter view

Traditionally, railway photography focuses on a front three-quarter view, emphasising the front and side of the train and taking up most of the image – a style known as a record shot. As a member of the Phoenix Railway Photographic Circle, we aim to break away from this traditional approach adding creativity into our railway photography. I encourage you to let your imagination run wild. Experiment with capturing a train speeding into the distance; use a shaft of light in a dark cutting to highlight the locomotive exhaust; zoom in on a small, abstract detail of a train or a piece of railway infrastructure; take a powerful low-angle shot showcasing the bulk of a powerful locomotive; or capture a wide vista in a city or countryside to stage the train in its environment. The possibilities are limitless. Challenge yourself, and let your creativity flow.

platform, which from a low point of view, offers an ideal base for capturing striking reflections of trains, signal lights, and the station ambience. Especially in low light or at night when the wet can add depth and reflection, transforming an ordinary composition into something extraordinary.



Stay safe

Capturing images of trains can be a highly enjoyable hobby, involving the exploration of new locations in the countryside or providing a reason to venture into different cities. In the UK, there are no legal restrictions on photographing trains. However, it's crucial to prioritise safety. Never trespass on the railway or place yourself or others in danger. At stations, railway enthusiasts are generally welcomed to take photos, so it's a good idea to let yourself be known to station staff – the courtesy will be appreciated. Stay away from the platform edge and avoid capturing images of security equipment like CCTV cameras. Flash photography is strictly prohibited as it can distract train drivers and dispatch staff, so is potentially very dangerous. Safety is paramount, and sometimes you may be asked what you are doing. Network Rail and National Rail do have guidelines for railway photography on their websites.

RECOMMENDED KIT

Real Time Trains

Once you've found a perfect location, you will need to know when and how often trains run, so see www.realtimetrains.co.uk to find trains for any location in the UK.

Traksy

This website has maps of the UK rail network showing live positions of trains – perfect when you're waiting, camera poised, wondering where the train is. <https://traksy.uk/live>

The Photographer's Ephemeris app

Perfect for aligning the sun (and moon), with railway lines and trying to plan what time of year you can capture a stunning sunset or dawn shot.





Don Bishop

Don is a full-time professional landscape and steam railway photographer with some 35 years' experience. He is self-taught to record his lifelong hobby of railways. In 2006 he became a full-time photographer, devoting his time equally to landscape photography and his passion for railway photography. Don also offers workshops on steam railway photography, usually at the scenic West Somerset Railway. Visit www.donbishop.co.uk

In railway photography I am driven by a passion for that elusive 'master shot' of a steam train in the landscape, working hard uphill with a heavy train, in full sun. Many miles can be travelled around the country trying to capture a special train running in a scenic landscape. Another angle is the desire to recreate scenes from the past on photographic charter events. I have been one of several organisers of these for some 30 years. These events allow like-minded photographers to get together to capture an authentic recreation, using locos and rolling stock specially hired for the day on our many heritage railways around the country. This enables us to place the train at a pre-planned location where the light is right at a specific time of day, but there is still an element of challenge in getting the shot in the best light.



Composition

For the more normal three-quarter front shots, compose with the track the train is on running in the bottom corner of the frame, left or right as the composition demands. If you're planning to capture a distant train in the surrounding landscape, remember to make sure the

The importance of light

Always make sure you are on the right side of the line for the light, unless you are deliberately going for a silhouette shot – which are normally best taken square/side on at the beginning or end of the day. Ensure the sun is at least 45 degrees to one side of the planned spot you are going to photograph the train at, in order to prevent flare in your lens.

If you are planning to capture backlit shots, it's usually best in the winter months unless late in the day. Try to work out where a glint might appear by looking at the light reflecting on other objects around you before the train approaches. Underexpose the shot by at least 2/3rds of a stop to maximise the glint of light on the side of the train. This will ensure you won't blow the highlights and lose detail in the exhaust.

For silhouette shots always expose for the sky (or other highlight) behind the train.





Think about the rear of the train

If it's possible, include the rear of the train in shot. If not, find a natural break for it such as trees, a bridge or simply disappearing round a bend. This will look much better than a train that comes out of the side of the picture from nowhere.

Exposure

A good starting point for capturing a moving train is a shutter speed of at least 1/500sec at f/5.6 and ISO 100. Personally, I tend to select ISO 200 and aim for f/8 to get maximum depth of field, with a fast enough shutter speed to freeze the train's movement. You will hear well-practised insiders talking of a shot being ½ or 1 stop down (or suchlike) when the light is less than perfect – this would then mean either reducing the shutter speed (but remember blur of fast-moving trains!) or reducing the aperture to say f/4 to get a good exposure. This will however reduce depth of field – ie, back-to-back sharpness of the final image! It's all about balance.

loco is working and producing visible exhaust to ensure it can be seen in the picture. It's also worth looking out for locations where the train is working uphill or away from a station stop. I recommend using the rule of thirds with the aim of placing the train in either the left or right third and lower half of your composition.

Right: Specially organised night shoots often take place in the winter months when the days are shorter. These can provide some different images, usually with the loco standing still in either a station or, as here, in an engine shed. Re-enactors are often used to provide more atmosphere to the images. Here, Hall No. 6998 'Burton Agnes Hall' receives attention in the Great Western Society's Didcot Engine Shed, Oxfordshire.



Include the exhaust

Try to keep the top of (or as much as possible) the exhaust in the frame, but don't fire the shutter too early just to achieve this. Try to keep the train in the lower half of the frame to give room for the exhaust to show. Sometimes it is worth considering a vertical shot to ensure the exhaust is captured – particularly when photographing a train starting away from a stop.

It's also worth bearing in mind the wind direction and consider if the exhaust of the engine will blow over your side of the shot; if it does it can blank out much of the engine and train and result in a very disappointing image. If the wind is likely to blow the exhaust over to the lit side of the train, think about moving to a location where the train is more sheltered from the wind.

RECOMMENDED KIT

DSLR and mirrorless cameras

I'm a firm believer that a (D) SLR or mirrorless camera will produce a far better result than most smartphones and enable you to be far more creative.

A versatile zoom lens

Ideally a zoom lens with a focal length between 18mm and 100mm will cover most compositions. You are unlikely to need to go below an aperture of f/4 for most situations, so this should ease the budget a little.

ND graduated filters

I use LEE ND grads to help capture the sky correctly without making the subject too dark. There are several manufacturers of these to suit various budgets, and I wholeheartedly recommend their use, rather than trying to fix it during post processing.

Style. & spirit

Born in Malibu and based in Los Angeles, American Robert Spangle's photographic journey is a Hollywood script with a dashing lead. Peter Dench finds out more

The name is Spangle, Robert Spangle. It was Spangler on the German side of his father's family, who emigrated in the late 1800s when names that were too foreign were being Americanised. Spangle was definitely more American. Perhaps it was the German heritage that had Spangle signing up for the US Marine Corps in 2007, aged 17 and a half. More likely it was the earlier attacks of 9/11 on the impressionable boy.

The name didn't help him blend into the military. You go by your last name. He found himself presenting his star Spangle manners in front of every formation and meeting high-ranking officials. While serving in the 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion (2nd Recon), training and working in South America, North Africa, the Middle East, with multiple deployments to Afghanistan, there were seeds of his photographic future.

'When I was starting in the military, we were given this amazing suite of Canon cameras with every lens imaginable, 400mm lens, 800mm lenses but I avoided it, it was all heavy and I didn't want to carry it,' explains the 34-year-old. 'I understood ISO and aperture and things like that. I was editing photos; in my special forces team I was the guy who ran communications and I was also the one compiling our reports from the ground. The guy on the team who was taking photos was physically handing the card off to me and I was with a tarp over my head and editing them on a Toughbook, trying to get license plate information or a clear image of someone's face.'

Designer start

Exiting the Marines, art school and a stint as a designer followed before an apprenticeship in England at Savile Row Bespoke Academy (founded by Andrew Ramroop OBE, Master Tailor and Director of Maurice Sedwell). Over the year and a half working on Savile Row, Robert

realised he didn't have the 20-year attention span needed to become a master tailor and turned his attention to photography and the streets of the fashionable west London Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. 'I started taking photos when I could, around a pretty demanding apprenticeship,' he says. 'I'd take photos on my way to work and wake up early to do that. On the way back it was dark. Sometimes you could take photos. In the neighbourhood you had quite posh, stylish locals. It was a really good way to get into street photography. I was new to the country and was studying the place.'

Big break

Without agenda or expectation, Robert archived his street-style photographs on microblogging social-media platform Tumblr. He continues, 'One day I got an email out of the blue from a younger editor at *GQ* who's now a very senior editor in the fashion world and he said, 'I've seen your work, would you like to do stories for us? I think I nearly did a backflip in my tiny bedroom in my tiny flat and that was very much an easy break.'

The break was encouragement, but one client doesn't make a living, and with military precision, he embedded himself in the task of securing more; reading stacks of fashion magazines, taking as many photos as he could, visiting fashion events, building a portfolio, researching and emailing picture editors. It paid off and after about a year, he became a fixture on the circuit documenting international fashion weeks and cities of interest from New York to London, Milan, Paris, Oslo, Kiev, Tbilisi, Stockholm, Copenhagen and Tokyo.

Then, at a house party on the east coast, late 2016, Robert got talking to a former marine reporting for the *Washington Post* who'd recently returned from Ukraine. He says, 'I'd had a few to drink, he'd had a few to drink. I said look man, the story is amazing but the photos [are] garbage. You're telling these amazing





A Taliban member drinks milk tea at a roadside cafe on an early morning in Sharana, Afghanistan, in 2021



‘Conflict journalism really is the absolute peak and if you’re given the opportunity into it, you should at least try’

▶ stories, you’re an incredible guy, your photos should really be doing at least one of that group justice; the next time you go on one of these, if they don’t send a photographer, call me and I’ll be there. No one needs to pay me, I’ll just go out there and do it, I think your words deserve proper images.

‘I’d more or less forgotten about it, we exchanged numbers and six months later I got a call and he says I’m going to Iraq and they told me there’s no budget for a photographer, would you want to go? My immediate thought was absolutely not, that’s a terrible idea, but I promised this guy and realised that, in the realm of photography, conflict journalism really is the absolute peak and if you’re given the opportunity into it, you should at least try.’

Robert went all in. Relinquishing his Nikon D850, D4 and D5, he invested in Leica M-Ds (typ 262), one with a long lens, one with a wide. The absence of a screen and electronic controls, not previewing or post-viewing, allowed him to be hyper-focused in a combat environment and forced him to work intuitively,

Above left: A Taliban fighter with a Manchester United Football Club badge on his military equipment. Taken in Kabul, 2022

Above right: An older Afghan in a hand-quilted velvet chapan coat sells red suede buzkashi boots to spectators. Kabul, 2021

Right: A passer-by in downtown Kabul, 2021

reactively and in an emotion-based way of taking pictures. It also removed the hassle of having to show photos to interested parties.

Acting on instinct

As the community fled bullets being fired by ISIS through the streets of Mosul, Robert’s programming from years documenting street style was present. He broke cover to photograph a family wearing their best burqas cut from the same cloth with highly detailed print. He ran out to capture a dignified-looking gentleman in an elegant suit.

He was initially reluctant to show these fashion photos to the writer he was working with, but his instinct proved rewarding. The writer suggested the family knew they were running for their lives and the uniformity of dress would help identify them as a family should they reach a refugee facility. A closer look at the image of the man in the suit revealed a missing thumb and index finger, a tell-tale sign of someone who had been working with homemade explosives.

‘It isn’t definitive evidence, but it’s interesting that this subconscious thing that guided me to take this photograph actually had a deeper and current line of commentary on the conflict than I’d been aware of,’ Robert continues. ‘After that I needed to take a step back and think more about the story and personal narratives, but realised that I shouldn’t totally





Man with missing fingers, Mosul, Iraq, 2017

▶ ignore my instincts when taking images.’ Spending time with the Kurds in Iraq and seeing how much their culture and dress had to do with their culture of resistance and unique position in the Middle East, being a multi-faith ethnic group, was more exciting for Robert than what he’d been working on in fashion. He considered how fashion could be a deeper line of questioning in culture and in conflicts removed from the big fashion cities of London, Paris, New York. The answer would be his book, *Afghan Style*.

Robert had served two tours of duty in Afghanistan

Above: Early-morning spectators watching horsemen as they warm up before a buzkashi match on the outskirts of Kabul, 2021

‘He considered how fashion could be a deeper line of questioning in culture and in conflicts removed from the big fashion cities of London, Paris, New York’

with the US Marine Corps. He has since thought about Afghanistan every day, sometimes all day. His first trip shooting for *Afghan Style* took place in 2021, several months before the US and NATO forces pulled out, and lasted over a month. He dressed as a local, studied Dari (one of Afghanistan’s major dialects) often travelled by bicycle (to make himself a harder target for the magnetic bombs that characterised the time) and added a Leica M10-D with a 50mm Zeiss C Sonnar f/1.5 lens to his kit bag. A Garmin inReach GPS spot messenger served as a backup messenger and tracking system for those looking after him back home.

When he returned in July 2022, the Taliban had been in power for nearly a year. Working under the Taliban wasn’t easy and it was not made easier being ex US military. You’re not going to be allowed into the country, let alone with a camera, unless you cooperate with the Taliban leadership. He took a few prints from his first trip and copies of *WM Brown* magazine that had published a small story by him on buzkashi, the national sport of Afghanistan in which horse-mounted players attempt to place a goat or calf carcass in a goal. Taliban commanders loved the magazine and reciprocated by showing him videos of them hunting pheasants with AK-47s from Land Cruisers.

