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Issue 275

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“We love creating the magazine for our readers every month and we can’t wait to spend 2024 with you”



And so begins a new year! 2023 was another exciting one for camera releases and photo technology development, which kept us busy on *Digital Photographer*. This has all culminated in our popular Gear of the Year awards, which you'll find on p24 of the magazine. Here, we round up all of the best products we saw pass through our doors over the past 12 months, from cameras to lenses, accessories to software. Be sure to take a look to see if your dream purchase is among them and feel free to drop us a message on social media or an email if you agree (or disagree) with our selections.

After reviewing the past, it's time to look forward and dive into our lead feature on the pro techniques you will need to succeed in 2024. Starting on p36,

we speak to the winning photographers of the International Photography Awards to glean their top tips and tricks for crafting a style that will make you stand out in the coming year, from sports to food photography, landscapes and architecture.

As gear is a theme for the issue, we've also put together a special extended reviews section for you, starting with Angela Nicholson's breakdown of the Nikon Z f. We then take the Leica M11-P for a spin, along with the iPhone 15 pro, DJI Air 3 drone and heavyweight pro lenses from Sony, Canon, Nikon and Leica. This kit bonanza starts on p96.

We love creating the magazine for you every month and we'd like all our readers to know how much we appreciate your custom. We can't wait to spend 2024 with you. Happy New Year!

Peter Fenech, Editor
peter.fenech@futurenet.com

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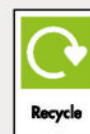
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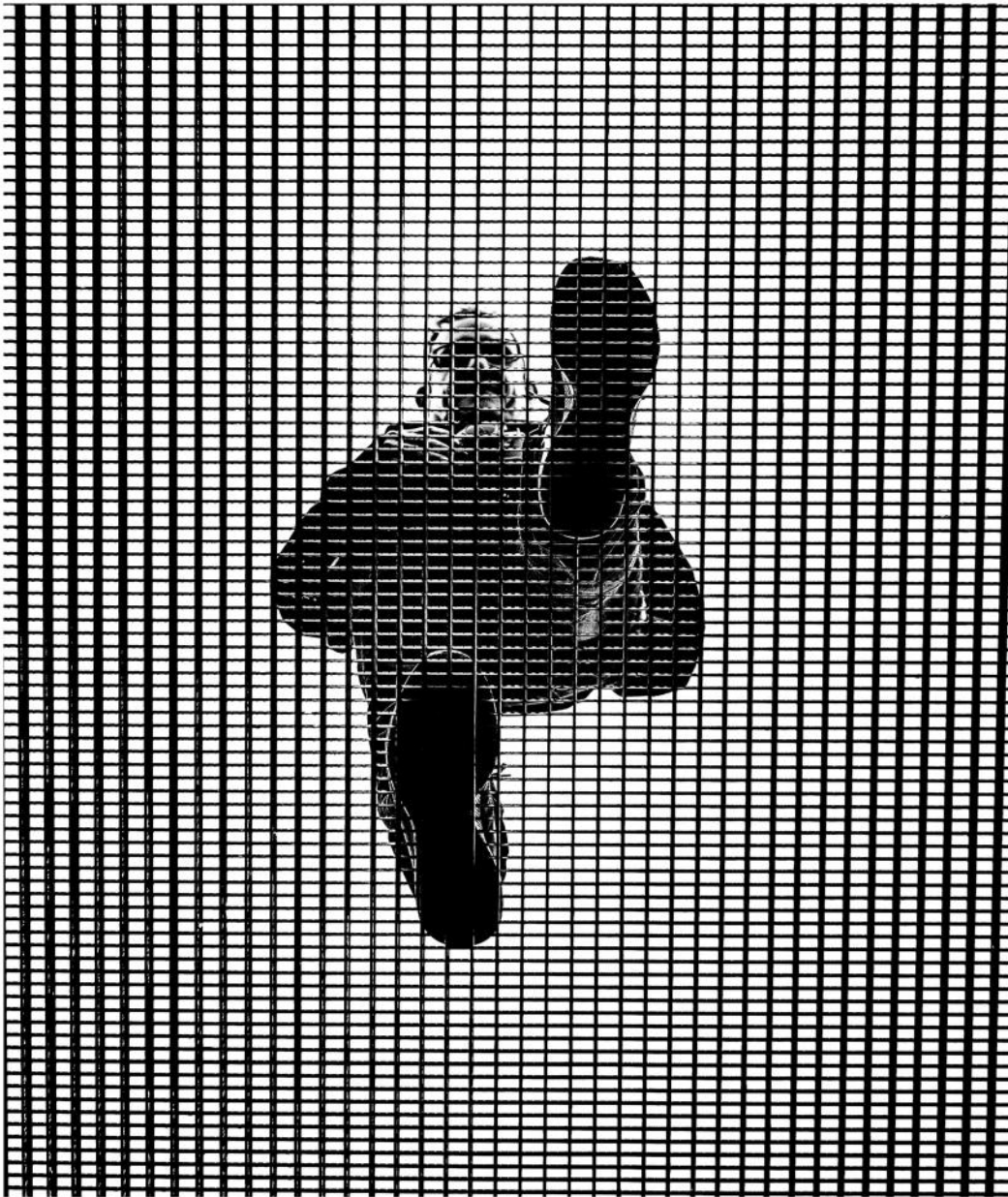
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© Alan Schaller

Our contributors



KIM BUNERMANN
Kim is *Digital Photographer's* technique editor. This issue, she has been working with the winning

photographers from this year's Photographer of the Year contest, compiling a feature on the essential techniques you need to learn for 2024. Starting on p36, make sure you know the hottest trends.

Website:
digitalcameraworld.com



JOSH DURY
Josh knows a thing or two about finding the perfect astro photo and this issue, he has put together our

Creative Project on shooting astro landscapes. Starting on p50 of the magazine, Josh guides us through the basic shooting and editing steps for capturing stunning starscapes, while managing the effects of urban light.

Website:
joshduryphoto-media.com



JAMES ARTAIUS
As we wrap up 2023, James has put together our annual Gear of the Year feature, highlighting the

best cameras, lenses, accessories and software. Starting on p24, he celebrates the products that stood out the most and explains what we can expect from the major industry players as we head into the New Year.

Website:
digitalcameraworld.com



NATALIA ZMYSLOWSKA
Natalia works across multiple genres. For our shooting tutorial this month, she provides a

refresher on the essential camera settings for capturing action with non-specific sports kit. Make sure you know how to use the basic features of your model for maximum sharpness. Find Natalia's steps on p56.

Website:
theworldwithnat.com



MATT ELLIOTT
For our Shoot Like a Pro feature this month, we joined pet photography expert Matt.

Beginning on p14 of the magazine, he explains how to work with animals, select and use locations, find engaging compositions and, above all, make sure your furry subject is happy and safe.

Instagram:
[@mattelliottpetphoto](https://www.instagram.com/mattelliottpetphoto)



ALEXANDER McDONALD
Alexander appears in our Photo CV this month, starting on p70 of the magazine. As a

portrait and beauty photographer, he is an expert in lighting and styling but, as he explains, it is the job of a pro shooter to continue to learn. Discover his story, favourite kit and tips for success.

Instagram:
[@alex.mcdonald.photography](https://www.instagram.com/alex.mcdonald.photography)

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© Finn O'Hara

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© Marko Saunala

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© Matt Elliott

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© Alexander Spataro via Getty Images

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© Ian Schofield via Getty Images

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We're all shooting the same scenes, with the same cameras and the same lenses, so just how can we stand out as photographers in the modern day? Well, there are multiple ways to shoot every scene and sometimes, simply changing camera height and angle can make all the difference to how a subject looks. In this free guide, explore how to work with scale, elevation and composition for dynamic shots bursting with energy!

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TTARTISAN RELEASES 35MM F/1.8 AF LENS AT A SUPER-LOW PRICE

TTArtisan has just released its newest APS-C autofocus prime lens for Sony, Fujifilm and Nikon Z mirrorless mounts and the price is mind-blowing

 The 35mm f/1.8 AF is the newest lens in TTArtisan's AF prime range and will be available for Sony E, Fujifilm X, and Nikon Z mounts. The company is best known for its affordable manual focus lenses, but TTArtisan has been slowly releasing autofocus lenses to cover all of the essential focal lengths. The new 35mm f/1.8 is equivalent to 50mm on a full-frame, a classic focal length that can cover a wide range of genres and is much favoured by the best photographers of all time.

The f/1.8 aperture allows versatility in different lighting scenarios, which also

enables great fall-off into smooth bokeh. The autofocus addition is a feature that will be welcomed by all users. We have seen the AF functionality of the TTArtisan primes in full effect with the TTArtisan AF 27mm f/2.8 lens, which is very fast and extremely quiet. The 35mm f/1.8 lens adopts an 'STM + lead screw type' structure, enabling efficient AF tracking for stills and video, further enhanced by the inclusion of eye AF.

Constructed from aviation-standard aluminium and with a weight of around 199g, the all-metal lens body is lightweight and compact. The 35/50mm standard range is

perfect for street photography, because when walking around all day, the lighter the kit the better. Another new feature is a USB-C port for updating firmware, in the rear lens cap. Other features of note include chromatic dispersion control through ED Glass and a square lens hood that blocks out more ambient light.

However, the biggest selling point with this lens is the price. At £122/\$149, it's an absolute bargain! The lens is available now for Sony E mount, with Fujifilm X, and Nikon Z (APS-C) versions to follow shortly.

ttartisan.com

Brightin Star teases a new 50mm f/1.4 for mirrorless APS-C cameras

 Xingyao Optics' Brightin Star is a Chinese lens manufacturer that, until now, has developed affordable manual focus lenses with large apertures. The Brightin Star 50mm f/1.4 AF (85mm full frame equivalent) is an APS-C prime lens with autofocus, available for the Nikon Z, Fujifilm X and Sony E mounts. But with the large number of 50mm lenses now on offer for APS-C mirrorless, it will have to offer something unique to be considered among the best Nikon Z lenses, the best Sony lenses and the best Fujifilm lenses.

With only a teaser poster having been released, not much is known about the lens at present. The poster displays the name of the lens along with the mounts that it will be released for. In addition, the poster says it's 'coming soon', which is a little cryptic but likely means early 2024.


