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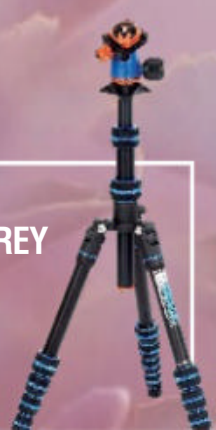
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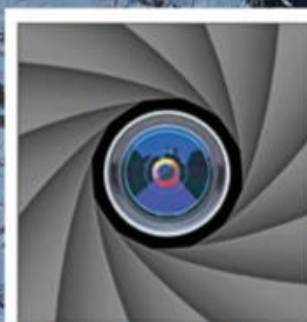
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ISSN 0004-9964

# “WOULD YOU PHOTOGRAPH MY WEDDING?”

**MIKE O'CONNOR, EDITOR**

**A**re there any five words that will put a shiver down the spine of a photographer faster than these ones?

Something about photographing a wedding makes all but the most seasoned of us break out into a cold sweat – the thought of missing a key shot, managing expectations, and something going wrong on the big day that you can't just go and reshoot. It's probably no surprise then that I've always (politely) declined when I've been asked this very question.

And yet despite this, I've always had a niggling desire to photograph one – not for some sort of ego-stroking exercise, but because I think there's something really special about being able to photograph a couple's big day. So, when I heard Anthony McKee, AP's very own Image Doctor, would be in town to shoot a friend's wedding a couple of months ago, I asked him if I could join him and assist.

Assisting is surely where every aspiring wedding photographer should start. In my case, I found my nerves were calm because the pressure was shared, and this was helped by much of the pre-work being done for me – I just had to turn up, get my settings right, and try and be helpful. In retrospect, I got the easy parts of the job – no stress of ensuring the shot-list was completed, no need to location scout ahead of time, and no need to be watching every minute of the run sheet to ensure we didn't go over – all privileges most wedding shooters will never get.

But what was most valuable was seeing the skills you need to call on that aren't necessarily the photography ones. Being confident is surely the most important of these – nothing reminds you that you must own the space you're in quite like photographing a wedding.

You've got to be decisive too – this is not the time to be a fly on the wall and sit on the fringes hoping the shots will just come to you. At the same time,



CREDIT: MIKE O'CONNOR

ABOVE: What is it about photographing a wedding that gives us chills? I had plenty of fun shooting my first one, and found more opportunities than I expected to be creative as well.

I was surprised by how much time there was to photograph the 'key' events – there's a certain predictability about a wedding that allows you to get yourself in the right position to pre-empt what happens next, and things like the vows take long enough that you can photograph them from multiple angles with time to recompose.

So, with that one in the bag, I've just agreed to shoot another wedding for friends around the time you'll be reading this, but I'll be doing it on my own this time. So, should you say yes if you're asked to photograph a wedding? I'll leave that up to you, but it may just be a proposal to think twice about. 🌟



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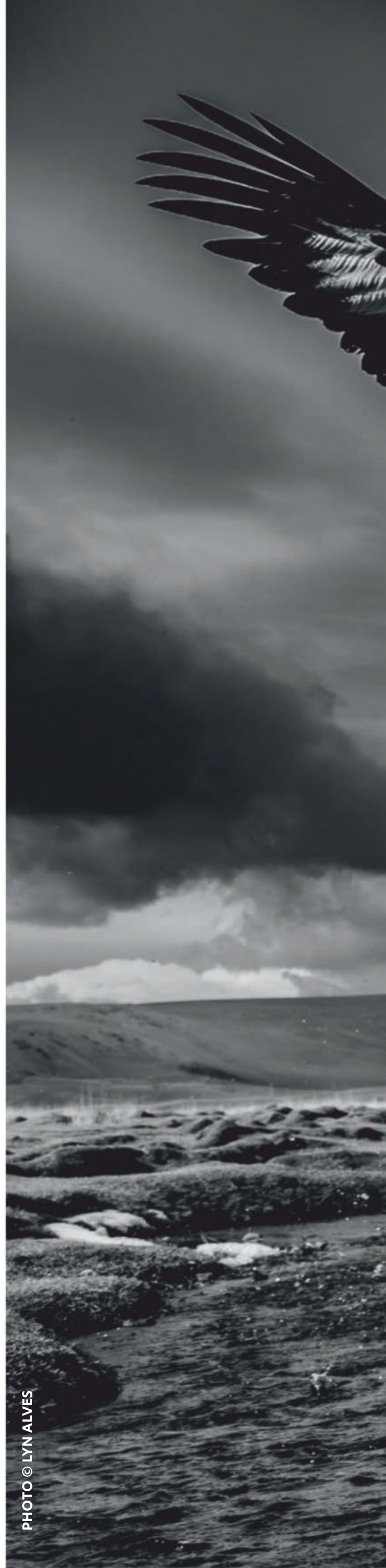
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## 22 THE GENIUS OF THE NIFTY 50

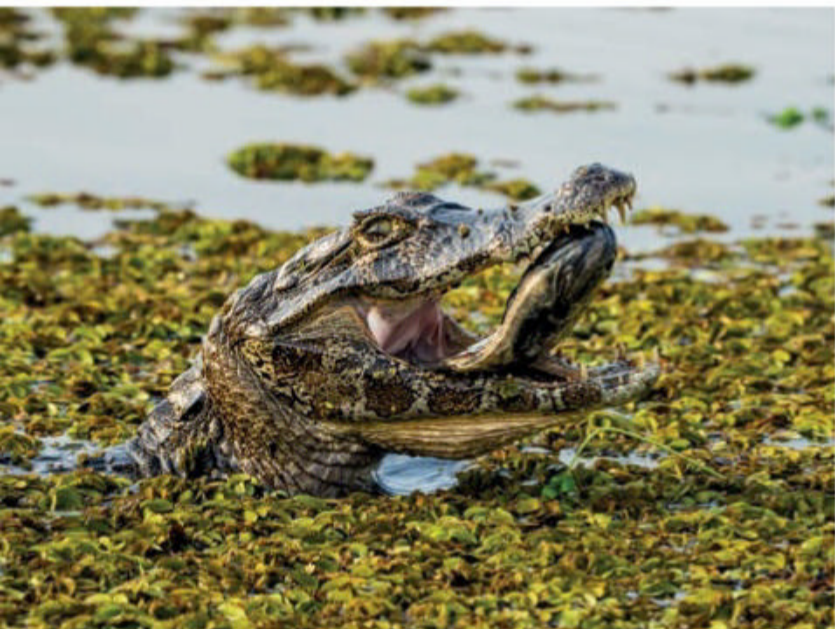
The 50mm lens didn't get the nickname "nifty fifty" for nothing. It's one of the most versatile lenses in any photographer's arsenal, and despite there being much more glamorous alternatives in 2024, the 50mm has an enduring appeal you just can't escape. Josh Wells explains why you should never ignore yours.

APRIL - MAY 2024

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**Photography**

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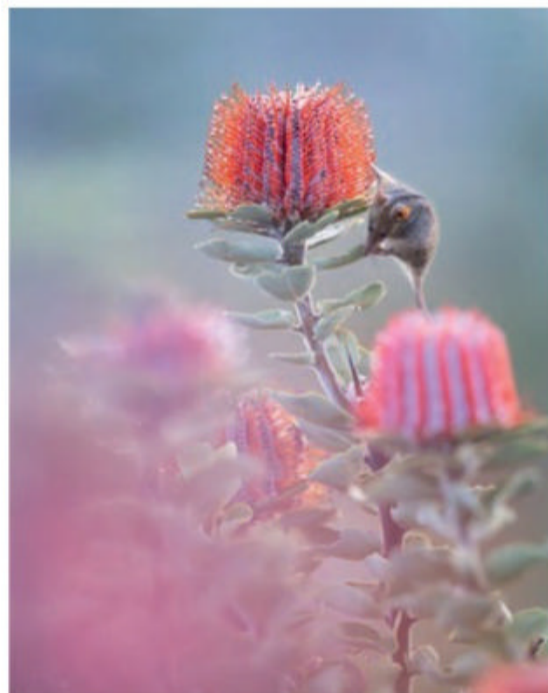
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### THIS ISSUE'S COVER

Shooting these honey possums on the south coast of Western Australia was a lesson in patience and timing, explains this issue's cover shot photographer Lewis Burnett. "I woke to the sound of rain on my tent, and knew that if I wrapped up, I'd be in for a treat in regards to photos due to the nice diffused light. Photographing wide open at f/2.8 to make the most of the early morning glow breaking through the sheets of misty drizzle, I was lucky enough to find these charismatic little critters feeding amongst a grove of flowering banksias." Sony A1, Sony 400mm f/2.8 GM lens. 1/1000s @ f2.8, ISO 1600.

## THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS



### JOSH WELLS

Josh is a portrait photographer who writes about better photography through science and philosophy as UV Filter Monocles on both Medium and Substack. He has a solo exhibition at Victoria Park Arts Centre this June. See more at [joshwellsphotography.com](http://joshwellsphotography.com)



### DARRAN LEAL

A photographer for more than 40 years and a photo tour guide for more than 30 of those, Darran has photographed all over the world. See more at [worldphotoadventures.com.au](http://worldphotoadventures.com.au)



### PAUL JOHNSON

A survivor from the pre-digital era, Paul learnt to process and print film at school and, for the past fifty years, he's kept trying to make better prints. His work has been shown in South Australian galleries and, since 2022, he's shown some of his work on Instagram @ [anima\\_loci\\_south\\_australia](https://www.instagram.com/anima_loci_south_australia)



### MATTY GRAHAM

Matty Graham is a photojournalist and former mag editor based in the UK. He specialises in landscape, portraiture and video. See more at [MattyGraham.com](http://MattyGraham.com)



# THE CONNECTION

PHOTOGRAPHER: AIDAN WILLIAMS

In the quiet stillness of 4am, I found myself lying awake, perched at 1,446 metres in Tasmania, contemplating how the relentless onslaught of three days of rain and storms had set our team back. My body, worn from consecutive projects leading up to this moment, desperately needed a break.

Ahead lay the prospect of a 25km hike with a 40kg backpack for the next 4-5 days. However, I was determined not to let this moment slip away, nor disappoint the team, no matter how strongly the urge to quit tugged.

A few years earlier, at the age of twenty-one, I found myself in a job that had left me questioning where I had strayed from my dream of becoming a sports photographer. Seeking a change, I impulsively booked a trip to Tasmania, enticed by its reputation as a haven for adventure.

It was during this journey that I stumbled upon the world of Highlining, a sport where individuals traverse a one-inch-wide Nylon/ Polyester webbing suspended between two fixed points at an elevated height. Inspired by the work of my idol, Australian action sports photographer Krystle Wright, I discovered a newfound passion and purpose. Fast forward six years, and I had returned to Southwest Tassie and the very place that had planted the seed of inspiration.

The essence of photography often lies in anticipation and meticulous planning. In the lead

up to this shot I immersed myself in studying every available photograph of the location, researching potential shots, necessary gear (usually the last consideration in a project), and visualising every conceivable angle, lighting scenario, and the distinct styles of the athletes I'd be capturing. Confident in my preparation, my focus shifted to contributing my part to the team and providing myself with the opportunity to bring my shots to life.

The beauty of being on challenging projects and enduring long hikes is the immersive connection you gain. Distractions fade away as you find yourself lost in thoughts of dream shots while traversing landscapes or listening to the calls of birds. It's a far more engrossing distraction than pondering the 40kgs on your back, the rain-soaked shoes inducing blisters, or the seemingly never-ending ascent.

My plan here revolved around framing the shot with highliner Carmen Ator perfectly aligned against the awe-inspiring mountain range, just as the sun rose. The golden rays would cascade like spotlights over her, capturing an image that echoed the first warmth of winter sunshine as she made her way along the line some 450m above the ground. And, when I awakened at 4am, everything was poised for execution – the rest was up to me.

**FUJIFILM X-T5, 16-55MM F/2.8 LENS @ 20MM.  
1/60S @ F20, ISO 1600.**







# QUICK SNAPS

## PEOPLE'S CHOICE: WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR 2023

**A STUNNING** image of a young polar bear drifting to sleep on an iceberg by British amateur photographer Nima Sarikhani has won the Wildlife Photographer of the Year People's Choice Award.

"Sarikhani's breathtaking and poignant image allows us to see the beauty and fragility of our planet," Natural History Museum director Dr Douglas Gurr said.

"His thought-provoking image is a stark reminder of the integral bond between an animal and its habitat and serves as a visual representation of the detrimental impacts of climate warming and habitat loss."

Sarikhani captured the image after three days searching for polar bears through thick fog off Norway's Svalbard archipelago.

Four other outstanding finalists were highly commended in the competition which also saw two Australian photographers shortlisted: Cooma, NSW photographer Charles Davis, for his image *Duckling Huddle*, and Sydney photographer Ofer Levy, for his image *Neighbourhood dispute*.



## STEVE MCCURRY RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITION TO OPEN IN MELBOURNE

**FAMED** photographer Steve McCurry will exhibit more than 100 of his photos, including his famed *Afghan Girl* image, in Melbourne this month, following a successful run of the retrospective exhibition in Sydney.

ICONS features more than 100 large-format photographs of McCurry's most iconic images, spanning 40 years of the photographer's work.

McCurry's work represents the "emotion of human suffering, joy and wonder, and features people of all ages, cultures and ethnicities – something he knew how to portray with surprising strength and naturalness," say exhibition organisers Fever.

Included in the exhibition is *Afghan Girl*, the hugely influential 1984 portrait of refugee Sharbat Gula which was featured on the cover of *National Geographic* magazine.

McCurry famously tracked down Sharbat in 2002, photographing her again for the title.

The exhibition, which will run at the Main Shed at Seaworks Maritime Museum, features downloadable audio guides and videos revealing details and descriptions of 43 of McCurry's pictures in his own words, as well as giving insight into his travels, adventures and profession.

Tickets start at \$29.

More info: [stevemccurryicons.com/melbourne/](http://stevemccurryicons.com/melbourne/)



## META TO LABEL AI IMAGES ON FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, AND THREADS

**META**, the owner of Facebook, Instagram, and Threads, has announced it will label AI-generated images in the coming months.

In a statement, the company says it is currently building the tools to detect AI-generated images, and the labels will be applied in all languages supported on its platforms.

“As the difference between human and synthetic content gets blurred, people want to know where the boundary lies,” the statement says. “People are often coming across AI-generated content for the first time and our users have told us they appreciate transparency around this new technology.”

The company noted it is hoping to rollout the feature soon as a number of ‘important elections’ are set to take place around the world.