Unlikely ally

The assistant minister of information couldn’t comprehend the idea of a photo-book. A calendar perhaps, but a book with pictures, he thought, are for children. Robert slowly began to shoot the pages for his book and found an unlikely ally: ‘Everyone

— WHITEWALL —
Black & White



Gregory Prescott

“White Feather”

Photo Print on ILFORD B/W Paper sealed under Acrylic Glass

42 x 56 cm | Floater Frame Basel, white matt | printed and framed by WhiteWall.com

Bringing photography to completion

When an image becomes visible as a print, it transforms from an abstract idea into reality. For WhiteWall, that means that a picture is only complete once it is hanging on the wall. We achieve perfection through craftsmanship, innovation, and use of the very best materials. Our award-winning gallery quality is always accessible to photo enthusiasts both online and in our stores.

in Afghanistan knows Steve McCurry's photo of the Afghan girl [Sharbat Gula]. She's a national hero, which as a woman in Afghanistan is pretty crazy. Everyone knows about her, everyone knows her story, that photo made her incredibly famous. Afghans do have this idea that they're very famous in terms of photography and are incredibly proud. They make this really wonderful assumption that if you're in Afghanistan and you're photographing them, it's because you're there to make them very famous.'

The 270-plus page hardback book (the 2022 edition of 1,600 copies printed in France by Escourbiac sold out) is Robert's attempt to address the actions of the US, the thousands of lives lost and destroyed on both sides and his own emotions connected to the conflict and the long shadow it has cast across the world.

'In those 20 years we never came to understand Afghanistan or Afghans any better than the propaganda that we used or came under the influence of in the initial invasion. I remember, when we went in, in 2001, everyone was joking about bombing cavemen and these awful inbred people and their wives and their terrible religion. Twenty years later the same jokes are still the limited knowledge of this country and I thought, personally, what a shame to have such a pervasive and violent influence across the fate of a country for two decades. The average Afghan life is totally dictated by American foreign policy and the average American can't find Afghanistan on a map, let alone tell you anything culturally about the country.'

Through silhouette, colour and texture and photographing Afghan men wearing their distinctive chapan (cloak), perahan (shirt), tunban (trousers) patoo



An Afghan amputee wearing a locally-made M-65 style field jacket, 2021



An Afghan wearing the pakol, a woolen hat that resembles a beret and evokes images of armed resistance, 2021

(shawl) and sindhi topi (cap), *Afghan Style* goes far beyond documenting the wardrobe. It's Robert's hope that the book can be a bridge to those who don't want to engage with news, providing an interface for opposing ideologies.

His 17-year journey from soldiering in the provinces of Helmand, Kandahar, Farah, and Nimroz to photographing across Kabul, Nangarhar, Nuristan and Paktika has been more of a corkscrew than an arc. His nationalism has flipped to patriotism. His focus is now on photojournalism, making recent informed reports from Ukraine and Gaza. However, he hasn't completely abandoned fashion and continues to shoot street-style photos, campaigns and editorials. His photography and in particular his @thousandyardstyle Instagram account, cleverly delivers a line of questioning through fashion and photojournalism. He's even designed a \$650 camera bag. It's very Robert Spangle.

A second edition of *Afghan Style* is scheduled for printing in 2024, published by Odyssee: See bit.ly/spangleafghan. The Indy camera bag is available from The Observer Collection at bit.ly/spangleindy or visit the website observercollection.com



Reader Portfolio

Spotlight on readers' excellent images and how they captured them



Wahine

1 Wahine is the Hawaiian word for woman, and this black-eyed Susan reminded me of a hula dancer with the traditional Hawaiian headdress. Shot with studio strobe.

OM Systems OM-1, Olympus 60mm f/1.8 macro, 1/100sec at f/13, ISO 200

Judy Hancock Holland, Vancouver Island, Canada



About Judy

Judy is a retired health educator who lives in Nanaimo, Vancouver Island, Canada. Photography is, for

her, a way to communicate her sense of wonder and awe at the world. See more at www.jhhphotography.com

How and why did you get into photography?

When I started university, I learned how to process my own film and make prints, and I was hooked. Career and family intervened, but 12 years ago, in retirement, I launched back in wholeheartedly.

What are your favourite photographic subjects and why?

My two favourite subjects are flowers, especially calla lilies, and adobe architecture. I love curves and light, and both those subjects can really showcase those elements.

What do you love about photography?

The way I practise photography is quite meditative and even spiritual. I'm drawn to the peace I experience, and the connection to something larger. I also love being able to share the miracles I see in ordinary things.

Favourite photographers

My biggest influence is the painter,

Georgia O'Keeffe. But I'm also very drawn to the lighting and poses of Canadian portrait photographer Yousuf Karsh, Robert Mapplethorpe's floral work, and the exquisite forms in images by Imogen Cunningham and Edward Weston.

What was your first camera?

A Kodak Instamatic when I was nine. My first 'adult' camera was a Praktica.

Current camera kit

OM Systems OM-1 camera and a few Olympus and OM System lenses. Lighting is often key when I work with flowers, and I use a Godox MS300 studio light and Godox 685 speedlight with various modifiers.

Favourite lens

The Olympus 60mm f/2.8 macro lens.

What software do you use for editing?

Lightroom for organisation and initial raw processing. For more specialised processing, Photoshop, Affinity Photo, On1 Photo RAW, and Nik Collection.

About your photos

These photos are part of a new project I'm calling 'digital etchings', which are inspired by etchings on metal. All are made from photographs, many of them focus stacked.

Favourite tips

Learn how to really see and compose first, then worry about learning the technical side.

Three Crones

3 I enjoy shooting in the Japanese wabi-sabi style, and these three dying daisies reminded me of three elders dancing. Shot with studio strobe and focus-stacked.

OM Systems OM-1, Olympus 60mm f/1.8 macro lens, 1/8sec at f/5.6, ISO 200

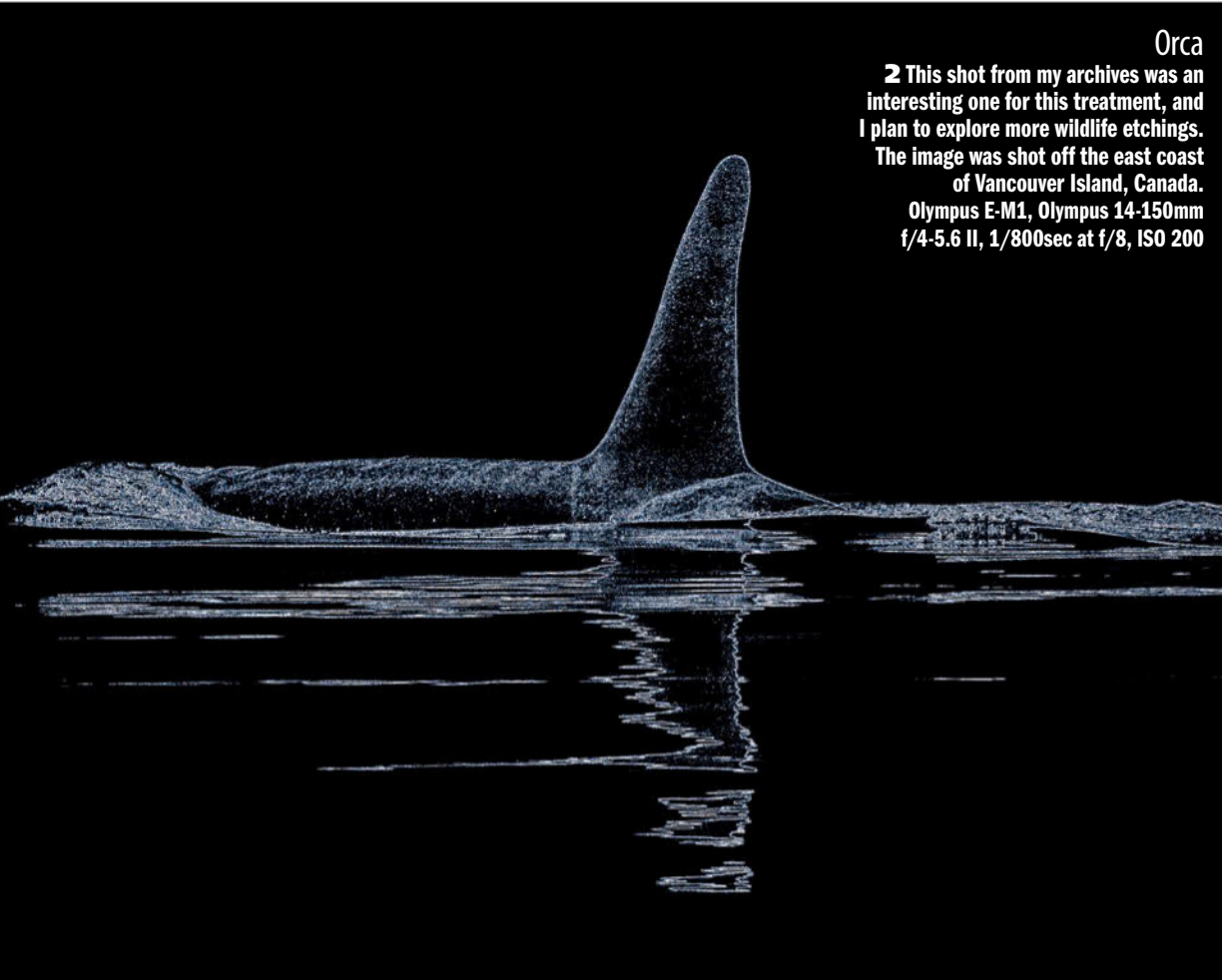


Reader Portfolio winners receive a one-year subscription to a **Gold Portfolio Series website** worth £300. UK domain name included.

Amazing Internet designs, builds and hosts amazing websites for creative people and companies. It has specialised in creating websites for photographers since 1999 and has services to suit all budgets. Whether you need a simple template-based site for £60 per year or a fully bespoke site, they've got you covered. www.amazinginternet.com

Submit your images

See page 3 for details of how to submit. You could see your photos here in a future issue! Please note: the prize is subject to change.



Orca

2 This shot from my archives was an interesting one for this treatment, and I plan to explore more wildlife etchings. The image was shot off the east coast of Vancouver Island, Canada. Olympus E-M1, Olympus 14-150mm f/4-5.6 II, 1/800sec at f/8, ISO 200

Dancing in the Moonlight

4 The sensual curves of calla lilies are a major draw for me. This focus-stacked image of three callas was the first digital etching I created, and still one of my favourites. OM Systems OM-1, Olympus 60mm f/1.8 macro lens, 1/60sec at f/5.6, ISO 200

Chambered Nautilus

5 This image started out as an exercise and a test of what my new iPhone could do. It's evolved into a number of forms, but this etching is one of my favourites. Apple iPhone 13 Pro, 1/300sec at f/1.8, ISO 32



Lightroom's Lens Blur: does it work?

Adobe Lightroom has enjoyed some impressive AI-powered updates recently including Lens Blur to create bokeh. **James Abbott** investigates its effectiveness to discover whether or not it lives up to the hype

Artificial Intelligence has become an integral part of photo-editing software and has, for the most part, delivered some unbelievably useful features that make some editing tasks quicker and easier than ever before. Photoshop may be leading the charge with its contentious Generative Fill Feature and other AI-powered tools, but Lightroom has also seen its fair share of impressive AI features including the more recent Lens Blur control.

Lens Blur, as the name suggests, applies lens blur to images to create realistic and aesthetically pleasing bokeh. This, in essence, allows you to change the point of focus in images with a large depth-of-field and to defocus backgrounds to remove clutter and make the subject more prominent. This is achieved using AI-powered subject selection and a range of tools that allow you to adjust and refine the blur that's introduced to photos.

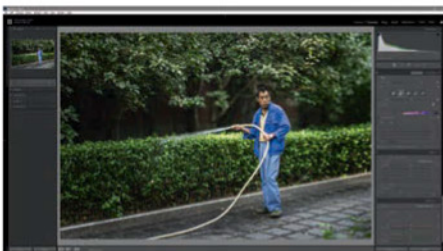
This idea has been around for a while – remember the Lytro cameras where you could adjust and set the point of focus in the Lytro software post-capture? It was an interesting idea that never really took off, but Adobe has come up with a feature that



works with practically any image taken with any camera. On paper, it sounds incredible, and while the results are mixed depending on the image used, there's little

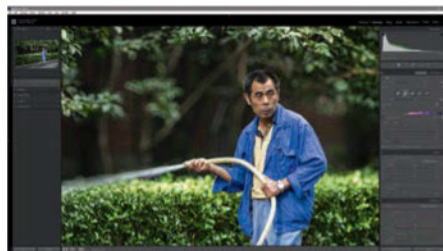
doubt it will be popular because of how well it can work in certain situations. But the question is, is it any good and how does it compare to real optical bokeh?

GET TO KNOW THE LENS BLUR CONTROLS



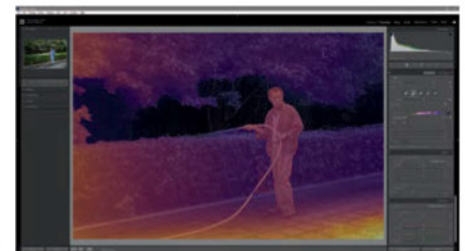
1 Apply Lens Blur

In the Lens Blur tab, expand Refine to show more controls and check the Apply checkbox. Increase the Blur Amount to the desired level and select the desired Bokeh type. You can work with the automated subject selection, use the Subject focus button or the Point/Area Focus Tool to click on the subject or drag over it to select what should be in focus.



2 Refine the Focal Range

The Focal Range shows a visual representation of the depth of sharpness. Move the entire frame by clicking in the middle and moving it along, or drag in the ends to reduce the depth of sharpness. Zoom into the desired point of sharpness to ensure it remains sharp. If it does begin to fall off, just move the end of the frame back.



3 Explore Visualize Depth

Click on the Visualize Depth checkbox and the Focal Range colours will be displayed so you can see what's sharp and what's falling off. You can use this when applying the Focus and Blur brushes, but applying these in the normal view allows you to see mistakes more easily. Uncheck the Visualize Depth checkbox to return to the standard image view.