We are seeing a number of third-party lens manufacturers who have specialised in manual focus lenses, start to develop AF models for mirrorless, especially around the 50mm focal range. Brightin Star joins TTArtisan, Sirui and soon 7Artisans and Meike in this regard. brightinstar.co.uk



© Brightin Star

Vanguard sets new heights

With a huge maximum payload and an extendable height of up to 1.8m, this new video tripod could set new industry standards

 Vanguard has launched its tallest and most stable tripod ever. The Alta Pro 3VL sets new standards in height and stability with an extendable height of 1.8m and robust 3cm diameter legs providing outstanding stability.

It comes in two versions, an aluminium model weighing 3.26kg and a lighter, 2.92kg carbon fibre edition. Both tripods are capable of taking a maximum payload of 25kg, making them perfect for mounting camcorders and cameras with cine lenses, and pack down to 85.5cm.

Vanguard has replaced the standard central column with a levelling system, CNC machined from a solid aluminium block. This not only delivers smooth and precise movements but ensures the highest quality finish. The levelling system can rotate through 360° degrees and the vertical can be moved 15° allowing for fast and easy camera leveling on any terrain.

The three-section tripod features convenient twist leg locks that operate silently and securely lock each joint




in place, ensuring the tripod remains stable at all times. Mounted on top of the levelling system is the VEO PV-18 Video Head with an Arca-Swiss plate. Like the levelling system, it has been CNC machined to ensure smooth and precise movement with a maximum load of 15kg.

The Vanguard Alta Pro 3VL is on sale now, with the aluminium version retailing for £350 while the carbon fibre one is priced slightly higher at £450. The VEO PV-18 video head can also be purchased separately for £160. vanguardworld.co.uk

© Vanguard

Viltrox releases new 20mm f/2.8 AF lens for Sony full-frame cameras

Viltrox releases its most compact and lightweight full-frame AF lens to date – and it only costs £132!

 Viltrox continues to expand its lineup, offering a new prime lens that's great value for money. The Viltrox AF 20mm f/2.8 wide-angle has been released for the Sony E mount and, according to Viltrox, the Nikon Z mount will follow shortly. The lens is tailored for astrophotography, landscape and architectural photography, with a 91.6° angle of view in a compact body. Weighing just 157g, it's designed for portability, providing a wide-angle option for those on the move. It's comprised of 10 elements in eight groups, including two ED lenses, one lens with a high refractive index and two aspherical lenses, to combat aspherical and chromatic aberration.

Unlike many of Viltrox's lenses, this 20mm f/2.8 has AF – and a fast and precise one at that, with the inclusion of an STM motor. It also features a USB port for quick and easy firmware updates. Lastly, it includes a minimum focusing distance of just 19cm (7.5 inches) allowing you to capture wide-angle macro shots, and HD Nano multilayer coating to reduce flare and ghosting.

The lens is available now for the Sony E mount, priced £132, but you will have to wait a little longer for the other mounts. viltroxstore.com/en-gb



© Viltrox

In other news

More snippets of photography news from around the world

LOMOGRAPHY GRAPE

Has Lomography just dropped the coolest camera in town? Its Fisheye No.2 35mm film camera gets a bold new colour scheme with the all-new Grape Jam edition. While the fisheye film camera with a massive 10mm wide viewing angle has been around for a little while, the new Grape Jam version is available to buy now with an RRP of £69. For more information, visit the official website:

shop.lomography.com/uk

ROTLIGHT ANOVA PRO 3 AVAILABLE FOR PRE-ORDER

Rotolight has announced an 'all-weather powerhouse'. The Anova Pro 3 is designed for filmmakers and content creators, with an output of over 22,000 lux, and is IP65 rated for use in even the most challenging shooting conditions. After a successful Kickstarter, the Anova Pro 3 is available for pre-order from the official Rotolight website with an RRP of £2399:

rotolight.com



STORY
BEHIND
THE STILL



Photographer: Alisa Zuniga

Instagram: @the_elevated_exposure

Website: theelevatedexposure.com

Image location: Monarch Pass,
Colorado, USA

Type of commission: Personal

Shot details: Nikon Z 9, Nikkor Z 70-200mm f/2.8 VR S,
1/250 sec, f/13, ISO 100



About the shot: Every year, Alisa Zuniga takes a trip somewhere different to see in the New Year. However, last year, she decided to stay closer to her home in Colorado, USA. "I chose to head for the south-west because it's my favourite part of Colorado," she says. As she was travelling, heavy snowfall transformed the landscape – including the trees, which were barely visible but still beautiful.

"My route to Ridgeway takes me up and over Monarch Pass and that moment couldn't have been more perfect," says Alisa. "I just knew that I had to stop and photograph these marshmallow trees that were sitting in front of the bluebird sky."

Above
Marshmallow trees

"Even through the howling wind, when looking at these big white trees, you can't help but feel a sense of peace"

In landscape photography, finding a suitable composition can be a challenge. "I decided that, instead of taking a photo with my wide lens to frame the landscape in a panorama, I wanted to capture as much of its beauty as I could to convey what I was seeing and feeling," she says. Alisa grabbed her telephoto lens and shot a series of portrait frames. The snowy scene is located 3,350m above

sea level at the top of the Monarch Pass, so Alisa not only had to contend with the cold but also the wind. "To avoid camera shake, I used a tripod and a fast shutter to capture the contrast of white against the blue sky."

In post-processing, Alisa took her eight-frame panoramic shot into Adobe Camera Raw, selecting the thumbnails so that any adjustments she made would also appear on the RAW sequences. After adjusting the contrast, highlights and shadows, Alisa stitched the images together in Photoshop using Photomerge, aligning them into one image. "I cropped and merged all the layers and ended up with a large image," she says.

SHOOT LIKE A PRO

FURRY FRAMES

Kim Bunermann joins **Matt Elliott** on a shoot with top dog Merlin to learn how to run a business capturing pet portraits with character

All main images © Matt Elliott



For animal-loving photographers, having a furry friend posing in front of the camera may seem like a dream come true. However, in practice, it can be a lot more challenging than it appears. Animals are notoriously difficult subjects to work with, not only in photography, and have a shorter attention span than their human counterparts. And, whereas communication with your model is essential when taking human portraits, it is far more of a challenge to direct your animal subjects when photographing them.

Today, I am meeting Matt Elliott, an experienced pet photographer based in Bristol. Known for his ability to create photographs that capture the unique personalities of pets and the special bond between them and their owners, Matt is a pet owner himself, meaning that he understands the profound impact animals have on our lives. Matt has captured countless special moments with humans and their pets – from dogs and cats to horses and even snakes – so I can't wait to see what he has in store for us today.

Before setting off to meet Matt, I notice that most of the images on his website (mattelliottpetphotography.com) have been taken outdoors. With the unreliable British weather adding yet another unpredictable element to the behaviour of his canine models, I wonder whether shooting in a studio environment, where variables such as the background and lighting can be easily controlled, might make his task easier. Being outdoors brings other distractions, such as other animals that could disrupt the pet's attention.




I am curious to see how he copes with any distractions and ask him why he takes on such challenges. Matt warns me that I should come prepared for the weather, wearing rainproof clothes and sturdy footwear. Conditions in the few days before our shoot in early December have been a mixture of rain and cold temperatures. Matt suggests that I join him on a shoot either early in the morning or towards the end of the day, advising me that these are the best times to get the perfect lighting conditions for atmospheric dog portraits.

Matt Elliott



As a lifelong dog owner, Matt Elliott has developed his passion for pet photography, honing his skills by capturing the distinct personalities of the animal kingdom and shooting everything from tiny Chihuahua pups to horses. Based in Bristol, Matt offers his pet photo sessions across the south-west of England and beyond and has worked with a variety of expert dog trainers and animal behaviourists to strengthen his expertise in the field. His priority in each session is to ensure that every animal is safe and comfortable. See more of Matt's work at:

mattelliottpetphotography.com  [@mattelliottpetphoto](https://www.instagram.com/mattelliottpetphoto)



Gaining their trust

Matt on how to ensure a safe environment for pets

“As a dog owner myself, I understand the concerns that my potential clients may have. Being transparent about how a photography session with you looks is important for building trust and, without this information, they may not book one.

One question I’m often asked is whether dogs need to be off-leash during the session. Around half of my sessions take place with dogs on a leash. The dog’s safety and comfort are my top priorities on every shoot so I work with whatever makes them feel most comfortable and take things at their pace. I can always remove the leash in post-processing if it



makes a better photo. Every dog is different and makes a great subject in its own right, so it’s important to be able to deal with a range of behaviours. That’s why I’ve worked with dog trainers and behaviourists in the past. With over five years of experience and lots of patience, I know that ensuring the photo session is relaxed, enjoyable, and stress-free is crucial for both the dog and the owner.”

Today’s subject is Matt’s own dog Merlin, a Miniature Schnauzer. Merlin is used to being in front of the camera and has even featured as a model for some pet brands. I figure that this makes him the perfect subject to demonstrate Matt’s photographic skills, though when I turn up to meet him, he seems particularly excitable – I’m hoping my arrival proves to be the only distraction of the day.

After meeting Matt, we get in his car and head to our first destination. During our ride, the topic of conversation turns to his favourite photographic gear. Matt tells me that he’s a Sony shooter, though he has previously owned some Nikon cameras, and has now settled on the Sony A7R V. We arrive at Ashton Court, a vast, open park on the city’s western outskirts, and Matt puts on his wellies and gloves and grabs his camera bag. “I often come here to shoot, it has lots of different spots to capture the dogs,” he explains. “When working with reactive dogs, I’ll try to find a quieter location. Sometimes, we’ll choose to use a secure dog field or a woodland somewhere else.”

Matt’s top priority is to ensure that the dog feels comfortable and safe during the shoot.

“I always ensure the animals in front of my lens are comfortable and, more importantly, safe,” he says. Before heading deeper into the park, Matt stops in front of the Ashton Court mansion, an impressive historical building. “Let’s stay here to take the first shots,” he says. Merlin gets into place and Matt positions himself a bit further away to frame the scene from a side angle. Suddenly, out of nowhere, there is a piercing noise, which directly catches both Merlin’s attention and mine too. Turning round to locate the sound, I see that Matt has blown a fox whistle to grab Merlin’s attention. It works as he directs his gaze towards the camera.

“When photographing dogs, I carry lots of noisy accessories with me,” Matt explains. “It works with most but can get tricky when I have a well-trained dog as a subject. They are trained to only pay attention to their owner and to ignore everything else happening around them. That certainly makes it a challenge.”

I ask Matt how he sees the role of the dog owner during a photo shoot. “Dogs have a connection to their owners in a way I can’t do, so the owner acts as a link between me and the dog,” he says.