“During this time, we expect to learn much more about how people are creating and sharing AI content, what sort of transparency people find most valuable, and how these technologies evolve. What we learn will inform industry best practices and our own approach going forward,” the statement said.

Currently, images created with Meta’s own AI tool MetaAI already include an “Imagined with AI” label that appears when published, but until now this hasn’t extended to AI-generated work created with other tools.

According to Meta, the new warnings would come up “when we can detect industry

standard indicators that they are AI-generated.” This is something Meta says it is working with ‘industry partners’ to develop.

The company says it is also in the process of building tools that can identify invisible markers, such as the watermarks embedded in many AI creations at scale – specifically, the “AI generated” information in the C2PA and IPTC technical standards that many AI companies adhere to.

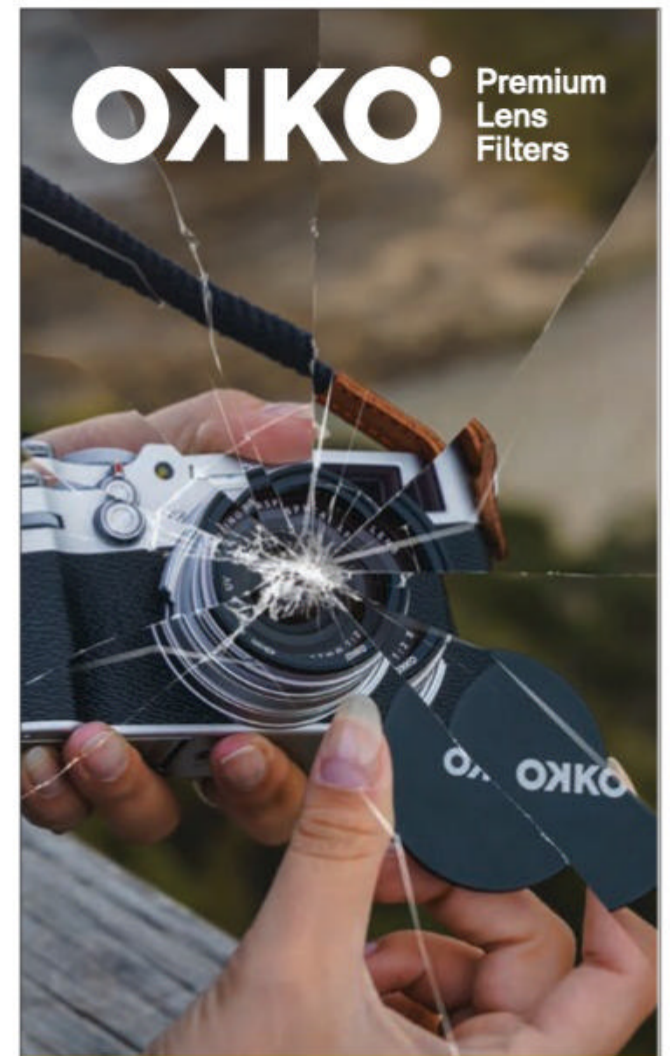
“So we can label images from Google, OpenAI, Microsoft, Adobe, Midjourney, and Shutterstock as they implement their plans for adding metadata to images created by their tools,” Meta says.

However, Meta admits it is still limited with what it can do with video and audio.

“While companies are starting to include signals in their image generators, they haven’t started including them in AI tools that generate audio and video at the same scale, so we can’t yet detect those signals and label this content from other companies,” the company says.

“While the industry works towards this capability, we’re adding a feature for people to disclose when they share AI-generated video or audio so we can add a label to it.”

However, as Meta acknowledges, it’s not yet possible to identify all AI-generated content, and there are ways that people can strip out invisible markers.



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## OPENAI INTRODUCES SORA TEXT-TO-VIDEO AI MODEL

**OPENAI** has announced Sora, a new video-generation model that the AI company says “can create realistic and imaginative scenes from text instructions.”

The text-to-video model allows users to create photorealistic videos up to 60 seconds long — all based on text prompts.

Sora, after the Japanese word for sky, is capable of creating “complex scenes with multiple characters, specific types of motion, and accurate details of the subject and background,” according to OpenAI’s introductory blog post.

The company behind the ChatGPT chatbot and the still-image generator DALL-E also notes that Sora can understand how objects “exist in the physical world,” and “accurately interpret props and generate compelling characters that express vibrant emotions.”

In addition, Sora can also generate a video based on a still image, as well as fill in missing frames on an existing video or extend it. That said, OpenAI says the tool does have weaknesses, and “may struggle with accurately simulating the physics of a complex

scene,” and may not understand specific instances of cause and effect.

For example, a person might take a bite out of a cookie, but afterward, the cookie may not have a bite mark.

Despite this, the results so far are pretty impressive.

The team behind the technology, including the researchers Tim Brooks and Bill Peebles, said the company was not yet releasing Sora to the public yet because it was still working to understand the system’s dangers.

Instead, OpenAI is sharing the technology with a small group of academics and other researchers who will “red team” it, a term for looking for ways it can be misused.

Despite this, with still images now capably produced by most AI tools, video appears to be the next frontier, with companies like Runway Pika and Google’s Lumiere already demonstrating impressive text-to-video models in an increasingly crowded space.

*You can watch some of the examples of the text prompted technology on the OpenAI website, [openai.com/sora](https://openai.com/sora)*

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Suggested model: DS1823xs+

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## 3LT RELEASES NEW TRIPOD AND MOUNTING PLATFORM

**CULT** camera accessory brand 3 Legged Thing has updated its Patti tripod line and introduced a new and improved camera mounting platform.



3LT's new Patti 2.0 brings a variety of updates to the company's entry-level tripod to bring it into line with the Punks 2.0 range. Patti 2.0, named after musician Patti Smith, now comes with a detachable leg, enabling photographers to create a monopod by joining the leg to the centre column.

The central canopy boasts an integral 1/4"-20 accessory attachment thread. To match the styling of other tripods in the Punks 2.0 range, Patti 2.0 also features a chunky column lock that combines knurling and rubber for optimum grip, and the flip locks have been refined with a textured surface.

Patti 2.0 is available in 'Darkness matte black' and signature 'ocean blue' colourways, each priced at \$273.



In addition, 3LT has also launched the LevelHed, a new raised mounting platform for improved compatibility with heads and clamps, and a smooth rotating bubble level for better visibility and usability.

According to 3LT, the LevelHed reduces set-up times and increases the accuracy and precision of levelling – making it ideal for landscapes, panoramas, and architectural photography.

Formed from anodised aerospace-grade magnesium alloy, the LevelHed tool allows users to achieve a level horizon without having to adjust their tripod's leg positions, on even the most challenging terrain.

The LevelHed is available in sleek Darkness matte black and a metallic slate grey colourway. It'll set you back \$263.

## BEST WORK OF GRADUATING STUDENTS FROM AUS AND NZ RECOGNISED

**THE** Ballarat International Foto Biennale has announced the winners of GradFoto 2023, celebrating the best work of graduating students from selected Australian and New Zealand institutions whose artistic practice uses photography as its primary medium.

International judge Virginia Woods-Jack, curator of Women in Photography NZ & AU, selected 21 finalists, with Zina Sofer from RMIT University announced as the overall winner for their series *Out of the Shadows*, 2023.

The image explores the history of the War Widows' Guild of Australia and its founder and president Mrs. Jessie Mary Vasey O.B.E and C.B.E. At its height, the Guild was involved in advocacy, education, support, counselling, and housing for widows.



Today, part of its legacy is a large housing estate in Elsternwick that is now facing demolition to make room for luxury units. The estate was built in 1950s specifically for the war widows and their families by the Guild.

Speaking about the image, Woods-Jack described the image as captivating and beautifully executed.

"It pays tribute to this impactful organisation [War Widows' Guild of Australia], the individual women, and the skills they employed to secure better futures for themselves and their families outside of the patriarchy in post-war Australia," she said.

For many women involved with the Guild, weaving was a lifeline, as it supplemented widows' unlivable pension, and it played a major role in establishing weaving as an industry in Australia. 🌟

You can see all the finalist images at [ballaratfoto.org/online-exhibition/gradfoto-2023-gallery/](http://ballaratfoto.org/online-exhibition/gradfoto-2023-gallery/)



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# YOUR BEST SHOT

FLIGHT



One of the most satisfying moments you can have in photography is when you realise you can use shutter speed to freeze a moment – and perhaps the ultimate test of this is capturing a subject in flight. This issue, we wanted to see images that explored flight in all its creative ways, and with a huge number of entries (more than 120!) you didn't disappoint us. These were our picks.





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## GLEND A GORE

*Breakfast Spotted*

### EDITOR'S COMMENT

You know that thing we said in the intro about freezing the moment – well, this is what it's all about! At a ferociously fast 1/16000s, Glenda captured this striking photo of a Caspian Tern as it dived for its breakfast. As she tells us, photographing these birds is challenging, not only for their speed, but for their white wings which

can easily come up as overexposed. Luckily that's not the case here, and you've done brilliantly to capture the full span of the wings too, a split second before they narrow for the dive.

### TECHNICAL DETAILS

Canon R7, Canon RF400mm F2.8 L IS USM lens. 1/16000s @ f3.2, ISO 800.

## ROSS DUNCAN

*Feeling insignificant*

### EDITOR'S COMMENT

What made Ross Duncan's shot a winner is it shows more than just a plane or object frozen in the sky, but also some of the environment around it – something that's often difficult to capture when shooting up against a sky. He tells us the image was captured while hiking along the famous Via Francigena in Northern Italy, following the path of an ancient glacier.

"I could hear a buzzy little engine somewhere, straining at its task, when suddenly out of the deep shadows a tiny plane bobbed into view, the backdrop of the Italian alps putting us all in our place."

The result is an image that's got a real feeling of story – the little plane dwarfed by the mountains as it surges up into the sky. If we were to offer one bit of feedback it would be to allow some of the texture of the mountain lost in the crunched blacks to show through, but otherwise, this is a fantastic image.

### TECHNICAL DETAILS

Fuji X-T1, 18-55mm lens @ 55mm. 1/1000s @ f14, ISO 320.

Thanks to the team at Blonde Robot, Ross Duncan has won a 3 Legged Thing - Punks Corey 2.0 Tripod Kit with AirHed Neo 2.0 valued at \$453. Corey 2.0 is aimed at travelling photographers who need a tripod small enough to pack into carry-on luggage. With its max height of 1.46m and a payload of 14kg, this magnesium alloy tripod is the ideal travel companion.

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**3 LEGGED THING**



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**YOUR BEST SHOT**

## PENELOPE ROBERTSHAWE

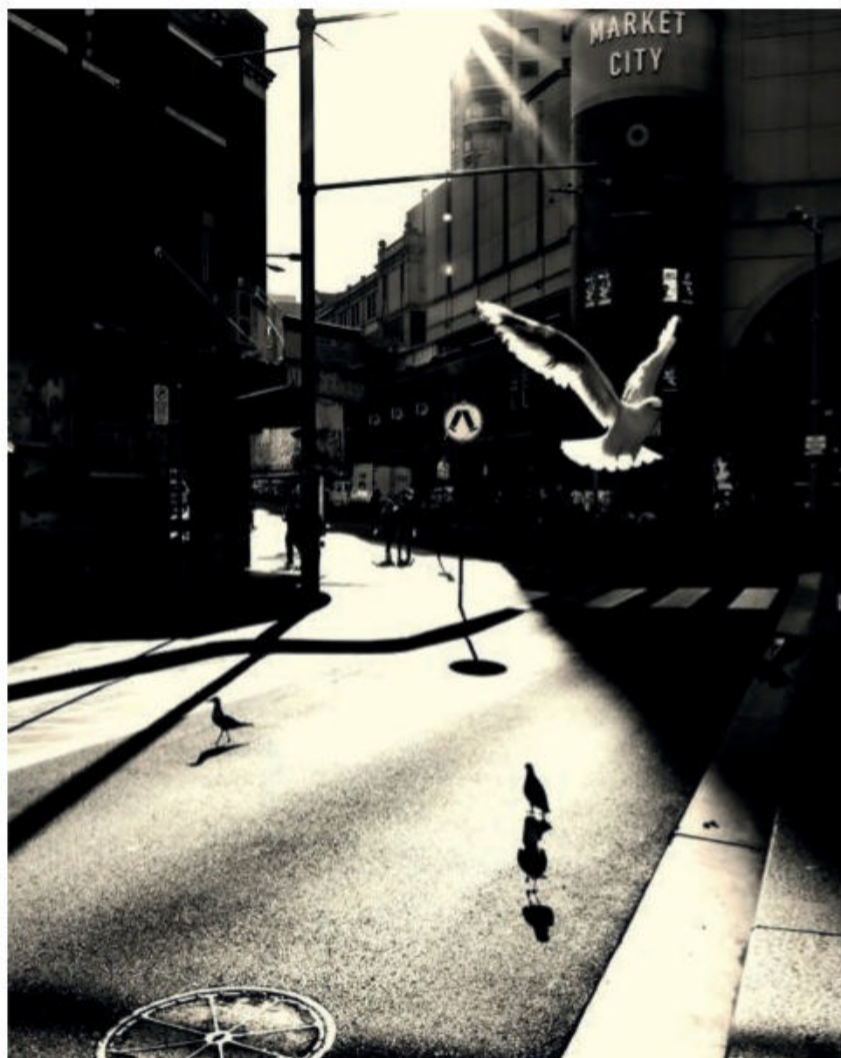
*Untitled*

### HOW I DID IT

I'm a street photographer and my subjects usually feature people in the urban environment. But people aren't the only creatures roaming the streets, birds are also prevalent everywhere I go. I took this shot in Haymarket, Sydney. It was late in the day when the sun casts long shadows. Seagulls were looking for pickings in the near empty street. I kneeled on the ground to frame the scene and shot on continuous into the light. This frame caught one of them in flight with its wings backlit.

### TECHNICAL DETAILS

Nikon Z7 II, NIKKOR Z 24 mm lens. 1/400s @ f10, ISO 250.