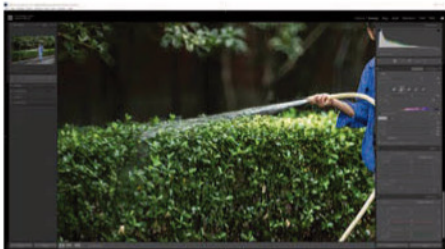


Top tip

You often have to use manual control

Lens Blur is initially applied automatically with subject detection performed by the algorithm. It often does a better job with simple subjects against simple backgrounds, but even in this situation you have to apply a degree of

manual control to achieve a result that looks realistic. More complex images, with multiple layers of depth, and those with visual elements that span these layers, typically require more work. The more you use Lens Blur, the better accustomed you become to what it can and can't do. You instinctively learn what will need to be done before you even run an image through the process.



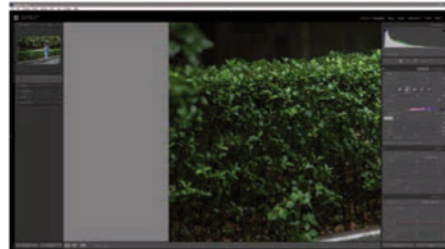
4 Paint in Focus

Select the Focus button and set Amount and Feather to 100. Depending on how blurred the incorrectly blurred area is, the Flow will need to be set to varying levels. Here, it was set to 100 to paint in sharpness of the water and leaves sticking up in front of the darker blurred background. Auto Mask was checked to isolate high-contrast elements.



5 Paint in Blur

If any parts of the scene appear too sharp, click on the Blur button and use the settings in the same way. You can adjust any of these settings as required for specific parts of the image. Auto Mask was unchecked because the aim was for a localised application of blur on the trees behind the gardener to make the focus fall-off appear natural.



6 Refine the Image

Zoom in to check for any hard edges or areas of sharpness or blur and use the Focus and Blur brushes to fix these. Since this is an AI-powered feature, it can take a moment to render the adjustments, so be patient and wait for the most recent adjustments to show. If you make a mistake, press Ctrl/Cmd+Z and Ctrl/Cmd+Sift +Z to redo.

Lens Blur tested

A simple image was taken at f/2.8 and f/11 to compare the results of Lens Blur with genuine optical bokeh

To fully test the effectiveness of Lens Blur, two photos were taken of a simple subject using a 90mm macro lens; one at f/2.8 and another at f/11 to show optical bokeh alongside Lightroom's AI-generated bokeh. The results are impressive but Lens Blur does lag behind optically created bokeh,

and achieving as close a result as possible does require manual intervention; you simply cannot rely on Lightroom's AI algorithm to do a great job on its own, in the way that Adobe marketing videos seem to suggest that it can.

Impressive but imperfect

Lens Blur, like most features designed to replicate optical phenomena, is far from perfect; it certainly isn't as effective as achieving a shallow depth-of-field through aperture control and focus at the point of capture. The feature can, however, provide the ability to defocus backgrounds in many but not all photos where the aperture was

stopped down for any reason.

The feature is highlighted as 'Early Access', so while it's a working Lightroom control where users can provide feedback about it to Adobe, there's plenty of room for further development and improvements before the 'final release'. This doesn't mean that it's ineffective – quite the contrary, it's impressive but far from perfect due to mixed results. The quality of results currently depends on the content of the image being edited, and manual control is required with even the least complex images. It's to be expected at this stage; and as editing AI improves, the need for manual intervention is likely to be reduced.



Shot at f/11

⬆ This is the control image taken at f/11 using a 90mm macro lens attached to an APS-C camera to provide an effective focal length of 135mm. This provides the sharpest results possible with the lens with some depth of field fall-off behind the camera, that was chosen for its simple shape.



Shot at f/2.8

⬆ The optically produced bokeh at f/2.8 is smooth both in front of and behind the subject. It's the best result by far and using shallow depth-of-field effects such as differential focus will always be favoured by many photographers because of how it directs attention and can control meaning.



Lens Blur

⬆ Lightroom's Lens Blur has done a great job overall, but manual control was required despite the simplicity of the subject and the clean and simple background. The element within the image that hasn't worked so well is the blurring of the text on the lens, which has an AI look that's not realistic.

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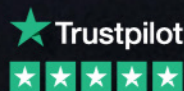
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A year with the Leica M11

Professional landscape shooter **Jeremy Walker** reflects on a year of working with Leica's high-resolution rangefinder camera

Once upon a time, I used Nikon DSLRs for all my professional photography. But a few years ago, I switched to using a Leica M10 rangefinder instead. Later, I complemented this with the higher-resolution M10-R, with its 41MP (rather than 24MP) sensor being a real advantage for my landscape work.

When Leica introduced the M11, it made what I feel were significant changes compared to the M10 and M10R. Aside from the increased 60MP pixel count, losing the fussy removeable bottom plate was a big improvement (traditional Leica users may disagree!). Used with the add-on handgrip, the whole of the base of the camera becomes an Arca Swiss fit dovetail plate, while retaining access to the vastly improved battery and memory card slot. The internal memory of 64GB was also a valuable addition, while the reduction from four buttons on

the rear of the camera to three helped streamline and simplify the M11's looks and usability. So, were these updates and improvements worthy of changing my M10-R to the impressive-looking M11?

Well, after a year and a half of using the M11 I have to say that so far, I have no regrets. In the past few years, I have had a huge change, not only in the camera system I am using, but also in my approach to my work. Over the past 18 months I have now sold my remaining DSLR kit, my travel flash packs, lighting stands, large filters, flash guns and just about every conceivable piece of kit I had bought over the years. My camera kit now consists of only a rangefinder body and four incredibly small prime lenses that fit neatly into a Billingham Hadley Pro bag. Travelling abroad has become a joy, with no fighting for overhead cabin storage and no worrying about having a huge camera rucksack taken away to

be put into hold luggage. I call it small-bag smugness.

Freeing, not limiting

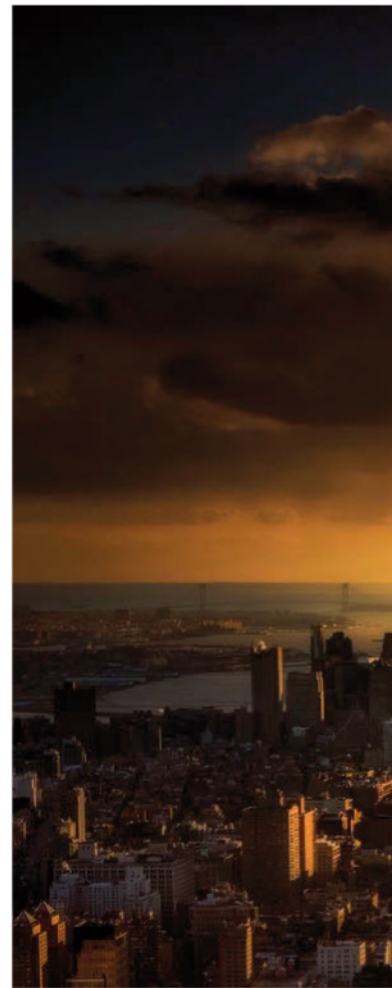
But is there a risk limiting myself to just a small range of focal lengths? Possibly, but I would rather concentrate on what I can shoot, not what I can't. I find this approach rather refreshing, trying to make the small amount of kit work for you and having to use your eyes and imagination a bit more. After all, it's possible to carry too much kit and still miss a shot. Small but perfectly formed is ideal for me when shooting my landscape, travel and architectural work.

My first overseas job with the Leica M11 came just a couple of weeks after purchasing it, a few days shooting in Florence, Italy. It was the middle of the summer, not my favourite time for travel and daytime temperatures were pushing towards the high thirties Centigrade, which is not the weather for heavy rucksacks and

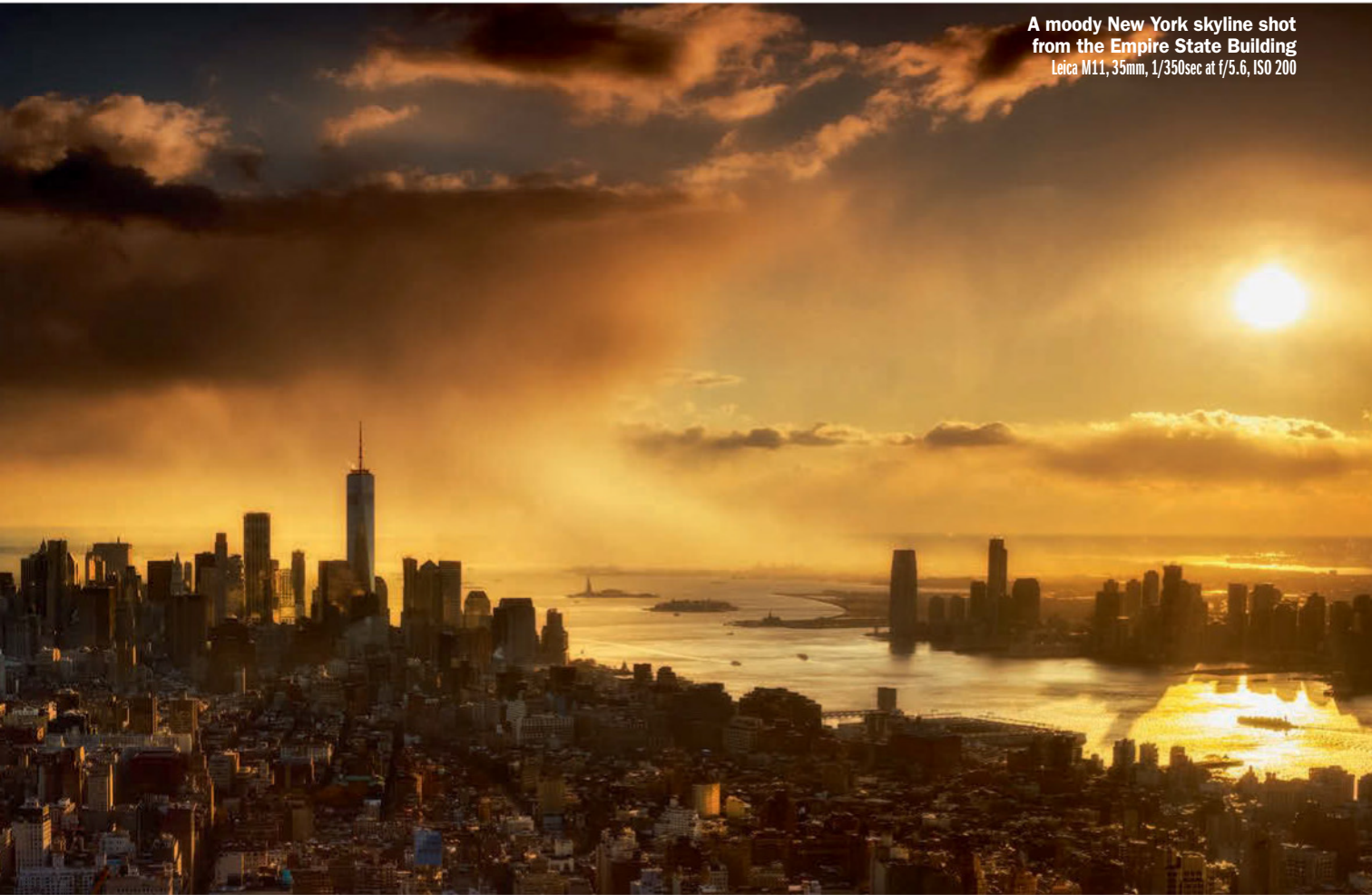
large tripods. On my first morning out on location I knew I had made the right decision. A small, light, unobtrusive bag and handheld shooting with a compact rangefinder camera. Perfect.

I have absolutely no problem shooting at higher sensitivities and will regularly use ISO 800 or 1600, as noise just isn't an issue. As for no tripod, well this has always been a problem for me. I have spent my career working from a tripod, fine-tuning a composition before capture. I now feel shooting handheld has perhaps freed me up creatively. Of course, the M11 viewfinder is not going to have the 100% accuracy of a mirrorless or DSLR viewfinder, but it is pretty good and I can always check the image on the super-sharp rear screen afterwards.

Working in the extreme heat of Florence with a small camera was a joy, and a great start to using the M11. But on returning home, I had a gap in the diary. I often



A moody New York skyline shot from the Empire State Building
Leica M11, 35mm, 1/350sec at f/5.6, ISO 200



get quieter in the summer months and so spent some time getting to know the camera better and discovering its quirks. I found one, although once you start researching it, there is plenty of information on the web.

I started playing with long exposures, something I rarely do these days. With an exposure longer than 30 seconds, often

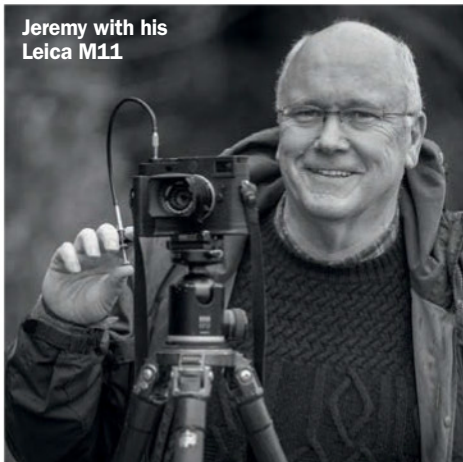
the image would have what looked like flare in one corner. Apparently, this is light leaking through the lens mount, a quirk in the Leica M rangefinder design. At first it seems horrendous, an expensive camera that's not perfectly light-tight. But once you know of the problem it's easily fixed, just shield the lens mount from direct

sunlight or, as I have done, make a soft leather collar that goes around the lens mount which is fixed in place with Velcro. It isn't a big deal for me (or, I suspect, many other M11 users) as I rarely shoot long exposures.