“I always ensure that the animals in front of my lens are comfortable and, more importantly, safe”

SHOOT LIKE A PRO



Matt's shooting setup

1 Accurate focus The Sony A7RV is a mirrorless camera boasting a 61MP sensor and a powerful autofocus system, which is vital for Matt's work. The advanced eye-detection AF feature comes in handy when capturing active dogs. If they won't stay still for long, the focus follows the eyes of the subject through the frame to ensure that the photographs remain sharp and clear. In this particular scene, Matt opted for a fast shutter speed of 1/400sec so he could capture Merlin without any motion blur.

2 Open aperture Matt prefers working with prime lenses, for their unmatched precision and sharpness. Here, he uses a 135mm optic that offers a constant open aperture of f/1.8. This f-stop number creates a shallow depth of field, blurring the background and distracting elements. This technique ensures the focus remains on the subject, while adding atmosphere to the frame.

3 Sound device Matt uses a collection of items that produce distinctive sounds, such as whistles and squeaky toys, to grab the dog's attention. To keep the dog interested during the session, Matt places these items close to his camera and changes them throughout the shoot. He even has a couple of items that can produce sounds with his mouth, such as the duck call, meaning that he can keep both hands holding the camera steady while capturing the shot.

4 Eye-level perspective The main purpose of a portrait is to establish an emotional link between the subject and the viewer. To achieve this, Matt positions himself at Merlin's eye level and by doing so, he sets the tone for a more intimate portrait. This approach allows you to see the pet's unique personality, focusing on their individuality and building a deeper emotional link.

I ask him why he shoots mainly outdoors. "I prefer to photograph animals in a natural environment where I believe they can feel much more relaxed," he replies.

Like many people during the pandemic lockdowns, Matt, his wife and Merlin took the opportunity to explore their local area, discovering many locations that he now uses for shoots. He believes that the photographer's approach and skill in capturing the dog's character and personality are more important than the location. Nonetheless, Matt explains that he often involves the owner in the decision-making process for the location. "Sometimes, there are

places that hold special meaning for both the owner and dog, so I will suggest going there. At the end of the day, I want to create a fun, relaxed experience and capture precious moments, so the owner can look at the images, remember them and maybe even get the feeling back from that day."

As we walk through the park, we come across some big pine trees, where Merlin almost seems to know what he's supposed to do, getting in position for a few poses. "Not all dogs I work with can do tricks or special commands and that's not a bad thing," says Matt. However, after the first few shots, Merlin's attention wanes and he's now more focused on the



squirrels in the tree opposite. Matt knows a few tricks to get Merlin's attention back and it's not long before he is looking straight at the camera lens again.

"It's a question of patience," says Matt. "Some dogs have a longer attention span than others, and it's different every time." When a dog is visibly stressed or loses interest, Matt often suggests going for a short walk with the owner. "After that, we continue the shoot and check if the dog is more relaxed. If they aren't, it soon becomes noticeable in the images." Even in big productions and commercials, you can see whether a dog is happy and relaxed or not. Matt has worked

Top tips from MPB

● Optimise your gear

Choose a camera with precise autofocus and pair it with fast prime lenses like a 50mm f/1.8 for sharp focus and appealing background blur. This combo ensures clarity, which is crucial when dealing with active pets.

● Capture with insight

Exercise patience to understand pet behaviour. Equip yourself

with knowledge about their favourite toys or treats to elicit genuine expressions. Use gear that allows you to get down to their eye level for compelling perspectives.

● Gear for comfort

Select a familiar location to ease pets and optimise your camera settings for natural light. Indoors, position pets near windows; outdoors, leverage the golden hours

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for warm, flattering light. Equip yourself to create a stress-free environment, enhancing your ability to capture authentic and captivating portraits.

Above Perspective change

Capturing pets from this top-down angle directs the focus to their eyes and creates a distinctive frame

SHOOT LIKE A PRO



FURRY FRAMES



with dog trainers, learning first-hand tips and tricks on how to handle canine models.

Merlin has done a great job today and, as we head back to grab a well-deserved coffee, I ask about Matt's client base and marketing strategies. He explains that most of his custom comes from word-of-mouth recommendations. "A lot of customers find their way to me through previous clients. Dog owners have a lot of connecting points with other owners, such as the park, the vet and so on." This makes personal referrals important for his business.

"Reviews from previous clients are the best advertisement for my business, they help to establish trust in my service." Apart from this, he has an online blog, where he shares insights on photo sessions, giving a glimpse of how he works. Matt also offers high-quality print products. "There are

so many quick and easy print services available these days, I want to offer my clients products that are really special and will last a lifetime," he says. When clients book a full session with Matt, they receive a credit towards his product menu. "This way, my customers can choose one of these special products to hang proudly on their wall."

Before I leave, Matt tells me the importance of his job and why he needs to be flexible from time to time. "I had a client booking a session with me, she mentioned that her dog was quite ill. I had to organise a last-minute shoot to photograph her beloved pet. It was a tough but important shoot with lots of emotions." I get the feeling that the fact our furry friends don't have as much time on Earth as we humans do is part of what drives Matt to be so passionate about creating not just photographs but memories too.

Matt says he prefers his sessions with oldies to working with very young dogs. "At first, you think 'Aww, cute puppies!' but the reality is that they can be the trickiest of all. Fortunately, I've got lots of patience and am more than up for the challenge," he says.

Over the past three years, Matt has worked with a client that finds foster homes for dogs and he also helps raise money for the Forest of Dean Dog Rescue.

"A few months before Christmas, we'll discuss possible ideas for this year's charity Christmas card and what props we may need." For this session, Matt prefers to set up a portable studio in the client's home. "I'll often use various stock images to create the background for the scene and bring the shot to life in Photoshop. In the last shoot, we had 15 Cavaliers! It's a challenge to coordinate so many dogs but it's worth it," he says.

Matt's favourite gear



1 Sony A7R V The AI-powered subject recognition autofocus system is truly remarkable with lightning-fast identification as well as reliable tracking capabilities. With its larger buffer, the A7R V is an effective tool for prolonged bursts of shooting.



2 Sony FE 135mm f/1.8 GM Weighing just under 1kg, this lens may be fairly hefty, but it delivers unparalleled all-round performance and stunning bokeh. For capturing tight head and shoulder portraits, the 135mm focal length is a clear choice.



3 Sony FE 35mm f/1.4 GM It's a pricey lens but worth every penny, so it's worth buying second-hand. The lens is easy to handle, thanks to the weighted 'declickable' aperture ring, smooth focus ring and customisable Focus Hold button.



4 Tamron 70-180mm f/2.8 Di III VXD This versatile lens is Matt's go-to choice for events. A clever design packs the maximum focal length in a compact body while maintaining the same fast and constant f/2.8 aperture as previous models.



5 Sony FE 85mm f/1.8 This prime lens is an alternative to Sony's GM lens, offering a lighter and more affordable option without compromising on quality. An ideal choice for handheld shooting, this is Matt's latest purchase for his video work.



6 Weatherproof clothing Wellington boots for muddy terrain and a water-repellent jacket for situations where laying on the ground gives the perfect perspective. Matt has incorporated his branding into his clothing for visibility.

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Digital
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GEAR — OF THE — YEAR

Your guide to the best, most exciting and most innovative photographic kit of 2023

What's old is new – and this has never been more true than in summing up photography in 2023. Last year saw the launch, not just of a new DSLR, but also a film camera, a mirrorless camera that looks like a film camera and two cameras that only shoot

in black and white. At the same time, what's new is new. In 2023, we saw a camera with a full-frame global shutter sensor, a 24-105mm f/2.8 lens, two cameras with AI-busting protocols to certify your images, a \$600 fully manual instant camera and a camera the size of a cigarette packet that works like a phone.

It has been a year of genuine innovation, with exciting announcements coming thick

and fast. And, as the global production problems began abating (for everyone except Fujifilm, it seemed), supply started to meet demand again – so when a new camera was launched, you could actually buy one. What a novel concept!

We hope you enjoy this roundup of the year's many highlights, but spare a thought: with the bar raised so high, how is 2024 going to compete? Stay tuned...

THE AWARDS



CAMERA OF THE YEAR

Jurassic Park reopens, as the global shutter opens fire in a crazy 12 months

Once upon a time, we only had SLR cameras, and they were only able to shoot black-and-white photographs. It took decades of development to create cameras that shoot in colour and don't need a mirror – so the most fascinating thing about 2023 is that not only do we have a new digital SLR, but one that only shoots black-and-white photographs.

Every year, we hear that DSLRs are dead and that Pentax is a dinosaur taunting an incoming asteroid for thumbing its nose at mirrorless. Yet here we are, with one of the year's best

cameras being a DSLR from Pentax, which is going even more Jurassic in 2024, as it resurrects its line of film cameras.

At the other end of the spectrum, Sony is that asteroid trying to eradicate the SLR era. Its latest flagship camera doesn't have a mirror, a mechanical shutter, or even a rolling shutter sensor – which means it doesn't have flash sync speed limits, either. The global shutter era is here and it is about to transform the photographic landscape in ways we can't even comprehend yet.

Innovation doesn't only happen at technology's top end, though. Canon is continuing its commitment to beginner photographers, a category that both Fujifilm and Nikon have said is no longer a primary concern to them. Entry-level cameras need to be more capable and usable than ever, to give people a reason to put down their smartphones, and today's 'basic' EOS is pretty much a powerhouse.

From top to bottom, the camera industry has never been more vivid or exciting.



Sony A9 III

This camera just threw away the photography rule book

- **Released** March 2024
- **Top feature** Global shutter

Four words changed everything forever: 'full-frame global shutter'. The A9 III is the new yardstick by which all flagships will be measured, with 120fps full-resolution 14-bit RAW continuous shooting, a 1/80,000 sec shutter speed, and both AI measures and countermeasures. The former uses a predictive AI algorithm to inform the autofocus system and better track subjects, while the latter embraces the C2PA content authenticity protocol to battle fake news and manipulated imagery. Most of this is completely irrelevant to many photographers – but when the tech starts to trickle down, this is where it will be starting from.



- **Released**
July 2023
- **Top feature**
Guided menu system

Canon EOS R100

With the bulk of the profit at the top end of the market, most manufacturers have abandoned the beginner cameras sector. Leave it to Canon, then, to not just replace its old entry-level DSLRs, but to do so with a mirrorless model that offers a ridiculous amount of bang for your buck. The R100's sensor offers frankly stunning image quality; the autofocus system is the same as the one in the 5D Mark IV; it has a guided user interface that explains the camera's features and helps you learn creative techniques... it's a phenomenal beginner camera that takes a pro-quality picture.