## DI LYMBURY

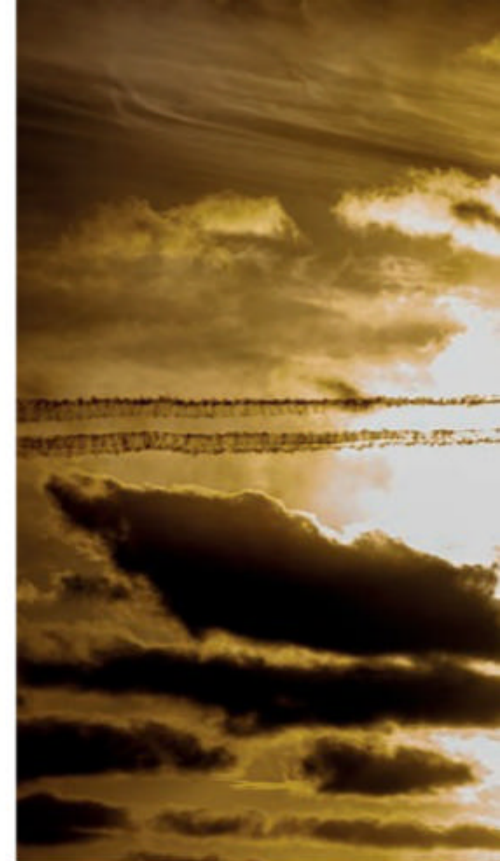
*Pacific Black Take Off*

### HOW I DID IT

I spend many moments at a local pond and many waterbirds frequent it. One of my favourites to photograph is the Pacific Black Duck and I am always hoping to capture a flash of the brilliant fluorescent greenish blue under the wings. This Pacific Black was captured at lift-off. Armed with a low camp stool and using a Canon camera handheld, I selected a high shutter speed to capture the splashes of the water.

### TECHNICAL DETAILS

None provided.



## RONALD FRITZ

*Flying to the sun*

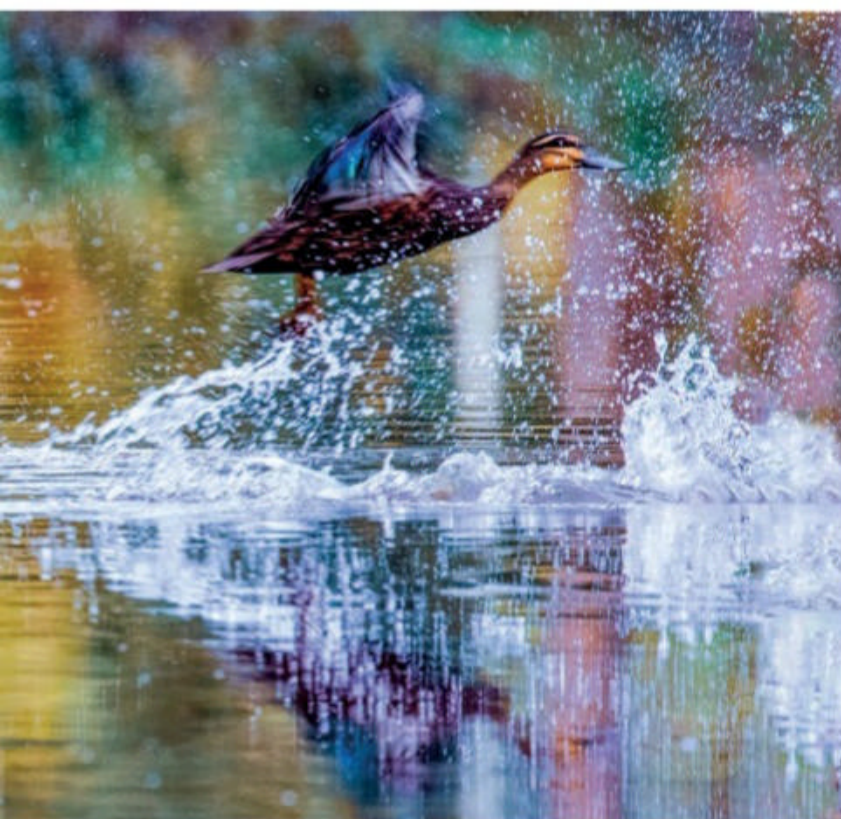
### HOW I DID IT

Captured at the Avalon Air Show 2023, and shot directly into the sun. I only saw the airplanes once I processed the photo in Lightroom!

### TECHNICAL DETAILS

Nikon Z6, NIKKOR 24-200mm f/4-6.3 lens @ 175mm. 1/320s @ f9, ISO 100.





## STEVE GENESIN

*Counter measures*

### HOW I DID IT

A RAAF Hercules aircraft on a slow pass at the Pacific Airshow lets loose the flares as part of its defence mechanisms. I, along with thousands of other spectators, watched and snapped away with our cameras trying to capture the action!

### TECHNICAL DETAILS

Olympus OM-1, Olympus 100-400mm lens @ 100mm. 1/1000s @ f9, ISO 200.

“

It gives me the versatility to photograph a whole range of animals and birds. The fast focus, huge zoom range, and vibration compensation make it my absolute go-to lens for animal images.

”

- Alex Cearns  
Tamron Pro Team member

# 150-500<sub>mm</sub> F5-6.7

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3. A maximum of three images can be entered per person.
4. Images must be in JPEG format.
5. Email file size must not exceed 7MB.
6. Please include the following information about your entry in the body of your email: Name, image title and up to 200 words explaining how you created your image. Please also include technical details including camera, lens, focal length, shutter speed, aperture, ISO, tripod (if used) and a brief summary of any software edits.

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PHOTO TIPS: PICKING THE RIGHT LENS



# THE GENIUS OF THE NIFTY 50

BY JOSH WELLS

Here's why the best lens might not  
be the one you have with you.

The world is already full of articles contemplating the best lens: The best lens for street photography, the best lens for portraiture, the best lens for wildlife. Inevitably these all seem to conclude that while the author's personal preference is for one such lens, there are merits to all focal lengths, and it ultimately depends on your shooting style as a photographer. This is not that article.

Such advice is often meaningless to beginner photographers. Any photographer who has spent a decent amount of time with their glass will develop preferences for different focal lengths, be they 35mm for its ability to hone in on details, 85mm for its gentle background compression, or 24mm for exaggerated perspective and long leading lines. The Best Lens, the one I am talking about today, is the lens every photographer should start out with, and which many should frequently return to: The fast 50.

50mm is not only the historical standard, but also photography's most common focal length: Canon's RF mount has two, Nikon Z has three and Sony FE has five. And you can add to this decades of historical SLR and rangefinder lenses which can be adapted to modern bodies.

So, what makes 50mm the best lens?



**THE ORIGINAL FULL FRAME UPGRADE?**

When Oskar Barnack designed the original Leica prototypes he took cinema film, which runs vertically through the camera, and ran it horizontally. Effectively doubling the imaging area.

ABOVE: APS-C users will find better luck approximating a 50mm focal length with a 33mm or 35mm lens. The advantage for such users is often a significantly improved minimum focus distance. For a year-long project of Australian Native Fauna I used handheld flash. Fujifilm X-T3, Fujifilm 35mm f/1.4 lens. 1/125s @ f4.5, ISO 200.

RIGHT: As above, 50mm makes for a flattering portrait in tight spaces. Unlike the above however, this image is shot wide open – the Sony Zeiss 55mm f/1.8 remains tack sharp. Sony A7 IV, Sony 55mm f/1.8 ZA lens. 1/160s @ f1.8, ISO 100.

**THEY CAN BE CHEAP...**

Canon's RF 50mm f/1.8 is a faster, sharper lens than most, and it goes on sale at under \$400. Sony has a workmanlike 50mm f/1.8 also under \$400, or the more inspiring Zeiss 55mm at around \$850 (they are also readily available used). Nikon Z mount is the only major player that seems to have dropped the ball in the value department, with an optically superb 50mm f/1.8, albeit at over \$900. Still, the adapted 50mm f/1.8G or a used f/1.4G will more than satisfy discerning cheapskates.

The 50mm focal length is so cheap due to a long history of production and scale economies, and unfortunately this does complicate things for crop sensor users. If you use an APS-C camera, your 50mm will render a field-of-view more akin to a 75mm lens on a full frame body.

To take advantage of the 50mm field-of-view you will need a 35mm lens or slightly wider. Luckily, Canon and Sony have cheap 35mm f/1.8 lenses, and Nikon also sells a cheap and high quality 40mm f/2, although personally I'd adapt the 35mm f/1.8G.

It's precisely because these lenses are so cheap that every photographer ends up with one at some point. It's also because of their cheapness that they have a reputation as lenses which you move on from, on the way to bigger and more expensive things. The idea that a 50mm is something to surpass is of course untrue because they can also scale with your budget and expectations.

**...AND PRICEY**

Almost all 50mm lenses will hold up to professional use, but perhaps after a few years in the game you want something beefier, and capable of taking a printable landscape photo wide open. Every big manufacturer lists excellent, blush-worthy 50mm lenses which could leave nobody wanting for better performance.

I have extensive experience with Sony's 50mm f/1.2GM which is eye-bleeding sharp even wide open, and Canon and Nikon's more expensive and bulkier alternatives appear equally impressive. Even Panasonic users are not left out by the Leica SL 50mm f/1.4 Summilux, a somewhat frustrating and eye watering expensive lens, but a great performer, nonetheless.

With options like these, the 50mm user will never go wanting for sharpness.

**50MM IS HOME**

The 50mm standard hinges on a fallacy: It does not match the focal length of the human eye— peripheral vision closer approximates 17mm, and our eyes continually dart around to fill our perception.

It also does not match the diagonal measurement of a full frame sensor (43.27mm for any lens designers reading today). I will go into a little of the history of the standard in the next section, however, like many standards the most compelling reason to consider 50mm the standard is because it works well, and no other lens has presented a better case.





**“THE LENSES ARE POPULAR BECAUSE THEY ARE CHEAP, AND CHEAP BECAUSE THEY ARE POPULAR— THE EQUATION WOULD COLLAPSE WERE IT NOT A RELIABLE AND HIGHLY USEFUL LENS...”**





## PHOTO TIPS: PICKING THE RIGHT LENS



At some point we must draw a point between where distortion ends and compression starts, and 50mm is as compelling a point as any. It is the widest lens on which many photographers would attempt a headshot, and about as long as you can go for compelling interior architecture.

The most common criticism of the focal length is that it is ‘boring’, however I believe there are benefits to a lens which gets out of the way and allows an image to speak for itself.

I believe those who criticise 50mm for its lack of characteristic are relying on their equipment to create intrigue, which should be already present in their lighting, emotion, and composition.

### 50MM IS HISTORY

While it may only be Henri Cartier-Bresson, Robert Capa, and a few peers who traded exclusively in the fast 50, almost every notable photographer has dealt with the focal length at some point.

A 50mm would have come with the Minolta SRT-101 which kickstarted Annie Leibovitz’s passion for photography. Twin Lens Reflex preferring Diane Ar-

bus, Helmut Newton and Vivian Maier all used 80mm, the medium format standard which best approximates the field of view of a 50mm lens.

So many famous photographers used 50mm lenses for the same reason you likely have one in your camera bag: they are cheap, high performing, and no-frills. The lenses are popular because they are cheap, and cheap because they are popular— the equation would collapse were it not a reliable and highly useful lens.

The 50mm standard is relatively new, and inextricably linked to the 35mm standard film gauge. When motion picture technology first emerged there were several competing formats, yet nothing could compete with 35mm which simply split mass-produced 70mm roll film down the middle.

In 1913 when Leitz engineer Oskar Barnack was tasked with creating the film-stock-testing machine which would become the original Leica, he used a 42mm microscope lens, more because it fit the imaging circle required for the new format than because it happened to fit the magic number of the diagonal of the film plane.



A microscope lens worked well enough to test film, but when Barnack proposed that his new little camera could be used as a portable camera, a higher quality lens which would stand up to enlargements was required.

The Max Berek designed 50mm f/3.5 Anastigmat (shortly thereafter renamed to Elmax, a portmanteau of Ernst Leitz and Max Berek's names, to avoid copyright concerns) adorned the first commercially available Leicas (Leitz, camera - it seems they really enjoyed the portmanteau in the Leitz factory!).

A generation later, the Leica came with interchangeable lenses, and a 35mm wide angle and 135mm telephoto complemented the 50mm standard.

As SLRs emerged, 50mm lens designs could fit a lot of glass in the focal path while still leaving clearance for a mirror. Wide-angle lenses required retrofocus designs to avoid the mirror, and long lenses required a telephoto design to keep sizes reasonable.

Meanwhile, the SLR era of 50mm lenses hinged on the double-gauss, an optically unproblematic and economically viable design. Only small variations

**LEFT TO RIGHT:**

When building a studio setup in a home, 50mm is just wide enough to not feel cramped, but long enough that it does not exaggerate facial features. Here, photographing album covers for musician Jessie Gordon, we're able to get a spacious head and shoulders, and a gelled background within the space of a home office. Sony A7 IV, Sony 55mm f/1.8 ZA lens. 1/250s @ f8, ISO 100.

The same lens and setting makes for a compelling environmental portrait up-close. Here, shooting behind the scenes footage after the fact, all of the important details of the location are held together by a totally natural perspective. Sony A7R III, Sony 55mm f/1.8 ZA lens. 1/125s @ f1.8, ISO 800.

The very natural perspective of a 50mm lens allows for complex compositions. In this promotional shoot for musician Alexis Naylor, we were able to quickly turn a film set into a photography studio. Sony A7R III, Sony 55mm f/1.8 ZA lens. 1/125s @ f1.8, ISO 320.



**“IT IS THE WIDEST LENS ON WHICH MANY PHOTOGRAPHERS WOULD ATTEMPT A HEADSHOT, AND ABOUT AS LONG AS YOU CAN GO FOR COMPELLING INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE...”**

**FOCAL LENGTH**

Focal length is measured as the distance between the point of convergence and the camera’s sensor. However, depending on your sensor size, the same lens will render a different field of view. To approximate the 46° angle of a 50mm lens on a full frame sensor, try a 33mm lens on an APS-C sensor or a 25mm lens on a micro four thirds sensor.

were made to this up until mirrorless technology allowed for the current crop of optically superb 50mm lenses which extend lens elements all the way back to the sensor plane.

**BUT ARE THEY OUT OF FASHION?**

And yet, in modern times the nifty fifty is often considered a relic. A boring lens which was fine for old codgers like Bresson, but less useful and dynamic than say, the 35mm/85mm duet: An incredibly popular choice among wedding photographers.

Of the two, only 35mm is a viable replacement for the 50mm standard (85mm makes for a stunning mid-telephoto, but a difficult do-anything lens).

35mm is eager to take over as the new standard for YouTubers and influencers, and even the modern Leica user may find 35mm a better fit on a modern 0.72x finder. But 35mm is nowhere near as versatile as 50mm. It excels at singling out individual details, with just enough distortion to move the world out of your subject’s way. 35mm will allow an event photog-



## PHOTO TIPS: PICKING THE RIGHT LENS

TOP RIGHT: In a proper studio a 50mm lens still makes for an effortless group shot. Musicians can be stacked on different planes which could become too far exaggerated by a wider lens. Here, shooting international Jazz outfit Meretrio, a 50mm lens is a comfortable photographer to subject distance. Sony A7R III, Sony 55mm f/1.8 ZA lens. 1/200s @ f4.5, ISO 80.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Backing up with a 50mm lens can give your image a sense of scale and scope without sacrificing a tight, graphic composition. This is the Perth Guitar Quartet. Sony A7 IV, Sony 55mm f/1.8 ZA lens. 1/250s @ f3.2, ISO 500.



rapher to get small group shots while navigating the bustle of a busy room.