More than tough enough

But here's a thing, if the lens mount is not light-tight in

extreme situations, just how weather-proof is the Leica M11 when the conditions get a little inclement? I'll be quite honest here, if it's absolutely tipping it down, I probably won't be shooting, but hunkering down and waiting for the light. As for the camera, it will be protected in my bag, so well and truly dry.



Jeremy with his Leica M11



The M11 kit is perfect for travel
Leica M11, 90mm, 1/200sec at f/2.8, ISO 64

▶ If I'm working in snow, mist, fog or drizzle, am I going to worry about all that moisture settling on the camera?

Worry, no, but I'll be aware of the conditions and keep the camera protected and as clean and dry as possible. But I have always done that, it's just good working practice. Your camera and lenses are incredibly important tools and you should care for them.

I have worked in Scotland in the middle of winter with the M11 and have not had any issues. In fact, what I have found from working with a small camera and tiny lenses is that it is a darn sight easier to protect them from the prevailing wind and weather. Also, climbing up to the likes of The Old Man of Storr on Skye in the darkness of a winter's pre-dawn is so much easier with a small camera, packed neatly into a purpose-designed padded cube that sits just inside of a



A winter landscape on Skye
Leica M11, 35mm, 1/125sec at f/5.6, ISO 400

proper, comfortable hiking rucksack. Small is wonderful.

Not surprisingly, Iceland has thrown some impressive weather at me, including freezing temperatures, high winds, snow

and plenty of rain. The Leica hasn't faltered once and the battery life in sub-optimal conditions has been impressive. I don't think I have ever used more than one battery in a whole

day, apart from when I headed out to shoot the northern lights after a day in the snow and biting winds, and that's even with a fair bit of checking images on the rear screen. ▶

This spectacular aurora was shot in the freezing cold in Iceland

Leica M11, 21mm, 30sec at f/4, ISO 3200



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Leica's M-mount lenses are pretty good for close-ups
Leica M11, 35mm, 1/350sec at f/8, ISO 200



It has to be said though, having a camera made from metal in freezing cold conditions is not so kind on the fingers. Although on the plus side, I can screw in the 'old-fashioned' cable release whenever my fingers are starting to get numb.

What I have discovered in places where the elements are always trying to wear you down and the light and conditions are changing by the second is the speed with which I can use the Leica. Okay, so the 35mm lens is my usual starting point, but I can visualise the 35mm frame in the landscape and I know how and what I want to convey in my image. Point, focus, shoot. Time can be precious and I have seen people lose a shot because they were dithering around with their zooms or their camera was on some obscure mode or setting from a previous shoot.

Having been using the M11 for landscape and travel work, I was pleasantly surprised by how reasonably close the lenses focus, certainly the 35mm and 50mm, which is not something I had taken into account. I'm not a macro or close-up shooter, but occasionally you stumble upon some small detail or micro-

landscape that is worthy of a shot. In the past, I have always carried a specialist macro lens with which to do so. But the idea of switching to a small rangefinder is to lose size and weight, so specialist lenses are not part of the plan.

Not just for street

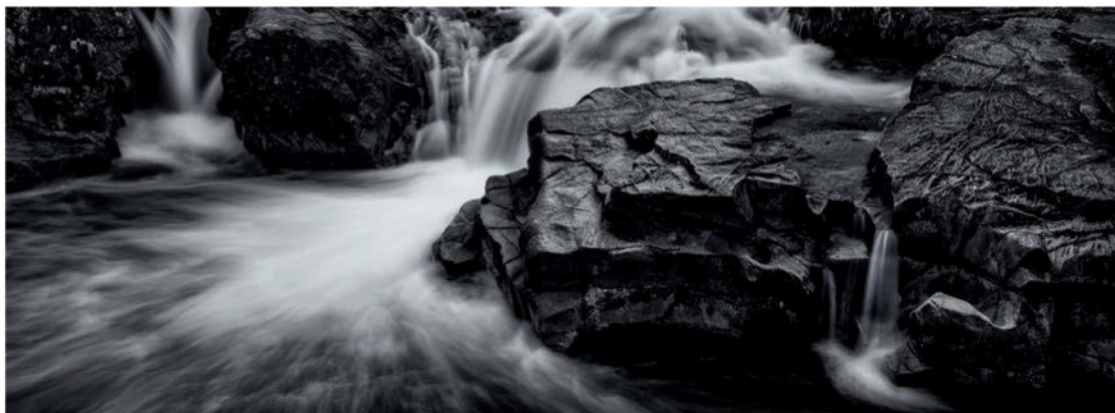
The Leica rangefinder is possibly not the first camera you would have associated with a landscape photographer. They are certainly more linked with 'street' photographers or reportage photographers from the 1950s and '60s. The Leica rangefinder is an anathema to most,

over-priced and out-of-date. There is pretty much no auto anything, a distinct lack of modes, and the frames per second is pitiful. As for video, forget it. But this is where the Leica M11, and in fact all Leica rangefinder cameras, score highly. It is the stripped-down, back-to-basics feel that makes this camera so appealing.

But it is not just the usability of the camera, there is something far more significant going on here. Just by picking up the camera, you know you are holding a superbly built, quality piece of engineering. Plastically a Leica is not, and that goes for the lenses

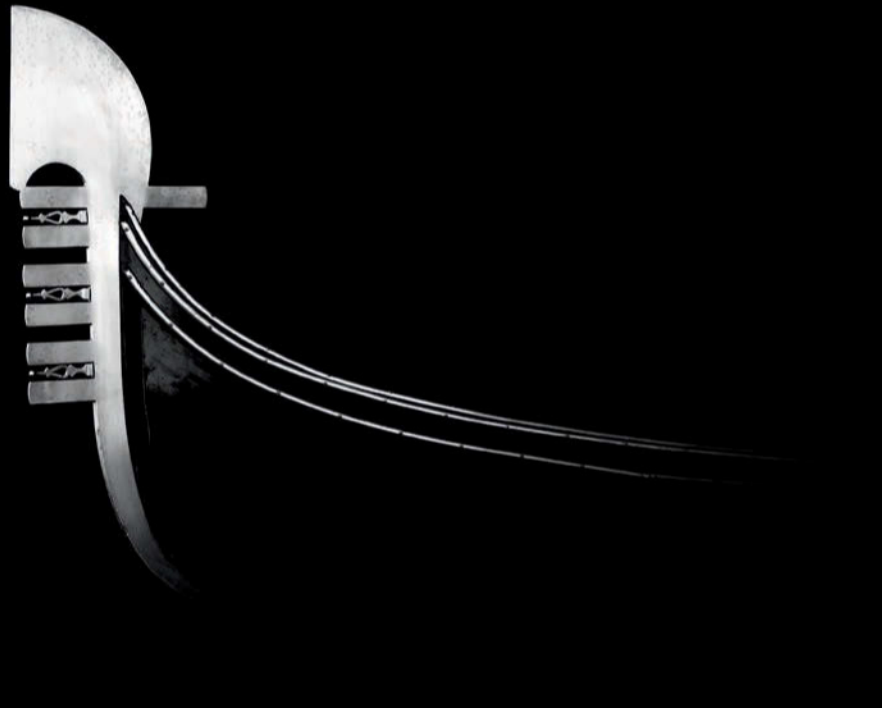
as well. There is a solid heft to the body and lenses that you just don't get from any other camera manufacturer. It's very hard to explain, there is just something special about using a Leica.

That 'something' goes beyond just the pure build quality of a camera or the design of a lens. Aficionados will talk about a Leica 'look' or feel to an image, although I'm not so sure about that, especially in the digital age where post-production plays such an important part in the final look of an image. I just enjoy using the M11, and simply by owning it, I want to get out there into the big wide world and



Leicas may be associated with street photography, but are great for landscapes too. Leica M11, 35mm, 2sec at f/8, ISO 64

A gondola detail from Venice
Leica M11, 90mm, 1/250sec at f/5.6, ISO 1600



images. Granted, this approach can sometimes be frustrating. The first thing I did on arrival was walk into St Mark's Square, look at the gondolas, and think how nice they would look if there was movement and blur in the image. But I had to search out other locations and think differently.

Choosing to carry a small, discreet camera in a big, busy, vibrant city and opting to explore the back streets and canals worked well. Somehow big backpacks and large zoom lenses on large cameras with bright yellow or red camera straps just seem to stick out like a sore thumb, and I really do not want

produce images. That is not an effect any other camera has had upon me.

Would it be possible to say that by owning and using a Leica M11 I have changed the way I work, the way in which I see the world? Possibly yes. Although I have spent my career shooting landscapes and travel imagery, mostly in colour, I now find myself shooting a great deal of black & white imagery. More often than not, I tend to see the world in high-contrast black & white (you can set the rear screen for this). But is this a result of using a Leica? Possibly, but it's probably more to do with where I am in my career, and what projects I am working on. But there does seem to be a high proportion of black & white work at present, something that has not happened before.

Freedom of the city

One influence the Leica has definitely had on me is that I now shoot a great deal more without a tripod, and I now spend a fair amount of time shooting in cities. London, Venice, Florence, and New York have all been visited several times in the past year, and not one trip was done with a tripod. Well, not really, although I do pack the superb Novoflex Basic Ball when I travel, just in case I want to shoot a night scene or long exposure.

The joy of being without a tripod and just a tiny camera bag truly hits home in a city like New York. Hopping on and off the subway or the myriad small ferries or water taxis crossing the river is so much easier when you are unencumbered. The views from the Rockefeller Center and Empire State Building are

sublime, and yes, have been shot a thousand times before, but on a whim (and with lovely wintry storm clouds gathering) I could just turn up, waltz through security and go shoot some stunning views in the most sensational light, handheld of course. The chap with the big camera-bag rucksack and large tripod was turned away by the security people.

Venice was also a bit of a revelation. A trip planned around doing everything handheld. Of course, it meant I would not be shooting long exposures of bobbing gondolas or doing much night-time photography, but I had done that sort of imagery years before for stock agencies; this time I wanted to shoot something a little different. Working handheld with the Leica would force me to look elsewhere for my



to draw attention to myself when I'm shooting.

Using the Leica handheld does make me look harder and perhaps more carefully for images, but I do revert to type quite often. My career has been built on landscape photography, especially panoramas, and I still love being out in the countryside at dawn, with the landscape covered in a veil of mist and a warm glow on the horizon. It is with the landscape work that I can once again slow down, use a tripod, and wait for the light.

It is however, strange seeing the small and demure Leica M11 on a heavyweight tripod. It looks

like pure overkill; in fact it just looks plain silly. The M11 isn't really a tripod sort of camera, but the fact that Leica produced a grip with the Arca plate running the entire length of the body rather suggests that there are a great deal of Leica users who use a tripod. For landscape work, I'm one of them.

Final thoughts

The M11 is not going to be to everyone's liking and I have no doubt it will get slapped with certain unfavourable labels. However, after a year and a half shooting in all sorts of conditions, weathers and environments,

I have found it to be an excellent workhorse. But here's the thing: it is so much more than just a working tool, so much more than just another camera and it's really very hard to put my finger on it. There is a pleasure to using an M11, there is an intangible quality to it.

There are of course drawbacks, such as a maximum focal length of 135mm. But if I really wanted longer lenses, I could use an adapter and almost any brand of lens. But that then defeats the object of the exercise, as I do not want to be carrying big, heavy lenses in a big, cumbersome bag. Small, simple and perfectly

formed is what I am after and pretty much what I now have.

The defining beauty of the Leica rangefinders, especially the M11, is the build quality, the tactility, and the compact size. All this with the optically stunning and tiny lenses (I'll ignore the larger and heavier f/1.4's) and the Leica is almost the perfect camera for me. It hasn't let me down and I haven't found myself in a situation when I have needed something it cannot give me, yet.

Switching to Leica has breathed a new life and enthusiasm into my photography. I just want to be out shooting and enjoying the experience.



The M11's 61MP resolution makes it perfect for classic landscapes
Leica M11, 50mm, 15sec at f/11, ISO 64





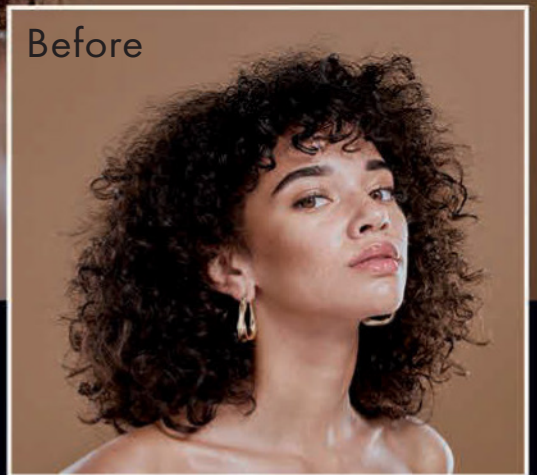
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Sigma's new 70-200mm combines excellent optics with rapid autofocus
 Panasonic Lumix S5HX, 200mm, 1/640sec at f/8, ISO 160



Sigma 70-200mm F2.8 DG DN OS Sports

This lens offers L- and E-mount users excellent image quality, great handling, and a huge discount over the camera-branded models, says **Damien Demolder**

Remarkably, Sigma's new 70-200mm F2.8 DG DN OS Sports is the first 70-200mm the firm has made specifically for mirrorless cameras. I expect even the company's highly visible president, Kazuto Yamaki, has lost count of how many versions of 70-200mm lens Sigma has made in the past 60 or so years,

as lenses with this zoom range, or thereabouts, have been popular since the technology first existed to make them.

When paired with a 24-70mm, a 70-200mm lens provides many photographers with all they need for day-to-day shooting. All we have to do is choose between an f/2.8 version, or a lower-cost (and more portable) f/4 model.