- **Released**
April 2023
- **Top feature**
25.7MP mono sensor

Pentax K-3 Mark III Monochrome

If the DSLR is dead, no one told Pentax. The company announced no fewer than six new versions of the K-3 Mark III and, in April, we got the brilliant Monochrome. Mono cameras are maybe the most niche category in the industry, but Pentax decided there was room for one more – and the camera is so popular that it has been on backorder since its launch. If you thought nobody would buy an APS-C DSLR that only shoots in black and white, you were dead wrong.



- **Released**
October 2023
- **Top feature**
Content Credentials

Leica M11-P

In many ways, the Leica M11-P is the same as the M11. The same 60.3MP triple-resolution sensor (enabling you to shoot 60MP, 36MP or 18MP stills), built-in 256GB memory, the same lack of autofocus and video... but there is one significant addition: Content Credentials. The M11-P has integrated protocols from the C2PA (Coalition for Content Provenance and Authenticity) to fight fake news and manipulated images at the point of capture – and it's the first camera to do so. An incredible street and reportage camera, and also one that's leading the way in the fight against AI. (See review, p104)



- **Released**
October 2023
- **Top feature**
Retro design

Nikon Zf

In a year with so many remarkable cameras, does one whose primary feature is style really merit a mention here? Yes, it does. Designed after the iconic FM2 SLR (much like 2021's Nikon Z fc), the Z f is a stunning camera to look at, and one that truly inspires you to shoot with it. Beneath its beauty and brass dials, though, there is plenty of cutting-edge tech, including the AF system from the flagship Z 9, new subject-detection algorithms designed for manual-focus shooting, and a Focus Point VR feature that uses the focus point to inform and improve the image stabilisation. Old dog, new tricks. (See review, p96)

LENS OF THE YEAR

Everyone promised that new mirrorless mounts meant a new optical era. Well, if anyone can...

Mirrorless cameras have done many truly transformative things since they launched. However, manufacturers said that these amazing new mirrorless mounts would unlock technical wonders and bestow us with the kinds of lenses we'd never dreamed of before – and then Sony's most remarkable lens of 2023 was a 300mm f/2.8. Hmph.

The only company actually living up to the promises it made

about its mount is Canon. First came the incredible RF 28-70mm f/2, right at the dawn of the EOS R system. Then came the 600mm and 800mm f/11s. And now... wow! It's really hard to break new ground and do something new in the world of lenses – but Canon has well and truly done it. We've seen some great glass from most brands, but Canon is simply untouchable when it comes to new frontiers in lens design.



● Released
December 2023

Canon RF 24-105mm f/2.8L IS USM Z

Our sister website *Digital Camera World* called this lens "a trinity buster", and that sums it up perfectly. A 24-70mm f/2.8? Sure. A 24-105mm f/4? Of course. But a 24-105mm zoom lens with a constant f/2.8 aperture? Absolute witchcraft. This is the first of a line of hybrid glass from Canon, bridging the gap between its EOS, Cinema EOS and broadcast lenses. Beyond the astonishing aperture, this electronic parfocal lens has minimal focus breathing, servo control, a stepless aperture ring, Virtual System compatibility and power zoom. The game just changed. (See review, page 111)



● Released
March 2024

Sony FE 300mm f/2.8 GM OSS

We took a shot at this one in the opening, but that's not a knock on the lens itself. Indeed, this is probably the best 300mm f/2.8 we've used – not to mention the lightest ever made. With 20 elements (including a bunch of extra-low dispersion ones) and a pair of XD linear motors to shuttle them all around at the superfast speed of Sony's AF, 11 aperture blades for circular bokeh and a clever optical design that backloads heavier elements towards the camera for better balance, this lens was worth the 15-year wait. (See review, page 110)



● Released
October 2023

Fujinon GF 30mm f/5.6 T/S

As mighty as medium-format is, it's not very well-served when it comes to tilt-shift lenses. Thankfully, Fujifilm came to the rescue with the first GF T/S optics – including this wide-angle 30mm (which is roughly 24mm in full-frame terms). It can make tilt adjustments up to $\pm 8.5^\circ$ and shift up to ± 15 mm (3mm more than rival lenses) and revolve by $\pm 90^\circ$. Crucially, the image circle provides more than enough coverage for the huge GFX sensor, with the highest-quality elements to render the maximum 102MP resolution of Fujifilm's current cameras. GFX is now the ultimate system for tilt-shift photography.



● Released
June 2023

Sigma 60-600mm f/4.5-6.3 DG DN OS Sports

The eagerly-anticipated mirrorless iteration of the classic DSLR superzoom, this Sony and L-Mount version is no mere old lens with a new mount – it has been redesigned from the ground up. It's still tank-like at 2,495g and 280mm in length but boasts Sigma's latest linear actuator motor for quick, quiet autofocus and delivers six stops of image stabilisation at the long end and seven stops at the wide end. And if a 10x zoom of up to 600mm isn't enough, it's compatible with Sigma's teleconverters to offer even more reach.



● Released
February 2023

OM System M.Zuiko 90mm f/3.5 Macro

The erstwhile Olympus has quietly become the go-to brand for macro photography, between its 60mm f/2.8 and 30mm f/3.5 close-up optics and the inherent depth of field advantage of the Micro Four Thirds (MFT) sensor. Joining them is this remarkable 90mm f/3.5, which offers a 2:1 reproduction ratio and is the first 2:1 lens with autofocus. However, this clever optic is also compatible with the M.Zuiko teleconverters – delivering a maximum effective focal length of 360mm and an astonishing reproduction ratio of 8:1. The MFT ecosystem continues to be the richest out there.



● Released
October 2023

Nikon Z 135mm f/1.8 S Plena

When Nikon feels a lens is so special that it gives it a signature name, you know you're in for a treat. But unlike the Noct, whose \$8,000 price tag meant it would only ever be a prestige product, the Plena ('the condition or quality of being full') is a lens that will realistically be bought and used by the masses. It's a practically perfect portrait lens, pin-sharp with virtually no distortion or aberration of any kind. Optically exquisite, it's fitting that this was released in Nikkor's 90th-anniversary year – as it's one of Nikon's finest-ever lenses.



● Released
December 2023

Canon RF 200-800mm f/6.3-9 IS USM

While not quite as mind-boggling as its trinity buster, Canon's souped-up superzoom lens was still a jaw-dropping technical achievement. The world's first super-tele zoom with an 800mm top end, this incredible optic is also compatible with teleconverters to give it an amazing 1,600mm reach. Still not enough for you? Mount it to one of Canon's APS-C cameras with a teleconverter, and it turns into an unbelievable 2,560mm. It is packed into a surprisingly small footprint, too, even though small is a relative term here. As an all-in-one optic, this really is remarkable – definitely one to take on safari.

SOFTWARE & ACCESSORIES OF THE YEAR

Reinventing the wheel and generative filling in the blanks

Let's face it: much as we love softboxes and tripods, they're not exactly the most scintillating of photographic accessories – at least, not as we knew them. However, as was the case with cameras in 2023, what's old is new again. Electronic softboxes and tripods have transformed decades-old technology, adding much-needed innovation that changes the way we use these tried-and-tested tools.

Innovation drives technology, but sometimes it's the other way around. It took LED lighting panels becoming a legitimate technology

before it became necessary to innovate a softbox to work with it, for example. Other times, innovation needs technology to catch up – such as adding AI algorithms to turn a standard tripod into something that moves depending on the kind of ground it's on and becomes a cameraman that can follow you around as you film.

When it comes to software, AI is the great debate of the moment. We've seen in the cameras of the year how an authentication coalition is trying to certify images as AI-free

at the point of capture. At the same time, image-editing apps are leaning into AI more heavily than ever before – spearheaded by Adobe, which fascinatingly is part of said coalition trying to police AI while also feeding it to a salivating consumer base.

At the end of the day, they're all just tools, of course. Whether we think that intelligent products threaten the integrity of imaging or we embrace them to improve it, one thing's for sure: AI isn't going anywhere. Rather, it's going everywhere.



● Released
April 2023

Rotolight SmartSoft Box

This is the world's first electronic softbox and it could well be the future of light modifiers. Designed for the Rotolight Aeos 2 Pro, it replaces the usual frosted diffusion dome seen on many LED lights. At first it doesn't seem that impressive: it's just a transparent panel that doesn't diffuse light at all. However, it's composed of liquid crystal particles – and once you run some voltage through them, they charge up and scatter the light. Using the rear touchscreen to drag the slider, you watch the transparent panel gradually frost over until it becomes completely opaque. It's absolutely astonishing technology.



● Released
January 2024

Benro Theta

A tripod, one of the year's best accessories? Yes, but this one is unlike any you've seen before. This intelligent modular tripod automatically levels itself, making sure that your horizon is level and your camera is perfectly balanced on uneven terrain. If you forget to do it manually, the legs can automatically lock to protect your camera from falls and optional Smart Modules can be installed (for functions such as remote camera control or track-and-follow for live streaming). In short, this is more like a robot than a camera tripod and seeing it move and adjust itself is a sight to behold.



● Released
January 2024

Hobolite lights

If you're the sort of photographer who loves the style-as-substance Nikon Z f, then you're probably going to love the line of similarly retro-tastic LED lights from Hobolite. With a vintage aesthetic that looks like an old Hasselblad body, this family of lights – the Pro, Avant, Mini and Micro – offer a tactile combination of knobs and buttons as well as the touchscreen immediacy of a smartphone app. With accessories from barn doors to diffusion domes that snap on and off magnetically, this is a remarkably adaptable continuous lighting system for both stills and video.

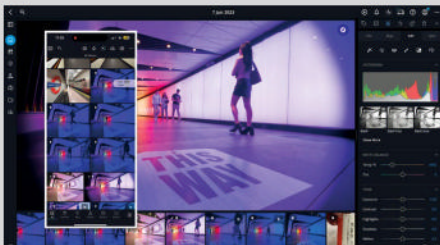


● Released
January 2024

Rode Wireless Pro

In 2019, Rode redefined the microphone game when it launched the Wireless Go range and it has now reached its final form with the Wireless Pro. Rode calls it "the most powerful wireless microphone ever" and, for once, that's not just hyperbolic marketing: this really is the ultimate in wireless mics. Major upgrades include 32-bit float on-board recording, 32GB of internal storage and 'near zero' latency, along with a 'safety channel' as a backup in case of clipped audio. It's a professional solution with a professional price tag, but you'll never need to worry about bad or lost audio again.