For single subject images, the 35mm focal length is supremely convenient. But what it cannot create are graphic, involved, and tight images which interplay subject and background.

While 35mm is a safe option, it is this lack of risks which I believe come as its biggest detriment. A 35/85 photographer with two bodies can easily stay put or slowly roam a room knowing that they have a lens available for whatever comes their way. Worse, a photographer with a capable zoom is at risk of becoming comfortable with staying completely stationary, letting the zoom do the work and giving up the possibility of taking any control over their background.

A photographer with a 50mm knows they will have to move, and in doing so creates a higher chance of risk and reward.

So, is my conclusion that you should sell your other lenses for a shockingly expensive new 50mm f/1.2? Obviously not. It would be hypocritical not to mention that all the famous photographers I mentioned used 35mm, 28mm, or any other focal length which suited the shot. What I do believe is that the age of the nifty fifty is not over. Beginner photographers are often looking for the next new thing to level-up their images. Seasoned pros are often wondering what might challenge them and spark some creativity. If the 50mm has sat dormant in your camera bag, or if you've never tried one before, you owe it to yourself to see how your images perform on the neutral territory of a humble lens which disappears and allows your image to speak on its own terms. 🌟





PHOTO TIPS: WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY



# 5 WILDLIFE MUST DO'S FOR BETTER SHOTS



Nothing beats a cute moment captured well. I captured this split second interaction in the Galapagos Islands many years ago. It still prints up to a couple of metres really well! Right place, right time with the right gear. Canon EOS-1Ds Mark II, Canon 100-400mm lens @ 150mm. 1/350s @ f5.6, ISO 200.

BY DARRAN LEAL

Being able to capture a special moment in time is the ultimate reward for a photographer, and this is even more so with wildlife photography. *AP* looks at 5 ways you can be more successful with your own nature photography.

**W**ildlife photography is a thrilling adventure where you get to explore and capture magnificent creatures in their natural habitats. It's not just about photography alone; it demands a deep understanding of animal behaviour, and an appreciation for the art of blending into their world. To capture perfect shots, you need to predict animal movements and patiently wait for just the right moment. At the same time, you need the right gear and to be passionate, patient, and respectful towards nature.

Here's five quickfire tips to help you reach your wildlife goals.

# 1

## THINK LOCAL

While it's easy to assume you must travel far to photograph wildlife, the reality is almost anywhere in Australia will have wildlife you can capture in one form or another, including in cities. Nature groups or camera clubs can help you discover good locations for wildlife photography. Returning to specific locations multiple times will help you become familiar with the local wildlife and their habits – leading to more rewarding photographs, while also needing less travel time.

A family of Ospreys lived near my old place in Hervey Bay, and I photographed them many times, and I have returned to the same parts of Lamington National Park dozens of times over the years. Building familiarity with these regions, and others, over multiple visits and many years has increased my chances of capturing unique and extraordinary moments.

# 2

## PRACTICE PATIENCE AND PERSISTENCE

There's no getting away from it – wildlife photography is a time-consuming hobby. In fact, if you look at the winners of competitions like Wildlife Photographer of the Year, you'll notice that most of the winning shots were captured by photographers who had devoted considerable time to photographing their subjects.

Spending time in a particular habitat or ecosystem allows you to observe and learn about the behaviour and movements of the wildlife within it. By studying migratory patterns, feeding habits, and breeding seasons, you can anticipate where and when to find subjects, and your work will be better for it if you can incorporate this context into your photos.

Wildlife activity can also vary significantly throughout the year, something you may struggle to get a sense of if you don't visit the same locations regularly. Some months may be more favourable for certain species' mating rituals or feeding patterns. By consistently visiting the same habitat and spending time around wildlife, you'll also build trust and familiarity. This can help your subjects become more comfortable with your presence and allow for closer interactions.

However, it's important to note that maintaining a respectful distance is crucial to both your safety and the well-being of animals.

It's worth thinking about what you wear too. You don't need to go all out and wear a ghillie suit, but wearing neutral colours is wise. And, remember when approaching any wildlife to move slowly, quietly, and at an indirect angle. Sudden movements or loud noises can startle animals and cause them to flee.







**“I CAN BE SHOOTING A STATIC SUBJECT ONE SECOND AND A MOVING SUBJECT ANOTHER, AND ALL WITH A CLICK FLICK OF A SWITCH.”**

LEFT: This hummingbird was photographed in northern Argentina. Amazingly, at ISO 10,000! I wanted to create a montage to tell a more creative and different story, and used Photoshop to create the montage and Lightroom Denoise to tidy up the noise. Sony A1, Sony 200-600mm lens @ 600mm. 1/2000s @ f8, ISO 10,000.

BELOW: Capturing the moment is one thing, but capturing emotion should be the goal of every wildlife photographer. This sleeping baby monkey on its mum's back is too cute! Sony A1, Sony 200-600mm lens @ 500mm. 1/250s @ f8, ISO 4000.

### **REFINE YOUR TECHNIQUE AND APPROACH**

Even if you have a technique that has proven successful in the past, remaining open to fine-tuning it is key. Every photography opportunity has unique conditions and challenges, such as different lighting, behaviour patterns, or environmental factors, and you'll maximise your chances of capturing exceptional images if you're willing to mix up your approach.

The best example for me is the implementation of my camera's custom buttons into my workflow. This means I can be shooting a static subject one second and a moving subject another, and all with a click flick of a switch.

Pre-configuring different settings for specific shooting scenarios saves time, and time is everything in fast-moving situations. Customise and fine-tune your settings based on your preferences and shooting style.





LEFT: By using my 200-600mm lens, I was able to isolate this caiman as it fed on a piranha. I like to angle myself parallel, or to the front-side of a subject. I notice that many beginners shoot from behind, but the results are often disappointing. Get in front of a subject and let them come towards you. This was shot at 15fps with continuous AF. Sony A1, Sony 200-600mm lens @ 315mm. 1/2000s @ f11, ISO 2500.

### FOCUS ON THE DETAILS

4

Modern gear means it's easy to capture a subject in your frame, but what sets a great image apart from a good image is the little things – the composition, the background, the lighting, the pose, and the moment itself. I don't want to just capture a bird on a branch, I want to capture the bird with a fish in its talons, or a crocodile just as it swallows its prey – these are the kind of interactions that if you can capture them, will elevate your photography.

Teach yourself to work a scene – move around, get high, get low, consider mixing up your settings, and finally review your work after the moment has passed, and consider what you could have done to capture the moment better. By taking the time to analyse what worked well and why, you'll put yourself in a better place to nail the shot next time.

### DON'T GET BOGGED DOWN BY GEAR

5

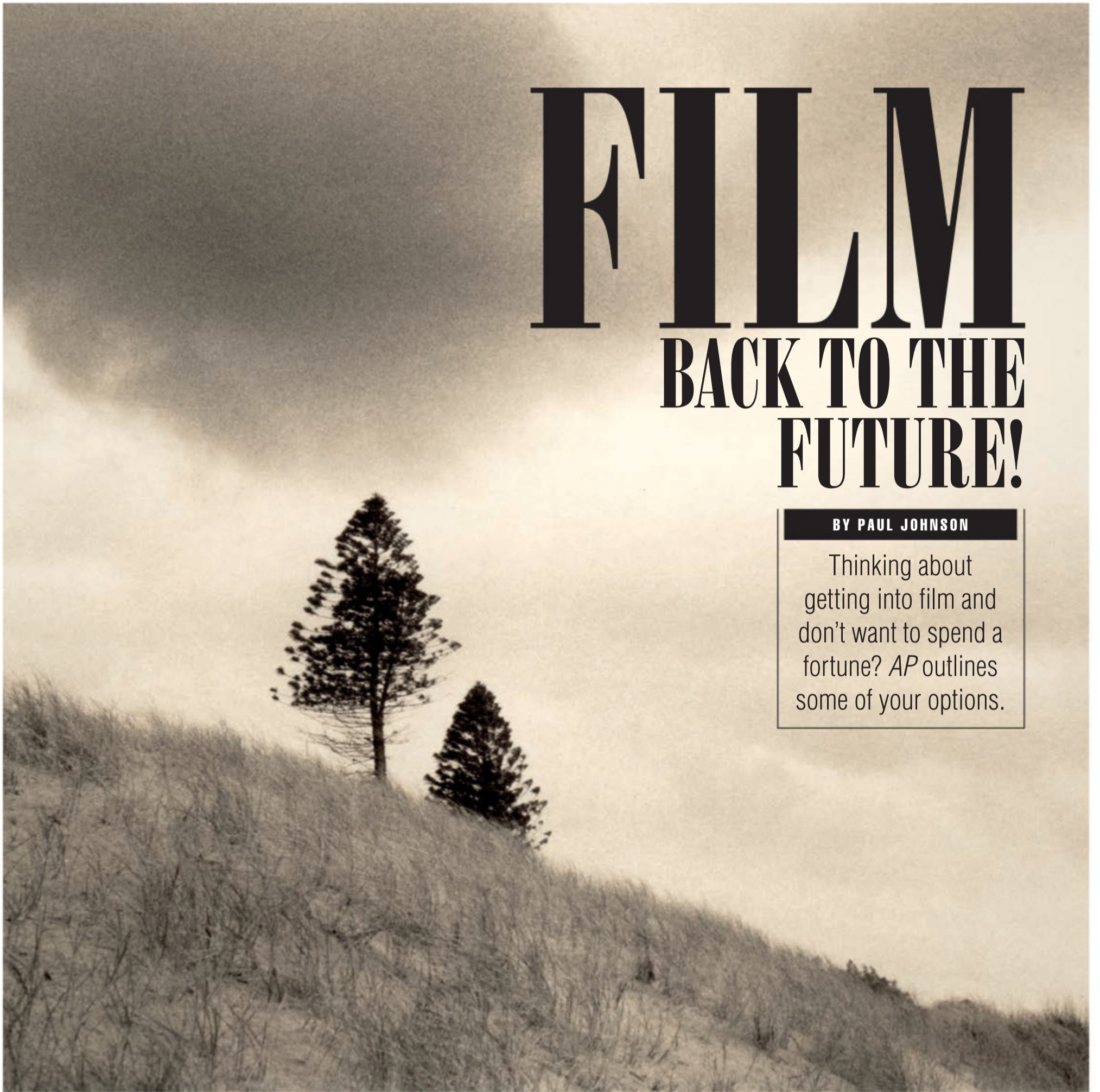
It's easy to get caught up in discussions about which camera brand is better, but the reality is all the reputable brands can produce excellent results when used correctly. All gear has strengths and limitations, and understanding these can help you find the best gear that suits your style and requirements.

A basic kit of a general-purpose lens like a 24-70mm and a longer lens like a 200-600mm will serve you well for most subjects, and will limit the time you spend second guessing your gear choices – remember the best camera is the one you have with you, not the lens or camera you left at home.

At the same time, when you feel like you're reaching the limits of what your gear can do is the time to consider upgrading. Hiring a modern body or a lens can be a great way to see what you're missing out on and whether you really need it. 🌐

#### MY 2024 WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY KIT

- Sony A1
- Sony 14mm f1.8 wide-angle lens. (Great creative landscapes and astro)
- Sony 20-70mm f4 lens. (General-purpose lens)
- Sony 70-200mm f2.8 lens. (With extension tube for closeup shoots)
- Sony 200-600mm f6.3 lens. (Go-to long telephoto lens)
- Sony mini flash unit. (Used rarely, but very handy)



# FILM BACK TO THE FUTURE!

BY PAUL JOHNSON

Thinking about getting into film and don't want to spend a fortune? *AP* outlines some of your options.

Once, rumours of film's imminent death seemed plausible, but hindsight shows the obituaries were premature. Even in an era of digital domination, a small cadre of artists have continued to create powerful and emotion-laden work on film.

Now in 2024, film sales are up, a new film has just been launched, and new film cameras are about to hit the shops. Clearly a lot of people are inspired to look for alternatives to digital and for an aesthetic that can be achieved with vintage film cameras.

So, if you're someone who can see film's creative possibilities but are new to analogue photography, where do you start?

## STARTING OUT

In 1888 Kodak advertised, 'You press the button, we do the rest' and modern pre-loaded single use cameras continue in that tradition.

For less than the price of a pro-spec roll of film you can buy a camera and all you have to do is point and press to get acceptable images on film. If you're an occasional user who wants to try fun shots, single use cameras might be just right for you.

The same can be said of many low-tech re-usable cameras that are on the market; they have 'focus free' (meaning the focus is set) or 'zone focus' (a small choice of focus distances) lenses and simple or no adjustments



## PHOTO TIPS: GETTING STARTED WITH SHOOTING FILM



for lighting. The benefits are you don't need technical knowledge to use them and, because you can reload with different film, they may be cheaper and more environmentally friendly in the long run.

This type of simple camera has relatively few moving parts and they don't allow for much adjustment, so they rarely break down. Take care buying used cameras though; some older versions need film formats that are no longer made. Internet sites have lots of these to choose from with prices starting at \$10 for used and about \$20 for new cameras.

### LOOKING AROUND

If you've been bitten by the film bug, you'll probably want to try a camera that can focus a sharp image, can cope with different lighting conditions and, when the mood takes you, can invite creative and experimental ideas.

Before shelling out cash on a camera ask around friends, family, and neighbours. Thirty years ago lots of people owned film cameras and many were put away in cupboards when digital flooded in. Who knows, an

aunt or uncle may be happy to pass on a barely used outfit that they bought in the 90s. If you're lucky and something turns up it's worth checking online reviews, tutorials and manuals because some cameras use obsolete or hard-to-get (meaning expensive) film formats or batteries – this type might be best as display pieces.