Traditionally, Sigma has offered f/2.8 lenses that cost much less than those offered by the camera manufacturers, allowing users to get that faster maximum aperture for a similar price to f/4 versions from the big camera brands.

That larger aperture/lower price tag combination is maintained once more, with this L- or E-mount lens selling for £1,500 – much



less than equivalent lenses from Sony and Panasonic. But while in the olden days Sigma was a 'secondary' brand, in the past decade or so we've seen it produce lenses that exceed the quality of those offered by the camera makers, and often offer original or additional features.

Features

Sigma's existing 70-200mm f/2.8 DG OS HSM lens was designed for Nikon and Canon DSLRs and, at 1,805g, it's pretty heavy. The company hasn't simply reworked this old



The lens is capable of recording impressive levels of detail
Panasonic S5HX, 70mm, 1/60sec at f/10, ISO 160

design, but has taken the opportunity to completely redesign the optical structure of the lens to make the most of the shorter back focus of mirrorless mounts, and to introduce its newest focusing systems.

The result is a lens that's a full 460g lighter. Its barrel is smaller too, so the filter size has dropped from 82mm to 77mm. The new lens uses 20 elements in 15 groups, instead of 24 in 22 groups, through the use of three aspherical elements in the new

design. We also get six FLD (fluorite-like Low Dispersion) elements and two SLD (Special Low Dispersion) elements to suppress colour fringing.

The new design has its closest focus distance cut in half, so we can now shoot objects as close as 65cm at the 70mm end, and 100cm at the 200mm end, with the latter giving us a handy 0.19x magnification. That's not exactly macro, but it's still useful.

Another development is the use of two HLA (High-response Linear

Actuator) motors to run the focusing system. The lens uses a pair of focusing groups, each with its own motor, to help it focus as quickly as possible. This also helps to reduce focus breathing and to maintain focus while the zoom is being operated. Those linear motors respond quickly and move sharply and, importantly for video, do so silently.

Another key feature is the optical stabilisation system, with the company's new OS2 algorithm providing up to 7.5 stops of shake correction. Depending on the body on which you use the lens, you will be able to determine whether in-camera or in-lens IS takes the lead, or a combination of the two operates.

As the name suggests, the f/2.8 aperture is constant throughout the zoom range, and an internal zoom design means that the lens doesn't vary from its 205mm length. The iris has 11 blades giving a minimum setting of f/22. The L-mount version is compatible with Sigma's 1.4x and 2x teleconverters.

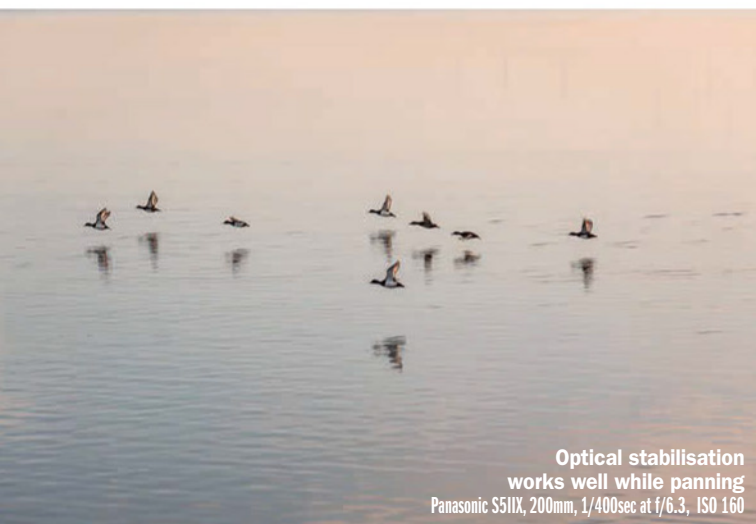
Build and handling

One notable new feature is that the lens now has an aperture

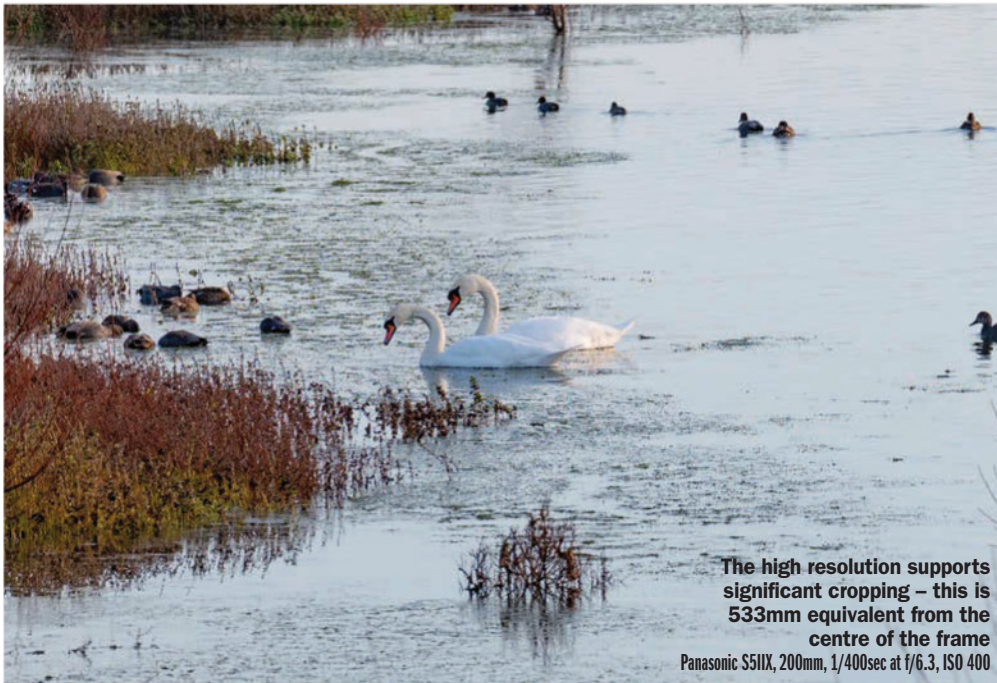
control ring, with third-stop values and an A position clearly marked. It can either be used with regular click-stops, or de-clicked so it doesn't disturb your audio track for video. The aperture ring can be locked too, but only to prevent it switching between the A and manual positions – you can't lock it in a specific setting. Physically the aperture ring is quite close to the focus ring, but they feel different enough that you quickly get used to which is which.

A focus limiter allows us to select specific distance ranges, with Full, 3m to infinity, and closer-than-3m settings. L-mount users can customise these ranges, as well as how the stabilisation operates, using the optional UD-11 USB dock. Three function buttons can be set to perform specific tasks such as AF-on, AF-Lock or AF-Near. A switch on the barrel turns OS off, sets it for general use, or tells it that we will be panning. We have a switch for three saved custom settings, and a switch for manual and autofocus operation.

A substantial tripod foot comes with an Arca-Swiss mount plate built-in, and the collar it's attached to lets us rotate the



Optical stabilisation works well while panning
Panasonic S5HX, 200mm, 1/400sec at f/6.3, ISO 160



The high resolution supports significant cropping – this is 533mm equivalent from the centre of the frame

Panasonic S5IIX, 200mm, 1/400sec at f/6.3, ISO 400

lens through 360°, indicating 90° angles with clicks along the way. The foot can be removed using an Allen key.

Should you find yourself out in British weather, you'll be glad to know the barrel is sealed against moisture and dust, with a gasket around the mount to seal it against the camera. Sigma says the combination of carbon fibre and thermally stable plastics in the construction help the lens perform well in all temperatures, while keeping the structure lightweight. The finish of the lens is attractive too, which shouldn't matter, but does. It looks very smart indeed.

Performance

I've been impressed with the pace at which this lens operates, and could not detect any lag or speed disadvantage compared to the proprietary model for the Lumix S5II and S1R bodies that I tested it on. The lens certainly doesn't hold the camera back in any way, and in fact offers us a number of handling benefits that the Lumix equivalent does not. I found it fast and very nice to use. As much as I'm a big fan of manual aperture rings, I locked it on A when shooting stills. But I enjoyed the ability to alter the iris manually, and silently, while shooting video.

I've been impressed with the

optical image stabilisation, too. When the lens was attached to the Lumix bodies I used it on, the cameras gave way to allow the lens to do most of the work. It makes sense with a long lens like this. Switching the OS on and off while looking through the finder, the difference is obvious. Likewise when using mode 2 during panning, the system allows a smooth view without jolting in the finder. I also found this to be true with the camera in portrait orientation.

While the handling and practical performance impress when the lens is actively in use, it is the optical performance that will get our attention once the images are magnified on the PC monitor. As much as I've tried, my usual image quality tests have left me somewhat unable to find anything much wrong with this lens. While there are some nuances in its ability to render detail across the various focal lengths, apertures and focus distances, the range of the lens' resolution only slips from what I would call 'very good' when the aperture is set to f/16 or 22. At all other apertures you can be sure of exceptional image quality – and even f/22 isn't bad, it just isn't as sharp as the larger apertures.

The pattern of optical resolution remains constant at

all focal lengths. At f/2.8 the lens is very good, but it improves to a peak at around f/4, tips very slightly at f/8, remains very good to f/11, drops a bit at f/16 and then drops noticeably at f/22 due to diffraction.

While resolution is very good at 70mm, it is from 135mm to 200mm that we get the better performance. So, I suppose in line with how people will want to use the lens, Sigma has optimised resolution for wide apertures at the longer focal lengths – which will keep the majority of users very happy.

The images are clean too, with plenty of detail uninhibited by colour fringing. Contrast remains very high, and flare is very difficult to initiate even when pointing directly into the rising sun and its reflections on water. I didn't test the lens with the compatible teleconverters, but its solo optical performance puts it on a solid footing for its images to be magnified further without dire consequences.

Vignetting is only a slight feature of the performance, with some corner shading at the widest apertures at all focal length positions. On a plain background it is reasonably obvious at f/2.8, but mostly gone by f/4. Those using it for natural subjects are likely not to notice it at all.



Verdict

Sigma has once again demonstrated it knows what photographers want and need, with a



lens that performs exceptionally well in the areas that really matter. When we buy a 70-200mm we want to be able to use it wide open at the long end and know that we aren't going to forfeit resolution, and that is exactly what this lens delivers. And, to top it off, Sigma gives us a constant f/2.8 aperture for less than the money other brands expect for an f/4 lens.

This lens is a full £1,100 less than Sony's equivalent f/2.8 lens, and £700 less than the Panasonic model, which is no mean feat. The usual rules of retail say that with lower cost comes compromise, but those rules really don't seem to apply here. We get a host of features on the barrel, fabulous handling, useful offerings such as clickless apertures, and a really first-rate optical performance to go with it. Frankly, I'm not sure what else we could ask for.



Data file

Price £1,499	Aperture f/2.8
Filter diameter 77mm	Min focus 0.65m
Lens elements 20	Length 205.5mm
Groups 15	Diameter 90.6mm
Diaphragm blades 11	Weight 1,345g
	Lens mounts L and Sony E

3 Legged Thing Taylor 2.0

This monopod is designed with travel in mind. **Angela Nicholson** has been letting it take the weight

● £79.99 ● www.3leggedthing.com

The 3 Legged Thing Taylor 2.0 is a 5-section monopod that collapses down to 44.1cm yet extends to 158cm, making it a great choice for travel. Fully extended, it's significantly shorter than the 2-metre-tall 3 Legged Thing Trent 2.0, but it's still well-sized for photographers of up to around 6ft 2in in height, as the camera's viewfinder should align with your eye rather than the top of your head.

Crafted from magnesium alloy, the Taylor 2.0 weighs 677g and has the usual rugged build quality of the firm's Punks 2.0 tripod series, with four sturdy leg-section locks that feature metal knurling and substantial rubber grips. It also has a robust rubber-like grip at the top along with a wrist strap, both adding to the comfort and security of the monopod in use. Despite its low mass, the Taylor 2.0 can support a weight of up to 30kg. Thanks to the spring-loaded 1/4in and 3/8in threads, the payload can be a camera or lens mounted either directly or via your favourite head. The sprung mechanism means that you're never left searching for an adapter if you decide to change how you mount your camera.

When completely collapsed, the Taylor 2.0 should fit neatly in a backpack's tripod or water bottle pocket, provided there's a strap to keep the top secure. Its leg locks are ergonomically designed for one-handed operation, with a smooth mechanism that requires minimal effort and less than a quarter turn to lock and unlock. This means you can deploy it quickly should the need arise.

The Taylor 2.0 is particularly useful for supporting large telephoto lenses, taking the weight and reducing shake dramatically. For many sports subjects, and some wildlife, you're likely to be able to use the monopod directly mounted onto the lens tripod collar, stepping forwards or backwards to tilt the lens up or down. With aerial subjects, however, a tilt head or gimbal will be required to enable the required shooting angles.

Verdict

Overall, the 3 Legged Thing Taylor 2.0 is a versatile, sturdy, and user-friendly monopod, making it a great choice for photographers who value portability and ease of use. Its well-thought-out design and high build quality mean it's perfect for wildlife and sports photographers on the move, as well as those who want to give their camera some extra support for everyday photography.



Load capacity
The Taylor 2.0 is rated to bear a hefty payload of up to 30kg.

Locks
The leg locks have chunky knurled metal and rubber grips.

Wrist strap
A woven wrist strap is supplied to give the monopod extra security.

Dual threads
A spring-loaded 3/8in-16 thread retracts to reveal a 1/4in-20 thread at the top of the monopod.

Colours
The Taylor 2.0 is available in a choice of finishes with blue or 'Darkness' (matt black) accents.