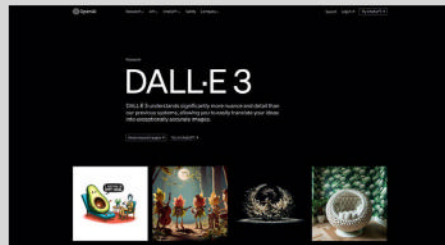
SOFTWARE OF THE YEAR



Mylio Photos

The latest update to Mylio Photos continues the application's mission to gather and catalogue all your photographs and memories in one place – something that's increasingly needed, in a world where we download camera images to a laptop, AirDrop photos to our iPads, WhatsApp images to our phones and back things up to the cloud. How do we keep track of everything, let alone find things we're actually looking for? Enter Mylio, which supports everything from Apple to Android and Frame.io to Instagram. And, you guessed it, AI makes it all possible.

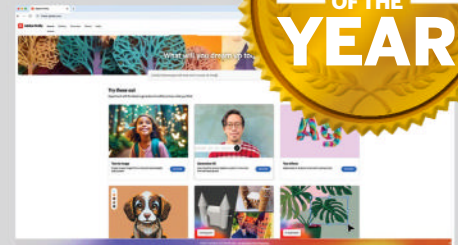
● Released September 2023



DALL·E 3

This is likely to cause controversy, as it's generative AI software and not photographic software. However, something fascinating happened in 2023: Boris Eldagsen won a category at the Sony World Photography Awards by surreptitiously submitting an image generated with DALL·E. Although he rejected the award, the incident highlighted just how major an issue the previously lighthearted subject of AI imaging had become. Now, varying flavours of AI photography are being legitimised. AI will never replace photography, but it sure is challenging notions of what it is.

● Released October 2023



Adobe Firefly

In launching Firefly, Adobe began integrating generative AI into Photoshop and Lightroom – Trojan-horsing some of the most powerful editing tools ever conceived into the laptops and web browsers of users everywhere. More than just an image generator, Firefly powers new tools such as Generative Fill (which removes unwanted objects in ways that the Clone Stamp could never even dream of) and Generative Expand (which expands backgrounds seamlessly). It's undeniably incredible, but also blurs the line between legitimate editing and representing reality more than ever.

● Released March 2023

Photographer
SOFTWARE
OF THE
YEAR

TOP PREDICTIONS FOR 2024

Our hopes and dreams about what to expect from the photo industry next year

Canon Will Canon's dark horse take gold at the Paris Olympics?

With 2024 being an Olympic year, it's time to reel the latest flagship pro sports cameras onto the front line. Sony and Nikon have revealed their big guns but, at press time, Canon was yet to show its hand with the EOS R1. Will it be a megapixel monster like the Z 9? A global shutter speed demon like the A9 III? The camera Canon takes to Paris will set the pace for the next four years – so it had better get things right.

Elsewhere this year, we're expecting the EOS R5 Mark II to finally make an appearance, and there has been plenty of speculation surrounding a retro camera (along the lines of the Nikon Z f), possibly inspired by the Canon AE-1. We also think Canon will flesh out its line of PowerShot vlogging cameras, challenging Sony's dominance of the industry's fastest (and, indeed, its only) growing segment.



Nikon Has Nikon found its calling, or will it keep spreading its wings?



After struggling to find its niche with the Z system in the early days, Nikon has hit paydirt with its flagship Z 8 and Z 9 and its retro-inspired Z f and Z fc. The question is, having found its groove, will Nikon double down on releasing more professional and hipster cameras?

While we hear that the Nikon Z 6III might be next up to the plate, there has also been chatter that an updated version of its flagship – the Nikon Z 9H – could be released, as a high-speed model to up the ante for pros ahead of the Olympics. (The Big N has done this in the past, with cameras like the Nikon D1H). While we don't know how many retro cameras can be released before the magic wears off (although Fujifilm would argue that never happens), we'd sure like to see some more retro lenses to go with the Z f and Z fc.

Panasonic

Phasers set to shock the world

Having finally joined the rest of the industry in embracing phase-detect autofocus, Panasonic will continue gradually outfitting its product line with this much-needed autofocus tech.

We half expect a Lumix GH7 to appear, even though the GH6 isn't exactly an old camera. An S1R II is also said to be on the way at the end of the year, quite possibly sharing the same tech as the Leica SL3 (as was the case with the S1R and the SL2, and a number of other uncannily similar Panasonic and Leica products).



There's a question mark over whether we will get a successor to the S1H, given that the S5 II and S5 IIX have been such huge hits. Both bodies feel like they have taken over as

the brand's video specialists, and the S5 line seems to have become the flagbearer for Lumix. Will we see more S5 models this year? We wouldn't be surprised.

Fujifilm

A busy year of launches – but will we actually be able to buy them?

Rumour suggests that 2024 will be an incredibly busy year for Fujifilm, with more cameras at the start of the year than the company released in the whole of 2023. One of them is going to be the follow-up to the monumentally popular X100V, which remains sold out everywhere with months-long waiting lists (we had to wait six months for ours). Fujifilm has struggled to get its products onto shelves since the pandemic, so we sincerely hope it can redress the balance next year.

With Instax being such a huge part of the company's success (and revenue), you can be sure that more instant cameras and printers will launch this year. Our fingers are crossed for a new Instax Wide camera, but we're curious to see whether Fujifilm continues with the peculiar Instax Pal experiment. Maybe it will do a Polaroid, and release a \$600 manual instant camera...



Sony

Will this be the year that video kills the photo star?

After refreshing its flagship sports (A9 III) and resolution (A7R IV) lines, it's time for Sony to update its long-in-the-tooth Alpha for video shooting – so keep your eyes peeled for an A7S IV this year. Along similar lines, there's also a lot of noise about a new FX camera (and those lines could be similar, given that Sony essentially released its A7S III tech twice more in the form of the FX3 and FX6).

Our money is on it being a very videocentric year for Sony, as the company will continue to iterate its new ZV line of vlogging cameras – which have been truly blockbuster sellers for Sony, accounting for some 40 percent of its camera sales. Don't go expecting a new flagship A1 to arrive this year, although we may well get a development announcement ahead of a 2025 launch.

OM System

We're rooting for the comeback kid, but we need more

We've always loved Olympus cameras and we love the output from OM since it divested from its former parent company. However, aside from the astonishing flagship OM-1, its recent products have hardly been revolutionary. The OM-5 was widely criticised for not being sufficiently different from the E-M5 Mark III it replaced, while the Tough TG-7 was little more than a rebadged Tough TG-6.

What can OM do to set things right? We know that the R&D budget won't be as flush as in the Olympus days, but we need to see a genuinely new product. A new sensor would really help; Panasonic has pushed the Micro Four Thirds ceiling up to 25MP while OM is still sitting at 20MP. Our hopes are high for an OM-10 this year and it would make our 2024 to see a new PEN camera as well.

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TECHNIQUES

UNLOCK WINNING ADVICE

Unleash your full potential in 2024 with tips and trend insights from Photographers of the Year

Words by Kim Bunermann

In 2024, the photography industry will maintain its focus on creating messages and conveying emotions, however, we should see an increased emphasis on immersive experiences through technology such as AI (artificial intelligence), VR (virtual reality) and AR (augmented reality). These technologies have been around for a while, laying the foundations for technical and visual changes within photography.

Pictured
Get inspired

Don't miss out on the beauty surrounding you. Keep your eyes open – the inspiration for your next project is just waiting to be discovered

Following trends is often viewed critically by creatives, but doing so can benefit photographers of all levels. Being aware of new challenges and preparing for them can be conducive to developing and refining your style. The knowledge acquired can be used to shape your future projects or take them in a different direction. Photography is a classic medium, so while the old approaches have their place, the trick is to expand your knowledge and experience.

Regardless of what 2024 brings, it's important that new technology is used to improve sustainability within the industry, not just in the materials and the printing processes we use but also in our photography practices. Genres such as landscape and wildlife photography, in particular, can help spread the message and play a crucial role in increasing awareness of these issues. Although the industry strives for perfection, there is still room for

improvement, especially in inclusivity and diversity. Photography can be a powerful platform and ensuring that it is accessible to everyone can only be beneficial to us all.

Over the next few pages, we talk to award-winning photographers who have perfected their work to get advice and fresh inspiration for projects in the year ahead. We'll analyse the latest trends to give you insights into the new technologies that are set to redefine the industry in 2024.

20 years
IPA international
photography
awards

WINNER
SPORTS

Main

**Mikaël Kingsbury,
Olympic Freestyle skier**

Finn's winning image for the Sports Photographer of the Year 2023, at the International Photography Awards



**BEAT
THE WEATHER**

"I use a hard shell backpack made by ThinkTank when photographing in snowy conditions. It's not only rugged but it's waterproof too. Water can silently ruin camera equipment, so by having a waterproof and shockproof case, I never worry about my equipment."

Shoot speedy subjects

Capture dramatic sports action with tips from Sports POTY **Finn O'Hara**

Finn O'Hara submitted his photograph, titled 'Mikaël Kingsbury, Olympic Freestyle Skier', to the prestigious International Photography Awards, an annual competition that attracts entries from top professionals, amateurs and students worldwide. His skier photograph was originally a commission from a client, however, Finn saw its potential and decided to follow his instincts. "I took it another step further by creating an image that I couldn't take during the pandemic. I had imagined what it would be like if we had a skier flying through a cloud of coloured smoke, and how incredible that would look," says Finn.

Constrained by the pandemic, time and money, he decided to photograph skier Mikaël Kingsbury in a studio in Canada where he was based. The photographer's point of view is crucial to showcasing movement in sport and action photography. "The skier is on his back on a waist-high platform so he can articulate his skis, poles and body. I'm on a 12ft-high

platform above him, shooting directly down. He's looking at a monitor that shows him what I'm shooting so that he can get his body positioning correct," says Finn.

Finn used a PhaseOne IQ3 100MP camera with a Schneider Kreuznach LS 55mm lens to capture this shot, adjusting his camera settings to 100 ISO, f/11 and setting the shutter speed to 1/320sec. The combination of aperture and a fast shutter speed enabled him to freeze the movement. Since the photo was taken in a studio, artificial lighting played a big role in creating the shot.

"Our lighting system is powered by five ProPhoto Pro-10 power packs. I took shots of the mountains to give the skier context, and then photographed green smoke from several smoke bombs but turned them red in post," he explains. In post-production, Finn worked closely with a retoucher to seamlessly combine the elements that he had captured in the camera into one photograph.