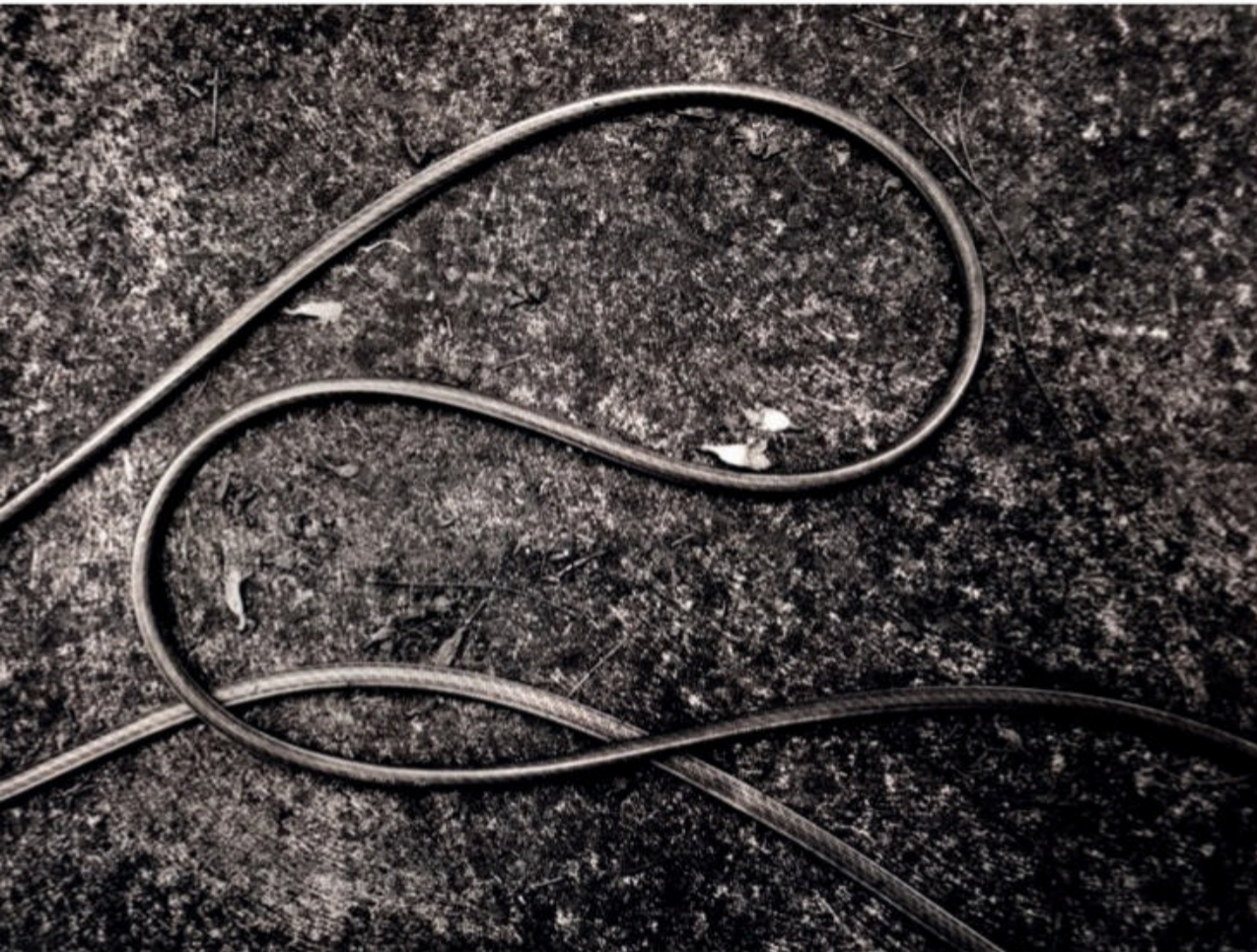
If your find seems serviceable, before loading a film, carefully blow dust from inside without touching any delicate parts like shutter curtains. If the camera takes batteries, check the compartment for corrosion then test important operations like focusing, shutter and aperture-setting as well as the film advance. Lastly, fire the shutter a few times then, if everything sounds good, load a film.

### WHAT TO BUY

Lucking out with friends and family, not having a budget that'll stretch to the five figures you'll need for a new Leica M6, or not wanting to wait until Pentax release their new film cameras doesn't have to end your analogue adventures; there are many other options.



## PHOTO TIPS: GETTING STARTED WITH SHOOTING FILM



When it comes to spending money on your first film camera, one thing makes real sense – used 35-millimetre cameras offer the best choice and value.

Old-school manual 35mm cameras were usually made with metal parts that are strong, repairable and adjustable and there are many fine examples that are now more than 50 years old. For example, Pentax’s interchangeable lens ‘S’ series single lens reflexes (SLRs) and Kodak’s Retina rangefinders each retain faithful followings to this day.

Automatic exposure cameras that were introduced in 1959 might seem like good value because they don’t need batteries, but their onboard electronics wear with use so check them carefully if you don’t want to end up with a paperweight. Given their age, even fully manual cameras from this era will probably benefit from cleaning, lubricating, and adjusting (CLA to those in the know) and some may need new light seals so factor in the effort of finding a technician and the cost of their work (\$80 to \$200 for a start) when negotiating a price.

By the 1970s many compact and SLR cameras had gained a battery to power built-in light meters and, in some instances automate exposure. There are some exceptional cameras in this segment and, if you’re patient, affordable examples can still be found.

However, the most affordable are typically cameras which came with batteries that are no longer produced. Personally, I have no trouble using a light meter app and treating these machines as fully mechanical marvels, but some people don’t like the cost and effort of work-arounds so the demand for them is less. Again, take the time to check reviews for the model you’re considering and factor in costs such as batteries and CLA.



OPENING PAGE: This image was made by exposing Fomapan 200 at ISO 100 and then developing it in replenished Xtol. It was then printed in a traditional darkroom and subsequently wet-processed to add colour.

LEFT TO RIGHT: Experimenting with different types of film can change how you see the world. This image was made with 35mm infra-red (IR) black and white film, a red filter and a 1950s Super-Frankarette camera. Blue skies contain little IR, but clouds and green vegetation reflect relatively large amounts, so skies are rendered dark while clouds and vegetation are bright. IR changes how lenses focus an image, so check that you can manual-focus your lens to an orange-red IR focusing mark before loading IR film;

Developing your own black and white film gives additional control of tonality, contrast and grain. This image was made with 35mm Fomapan 200 black and white negative film, and processed in Dektol paper developer to expand contrast. It was then printed in a traditional darkroom and subsequently wet-processed to add color;

While apps like Lightroom, Snapspeed and VSCO can mimic analogue effects, film sales data says that many photographers want more. Increasingly, younger people are carrying vintage cameras like this Pentax as a practical option and an aesthetic statement because no app can look, sound and feel like the real thing.



## PHOTO TIPS: GETTING STARTED WITH SHOOTING FILM



From the mid to late 70s and into the 1980s, most brands had given their cameras electronically controlled shutters. Without a battery, many of these cameras won't work and parts for them are meant to be replaced not repaired.

If you find one that has been well cared for, and there are many around, it's unlikely to need adjustment, but it will benefit from a service and new seals. Models to look for in this group are those with manual, aperture priority and program modes. Later, camera manufacturers, which had already introduced fully automatic compacts, began offering SLRs with automatic winding, exposure setting and focusing. Zoom lenses also became popular in this period and, if you're contemplating spending money on something with a vintage zoom, be aware that some photographers feel that these are not up to modern standards and opt for fixed focal length lenses. Once again this can affect selling prices.

Today, late model compacts attract premium prices but many same-age SLRs receive little attention so mint condition examples can sometimes be had for less than \$100. Some film cameras from the 90s and early 2000s were made with polycarbonate and they typically don't need door seals, otherwise the usual checks remain relevant, so taking a new battery and even an old film to run through your prospective purchase can be worthwhile.

### WHERE TO BUY

Once you've decided to take the plunge and buy a film camera you'll probably start browsing internet sites as a way to get up to speed with what's available and prices sellers want for their gear. Of course, take all the usual precautions when thinking about buying used equipment unseen from the web and don't ignore bricks-and-mortar dealers. Actually handling cameras and talking with people who are passionate about photography can help clarify what might suit your budget and style. Prices may be higher at regular and online stores (though not always) but a pay-off is that they usually offer some sort of guarantee.

If price is the limiting factor, clearing sales, local markets, op shops and even pawnbrokers can be worth a look, especially if someone who knows about old cameras is willing to go with you. You may find a treasure in its original packaging but don't be surprised to find that many sellers have seen and matched the prices being asked for online.



TOP TO BOTTOM: A selection of some of my vintage 35mm cameras;

Some outdated formats can still be used, but they are not efficient or cost effective when starting out with analogue;

If you're shooting a lot of film, home developing can be cheaper than using a lab. Processing black and white yourself can also open up creative possibilities.

OPPOSITE: Holga is a low-tech brand that has developed a cult following amongst photographic artists who make the most of the camera's rudimentary controls and plastic lens. Eirik Holmøyvik's Icelandic impressions #6 shows that simple cameras can, in the right hands, create beautiful mood-filled images.



IMAGE: EIRIK HOLMØYVIK

As always, check the camera's condition, format, and battery requirements carefully and if either is problematic remember that millions of film cameras were made last century and move on.

Whichever route you take towards buying a used film camera, remember to do your research first and, if you can, take an experienced photographer along with you when you check out possible purchases.

### **FILM CHOICES**

When you've got a camera you'll want to get film for it. Apart from format, it's important to know that, like people, some film types are better at some things than others. Broadly, you could say there are two basic types – colour and monochrome – and that each of these types has two sub-groups – positive and negative.

Without doubt the current standout choice for starting in analogue is colour negative film. And for good reason: it is the most widely available type, it is amongst the cheapest

to process, and it reliably produces a distinctive 'film' look.

Generally, amateur film is also the most practical because it can cope with a range of temperatures and has, what old-timers would call, 'a wide exposure latitude' by which they mean it does a good job coping with the brighter and darker parts of a scene.

So, whilst specialist films can produce beautiful results with the right equipment and conditions, for most people, the creativity-cost equation works in favour of general purpose colour negative film – and with one retailer offering Kodak Colorplus 200 at \$14 for a 36 exposure roll who would argue?

When you've been using colour film for a while you'll probably want to experiment with black and white. Of course scanned images can be converted to mono in post production or with filters, but many say it's not the same as doing it with film.

Here Ilford's XP2 Super might be an option; it is a modern, forgiving, fine-grained black and white film that is



**“GRAIN, IN FILM PHOTOGRAPHY, IS  
LIKE BRUSH STROKES IN PAINTING;  
SOME WANT TO SEE THE ARTIST’S  
HAND AT WORK AND OTHERS DON’T.. ”**







## PHOTO TIPS: GETTING STARTED WITH SHOOTING FILM

**RIGHT:** Fuji and Kodak make reliable general purpose colour negative films in 200 and 400 speeds. These films forgive exposure and temperature variations and you can turn that flexibility to your advantage. Typically, giving colour negative film a little less exposure than normal will intensify colours.

**BELOW:** Film choice is the first way to influence grain, tonality and contrast. Kodak Tmax 400 is a modern tabular-grain film that produces sharp, very fine-grained negatives.



processed by local labs as if it were colour film. While many photographers love the detail that XP2 Super yields, others prefer the classic grain, tonality and contrast that comes with old-school black and white films.

Grain, in film photography, is like brush strokes in painting; some want to see the artist's hand at work and others don't. If you're one of those photographers who loves grain your first step might be to try a roll of traditional 400 speed black and white film, it will cost a little less than colour film, but processing will cost a little more.

For very distinctive grain you might try an ISO 3200 film or 'push' regular 400 speed film to 800 or beyond. Be aware that, used in daylight, fast films need a camera with a fast shutter and small apertures or neutral density filters. Also, that 'push processing' to accentuate grain and contrast will cost about 50% more when your lab develops the film. An alternative to paying a lab is, of course, to develop and scan for yourself.

### DOING IT YOURSELF

Anyone who can cook successfully can develop film and, if film photography is going to become a habit, developing your own can be much cheaper than paying a lab. Buying the equipment and processing just a few rolls of film will work out to be more expensive though. For example, commercially available starter kits for black and white, which include a new developing tank, thermometer and enough chemicals to process two films, will cost nearly \$200. By comparison, 'develop only' at a lab will cost about \$10 for colour negative or \$17 for black and white films.

There is a more cost-effective route, however. If you start with a used small tank (\$20) and buy Foma black and white film developer (\$14) and fixer (\$15) from the Australian distributor and, if you can borrow a thermometer and load your tank in a completely dark place, you'll be able to develop 10 black and white films for about \$5 each. A Tetenal Colortec C41 Chemical Kit (\$68) that will develop 16 rolls of colour negative film works out at about \$5.50 per film. Add 70 cents per film for negative sleeves and you're still paying less than if you'd used a commercial lab. Remember though, those costs only work if you're using chemicals before they expire (Foma recommend using mixed developer within 2 months and Tetenal say 6 weeks for Colortec) and that you'll still want to scan or print your films.

### BACK TO THE FUTURE

There was a time when photographers who were looking for fun, creativity and a different aesthetic hoped that film would be around for just a few more years. Then, when Kodak re-released Ektachrome in 2018 there was cause for optimism. Now the pace is quickening; Harman has opened a new factory and released an entirely new colour negative film, and Pentax say they're going to launch two new film cameras. If successful, this resurgence could breed hopes that other manufacturers might get into analogue. Suddenly it seems that film might hold on for a good time yet and a new generation of analogue photographers can keep using film well into the future! 🌟



# CREATE YOUR OWN LIGHTROOM PRESETS

BY MIKE O'CONNOR

Create your own lightroom presets with this step-by-step guide.

Using Lightroom's presets are a handy way to speed up your workflow. They allow you to use commonly applied settings at the touch of a button, saving valuable editing time. And while Adobe has greatly expanded its own preset offerings over the years, there's something much more satisfying about creating your own, and in your own style. So, let's take a look at how you do it.



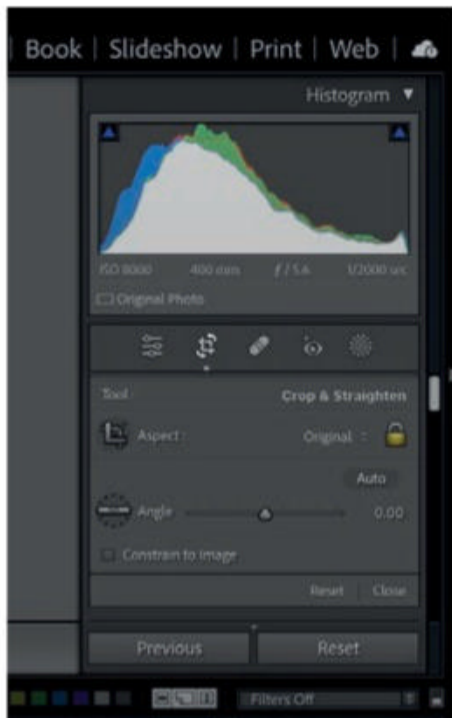


## EDITING TIPS: CREATE YOUR OWN PRESETS

### STEP 1

#### PROCESS THE IMAGE

Firstly, you'll want to start by applying any basic RAW processing required before applying your unique preset. To save even more time, you could create a preset for your basic RAW adjustments, but as every image will need its own unique basic adjustments it may be best to do these manually – cropping or noise reduction are good examples.