Amateur Photographer Testbench **GOLD** ★★★★★

At a glance

- 5-section legs
- Magnesium alloy build
- Maximum height: 1.58m
- Folded length: 44.1cm
- Weight: 677g
- Rated load: 30kg

DOCZ BASE

3 Legged Thing sells the Taylor 2.0 either by itself, or with the Docz tripod base for £104.99. This mounts quickly in place of the usual rubber foot. Its main bonus is smoother tilting and swivelling, which is beneficial when tracking moving subjects or shooting video. But it adds bulk and the overall weight climbs to 1.2kg.





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XF 100-400MM F/4.5-5.6 R LM OIS WR



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Professor Newman on...

Fakeh

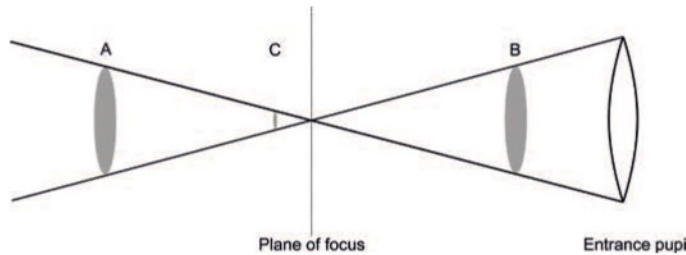
How smartphones can calculate convincing background blur, or 'fake bokeh'

The term 'bokeh' refers to the character of the out-of-focus blur rather than the blur itself.

It was coined in 1997 by Mike Johnson, a photographic journalist. He concluded, 'It's true that some photographers seldom or never take pictures in which anything is not sharp. For them, bokeh is not much of an issue when they're working, although it's still pertinent when they're looking at other people's pictures. For the rest of us, well, there's nothing to be scared of. It's just another arrow in the creative quiver.'

Now that smartphones are the most-used cameras, the phone manufacturers have needed to cater for 'the rest of us'. As has been discussed in this column before, the extent of out-of-focus blur depends on the size of the entrance pupil of the lens. In the case of phone lenses these are invariably small, so how can a phone provide what is required? The solution is often ascribed to 'AI', the present cure-all of choice, but in fact it's a case of simple application of optical principles.

Out-of-focus blur can be thought of as the result of 'painting' an image using a brush, the size of which depends on the distance of the object being painted from the plane of focus. The further from that plane, the larger the brush (the bokeh depends on the shape and bristle pattern of the brush). The size of the brush is simple to determine, as is shown in the diagram. A convincing rendering can be produced by blurring objects using a blur function, with its extent dictated by the distance of the object from the in-focus



Objects are rendered using a 'brush' sized according to distance from the plane of focus. Distant objects (A and B) are rendered with a large brush. Closer objects (C) with a smaller brush. Objects in the plane of focus are rendered without additional blur.

part of the image. To do this, a depth map is required, giving the distance of each object from the camera. The collective term for the techniques that achieve this is photogrammetry, all of which work by correlating images of objects taken from different viewpoints. Higher-end phones, which have several cameras at slightly different locations on the back, can use these cameras to provide such images.

The distance between the cameras is small, so the depth map may not be very precise. But it can still be good enough to provide a good basis for the gradation of background blur.

Depth-based blurring

Once a depth map is available, then the image is segmented into planes, each featuring images from different depths. Then, starting from the furthest and working towards the nearest, each plane is rendered with the application of the amount of blur appropriate to their distance from the plane of focus. The number of planes depends on the precision of the depth map and how accurate a result is required. Thus objects in the plane of

focus are not blurred at all, while those far away are blurred most. The blur function applied may simulate different bokeh if required. When the planes are composited together, the sharp in-focus objects are rendered over the blurred background objects, so no masking is required. Blurred foreground objects create a haze over objects behind them, just as they would naturally.

But where does AI come in? As in other areas, such as noise reduction, the inferential power of AI may be used to enhance the basic technique. Depth maps may be created from a single image by inferring the likely depth of objects given commonly found arrangements in images. Or, a low-resolution depth map may be enhanced to provide more convincing blur. Taken together, these techniques can provide very convincing out-of-focus blur, acceptable to all but the bokeh purist. They aren't available in specialist cameras, because these only have a single camera – although those equipped with dual (or quad) pixel AF are quite capable of creating a depth-map so could in principle make use of the same techniques.

Bob Newman is currently Professor of Computer Science at the University of Wolverhampton. He has been working with the design and development of high-technology equipment for 35 years and two of his products have won innovation awards. Bob is also a camera nut and a keen amateur photographer

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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.



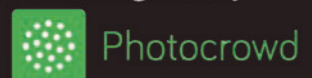
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Don't forget to visit bit.ly/eisa-maestro for tips on creating a successful portfolio. The winning International photos will be published in the Sept/Oct issues of all 16 EISA photo magazines/websites. For details, terms & conditions, see www.eisa.eu/maestro

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Buying Guide

100
cameras
listed &
rated

Our comprehensive listing of key camera specifications

Cameras

Cameras come in three types: DSLRs with optical viewfinders, mirrorless models with electronic viewing, and compact cameras with non-interchangeable lenses

Controls

Entry-level cameras tend to have simple, easy-to-understand controls, while more expensive models add lots of buttons and dials to give quick access to settings.

Viewfinder

The biggest difference between DSLRs and mirrorless cameras is that the latter use electronic, rather than optical viewfinders. Some advanced compact cameras also have built-in electronic viewfinders to complement their rear LCD screens.

Compact cameras

These range from small, pocketable models to large bridge-type cameras with long zoom lenses and SLR-style designs. In this guide, we're only including those with relatively large sensors for high image quality, raw format recording and manual controls.



Handgrip

DSLRs traditionally have relatively large handgrips, while many mirrorless models have much smaller grips to keep the size down. However, some can accept accessory grips to improve handling with larger lenses.

Lens mount

Each camera brand uses its own lens mount, and mirrorless cameras use different lenses to DSLRs even from the same brand. However, mirrorless models can often use DSLR lenses via a mount adapter.

ALMOST all serious photographers prefer to use cameras with interchangeable lenses, as this gives the greatest degree of creative flexibility. At one time, this meant digital single-lens-reflex (DSLR) cameras, but these have now been joined by mirrorless cameras that use electronic viewfinders. The latest models are true alternatives to DSLRs, offering the same image quality and creative options. Camera

manufacturers offer a range of options, from simple, relatively inexpensive beginner-friendly designs, to sophisticated professional models. In the middle of the range you'll find enthusiast cameras with more-advanced control layouts. Meanwhile the term 'compact' refers to cameras with built-in lenses, regardless of their size. Many offer excellent image quality and full manual control.

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Mirrorless cameras				SENSOR SIZE	RESOLUTION (MP)	LENS MOUNT	MAX ISO	VIDEO	MIC INPUT	AF POINTS	BURST MODE (FPS)	VIEWFINDER	BUILT-IN HI-FI	FLASH	SCREEN SIZE (IN)	ARTICULATED LCD	TOUCHSCREEN	BATTERY LIFE (SHOTS)	WIDTH (MM)	HEIGHT (MM)	DEPTH (MM)	WEIGHT (G)
NAME & MODEL	RRP	SCORE	SUMMARY	SHOOTING										SCREEN			DIMENSIONS					
Canon EOS M50 Mark II	£699	4 ★	Likeable, easy-to-use entry-level APS-C model with viewfinder	APS-C	24.2	Canon M	51,200	3840	-	143	10	-	-	-	3	-	-	250	116.3	88.1	58.7	387
Canon EOS RP	£1400	4 ★	Compact and affordable but over-simplified full-frame camera	FF	26.2	Canon RF	102,400	3840	-	4779	5	-	-	-	3	-	-	250	132.5	85	70	485
Canon EOS R3	£5880	5 ★	High-speed, pro-spec flagship model that's packed full of clever technology	FF	24.1	Canon RF	204,800	6000	-	4779	30	-	-	-	3.2	-	-	860	150	142.6	87.2	1015
Canon EOS R5	£4200	4.5 ★	Remarkable 45MP powerhouse capable of internal 8K video recording	FF	45	Canon RF	102,400	4096	-	5940	12	-	-	-	3.2	-	-	320	135.8	97.5	88	738
Canon EOS R6 Mark II	£2780	5 ★	Updated model gains 24MP sensor and AI subject-recognition AF	FF	24.2	Canon RF	204,800	3840	-	4897	12	-	-	-	3	-	-	450	138.4	98.4	88.4	670
Canon EOS R7	£1350	4.5 ★	Fast APS-C RF-mount model with sophisticated autofocus from the EOS R3	APS-C	32.5	Canon RF	51,200	3840	-	651	15	-	-	-	3	-	-	770	132	90.4	91.7	530
Canon EOS R8	£1700	4.5 ★	Lightweight full-frame camera that offers great image quality and autofocus	FF	24.2	Canon RF	204,800	3840	-	4897	6	-	-	-	3	-	-	220	132.5	86.1	70	461
Canon EOS R10	£900	4 ★	Compact, lightweight yet highly specified RF-mount APS-C mirrorless model	APS-C	24.2	Canon RF	51,200	3840	-	651	15	-	-	-	3	-	-	430	122.5	87.8	83.4	429
Canon EOS R50	£790	4 ★	Small entry-level APS-C model with subject detection autofocus	APS-C	24.2	Canon RF	51,200	3840	-	651	12	-	-	-	3	-	-	310	116.3	85.5	68.8	375
Canon EOS R100	£670		Entry-level APS-C model that's designed to be a simple family camera	APS-C	24.2	Canon RF	25,600	3840	-	143	6.5	-	-	-	3	-	-	340	116.3	85.5	68.8	356
Fujifilm X-H2	£1899	5 ★	High-resolution pro flagship model with same design as X-H2S	APS-C	40	Fujifilm X	51,200	7680	-	425	15	-	-	-	3	-	-	540	136.3	92.9	84.6	660
Fujifilm X-H2S	£2499	5 ★	Extremely impressive pro-spec high-speed flagship model	APS-C	26.1	Fujifilm X	51,200	6240	-	425	40	-	-	-	3	-	-	580	136.3	92.9	84.6	660
Fujifilm X-S10	£949	5 ★	Fine SLR-styled model with in-body image stabilisation and large handgrip	APS-C	26.1	Fujifilm X	51,200	3840	-	425	20	-	-	-	3	-	-	325	126	85.1	65.4	465
Fujifilm X-S20	£1249	5 ★	Excellent 26MP still/video hybrid camera that includes 6.2K video recording	APS-C	26.1	Fujifilm X	51,200	6240	-	425	20	-	-	-	3	-	-	750	127.7	85.1	65.4	491
Fujifilm X-T30 II	£769	5 ★	Superb mid-range model that's a joy to use and gives lovely output	APS-C	26.1	Fujifilm X	51,200	4096	-	425	8	-	-	-	3	-	-	390	118.4	82.8	46.8	378
Fujifilm X-T5	£1699	5 ★	Retro-styled enthusiast model with 40MP sensor and subject-detection AF	APS-C	40.2	Fujifilm X	51,200	4096	-	425	15	-	-	-	3	-	-	580	129.5	91	63.8	557
Leica SL2	£5300	4 ★	Sports 47.3MP full-frame sensor, in-body stabilisation and 5K video	FF	47.3	Leica L	50,000	5120	-	225	20	-	-	-	3.2	-	-	370	147	107	83	916
Leica SL2-S	£3975	4 ★	More affordable 24MP version of the SL2 with pro video features	FF	24.6	Leica L	100,000	4096	-	225	25	-	-	-	3.2	-	-	510	146	107	83	931
Nikon Z 5	£1719	4 ★	Simplified version of the Z 6, comes with compact 24-50mm f/4-6.3 zoom	FF	24.3	Nikon Z	102,400	3840	-	273	4.5	-	-	-	3.2	-	-	470	134	100.5	69.5	675
Nikon Z 6II	£1999	4.5 ★	Second-generation full-frame mirrorless model with useful updates	FF	24.5	Nikon Z	204,800	3840	-	273	14	-	-	-	3.2	-	-	410	134	100.5	69.5	705
Nikon Z 7II	£2999	4.5 ★	Gains dual card slots, faster shooting, 4K 60p video and vertical grip option	FF	45.7	Nikon Z	102,400	3840	-	493	10	-	-	-	3.2	-	-	420	134	100.5	69.5	705
Nikon Z 8	£3999	5 ★	Sensational all-rounder with all the Z 9's features in a smaller body	FF	45.7	Nikon Z	102,400	7680	-	493	20	-	-	-	3.2	-	-	340	144	118.5	83	910
Nikon Z 9	£5299	5 ★	Stunning high-speed, high-resolution flagship with pro build and connectivity	FF	45.7	Nikon Z	102,400	7680	-	493	20	-	-	-	3.2	-	-	700	149	149.5	90.5	1340
Nikon Z f	£2299	4.5 ★	Lovely retro-styled full-frame mirrorless with all the latest technology	FF	24.5	Nikon Z	204,800	3840	-	273	14	-	-	-	3.2	-	-	380	144	103	49	710
Nikon Z 30	£699	4 ★	Designed for vloggers, with articulated screen but no viewfinder	DX	20.9	Nikon Z	204,800	3840	-	209	11	-	-	-	3	-	-	330	128	73.5	59.5	405
Nikon Z 50	£849	5 ★	Well-specified APS-C mirrorless model boasts excellent handling	DX	20.9	Nikon Z	204,800	3840	-	209	11	-	-	-	3.2	-	-	320	126.5	93.5	60	450
Nikon Z fc	£899	4 ★	Lovely-looking retro-styled model with fully articulated touchscreen	DX	20.9	Nikon Z	204,800	3840	-	209	11	-	-	-	3	-	-	300	134.5	93.5	43.5	445
Olympus OM-D E-M10 IV	£699	4.5 ★	Compact, lightweight, enjoyable to use and takes great-looking pictures	4/3	20.2	Mic/4/3	25,600	3840	-	121	15	-	-	-	3	-	-	360	121.7	84.4	49	383
OM System OM-1	£2000	5 ★	Excellent flagship model includes 120fps shooting and subject-detection AF	4/3	20.4	Mic/4/3	102,400	4096	-	1053	120	-	-	-	3	-	-	520	134.8	91.6	72.7	599
OM System OM-5	£1199	5 ★	Small, lightweight and weather-sealed camera gives great output	4/3	20.4	Mic/4/3	25,600	4096	-	121	10	-	-	-	3	-	-	310	125.3	85.2	49.7	414