Pictured
Matt Chapman
Major League
Baseball star for the
Toronto Blue Jays

Fast gear

"The most used items in my camera kit are my Canon R5 and RF 28-70mm f/2L lens. With reliable autofocus and respectable ISO, they allow me to be flexible. I love my travel tripod with Gitzo carbon fibre legs and Manfrotto 410 geared head – it's versatile and solid. But the tools I most rely on are my SanDisk memory cards and field SSD drives. I need them for every photo I take and they never let me down."



Finn O'Hara



Driven by a passion for storytelling, Finn takes photos that are intimate, situational and visceral. His most notable work includes projects for Nike,

Adidas, ESPN and *The New York Times* magazine. Finn has won many international photography awards and was recently named Sports Photographer of the Year by the IPA. His images are held in the permanent collections of the McMichael Canadian Art Collection and the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro.

finnohara.com

[@finnohara](https://www.instagram.com/finnohara)

Get ready for the perfect moment

A split second can make or break the picture, so be prepared

1 Visualise the image

"Think ahead and visualise your photo days ahead of time and circle back to those visualisations at the end of the day. Compare those visualisations to what you captured. Boom! You're developing your mind's eye."

2 Speed up workflow

"I use a few custom button functions to make my workflow easier. I use back button focus which helps a lot when shooting high-speed sports. It allows me to be more reactionary to constantly changing subjects. I also have assigned a custom button on the back that resets the focus point back to the centre of the viewfinder."

3 Embrace the unexpected

"Selecting an aperture of f/8 helps to keep the action sharp within the frame.

Indeed, the popular saying 'f/8 and be there' still holds up. Don't be overly concerned by the tech and technique, instead, pay close attention to where you are and who or what you are photographing."

4 Follow a one-shot mentality

"When shooting athletes with strobes, I never shoot in burst mode. This is partially because when I shoot with a PhaseOne system, there is no option for burst mode, so I have to take my images one shot at a time. Athletes can only repeat their performance for so long, so I really have to nail it first time. Even when shooting athletes with the Canon R5 and a strobe, I still like shooting with the one-shot mentality. It keeps myself, the athlete and my client focused on what we really want, rather than just spraying the camera and hoping I get something."


 LANDSCAPE
 PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR


 WINNER
 LANDSCAPES

Pictured
After the Fire

This image by Mik won the UK LPOTY 2023 title, a competition that seeks to inspire engagement with the British landscape through photography

Frame atmospheric landscapes

How to convey visual impressions in one shot, with tips from **Mik Dogherty**, LPOTY UK winner

Mik Dogherty



Mik Dogherty is an outdoor photographer, based in the New Forest National Park in southern England. Mik is self-taught and had been a keen

film photographer in his younger years, although a career in the Royal Navy and then the petrochemical industry had put his hobby on hold. In 2010, the advent of digital cameras helped Mik to revisit his passion. After suffering from mental health issues, Mik took early retirement, giving him the time and mindfulness to follow his photography hobby with dedication. His recent win in the LPOTY competition for the image above is a new highlight of his career.
mikdogherty.com
 @mik_dogherty_photo

Landscape photographs aren't just about the beautiful surroundings of our environment, they are a document of time. Natural phenomena, the elements and how the landscape changes around us is a fascinating topic. Due to the availability and aesthetics, plenty of creatives choose this as a subject.

"I entered the image 'After the fire' into the LPOTY UK competition because of the way the heath fire had destroyed the character of this local heathland. It went from life to death and then the regeneration could begin," Mik says. He passes this spot every time he travels through the New Forest National Park and when a local heath fire destroyed the landscape, he saw the photographic potential of the scene. "It needed to be a panorama to give a perspective of the size of the area affected," he explains.

Since landscapes cover a large area, it is difficult to decide what to include and exclude in the frame. There may also be distractions that cannot be easily removed from the scene. Therefore, it is important to take time to observe and appreciate the natural environment before deciding on how to frame the shot. Alternatively, you could consider

returning at different times of the year or in different weather conditions to capture the scene. "I wanted to hide the view of the large Fawley oil refinery complex in the background, with its towers and chimney stacks. I had to consider that I would need to wait for a foggy or misty morning before I could get the shot I'd seen," Mik says. This decision not only eliminated distractions but also added a layer of atmosphere to the photograph. Considering the atmosphere the natural environment gains through the weather is crucial to enhance the image's mood, and distinguishes this image as a professional shot.

The most important ingredient of a pro landscape shot is the light. However, natural light is also the most challenging source to work with. "When that morning came with the great sunrise there was a low, thick mist. Shooting towards the sun could have been an issue, but the mist helped diffuse its brightness, allowing me to increase the exposure slightly to give more detail in the foreground," Mik says. Waiting for the ideal weather and sun can be limiting, but it's advisable not to wait too long. "Now, months later, the lone tree has fallen and most of the burnt skeletal remnants of gorse bushes have gone, mostly devoured by the grazing ponies. This picture no longer exists and the gorse is already growing back".

SHOOT LONG-TERM PROJECTS

The landscape is constantly changing due to the time of year, weather and natural phenomena. It's worth visiting the same location throughout the year to capture how these elements affect the scene. This will provide you with valuable experience and new challenges to overcome in terms of lighting and weather conditions, as well as help you develop your photographic style.

UNLOCK WINNING ADVICE

Mik Dogherty's kit essentials

FUJIFILM GFX 50S II

The medium format camera is the fifth model in the GFX series, with a 51.4MP sensor and X Processor 4 image processor.



FUJINON GF 32-64MM f/4

This lightweight lens (875g), provides effortless switching between wide-angle and standard angles of view, all while maintaining a constant f/4 aperture rating.

FUJINON GF 45-100MM f/4

This lens is highly versatile and perfect for all types of photography, thanks to its optical image stabilisation technology that provides up to five stops of stability.



FUJINON GF 100-200MM f/5.6

The lens features two Super ED elements and an aspherical element that minimise chromatic and spherical aberrations while improving clarity as well as sharpness.



KASE MAGNETIC CIRCULAR ND FILTERS AND POLARISER

ND filters control the light in bright scenes or when using long exposure times while polarisers enhance colours and reduce glare, reflections and haze.



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When composing, this camera accessory allows for precise positioning thanks to three independent movement options and accurate levelling with three bubble levels.

Pro Advice

Weather can affect the mood of an image – and the lifespan of your gear!

1 Think about weather “Once you have found a great shot, it’s always worth considering not just the composition, but the ‘atmospherics’. Try to think about what the best weather conditions could be for that photograph – whether that’s fog, a moody sky, sunset, rain, snow, diffused light, strong, direct light or flat light – and then maybe come back at another time to shoot when the conditions are perfect.”

2 Take care “Bear in mind the old phrase ‘Failure to prepare is preparing to fail’ so, once you get home, take care of your kit straight away by charging batteries

and cleaning lenses and filters so it is ready to go for the next outing.”

3 Protect your gear “If you have been using a tripod, when folding it away, don’t push the bottom legs all

the way up but, instead, leave the width of a hand between the foot or spike and the bottom of the next leg section. That stops forcing mud, sand and moisture up into the tripod workings and causing the legs to jam.”



Pictured
Autumn leaves

Captured in the New Forest, this photo showcases a gradient of autumnal colours with green leaves on the left and orange on the right

Capture delightful stories

Tell a story with your food images says **Jon Enoch**, a Food POTY winner

To capture the title-winning shot, Jon travelled to Mumbai, India, one of the busiest cities in the world. "I read an article years ago about food colourings in sweets, with candy floss as an example, so I could vividly see what the photo series would look like," he says.

Although Jon won the title, he does not describe himself as a food photographer in the traditional sense. "Taking images of lasagne doesn't interest me, I focus mainly on the human side of the equation. As a food image, it's a bit different and in the world of photography different is your superpower".

When creating a personal project, Jon finds a back story that initially inspires him that has certain criteria he is looking for – and this idea ticked all his boxes.

Photographing in Mumbai brings challenges, including the relentless heat and humidity and the sheer amount of people. Shooting at night was a good option, as the temperatures are slightly lower, it's a bit less busy and the jet lag is less of an issue. Therefore, lighting was one of Jon's first considerations along with the initial practicality. "What lighting can I take on the plane with me, what is portable and flexible as I don't know the city layout. Then I ask myself what atmosphere I want to create from the lighting setup. It's all about the atmosphere – enhancing what's naturally there," Jon says.

"Getting around in Mumbai is a nightmare and our setup with all the lighting attracted a lot of interest. We had an amount in cash for smoothing the way with local police, which is an unusual item to see on the production plan," he explains. As the images were shot at night, Jon could control the lighting, and give



Pictured
Fish man
A fish seller and his mobile shop captured on the streets of Hanoi, Vietnam

PREPARATION IS KEY
"I always have a backup plan – and a backup for the backup plan. It might be spare kit or a quick fix if something goes down but also a spare idea if things aren't working. I turn up before the subject to prepare everything in advance. You can never over-prepare."

it an unusual take. "I had a crew of two assistants, and we set up the shot with the lighting as quickly as we could with the crowds building up around us. The portrait was shot with a Canon 5DS R, with 50mm Sigma f/1.4 lens at 1/160 sec at f/5.6 and ISO 400," Jon explains.

His shot is all about the man but he offers enough information to draw the viewer in while also holding enough back for extra intrigue. "He's clearly a candy floss seller but what's his life like? Where does he live? Why has he chosen this life? I want the viewer to leave with more unanswered questions than when they started and also to create a little portal to another world. The amazing structure of candy floss is visually striking; it grabs your attention at first sight," says Jon.

Get inspired
Let your environment influence you to develop ideas with impact
"I allow inspiration to come to me in any guise – it could be something I see when walking around London, on TV or online. The smallest unusual item can spark an idea. I let my ideas stew for a while, if the concept keeps popping up, I know I'm onto a good idea. Once I've made a decision to do a personal portrait project, I don't hang about. I get it planned and booked, often in fear that someone else will complete a similar project. Ideas are the key – original ideas are gold dust."

Career advice

First-hand tips to build, form and develop your photography business

1 Take every opportunity
"My most important tip for early career photographers is always to grab every opportunity that is offered to you. You don't need to emerge fully formed. Take the opportunity and make the most of it – at the very least you will learn how to get better. There are great images everywhere, you have to get out there and find them."