### STEP 2

#### APPLY THE EFFECT

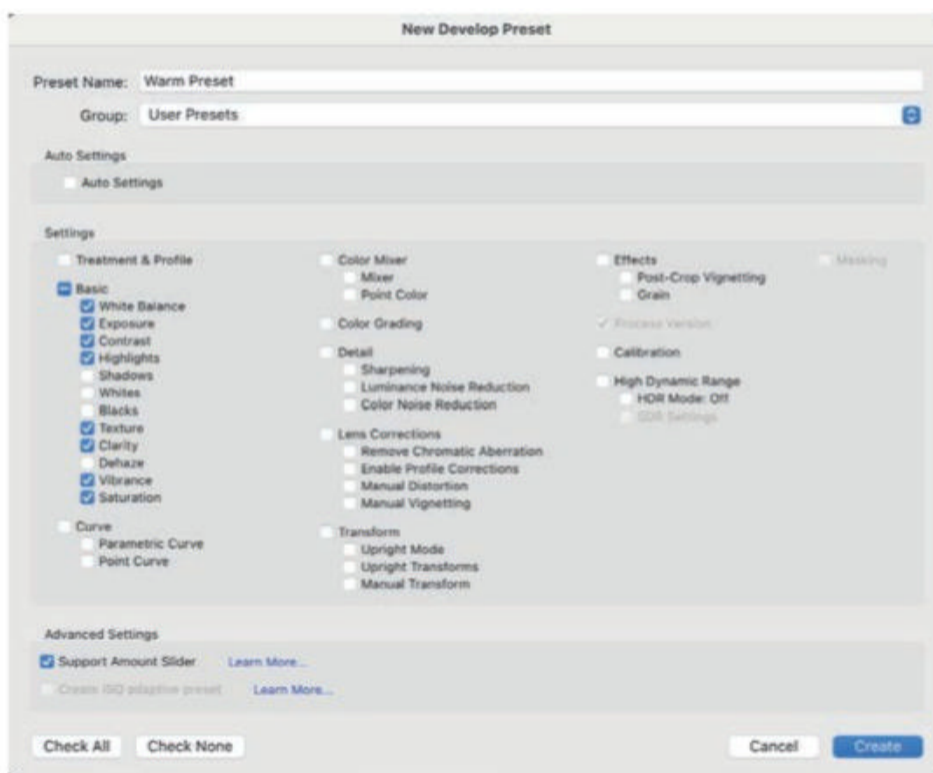
For this shot of a Miromiro/Tomtit I photographed in New Zealand last year, I'm going to create a warmer, punchier look that accentuates the texture of the feathers and the yellow tones in the wee bird's breast. To do this, I set the Colour Temperature to 5100, Exposure +0.30, Contrast +29, Highlights -50, Texture +10, Clarity +20, Vibrance +15 and Saturation +10 to complete the effect.



### STEP 3

#### SAVE THE PRESET

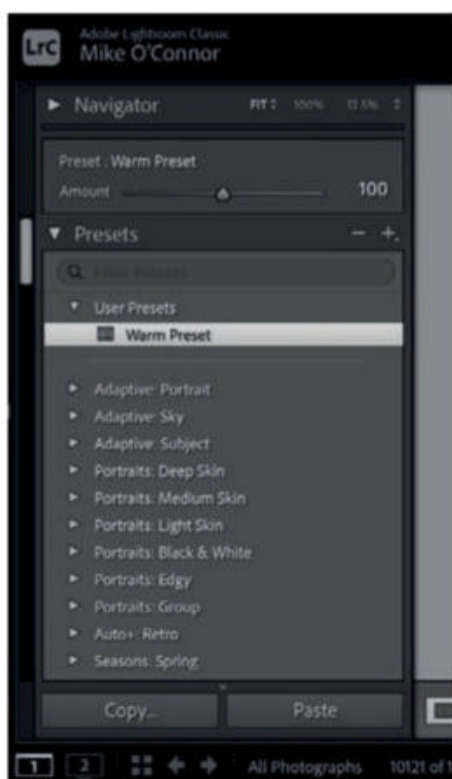
Expand the Preset tab, and click on the plus symbol and then 'Create Preset'. When the dialogue opens, give the preset a new name. I've called mine 'Warm Preset'. By default it will be placed in User Presets. Click 'Check None' to clear all the fields, and then click on only the adjustments you want to be included in your preset, before clicking 'Create'.



### STEP 4

#### APPLY IT NOW...

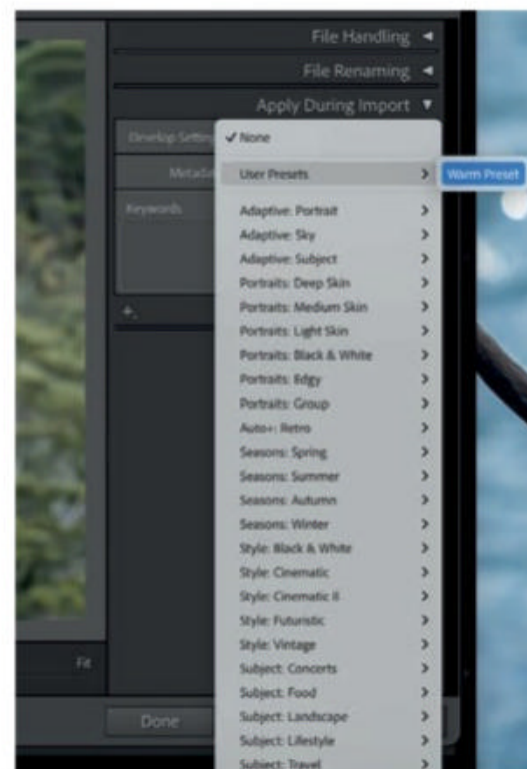
With the preset now saved, you can find it under User presets in the Presets tab. Hovering over the preset name will temporarily show it applied to the active image. To apply it, simply left-click on the name and the adjustments will be applied to your image – easy.



### STEP 5

#### ...OR APPLY IT AT IMPORT

You can also apply your preset at import, saving even more time. To do this, in the Import dialogue, expand the Apply During Import tab on the right and select your preset from the list. This is great for instances where you have lots of shots of the same subject, and you want to bulk edit in one hit. You can also create a bunch of your own presets for different effects as well.





TESTED: OM SYSTEM OM-1 MARK II



# OM SYSTEM OM-1 MARK II

OM System's flagship camera gets a facelift, but is this Micro Four-Thirds mirrorless really worth the upgrade? Matty Graham investigates.

**T**hink Micro Four-Thirds and you probably think about OM System, formerly called Olympus. The brand has a strong pedigree in the crop sensor camera game and in 2022 introduced the OM-1, the brand's all-singing flagship camera that offered blistering frame rates and a truckload of computational features.

The OM-1 attracted praise for its pro-build and ease of use, reinvigorating interest in the Micro Four-Thirds sector.

Fast forward nearly two years and the

replacement has arrived, but rather than a whole new camera, the Mark II is more of a refinement. Let's take a look at this facelift model to see what's been improved.

## THE BUILD

First up, let's talk about the design, which is almost exactly the same as the original OM-1. The only differences found on the Mark II are a new name plate (OM System instead of Olympus), and there's a change in design to the dials – gone are the plastic versions and in their place are

much nicer 'rubbery-style' dials, which will make it much easier to change settings if you are using gloves.

That said, the original OM-1 was a pretty comprehensive body to begin with, offering an extreme level of weather protection to keep moisture and dust at bay, while delivering an ergonomic build and a sensible layout of buttons. Tipping the scales at just 599g, the body was lightweight, but robust enough to take the knocks of everyday use.

## ON THE INSIDE

So, if the body is pretty much the same, what else is new? Well, it's inside the camera where things have really changed and perhaps the biggest new feature is the introduction of a Live Graduated ND filter. That's right, you may well be able to finally ditch those expensive and awkward glass filters as the Mark II now offers this feature in-camera.

The feature works well and users can use the LCD to drag a horizon line over the area of the scene where they want the ND grad effect to work. The angle of the horizon can be adjusted using the dials so that you can fine-tune it in and there are more settings too.

For example, you can change the type of graduations, choosing between Soft, Medium or Hard, and the strength of ND grad can be adjusted too, with photographers selecting from GND2, GND4 and GND8.

From my testing, these different levels of filtration should be enough for most photographers, but if you are greeted with an extremely high-contrast lighting





scene – such as a strong sunset or sunrise where the sky is much, much brighter than the foreground – then you may still need some physical grad filtration. That said, the feature works incredibly well and is certainly an adequate safety net for those photographers who have ventured out without packing any glass filters.

It is computational features like the Live GND mode that OM System does very well and one of the other computational features has also been improved. The Live ND, which can artificially extend the shutter speed so users can capture long exposures has been improved and now offers ND128 – that's 7-stops of exposure you are buying back without needing to add a physical ND filter in front of your lens and that's pretty damn impressive.

## AUTOFOCUS

The new Mark II offers the same blistering frame rates, enabling wildlife and sports photographers to shoot 50 frames per second with full AF/AE or up to a whopping 120 frames per second with locked autofocus. While the original OM-1 had a buffer of 90 frames, this Mark II increases this dramatically to over 200 frames in one go.

But it's the autofocus system that sees a major improvement, with the AF far

better at picking up fast moving subjects in the frame and now identifies humans, even if they are facing away from the camera. I shoot a lot of bird photography and can confirm the Mark II is way, way better at locking onto feathered subjects, even if they are partially obscured by branches or other objects that could flummox regular AF systems.

## IMAGE QUALITY

Although the 20-megapixel MFT sensor is the same as the original OM-1 – which will be somewhat of a disappointment to some photographers – the image quality does receive a bump, both in general photography and even more so when the High Res Shot mode is engaged.

As a reminder; the High Res mode enables photographers to capture a single high res file (50-megapixel handheld or 80-megapixel when used on a tripod) and the Mark II enables users to capture these files in 14-bit RAW format, up from 12-bit RAW; and while that may sound like an inconsequential upgrade, it's the equivalent of three times the tonal range.

Another incremental but important improvement is the In Body Image Stabilisation (IBIS), which has seen a boost from 7.5



TOP: OM System OM-1, OM 150-600mm F5.0-6.3 lens @ 600mm. 1/400s @ f6.3, ISO 800.

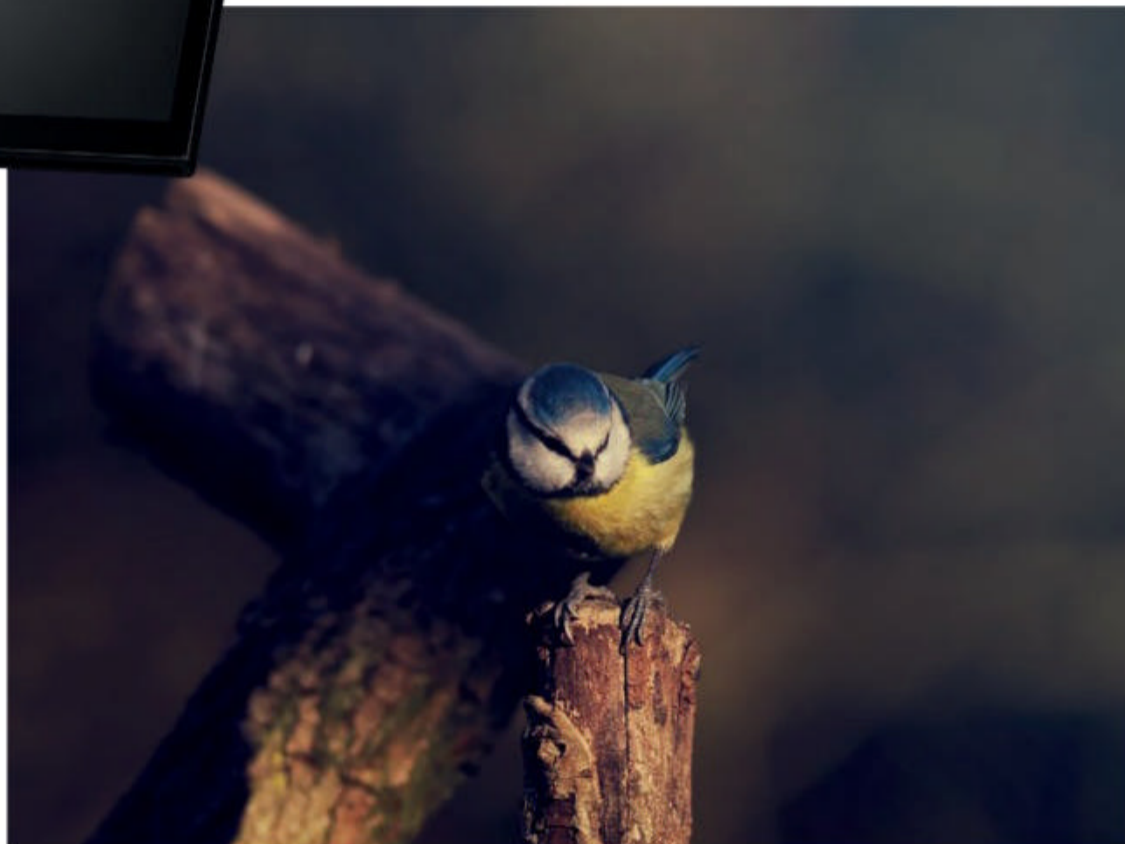
LEFT: OM System OM-1, OM 150-600mm F5.0-6.3 lens @ 523mm. 1/640s @ f6.3, ISO 500.



## TESTED: OM SYSTEM OM-1 MARK II



BELOW: OM System OM-1, OM 150-600mm F5.0-6.3 lens @ 274mm. 1/1250s @ f5.8, ISO 320.



SCORE  
**8.8**

### RESULTS

#### HANDLING ★★★★★

Already impressive on the original, the Mark II remains a highly ergonomic and usable camera system.

#### FEATURES ★★★★★

Taking computational features to new levels, the OM-1 Mark II is bursting with advanced features.

#### AUTOFOCUS ★★★★★

Solid, and especially so at tracking moving subjects in continuous mode.

#### IMAGE QUALITY ★★★★★

The resolution count of 20-megapixels will induce sighs from users who were hoping for a bump in the pixel count. However, image quality does remain decent.

#### VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★

More expensive than the original OM-1, the Mark II still offers decent value for money.

#### FINAL WORD

An improvement over the original OM-1? Undoubtedly, and the new computational features will certainly turn heads. Some existing MFT users will have hoped for more, but OM System has built on a solid foundation and refined an already special camera to be even more special. Expect wildlife (especially bird) photographers to find a perfect companion in the OM-1 Mark II.

#### SPECS

Sensor	Stacked BSI Live MOS Sensor
Format	Micro Four-Thirds
Resolution	20MP
Lens Mount	Micro Four Thirds
Autofocus	Phase detect, 1053 points
LCD	3" articulating touchscreen LCD
Viewfinder	5460K resolution
Video	DCI & UHD 4K @ up to 60p
Weight	599g
More info	omsystem.com

to 8.5 stops to help banish camera shake.

In the hands, the Mark II is an engaging camera to take out into the field. Many will look past the OM System cameras in favour of APS-C or full-frame options, but Micro Four-Thirds does bring certain benefits, particularly the 2x crop factor, which will appeal to wildlife photographers looking to capture subjects from a distance that would be scared away if you got too close.

The small and lightweight dimensions of OM System gear is also a big plus and there aren't many photographers out there who would choose to carry heavier gear when given the choice.

Also launched alongside the OM-1 Mark II was the 150-600mm F5-6.3 IS lens, which is the perfect optic to explain the benefits of the Micro Four-Thirds system.

With an equivalent focal length of 300-1200mm, the creative opportunities this lens and camera combo can bring are incredible and despite the new lens weighing around 2kg, the full-frame versions would be ginormous in comparison. What's more, the lens works with OM Systems 1.4x and 2x teleconverters, extending the maximum focal length to a mind-blowing 2400mm. This could widen the appeal of the system to travel or astrophotographers, all looking to

take advantage of the extraordinary focal length to capture new images.

#### THE WRAP-UP

The OM-1 Mark II is definitely an evolution rather than a revolution, and OM System has spent a lot of time improving the most important areas that made the original OM-1 such a big hit.

Have they gone far enough, and could they have done more? Maybe. At the same time, the lower resolution offered by this camera will still draw complaints, but then again, if resolution is the biggest factor in your decision to buy a camera, then Micro Four-Thirds likely isn't the right format for you anyway.

No, this system is squarely aimed at wildlife and nature photographers seeking a lightweight system that can offer lightning quick burst mode, impressive autofocus and some clever computational features – all while not weighing you down, both physically and financially.

Remember, the OM-1 Mark II remains incredible value for money given the professional build, weather protection and high level of features.

A massive leap forward? Not quite, but a good step forward that will certainly please existing OM system users and may well convert others to the Micro Four-Thirds gang. 🌟





TESTED: ECOFLOW RIVER 2

# ECOFLOW RIVER 2 PORTABLE POWER STATION

EcoFlow's River 2 powerbank packs a ton of functionality into a compact package. Mike O'Connor takes a look.



**P**ortable power is something we increasingly need in an era of battery-powered everything, but what do you do when that wussy little powerbank won't cut it? Well, get a bigger one!

Having reached the limits of what my little USB-C powerbank can deliver, I've been reviewing EcoFlow's River 2 portable electric generator this summer. It's been slung in the back of the car and acted as a portable power option for our camping holiday, charging everything from my camera, to smartphones, tablets, my running watch, and even our coffee grinder (yes, I'm one of those people who camps with a coffee grinder...)

So, how has it performed? In one word, brilliantly.

## WHAT IS IT?

You can think of the EcoFlow River 2 as a big, easy-to-use, powerbank.

The 3.5kg box has two USB-A and one USB-C ports, along with a full size

AC and a DC output. That 3.5kg is a fair heft, so this isn't really the sort of thing you'd put in a hiking backpack.

According to EcoFlow, the battery technology in the River 2 has been updated over its predecessor to use LFP (LiFePO4) Lithium Iron Phosphate batteries, boosting capacity and longevity. Whereas the original battery technology was good for 500 charges up to a capacity of 80%, using the River 2 six times a week, of 3000 full 100% cycles, will last 9.6 years until it drops to 80% - impressive.

## ADDING POWER

You've got three options to charge the EcoFlow. The first is the traditional plug into the mains. This is also the fastest charging option and takes an hour or so from zero percent. The other option is via DC on your car's battery, likely through the car's cigarette lighter. I didn't have a cable to test this, but indications are it takes a bit longer, as much as three hours, to fully

charge, and you'll want to do it when the car is running to avoid discharging your battery. Then there's the option of solar panels. It takes an input of up to 220W, with EcoFlow also making several solar panel options, including a 220W version, although I wasn't sent these for review so can't speak to their convenience.

## USING POWER

In use, my phone charged at a decent rate of 14 Watts, my Sony A7 IV used three Watts, and my laptop hit the maximum 60 Watts that the USB-C port can output.

This 300 watt limit means you can't power big fans, portable ovens, or heaters. When these are connected the River 2 will try to keep up before tripping the overload. However once you unplug the device, it will reset itself.

Capacity-wise, the River 2 holds about 256 Watt Hours. According to EcoFlow that's enough to charge an iPhone 14 Pro up to 15 times or a laptop about four times. If I was to offer one criticism, it's that there's only one USB-C port and two USB-A ports. I'm increasingly finding less need for 'traditional' USB-A ports, and having two USB-C would make more sense.

## THE WRAP-UP

Sure it's big, and at \$649, it's not exactly dirt cheap. But the EcoFlow River 2 is well-built, comes with a solid warranty, has a variety of inputs and outputs, and most importantly, charges your stuff without a fuss. I highly recommend it. 🌟

LEFT The EcoFlow River 2 is solidly built, and well-designed. The flat top surface is great for plonking down what you're charging, and it has a handy carry-handle built into the body too.





TESTED: SIRUI SNIPER 56MM F1.2



# SIRUI SNIPER 56MM F1.2 LENS

Sirui's new cut-price Sniper primes offer wide apertures at narrow prices. Steve Thomas takes a look.

Sirui has been making great photography products for some time now, and over the past couple of years the Chinese company has refocused on developing a growing and impressive range of affordable fast aperture prime cine and photography lenses.

However, up until now the company has never offered any lenses with autofocus, with its new, and fast f1.2 autofocus APS-C Sniper trio for Fuji X, Sony E & Nikon Z mount its first offering of this kind, making the lenses an intriguing option to review.

Currently Sirui's Sniper series of lenses are available in 23mm, 33mm and 56mm formats.

We checked out the 56mm f1.2 version for Fuji X mount to see how this fast budget sharpshooter stacks up.

## THE TECH

All three Sniper lenses have a very similar size, aesthetic, and build quality, and are offered in black (as tested), white, or silver as individual lenses or as a set, which has the added bonus of selling at a slight discount.

The 56mm weighs in at 419g, is 92mm long, has STM autofocus with an aperture range of f1.2-f16, has a 58mm filter thread, ED glass, a 12 element structure with 11 aperture blades, a USB-C port (for firmware updates), a 360-degree twist focus ring and are served with a twist fit plastic lens hood and soft lens pouch.

## BUILD QUALITY

Overall, the build quality and finish is very good for a lens at this price point. And although it does lack weather seal-

ing, you can't complain about this given the low entry price of just \$599.

The black version is made from anodised metal and has a carbon fibre section, and it's a good looking lens – as strange as that may sound. So far, it seems solid and durable.

## IN USE

This is not a small lens for a Fuji, but it still sits and fits well on the X-series bodies. Unfortunately, there is no dedicated aperture ring, which many users of Fuji's native glass will miss, and the aperture dials when used in-camera also have a long throw between stops. As an aperture priority shooter this can be a little irritating at times.

In the hand, the lens feels solid and in proportion to the X-series cameras, similar to the red label Fujinon lenses but without that lenses' solid feel. The focus ring is knurled metal and is wide – a full thumb width. It is smooth but not so much so that it slips on its own – it has a cine lens feel to it, something a hybrid shooter will appreciate.

## AUTOFOCUS

The autofocus on the Sirui 56mm f/1.2 is not the fastest around, but it's on par with many of the older Fujinon lenses. This means it's usable in most well-lit scenarios, though I suspect it would struggle with fast moving action sports and can tend to





LEFT: The ability to shoot wide open, or at least close to it, is what you buy a lens like this for. The drop-off is pretty impressive too. Fujifilm X-T2, Sirui 56mm f/1.2 lens. 1/7500s @ f1.4, ISO 200.

hunt a little in difficult and low lighting situations – as do many of the older Fujinon lenses.

It's worth noting that the lenses also work with cameras that offer Eye AF too.

### IMAGE QUALITY

Image quality in the 56mm is surprisingly good, although images are not as edge-to-edge sharp and detailed as those from the fast Fuji equivalent lenses. But that is to be expected for a lens that is a third the price of the Fuji versions.

Few lenses perform at their best when shot wide open, and yet if you buy an f1.2 lens you will probably often shoot it that way.

The trade-off here is that at f1.2 the Sniper displays a little more softness, a tad less contrast, and some mild fringing and chromatic aberration.

When it comes to the “B” word (bokeh), the effect will obviously differ through the focal lengths of the Sniper series, with the 56mm we tested perhaps being the best to demonstrate its prowess, or not, as the case may be. Overall, the bokeh shape and appearance depend on the light source, but it is slightly ovalised.

Brighter halogen lights do reveal some fringing at f1.2, although this does improve at f1.8, and even more so at f2.8. Chromatic aberration is generally well managed throughout the aperture range, with it improving noticeably from f5.6.

Sharpness and all-round image quality improves with every step of aperture, and by f4 the image is much more contrasty and cleaner. Get past f5.6 and fringing, distortion, chromatic aberration, and other imperfections are far less apparent, and between here and f11 image quality is pretty good all round.

All-in-all, I'd describe it as a characterful lens, even a little unrefined perhaps, which some will see as a nice analogue twist in a world of clinical digital image perfection.

### THE WRAP-UP

Sirui's Sniper series of lenses are exceptionally fast and good value primes that punch above their weight. For most users – including professionals who may only use or need such fast lenses on occasion, these are plenty good enough.

That said, you do not get the weather sealing, the image quality, or performance of the native Fujinon equivalent glass. But Fujifilm's equivalent XF 56mm F1.2 R WR lens ain't exactly cheap, and will set you back around \$1,500. That's the trade-off really, and one you'll need to decide for yourself if it is enough of a dealbreaker.

That leaves the Sirui Sniper series as a great value and very acceptable lens series for those on a budget, but probably not the best option if ultimate image quality is your goal. 🌟

SCORE  
**9.8**

### RESULTS

#### BUILD QUALITY ★ ★ ★ ★

The overall build quality is very good, and superb for the price. Weather sealing would be nice, but is perhaps too much to expect at such a low price.

#### AUTOFOCUS ★ ★ ★

Usable in most well-lit scenarios, though this wouldn't be your first pick for fast moving action sports.

#### IMAGE QUALITY ★ ★ ★

Image quality is not on a par with the far more expensive Fujinon lenses, but it's solid and above what you may expect of an inexpensive lens.

#### VALUE FOR MONEY ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

For an f1.2 autofocus lens at this price point, the Sniper offers amazing value for money.

### SPECS

<b>Focal length</b>	As tested, 56mm, also available in 23mm and 33mm
<b>Maximum aperture</b>	f1.2
<b>Lens mount</b>	As tested, Fuji X, also available in Sony E & Nikon Z
<b>Lens format</b>	APS-C and Full Frame
<b>Image stabilisation</b>	No
<b>Maximum focus distance</b>	0.6m
<b>Optical design</b>	12 Elements in 11 Groups
<b>Filter size</b>	58mm
<b>Length</b>	92.2
<b>Weight</b>	400g
<b>Price</b>	\$599
<b>More info</b>	sirui.com

**Photography**  
**GOLD AWARD**



# MAKING THE FAMILIAR STRANGE

It's been said that discovery consists of seeing what everyone has seen and thinking what no one has thought. Here's how one photographer has incorporated this idea into her work.



WITH NILMINI DE SILVA

**M**y photography is inspired by my connection to the natural environment, enabling me to dabble in genres from portrait to aerial landscapes with natural light. At a time when we are inundated with imagery, I believe the challenge of creating unique images lies in making the familiar strange.

This image was taken when my partner and I lived in our motorhome for five years, travelling and working remotely. I love waking up with the sunrise to connect with the natural world while serendipitously discovering photo opportunities.

At the time, the dew drops on the chain link fence was the first thing I saw when I woke up early morning at our camp site in Kilcoy, north of Brisbane. The harshness of the fence against the softness of the spider web and dew were a beautiful sight in the morning light.

I edited the RAW file in Lightroom, adjusting for lens corrections, white balance, temperature, and tone. I experiment with the Basic sliders before editing for sharpness and noise. The chain link fence was straightened before finessing the image in Photoshop. I used curves and masks for localised adjustments such as contrast and vibrance as well as to dodge and burn. The high pass filter blended with linear light was handy for creative sharpening and I check my colour balance before exporting.

This image resonated with many audiences and has won both national and international awards. With this image I won the 'Shape and Form' category and was voted 'People's Choice' at the Biophilia Awards. This was special because as a civil engineer who specialised in water management, my work is closely aligned to Biophilic Design—connecting people and nature within our built environment.

The judge said they were immediately drawn to this image for its juxtaposition of the harsh barbed wire fence against the gentle droplets in what appeared to be cobwebs. They enjoyed my framing—positioning the subject in the top third, so it



could spill down into the rest of the image. I was commended for my use of contrast which brought definition to the water droplets and for my choice of shallow depth of field, which drew focus to the subject and the reflections in the distance.