ALL PRICES ARE RRP'S. STREET PRICES MAY VARY

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Mirrorless cameras

NAME & MODEL	RRP	SCORE	SUMMARY	SENSOR SIZE	RESOLUTION (MP)	LENS MOUNT	MAX ISO	VIDEO	MIC INPUT	AF POINTS	BURST MODE (FPS)	VIEWFINDER	BUILT-IN Wi-Fi	FLASH	SCREEN SIZE (in)	ARTICULATED LCD	TOUCHSCREEN	BATTERY LIFE (SHOTS)	WIDTH (mm)	HEIGHT (mm)	DEPTH (mm)	WEIGHT (G)
Panasonic Lumix G9	£1499	4.5★	High-speed, rugged photo-centric flagship camera with in-body IS	4/3	20.3	Mic4/3	25,600	3840	·	225	9	·	·	·	3	·	·	890	136.9	97.3	91.6	658
Panasonic Lumix G9II	£1699	5★	High-end Micro Four Thirds model with phase-detection autofocus	4/3	25.2	Mic4/3	25,600	5760	·	779	14	·	·	·	3	·	·	390	134.3	102.3	90.1	658
Panasonic Lumix G100	£590	4★	Small SLR-shaped camera specifically designed for vloggers	4/3	20.3	Mic4/3	25,600	3840	·	49	10	·	·	·	3	·	·	270	115.6	82.5	54.2	345
Panasonic Lumix GH5 II	£1499	4.5★	Video-focused high-end model with in-body stabilisation and 4K video	4/3	20.2	Mic4/3	25,600	4096	·	225	12	·	·	·	3	·	·	410	138.5	98.1	87.4	727
Panasonic Lumix GH6	£1999	5★	Impressive high-end video model with new 25MP sensor and 5.7K recording	4/3	25.2	Mic4/3	25,600	5728	·	14	·	·	·	·	3	·	·	330	138.4	100.3	99.6	823
Panasonic Lumix S1	£2199	4.5★	24MP full-frame mirrorless with exceptional viewfinder	FF	24.2	Leica L	204,800	3840	·	225	9	·	·	·	3.2	·	·	380	148.9	110	96.7	899
Panasonic Lumix S1H	£3600		Specialist full-frame mirrorless model designed for pro-level video	FF	24.2	Leica L	204,800	4096	·	225	9	·	·	·	3.2	·	·	380	151	114.2	110.4	1164
Panasonic Lumix S5	£1800	4.5★	Compact-bodied, enthusiast-focused model designed for both stills and video	FF	24.2	Leica L	204,800	3840	·	225	7	·	·	·	3	·	·	440	132.6	97.1	81.9	714
Panasonic Lumix S5II	£2000	4.5★	Compact model with phase detect autofocus and unlimited video recording	FF	24.2	Leica L	204,800	5952	·	779	9	·	·	·	3	·	·	370	134.3	102.3	90.1	740
Panasonic Lumix S5IIX	£2300	5★	Video-specialist version of the S5II boasts higher-quality recording options	FF	24.2	Leica L	204,800	5952	·	779	9	·	·	·	3	·	·	370	134.3	102.3	90.1	740
Sigma fp	£1999	4★	Smallest full-frame mirrorless, but compromised features and handling	FF	24.6	Leica L	102,400	3840	·	49	18	·	·	·	3.2	·	·	280	112.6	69.9	45.3	422
Sigma fp L	£1999	4★	High-resolution version of the fp with 61MP full-frame sensor	FF	61.0	Leica L	102,400	3840	·	49	10	·	·	·	3.2	·	·	240	112.6	69.9	45.3	427
Sony Alpha 6100	£830		Entry-level APS-C model with Sony's latest AF technology and 4K video	APS-C	24.2	Sony E	51,200	3840	·	425	11	·	·	·	3	·	·	380	120	66.9	59.4	396
Sony Alpha 6400	£1000	4★	Extraordinary new autofocus system, but in an outdated body design	APS-C	24.2	Sony E	102,400	3840	·	425	11	·	·	·	3	·	·	360	120	66.9	49.9	403
Sony Alpha 6600	£1450	4★	In-body stabilisation and impressive autofocus, but frustrating body design	APS-C	24.2	Sony E	102,400	3840	·	425	11	·	·	·	3	·	·	720	120	66.9	59	503
Sony Alpha 6700	£1450	4.5★	Boasts a 26MP sensor in a much-improved body compared to the A6600	APS-C	26	Sony E	102,400	3840	·	759	11	·	·	·	3	·	·	570	122	69	75.1	493
Sony Alpha 1	£6500	5★	Flagship model with an unprecedented combination of resolution and speed	FF	50.1	Sony E	102,400	7680	·	759	30	·	·	·	3	·	·	530	128.9	96.9	80.8	737
Sony Alpha 7 II	£1498	5★	The full-frame Alpha 7 II includes in-body image stabilisation	FF	24.3	Sony E	25,600	1080	·	117	5	·	·	·	3	·	·	350	126.9	95.7	59.7	556
Sony Alpha 7 III	£1999	5★	Fine camera with 10fps shooting and 4K video recording	FF	24.2	Sony E	204,800	3840	·	693	10	·	·	·	3	·	·	610	126.9	95.6	73.7	650
Sony Alpha 7 IV	£2400	5★	Excellent all-rounder with 33MP sensor and fully articulated screen	FF	33.0	Sony E	204,800	3840	·	759	10	·	·	·	3	·	·	610	131	96.4	79.8	658
Sony Alpha 7C	£1900	3.5★	Compact full-frame design let down by poor handling and tiny EVF	FF	24.2	Sony E	204,800	3840	·	693	10	·	·	·	3	·	·	680	124	71.1	59.7	509
Sony Alpha 7C II	£2100	4★	Much-improved compact model, but still compromised in certain respects	FF	33.0	Sony E	204,800	3840	·	759	10	·	·	·	3	·	·	530	124	71.1	63.4	525
Sony Alpha 7CR	£3200	4★	High-resolution twin of the A7C II, with a 60MP sensor	FF	61.0	Sony E	102,400	3840	·	693	8	·	·	·	3	·	·	490	124	71.1	63.4	525
Sony Alpha 7R III	£3200	5★	Impressive image quality and handling, but starting to look a little dated	FF	42.4	Sony E	102,400	3840	·	399	10	·	·	·	3	·	·	650	126.9	95.6	73.7	657
Sony Alpha 7R IV	£3500	5★	Superb high-resolution, full-frame mirrorless with new 61MP sensor	FF	61.0	Sony E	102,400	3840	·	567	10	·	·	·	3	·	·	670	128.9	96.4	77.5	665
Sony Alpha 7RV	£4000	5★	61MP model gains subject detection, 8K video and 4-way articulated screen	FF	61.0	Sony E	102,400	7680	·	693	10	·	·	·	3.2	·	·	530	131.3	96.9	82.4	723
Sony Alpha 7S III	£3800	4.5★	Huge update gains fully articulated screen and new touch interface	FF	12.1	Sony E	409,600	3840	·	759	10	·	·	·	3	·	·	600	128.9	96.9	80.8	600
Sony Alpha 9 II	£4800		A9 gains professional connectivity options and an improved body design	FF	24.2	Sony E	204,800	3840	·	693	20	·	·	·	3	·	·	500	128.9	96.4	77.5	678
Sony Alpha A9 III	£6100		World's first global shutter brings breathtaking speed - but at a price	FF	24.6	Sony E	51,200	3840	·	759	120	·	·	·	3.2	·	·	400	136.1	96.9	82.9	702
Sony ZV-E1	£2350		Small full-frame vlogging camera, with articulated screen but no viewfinder	FF	12.1	Sony E	204,800	3840	·	759	10	·	·	·	3	·	·	570	121	71.9	54.3	483
Sony ZV-E10	£680	4★	Designed for vlogging, with high-end microphone and fully articulated screen	APS-C	24.2	Sony E	51,200	3840	·	425	11	·	·	·	3	·	·	440	113	64.2	44.7	343

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DSLR cameras			SENSOR SIZE	RESOLUTION (MP)	LENS MOUNT	MAX ISO	VIDEO	MIC INPUT	AF POINTS	BURST MODE (FPS)	VF COVERAGE (%)	BUILT-IN Wi-Fi	FLASH	SCREEN SIZE (IN)	ARTICULATED LCD	TOUCHSCREEN	BATTERY LIFE (SHOTS)	WIDTH (MM)	HEIGHT (MM)	DEPTH (MM)	WEIGHT (G)				
NAME & MODEL	RRP	SCORE	SUMMARY				SHOOTING						SCREEN			DIMENSIONS									
Canon EOS 2000D	£469	3★	Minor update to EOS 1300D gains 24.1MP sensor				APS-C	24.1	Canon EF	12,800	1080		9	3	95	·	·	3			500	129	101.3	77.6	475
Canon EOS 250D	£530	4★	Very compact entry-level DSLR with fully articulated screen and 4K video				APS-C	24.1	Canon EF	51,200	3840	·	9	5	95	·	·	3	·	·	1070	122.4	92.6	69.8	449
Canon EOS 850D	£820	4★	Fully featured upper entry-level DSLR includes 4K video recording				APS-C	24.1	Canon EF	51,200	3840	·	45	7	95	·	·	3	·	·	800	131	102.6	76.2	515
Canon EOS 90D	£1210	4★	Mid-range DSLR boasts 32.5MP sensor, 10fps shooting and 4K video				APS-C	32.5	Canon EF	51,200	3840	·	45	10	100	·	·	3	·	·	1300	140.7	104.8	76.8	701
Canon EOS 6D Mark II	£1999	4.5★	Includes 26.2MP full-frame sensor and fully articulated screen				FF	26.2	Canon EF	102,400	1080	·	45	6.5	98	·	·	3	·	·	1,200	144	110.5	74.8	765
Canon EOS 5D Mark IV	£3599	4.5★	Hugely accomplished workhorse model, but pricey				FF	30.4	Canon EF	102,400	3840	·	61	7	100	·	·	3.2	·	·	900	151	116	76	890
Canon EOS-1D X Mark III	£6499		Super-fast pro model for sports and action photographers				FF	20.1	Canon EF	819,200	5496	·	191	16	100	·	·	3.2	·	·	2,850	158	167.6	82.6	1440
Nikon D780	£2199	5★	Superb all-rounder blends the best of DSLR and mirrorless technology				FX	24.5	Nikon F	204,800	3840	·	51	7	100	·	·	3.2	·	·	2,060	143.5	115.5	76	840
Nikon D850	£3499	5★	High speed and superb image quality make this the best DSLR yet				FX	45.7	Nikon F	102,400	3840	·	153	7	100	·	·	3.2	·	·	1,840	146	124	78.5	1005
Nikon D6	£6299		Latest pro-level high-speed sports camera boasts high-tech AF system				FX	20.8	Nikon F	3,280,000	3840	·	105	14	100	·	·	3.2	·	·	3,580	160	163	92	1450
Pentax K-70	£600	4.5★	Solid performer with fully articulated screen and in-body stabilisation				APS-C	24.2	Pentax K	102,400	1080		11	6	100	·	·	3	·	·	410	125.5	93	74	688
Pentax KF	£849		Refresh of the K-70, with additional Custom Image colour modes				APS-C	24.2	Pentax K	102,400	1080		11	6	100	·	·	3	·	·	460	125.5	93	74	684
Pentax K-3 III	£1899	4★	Highly specified but pricey APS-C DSLR that boasts a large viewfinder				APS-C	25.7	Pentax K	1,600,000	3840	·	101	12	100	·	·	3.2	·	·	800	134.5	103.5	73.5	820
Pentax K-3 III Monochrome	£2249	4★	Specialist version of the K-3 III that only shoots in black & white				APS-C	25.7	Pentax K	1,600,000	3840	·	101	12	100	·	·	3.2	·	·	800	134.5	103.5	73.5	820
Pentax K-1 II	£1799	4.5★	Well-featured full-frame DSLR that's excellent value for money				FF	36	Pentax K	819,200	1080	·	33	4.4	100	·	·	3.2	·	·	670	136.5	110	85.5	1010

ALL PRICES ARE RRPS. STREET PRICES MAY VARY

We've tried our hardest to ensure that the information in this guide is as complete and accurate as possible. However, some errors will inevitably have crept in along the way: if you spot one, please let us know by emailing ap.ed@kelsey.co.uk. Unfortunately we don't have space to list every single product on the market, so we don't include the most expensive speciality items. **Before making a purchase we advise you to check prices, along with any crucial specifications or requirements, with either a reputable retailer or the manufacturer's website.**