2 Build your team
"I have a small and loyal mix of people I call upon so I can scale up and down for any shoot. I work with assistants, as you might expect, but as you grow, this will extend to other areas, such as accountants, kit hire houses, stylists, makeup artists and designers. Treat people well and they tend to put a shift in for you when you need them."

3 Invest in yourself
"I put a fixed percentage of turnover into a separate bank account and 100 percent of that has to be spent on creative development. It's a simple trick but one that works for me. If I have a few spare days between commercial assignments, then great. I can reinvest some of the cash into shooting a little personal project."

Jon Enoch



Jon is an award-winning London-based portrait, advertising and lifestyle photographer with a bold, uncomplicated approach to his work. This covers

campaigns for advertising agencies, working directly with brands worldwide and he also shoots portraits of sports personalities, celebrities and CEOs.

jonenoach.com

@jonenoachphoto



WINNER
STREET FOOD

Pictured
The Candy Man

Jon's winning image in the Pink Lady Food Photographer of the Year competition pictured candy salesman Pappu Jaiswal on the streets of Mumbai, India



Photograph minimalistic architecture

Discover urban landscapes where
less is more with Minimalism
POTY **Mario Tarantino**



WINNER
MINIMALISM

Pictured
Scale of Space
This image earned
Mario the ReFocus
Awards Minimalism
POTY 2023 in the
professional category

**KEEP
IT FRESH**
"Unconventional angles
and fresh points of view
is something that started
with the launch of both GoPro
Cameras and drones. With the
advance of technology, shrinking
cameras allow for new
angles, unconventional
perspectives and new
points of view."



Mario Tarantino describes himself as a 'monochromatic' but it was the photographic potential of brutalist architecture that led him to capture the image that won an award. "I submitted the photo because I felt the narrative I wished to convey when looking at it," says Mario. He already had a creative direction in mind before being on location. "I wanted to create an outer-worldly narrative, a meeting place or place of worship on another planet. Once on location, the sheer scale of the monument was impressive. To convey that immenseness, I put a silhouette of my father in the frame."

Brutalist architecture is built with rough concrete, making for a heavily textured surface. "Getting the right angle, aperture and exposure was crucial in keeping the balance between enough and too much detail," he says. Another challenge was the strong light, therefore Mario used an ND filter which let him control the light further. With a minimalistic environment and subject, the composition is crucial. "The composition is minimalist – the monument with its clean lines is placed on the third with the sky creating lots of negative space. The scale is demonstrated by the silhouette on the opposite third, which creates a balance between the subjects," says Mario.

Using traditional composition rules such as the rule of thirds is a tried and tested method, but it's important to experiment as every subject requires different strategies. "Try experimenting with both portrait and landscape orientations when photographing your subject. Sometimes a tighter frame is better to guide the viewer's eye into the frame making it more engaging," says Mario. "Try and take the time to visit a location before going to photograph it. That way, you are familiar with the surroundings resulting in



better composition as well as knowing what time of the day is best to do the shoot". When it comes to light, he prefers to shoot in the early morning or late afternoon when the light is softer. "I prefer shooting in low light conditions. However, I have taken great photos during strongly lit daytime as well. The midday and early afternoon sun can also enrich B&W photography, especially if you want to create high-contrast imagery," he adds.

Mario follows a minimalistic philosophy of 'less is more'. This is not just visible in his photographic work but also his technical approach. One of his most important accessories is a tripod for long-exposure shots. "When it comes to lenses, try and keep it simple," he says. "A 24-70mm is a great all-rounder and should be part of everyone's kitbag. I usually carry this optic and a 16-35mm flat wide, so I'm not overcomplicating things on location."

Mario Tarantino



Mario Tarantino's photographic style includes architecture, street and landscapes. He adheres to a 'less is more' philosophy as shown in his minimalist photo compositions. The simplicity of deep blacks coupled with crisp whites and the tones in between, makes the mundane look marvellous. Mario often uses long exposures, creating low-key tones for more emotive shots.
mariotarantino.com
[@mariotarantinobnw](https://www.instagram.com/mariotarantinobnw)

Change approaches

Discover different techniques to evaluate your photography

1 Exposure bracketing

"This is one way of creating well-lit and detailed photographs. Expose for the blacks, shadows, mids, lights and highlights. Each of these exposures can then be blended together, creating a wonderfully detailed and lit image. Having these exposures also allows for greater artistic expression in the way the image is lit and guides the viewer's eye through the photo."

2 Focus stacking

"Sharpness and detail are important so focus stacking is especially effective when working with wide-angle lenses. This technique helps to ensure a sharp image from front to back. To do so, multiple images with different focus points need to be created. Start by focusing on the foreground and then move it through the image. The images can be blended in post-production."

3 Get support

"Always bring your tripod with you, especially if you are going to shoot in low light conditions. It is vital for exposure bracketing, focus stacking and long exposures as well as providing a steady base for sharp images. A tripod also helps with your photo composition, as it forces you to slow down and take in your surroundings as you set it up, usually resulting in a better composition."

Expand the view

Work with short focal lengths

"I enjoy working with wide-angle lenses and with practice, have got to know their pros and cons. What I love about this optic is the spectrum of genres they cover, from architecture, landscapes and even street.

A wide-angle lens draws the eye into the scene, creating a strong feeling of perspective as well as a greater field of view in either landscape or portrait format. I also find the depth of field on wide-angle lenses superior to telephoto in that images are usually sharp throughout, with the exception of the corners. I work with a Canon EF 16-35mm f/4L.

When shooting with a wide-angle lens, fill the frame to avoid empty spaces where the eyes exit the image. Try to shoot at low angles, making use of leading lines to take the viewer through the image to the background."

Get inspired for 2024

Start the year with some fresh perspectives by following these pro tips and trends

One of the biggest factors in 2024 will be artificial intelligence, which inspired most trends of the past year. We have seen a number of perfectly generated images, mostly themed around human-like subjects and depicting utopian scenarios, which left a lasting impression. This year, a symbolic response to this movement is emerging from the classic photographic genre.

The biggest trend of 2024 is likely to be the creation of so-called hyper-realistic photographs that mimic the aesthetics of AI-generated images. This approach involves using ultra-high-definition techniques to create hyper-realistic images of the subject and incorporating significant elements found in generated images. This could, for example, mimic the liquid texture of skin. The trend may divide opinions but it allows photographers to re-examine the medium and use new techniques in light, composition and image processing.

This approach will also be noticeable in another trend in 2024, in this case, minimalism. The use of negative space to abstract the reality around us is a creative

approach that follows a 'less is more' philosophy. However, this doesn't necessarily mean that creating images with a minimalistic theme requires any less effort or planning from the photographer. In fact, the opposite is true; the approach to the scene must be carefully considered to depict it in a minimalist way. Composition rules such as the rule of thirds, new perspectives, soft light and black-and-white techniques come into play.

The rise of social media brought lots of aesthetic photos, with no messages behind them but, this year, photography is finding its voice again. This trend could be a reaction to the overwhelming amount of content-free photographs. They say a picture is worth a thousand words, so it is all the better to see that this power is being recognised and thought-provoking imagery is back.

Technology never stands still, with virtual reality and augmented reality technologies bringing in 360° photography. This tech is popular in advertising and wedding photography, where moments from the special day can be re-experienced or the product can be viewed from all angles.



Change perspective

"I've always enjoyed getting the wider picture, with a preference for multiple-shot panoramas. However, more recently, I've also been taking shots of more intimate views, close-ups and experimenting with using a smaller depth of field to isolate the subject."

Mik Dogherty

© Mik Dogherty



Tell action stories

"I think the most relevant techniques in sports photography in 2024 will continue the evolution of storytelling. Audiences are compelled by the range of human emotion that sport traverses and sports photographers will be there to capture it."

Finn O'Hara

© Finn O'Hara

Frame authentic

"I'm a commercial-minded photographer and the vast majority of brands want to align themselves with values such as authenticity and craftsmanship. Every action creates an equal and opposite reaction so, despite the rise of AI, genuine moments of real human interaction will, perversely, become more powerful and sought after. Real will become the new sign of luxury." *Jon Enoch*