Photography is meant to evoke emotion in the viewer. I am grateful the symbolism of rural Australia with its droughts and bushfires was so easily recognised. 🌿

**CANON EOS 6D, EF100MM F/2.8L MACRO IS USM LENS. 1/1250S @ F14, ISO 1000.**

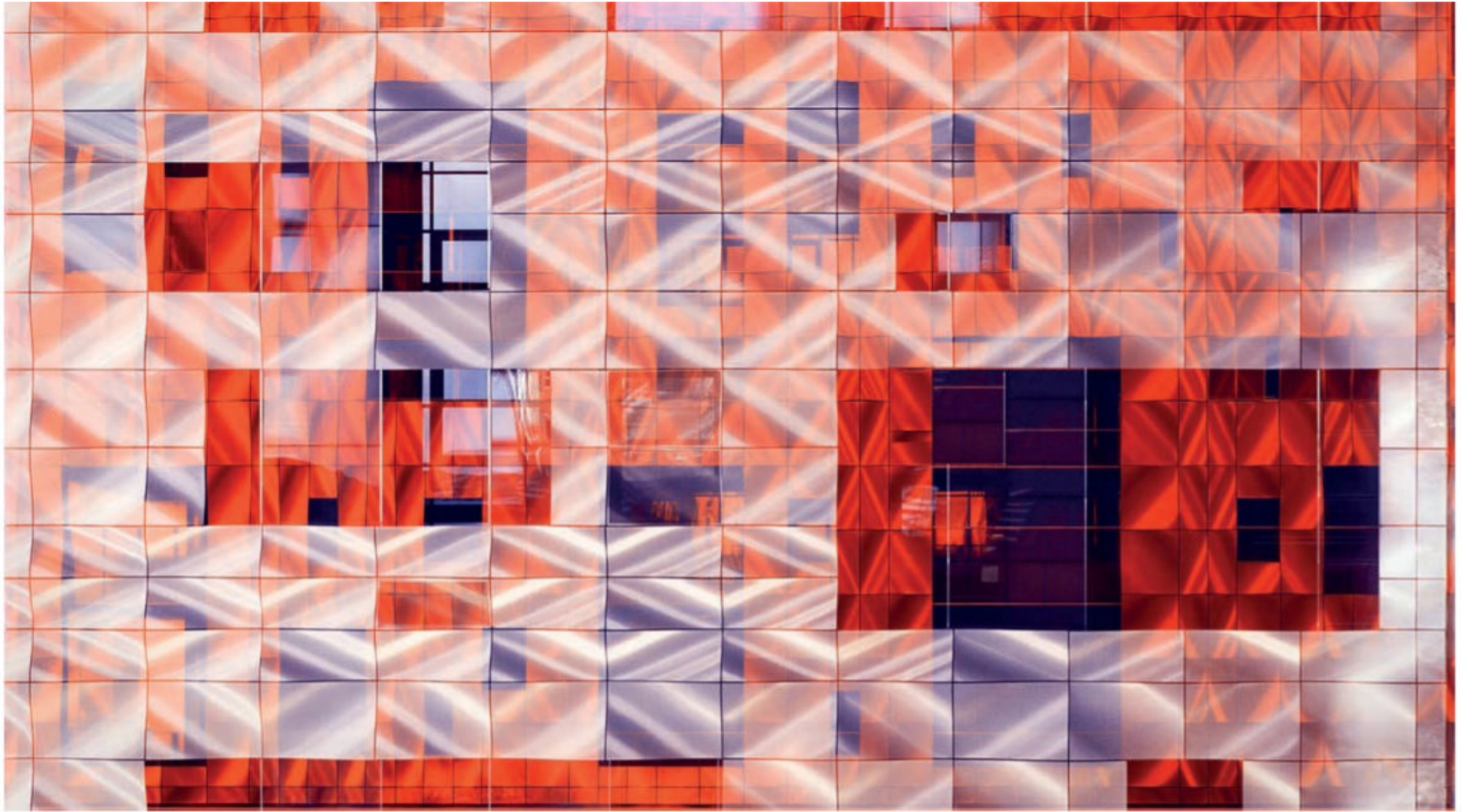


### **THE AUSTRALIAN PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY**

Membership with the Australian Photographic Society caters for enthusiasts, amateurs and professionals in photography.

The APS can help you improve your photography, increase your level of satisfaction and achievement with your images, and make lasting friendships with other photographers throughout Australia. All that is required is that you take two steps; the first, joining the society; the second, becoming involved in what it has to offer.

*Find out more at [a-p-s.org.au](http://a-p-s.org.au)*



# INTRODUCING CAPA

The APS' Conceptual Art Portfolio Award celebrates the fusion of creativity and vision.

WITH HELEN CARPENTER



Photography is a powerful medium for expression. It allows us to capture moments, evoke emotions, and tell stories that words often fail to convey.

Recognising the immense power of conceptual art photography, the CAPA - Conceptual Art Portfolio Award, was born. The CAPA is not another photography competition; in fact, it is aimed at members who wish to develop their photographic talents through an avenue other than competitions.

With four prestigious levels - Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum - it offers artists the opportunity to showcase their talent and, through its mentorship program,

take their artistic journey to new heights.

Upon entry, participants are matched with experienced mentors who guide and advise. These mentors, accomplished photographers themselves, provide valuable insights and technical expertise, helping participants refine their portfolios and elevate their artistic vision.

The mentorship program provides participants with the necessary support and guidance to enhance their skills and develop a signature style. It allows participants to tap into their potential, while also receiving constructive feedback that encourages growth and experimentation.

Once participants have refined their portfolios under the guidance of their mentors, the body of work is submitted to a panel of three independent assessors. These assessors evaluate each submission based on various criteria, including creativity, composition, technical proficiency, and the ability to convey a powerful concept.

The feedback provided by the assessors is invaluable, as it not only highlights the strengths of the participants' work but also offers constructive criti-

cism aimed at pushing them further. This feedback loop fosters a spirit of continuous improvement and encourages participants to challenge themselves, ultimately helping them evolve as artists.

The CAPA awards, presented in the form of Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum distinctions, are a testament to participants' dedication, creativity, and artistic prowess. These accolades not only recognise their achievements but also provide a platform for exposure and recognition within the photography community.

Achieving a CAPA award is not just about receiving a title; it is about becoming part of a vibrant community of artists who share a passion for conceptual art photography. The CAPA network expands horizons, connecting artists with like-minded individuals, fostering collaborations, and opening doors to new opportunities.

So, if you have a passion for conceptual art photography and a desire to take your craft to new heights, why not sign up and have a go at CAPA? Head to the APS webpage at [a-p-s.org.au/index.php/capa-information](http://a-p-s.org.au/index.php/capa-information), or contact Kym Houston Chair of the CAPA program. 🌟

ABOVE: *Naval Urban Abstracts* by Ken Opeskin.

# Join the APS

## INDULGE YOUR PASSION FOR PHOTOGRAPHY



A not for profit organisation catering to enthusiasts, amateurs and professionals in photography.

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"The Dance of the Dragon Flies 1" APS Bronze Medal Nature National 2023 by Maria Mazo

### HONOURS & DISTINCTIONS

APS offers a range of honours starting at the Licentiate level and progressing to Grand Master and even beyond for exceptional photographers. APS also administers applications from Australian residents for FIAP Distinctions which are internationally recognised.

### SHARE YOUR IMAGES

Share your passion for taking pictures. APS members can share their images by participating in online folios, using the Critique Room for positive feedback on your images in addition to entering APS endorsed National and International exhibitions.

### SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

From first time camera users, through to experienced amateur's, camera club members, semi-professional, emerging and professional photographers the APS has a range of benefits and activities that appeals to all levels.

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[www.a-p-s.org.au](http://www.a-p-s.org.au)

# IMAGE DOCTOR

Images need a pick-me-up?  
The doctor will see you now.

BY ANTHONY MCKEE

THIS  
MONTH'S  
WINNER

## DITCHING THE DISTRACTIONS

"I captured this image of the Wheel of Brisbane after meeting a friend for lunch in Southbank, Brisbane. The sun broke through the clouds at the right moment on that overcast day and I wanted to show the Wheel's scale. I found zooming in worked better at capturing the size of the Ferris wheel instead of as a whole with a wide angle, but I'm unsure if this was the right decision. I would love some feedback on this shot!"

**ANTHONY'S TIP:** Hi Etienne, and thanks for sending in this image; we don't often get to see images shot on film anymore! You mentioned that you zoomed in rather than shooting wide to get the whole wheel in the picture, and personally I think you made the right decision. One mistake many people make is that they try to fit too much into their pictures. This can work well in the right situations, particularly if you are a skilled storyteller, but often too much information can be distracting. As a wise man once said, "less is more"; (damned pay clerk!). Anyway, about the only thing you might want to explore when shooting similar images against a blue sky is to try adding a polarising filter to the lens. This can darken the sky and often add some more drama. Keep shooting film!

TITLE: Round and Round We Go!  
PHOTOGRAPHER: Etienne van Rooyen  
DETAILS: Pentax KM, 28-80mm f/3.5 lens @ 60mm.  
1/125s @ f8, Fujifilm Fujicolor ISO 100.





### LINE, CONTENT AND MOMENT

“While walking the back lanes and canals of Venice with my wife I spotted this location that seemed to sum up all of Venice in one image: canal, bridge, alleyway and gondola. I was keen to capture the image with just part of a gondola emerging from under the bridge rather than the whole boat. Fortunately it was quite a busy canal as it took many attempts to get the gondola in just the right spot. Edited in Lightroom with a crop to remove distractions, details were brought out of the shadows and tweaks to the tone curve. Some enhancement to the orange / yellow for the bricks and blue / aqua for the water.”

**ANTHONY'S TIP:** Hi Geoff, a few years ago I realised I could distill my approach to photography down to three simple steps - Line, Content and Moment. This

shot is the perfect example of the idea; you found the line (a viewpoint with multiple points of interest along it), you adjusted the focal length to fit in the content that was important to you, and then you waited for the moment. In all I think you got everything just about right, with one exception - as I look at the photo I cannot help but be distracted by the highlight above the stairs in the top left corner. If you crop out the top left, suddenly this image becomes a lot stronger. Otherwise, great work.

TITLE: Venice

PHOTOGRAPHER: Geoff Kaiser

DETAILS: Olympus OM-1, 12-40mm f/4 Pro lens @ 16mm. 1/200s @ f8, ISO 1000.





### LEARN THE DANCE

“I was walking in Nice on the Promenade when I saw a group of people gathering around this man making soapy water bubbles for the children around him. My camera had already the black and white setting with the red filter. I used photoshop elements to crop the photo, added some contrast and used the levels to lighten the right side where the crowd is, and darken the sky.”

**ANTHONY’S TIP:** Hi Thierry, you have everything you need in this situation to make a great photo, but you failed to bring everything together. Yes, the busker is making bubbles but the image would be stronger if someone was looking at him, and if that was what you were hoping to convey, then at least show us a frame where all the kids nearest the camera have their eyes open! The Fujifilm X100T is a great camera, but on its own it is not enough to make you a street photographer; for that you’ll need to learn the dance! Work on your timing and street skills to be in the right place at the right time to get the best photos. It takes practice.

As for using a red filter on your camera, personally I’d be shooting in RAW mode, then converting the images to monochrome in Lightroom and using the B&W Mixer to selectively adjust the tones within the scene. Keep at it!

TITLE: The Water Bubbles Maker  
PHOTOGRAPHER: Thierry Rocchia (NSW)  
DETAILS: Fujifilm X100T, 23mm lens. 1/170s @ f5.6, ISO 200.

### MAKE WHAT OTHERS DON’T SEE

“I was able to capture some stunning images of this bird with a Nikon D750 using a Sigma 150mm-600mm lens hand held. To capture this bird, its owner brings along up to half a dozen different parrots for a free fly at a local park and I was able to capture this image of this bird having some fun. These birds are amazing at the antics that the owner lets them get up to and it is just amazing watching these birds free flying and the speed that they get up to.”

**ANTHONY’S TIP:** Hi Daryl and thanks for sharing this image. Years ago I realised that photography is no different to creative writing; our job as a photographer is to put together stories that engage an audience. Your photo simply says “here is a blue macaw flying”, but what could your audience learn from this image if you gave them more information?

I’m guessing you know the owner of this bird and so you could potentially collaborate on some ideas. I would be exploring some more complex visual opportunities, like what happens when you have the bird flying towards you with the owner in the back of the image, or you are positioned directly beneath the owner the Macaw flies in to land. Make the images that others do not usually see.

TITLE: Flying Free  
PHOTOGRAPHER: Daryl Fisher  
DETAILS: Nikon D750, Sigma 150-600mm lens @ 370mm. 1/800s @ f6, ISO 360.





**30K**  
**PRIZE**

**MULLINS CONCEPTUAL  
PHOTOGRAPHY PRIZE**



SUN KISSED #1, #2, #3, #4 BY CHRIS BOWES - WINNER OF THE 2023 \$25,000 PRIZE

**20**

Entries 4 Mar - 12 Jun  
Exhibition 15 Aug - 12 October

**24**



[WWW.A-P-S.ORG.AU](http://WWW.A-P-S.ORG.AU)



**LIGHT AND SHAPE**

“I’ve recently begun using an off camera flash to shoot low key portraits in my home studio. For this image the flash was at 1/2 power (in manual mode) and mounted in a softbox with grid; it was positioned about 2m away and slightly above the model. Whilst I’m happy with the photo, it seems to have a little burn out on her forehead area. I can probably adjust this in photoshop but would rather use the camera and flash settings.”

**ANTHONY’S TIP:** Hi John, this image is not too bad for a first attempt, but here are a couple of things to consider. First, soft-boxes don’t always create soft light; it’s all relative to the size of your light source (your soft-box) and its proximity to the subject. I typically use a 100cm softbox for images in this style, usually at about 1.5 metres from the subject. As for the highlights, I shoot in RAW mode (exposing for the highlights) and then I use an adjustment brush in Lightroom to tone the highlights down.

Two other quick notes - if you are just working with flash, use a fast shutter speed of about 1/125th of a second, and try and experiment with a silver reflector from the opposite side of the light to bring a little more light and shape into the cheekbones. Otherwise, good effort.

TITLE: Finding the Light  
PHOTOGRAPHER: John Lawson  
DETAILS: Canon EOS 5D Mk IV, Canon 24-70mm f/4 lens @ 50mm. 1/8s @ f4, ISO 200.



**12 MONTH SUBSCRIPTION TO AUSTRALIAN PHOTOGRAPHY OR CAPTURE MAGAZINE**

Congratulations to Etienne van Rooyen who has won a 12-month subscription to either *Australian Photography* or *Capture* magazine for taking out Image Doctor this month! *AP* has been celebrating the work of Australian photographers for more than 70 years. Published quarterly, *Capture* is Australia’s leading journal for emerging and professional photographers.

Find out more about AP at [australianphotography.com](http://australianphotography.com), and *Capture* at [capturemag.com.au](http://capturemag.com.au)



**HOW TO SUBMIT AN IMAGE**

- Email entries to: [imagedoctor@australianphotography.com](mailto:imagedoctor@australianphotography.com) with “Image Doctor” in the subject line.
- Include your name, image title and up to 150 words about how you created it.
- Only one image per person per month.
- Images must be saved in JPEG format. Maximum file size is 5MB. Include your name in the filename of the image.
- An Australian address is required in order to receive the prize.
- Employees of Yaffa Publishing or the sponsor are not eligible to win the prize.
- The editor’s decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.



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Our workshops help you to take better images and explore what you can do with those images. Most importantly, we put your photography first!



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