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Compact cameras

NAME & MODEL			RRP	SCORE	SUMMARY	SENSOR SIZE	RESOLUTION (MP)	LENS RANGE (MM EQUIV)	MAX ISO	VIDEO	MIC INPUT	BURST MODE (FPS)	VIEWFINDER	BUILT-IN W/FI	FLASH	SCREEN SIZE (IN)	ARTICULATED LCD	TOUCHSCREEN	BATTERY LIFE (SHOTS)	WIDTH (MM)	HEIGHT (MM)	DEPTH (MM)	WEIGHT (G)
					SHOOTING	SCREEN			DIMENSIONS														
Canon G1 X Mark III	£1149	5★	Rewrites the rule book by fitting an APS-C sensor in a compact body	APS-C	24.2	24-72	25,600	1080	9	•	•	•	•	•	3in	•	•	200	115	77.9	51.4	399	
Canon G5 X Mark II	£849	4★	Handles well and gives great image quality, but sluggish AF in low light	1in	20.2	24-120	25,600	3840	30	•	•	•	•	•	3in	•	•	230	110.9	60.9	46	340	
Canon G7 X Mark II	£549	4.5★	Pocketable body that handles well, with really useful zoom range	1in	20.1	24-100	12,800	1080	8	•	•	•	•	•	3in	•	•	265	105.5	60.9	42	319	
Canon G7 X Mark III	£699	4★	Lovely pocket camera that includes 4K video and YouTube live streaming	1in	20.1	24-100	25,600	3840	•	30	•	•	•	•	3in	•	•	265	105.5	60.9	41.4	304	
Canon G9 X Mark II	£449	4★	Slim, stylish, pocketable camera gives great image quality	1in	20.2	28-84	12,800	1080	8.2	•	•	•	•	•	3in	•	•	235	98	57.9	30.8	206	
Canon V10	£429	3.5★	Unusual camera designed for vlogging, but has some significant limitations	1in	15.2	19	12,800	3840	•	na	•	•	•	•	2in	•	•	290	63.8	90.0	34.3	211	
Fujifilm X100V	£1299	5★	Classic rangefinder-like camera with tilting screen and weather-sealing	APS-C	26.1	35	51,200	3840	•	20	•	•	•	•	3in	•	•	420	128	74.8	53.3	478	
Leica V-Lux 5	£1049		Customised, re-badged version of the Panasonic FZ1000 II	1in	20.1	25-400	25,000	3840	•	12	•	•	•	•	3in	•	•	440	136.7	97.2	131.5	812	
Leica Q2 Monochrom	£4995	5★	Variant of the Q2 with a modified sensor that only shoots in black & white	FF	47.3	28	100,000	4096	20	•	•	•	•	•	3in	•	•	350	130	80	91.9	734	
Leica Q3	£5300	5★	Lovely top-end compact with 60MP full-frame sensor and 28mm f/1.7 lens	FF	60.3	28	100,000	8192	15	•	•	•	•	•	3in	•	•	350	130	80.3	92.6	743	
Panasonic FZ1000 II	£700	4★	Updates FZ1000 with higher-resolution, touch-sensitive screen	1in	20.1	25-400	25,600	3840	•	12	•	•	•	•	3in	•	•	440	136.2	97.2	131.5	810	
Panasonic FZ2000	£600	4.5★	Sophisticated bridge camera with strong focus on 4K video	1in	20.1	24-480	25,600	3840	•	12	•	•	•	•	3in	•	•	350	137.6	101.9	134.7	966	
Panasonic LX15	£370	4.5★	Likeable advanced compact with ultra-fast f/1.4-2.8 zoom lens	1in	20.1	24-72	25,600	3840	10	•	•	•	•	•	3in	•	•	260	105.5	60	42	310	
Panasonic TZ200	£500	4.5★	Huge zoom range for a pocket camera, but telephoto images lack detail	1in	20.1	24-360	25,600	3840	10	•	•	•	•	•	3in	•	•	370	111.2	66.4	45.2	340	
Ricoh GR III	£799	4★	Slimline, lightweight advanced compact with in-body image stabilisation	APS-C	24.2	28	102,400	1920	4	•	•	•	•	•	3in	•	•	200	109.4	61.9	33.2	257	
Ricoh GR IIIx	£899	4★	Variant of the GR III with new 40mm-equivalent f/2.8 lens	APS-C	24.2	40	102,400	1920	4	•	•	•	•	•	3in	•	•	200	109.4	61.9	35.2	262	
Sony RX10 IV	£1800	5★	Update to RX10 III with vastly improved shooting speed and autofocus	1in	20.1	24-600	12,800	3840	•	24	•	•	•	•	3in	•	•	400	132.5	94	144	1095	
Sony RX100 III	£810	5★	Features fast f/1.8-2.8 zoom lens and pop-up electronic viewfinder	1in	20.1	24-70	12,800	1920	10	•	•	•	•	•	3in	•	•	320	101.6	58.1	41	290	
Sony RX100 V	£900	4.5★	Includes super-fast 24fps shooting and slow-motion video up to 960fps	1in	20.1	24-70	12,800	3840	24	•	•	•	•	•	3in	•	•	220	101.6	58.1	41	299	
Sony RX100 VII	£1200	4.5★	Gains Sony's latest AI-based autofocus tech, including real-time eye AF	1in	20.1	24-200	12,800	3840	•	20	•	•	•	•	3in	•	•	260	101.6	58.1	42.8	302	
Sony ZV-1	£700	4★	Designed for vloggers, with high-spec mic and fully articulated screen	1in	20.1	25-70	12,800	3840	•	24	•	•	•	•	3in	•	•	260	105.5	60	43.5	294	
Sony ZV-1 Mark II	£870	4.5★	Updated vlog camera gains ultra-wideangle zoom and touchscreen interface	1in	20.1	18-50	12,800	3840	•	24	•	•	•	•	3in	•	•	290	105.5	60	46.7	292	
Sony ZV-1F	£550		Simplified version of the ZV-1 with fixed 20mm equivalent prime lens	1in	20.1	20	12,800	3840	•	16	•	•	•	•	3in	•	•	360	105.5	60	46.4	256	

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Used Canon

R3 body box £3999, R5 body box £2799, R6 body box £1199

Table listing Canon R series mirrorless cameras and their prices.

Used Canon

200-400mm IS USM £3999, 300mm F2.8 IS USM LII £3499, 400mm F4 DO II USM £3499, 500mm F4 IS USM LII £4999

Table listing Canon AF lenses and their prices.

Used Canon

5D MKIV body box £1299, 90D body box £1899, 7D MKII body box £599

Table listing Canon DSLR cameras and their prices.

NIKON AUTOFOCUS CAMERAS, LENSES, FLASH, ACCESSORIES ETC USED

NIKON Z MIRRORLESS USED

Table listing Nikon Z mirrorless cameras and their prices.

NIKON DSLR USED

Table listing Nikon DSLR cameras and their prices.

NIKON AF LENSES USED

Table listing Nikon AF lenses and their prices.

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

GIETZ CO TRIPODS/HEADS USED

Table listing Gietz Co tripods and heads.

SONY DIGITAL USED

Table listing Sony digital cameras.

OLYMPUS MICRO 4/3 USED

Table listing Olympus Micro 4/3 cameras.

PANASONIC MICRO 4/3 USED

Table listing Panasonic Micro 4/3 cameras.

PANASONIC MICRO 4/3 USED

Table listing Panasonic Micro 4/3 cameras.

PANASONIC MICRO 4/3 USED

Table listing Panasonic Micro 4/3 cameras.

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BRONICA, FUJI, HASSELBLAD, MAMIYA, PENTAX ETC. MEDIUM FORMAT USED

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Table listing Bronica ETR 645 cameras.

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Table listing Bronica SQ 6x6 cameras.

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Table listing Mamiya 645 MF cameras.

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PENTAX 6x7 USED

Table listing Pentax 6x7 cameras.

35mm AUTO/MANUAL FOCUS CAMERAS & ACCESSORIES, CANON, MINOLTA, NIKON, OLYMPUS, PENTAX, ETC. USED

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Table listing Canon AF film camera bodies.

NIKON AF BODIES USED

Table listing Nikon AF camera bodies.

NIKON MF BODIES USED

Table listing Nikon MF camera bodies.

NIKON MF LENSES USED

Table listing Nikon MF lenses.

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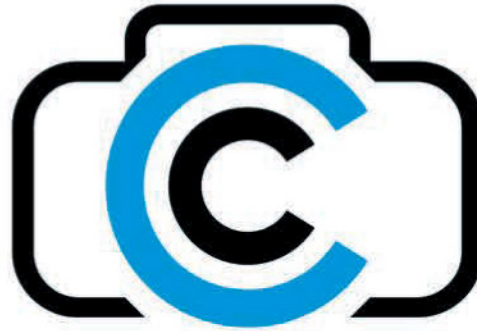
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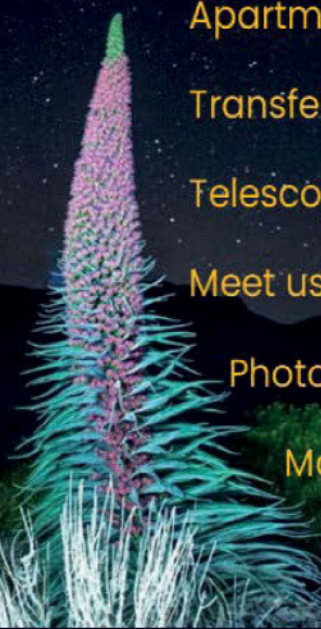
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Final Analysis

Paul Hill considers...

'Best friends beneath a poster of their favourite pop star, Rick Astley', by Bill Stephenson

I was watching *Strictly Come Dancing* recently when the 1980s star Rick Astley popped up, and my mind was transported to Bill Stephenson's recently published *Streets in the Sky* book I'd just been reading. I probably hadn't seen Astley on TV or in print for over 30 years, and there he was, looking just like the poster on this bedroom wall in Sheffield taken in 1988. What's he on? I thought.

What makes the best photographic portraits memorable is that they 'say' something rather than just being a likeness. We can detect from this image that the girls wanted to be close to their idol and the next best thing was to be connected through a photo of him. But the picture portrays more than pre-pubescent idolatry because Bill allowed the girls to choose their pose.

Duality

Naturally they wanted to show that they are best mates, but this picture also reflects their environment and kids' fashions of the day. Notice the Artex swirls that were so popular in post-WW2 housing. But above all this is an engaging image that shows both the psychological and emotional interior and the factual and descriptive exterior. No other medium can convey that duality so well.

Streets in the Sky contains portraits Bill made of the last tenants of Sheffield's monumental Hyde Park Flats, before they were used as accommodation for the World Student Games in 1991. The flats, considered architecturally revolutionary at the time, were demolished a year later.

With a Hasselblad 500C and Fuji colour negative film, Bill adopted a considered direct approach that is a very familiar one today. However, colour and this overtly posed portrait style were comparatively rare in social documentary projects even in 1988.

As he recalls: 'I developed a familiarity and intimacy with the residents, which I hope comes across in the portraits. I soon realised an on-the-wing street photography approach was completely wrong so I started



© BILL STEPHENSON

talking to the tenants, attending meetings and attempted to become a "guest" in their community, less conspicuous, less like an official. I always kept my camera in a supermarket shopping bag!

As a young man, Bill had wanted to study a creative subject and enrolled on to a furniture design course at Trent Polytechnic, Nottingham, in the 1970s. But after doing a photography block, he decided designing chairs and tables was not for him. He worked as tyre fitter, van driver and photographer at a Butlin's holiday camp before enrolling on a full-time photography course at Sheffield Poly.

Bill has completed several acclaimed

documentary projects in his long career, and this has been acknowledged by Manchester University, among others, who are currently acquiring his work for their library collection.

Times move on. The iconic flats are history, and the girls in the bedroom are now adults and almost certainly mothers with children of their own of a similar age. However, time seems to have stood still for Rick Astley, who will probably always look the same as he does in the poster. AP

Streets in the Sky can be obtained from:
www.martindust.photography/store
 Visit <https://billstephenson.co.uk/>

Among many achievements, Paul Hill has written two books on photography, was director of the Creative Photography course at Trent Polytechnic and has been exhibited numerous times. He was the first photographer to receive an MBE for services to photography and the first professor of photographic practice in a British university. hillonphotography.co.uk

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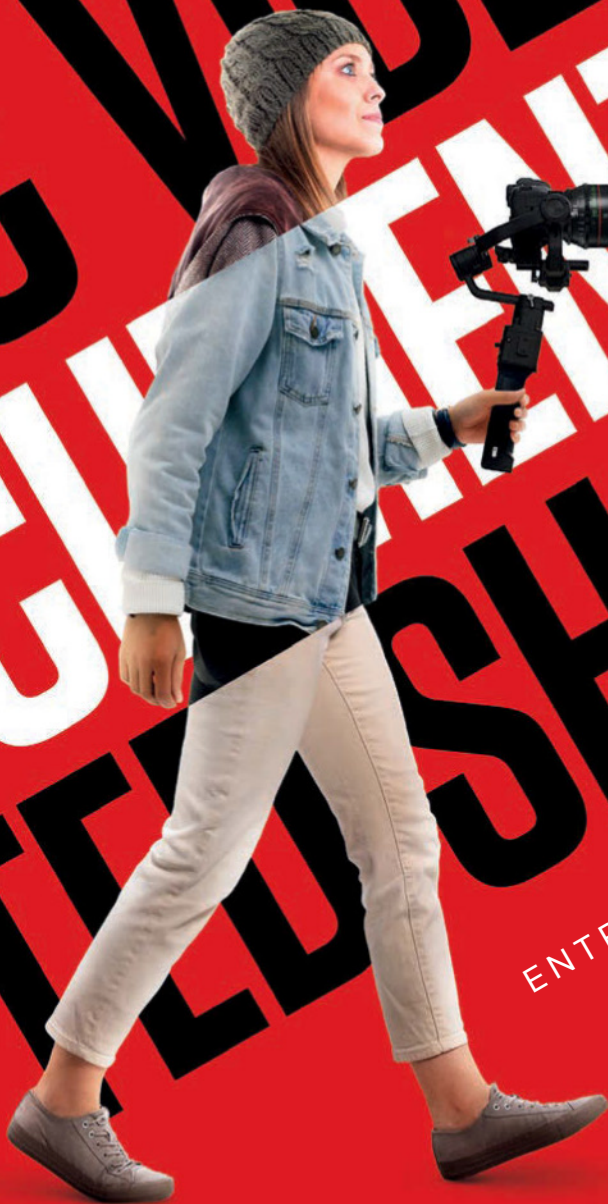
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