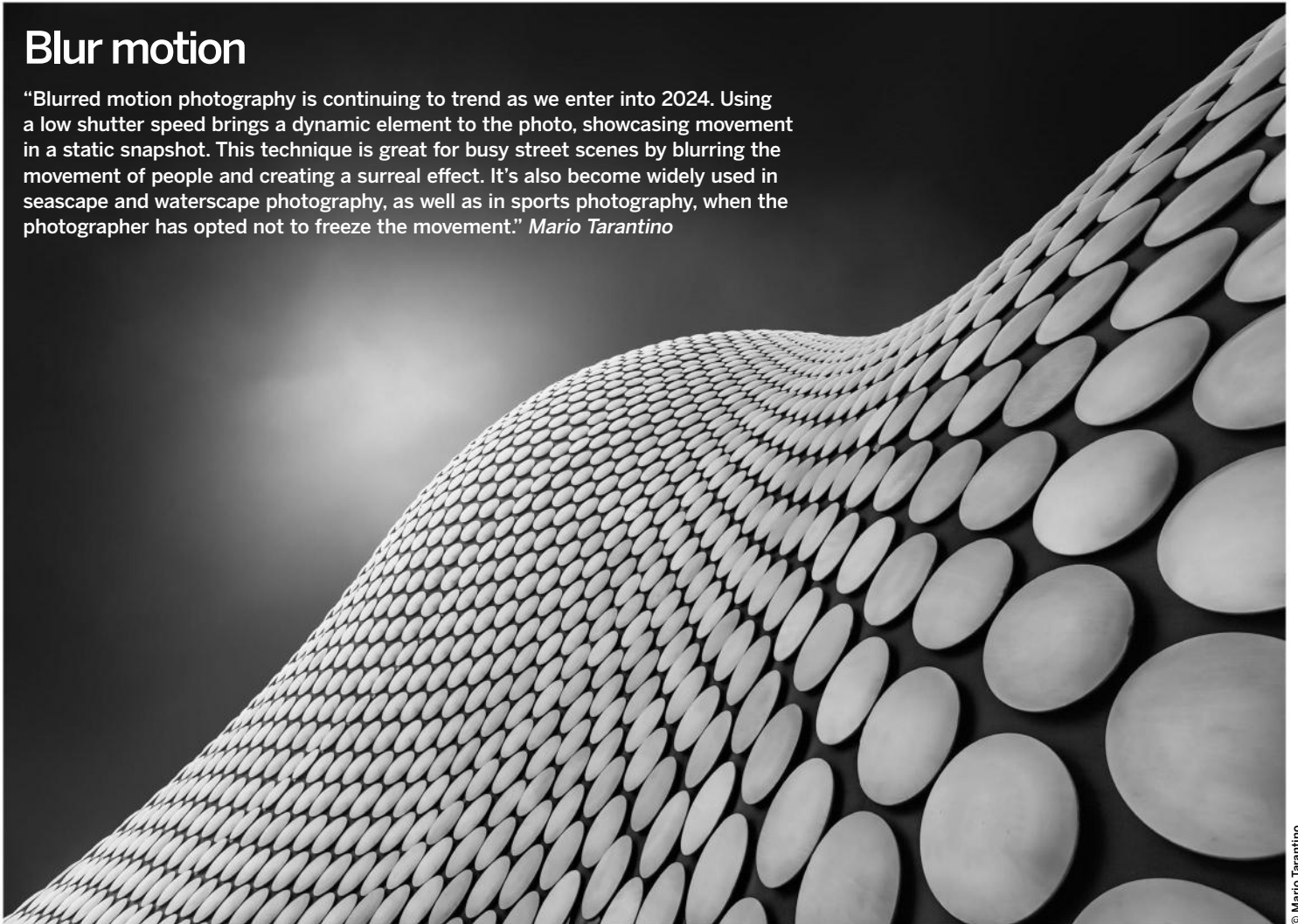


© Jon Enoch



Blur motion

"Blurred motion photography is continuing to trend as we enter into 2024. Using a low shutter speed brings a dynamic element to the photo, showcasing movement in a static snapshot. This technique is great for busy street scenes by blurring the movement of people and creating a surreal effect. It's also become widely used in seascape and waterscape photography, as well as in sports photography, when the photographer has opted not to freeze the movement." *Mario Tarantino*



AI: opportunity or threat?

AI divides the world of photography, but how do we make the most of it?

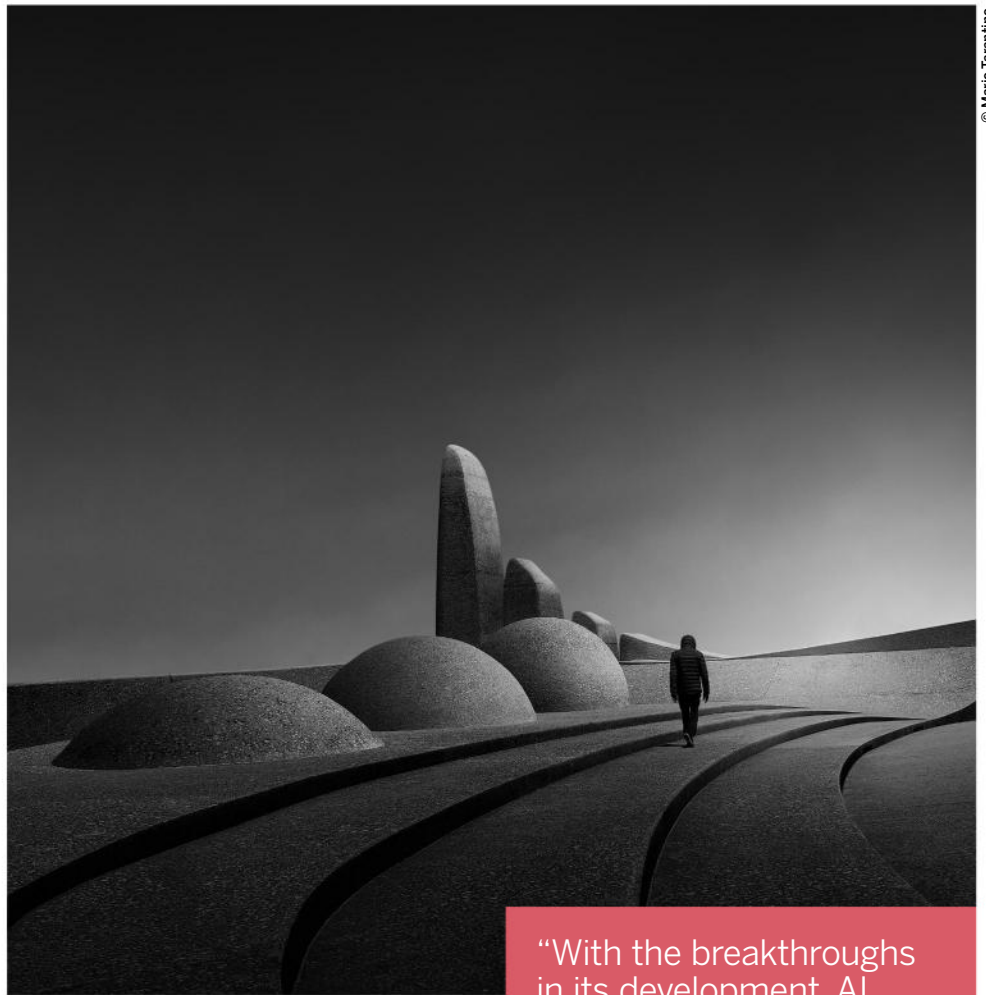
As we look ahead, it is clear that artificial intelligence will continue to gain momentum throughout 2024. On one hand, this is exciting for photographers who are likely to see new opportunities arise as AI technology develops, but on the other, it is difficult to predict exactly how these developments will impact the photography industry. One thing is certain, photography will always find a way to adapt and capitalise on new technology.

There are a few potential outcomes to consider. It is possible that AI technology will soon reach its peak and the industry will distance itself from it. Alternatively, new art movements may be created as photographers explore the unique possibilities offered by AI – not just to generate but to enhance their own imagery. It is clear that the industry will adapt to AI in some capacity, whether that's to streamline existing workflows or to create new and innovative forms of art.

“I think we’re going back to basics and there will be a reaction away from AI and the fake.” *Jon Enoch*



© Jon Enoch



© Mario Tarantino

“With the breakthroughs in its development, AI has and will continue to impact the photography industry. AI-assisted post-production has greatly simplified photo editing as well as allowing for increased artistic expression.”

“Not only is AI making its presence felt in post-production methods and workflows, but it is also becoming a recognised art form at the same level as photography or any other. This can be noticed in the many prestigious photo competitions nowadays that also have a specific AI category.”
Mario Tarantino



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STUNNING STARSCAPES

You'll be amazed at how much detail you can capture with simple techniques and subtle editing



Light pollution is changing the way we see the night sky, how we photograph it and our connection to the stars. When taking astro photos nowadays, it is hard to escape the reality of light pollution from nearby towns and cities, even out at sea or in rural areas. Sometimes, it is necessary to travel to dark-sky places that provide an 'open window' to the universe, but it is a battle photographers are often up against.

Luckily, the modern astro photographer can also call upon a series of techniques that lift the curtain of light pollution that prevents us from getting a clear view of our home galaxy, the Milky Way. Capturing images of this spiral system of billions of stars evokes an emotional response, telling the story of our relationship with the environment around us. Let's look at the process of how we counterbalance the constant battle between light and dark...

Words and images by: Josh Dury

Difficulty level: Intermediate

Time taken: Two hours

What you'll need

- Sturdy tripod
- Wide-aperture lens
- Remote camera release
- Image-editing software



Pictured

Magic Mendips

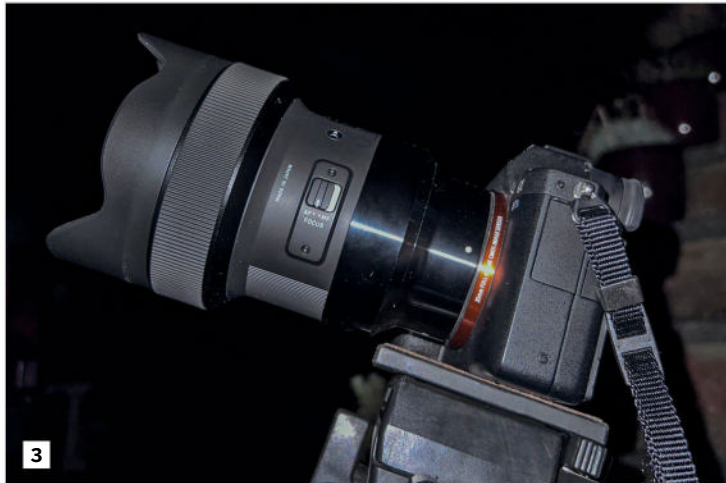
This photo captures the serenity of the Mendip Hills but also the relationship we have with the night sky and light pollution



1 Stabilise your tripod Use a strong and sturdy tripod whenever you take complex night shots. You want to avoid any camera shake while shooting longer exposures to capture faint celestial details. You may need to weigh down your setup if you are in a windy environment.



2 Switch to manual It is important to shoot in Manual so you are in control of your camera and how it operates. Your camera needs to be an extension of you, and how you expose fragile starlight as it enters your camera (being mindful of nearby light sources).



3 Shoot wide No matter what your equipment setup is, you will need to keep your aperture nice and wide so you can let more light in. However, bear in mind that too harsh an exposure can blow out details. Start at the maximum f/stop to prevent unwanted star-trailing.



4 Compose your subject Composition is crucial to telling a story in your photo. Use gridlines and the artificial horizon to ensure the camera is level, which can be a challenge when the lens is pitched up greatly. Use manual focus and a magnified view to prevent AF hunting.



5 Trial and error There is no right or wrong answer to the question of which camera settings you should use. However, rely on the histogram or clipping alerts to gauge exposure since the LCD itself can impact your eye's impression of brightness in the dark surroundings.



6 Deploy your shutter

Along with your tripod, a remote shutter release is an essential piece of kit for capturing stable astro images. This helps you avoid any camera shake caused by interactions with your controls. Take a step back, set your shutter intervals, and activate the shutter.

The setup

STUNNING STARSCAPES

BRIGHT LENS

An optic with a wide maximum aperture permits more light into the camera, increasing quality

REMOTE TRIGGER

At the exposure times needed for astro, any vibration will be visible, so use a cable or remote shutter release

SUPPORT

A tripod is essential. Choose a sturdy set of legs and use a pan-and-tilt head for easy levelling

5 top tips for better astro shots

1 As an astrophotographer, it is your decision where to shoot, but try to stay away from light sources if you want to capture the finer details of the Milky Way.

2 Make sure to prepare yourself each time you go out on a shoot. Take a bottle of water, some snacks and warm clothing. Most importantly, let somebody know where you are going.

3 Keep shooting! The more images you capture, the more

you train yourself on what to look out for and how to overcome your personal photography obstacles.

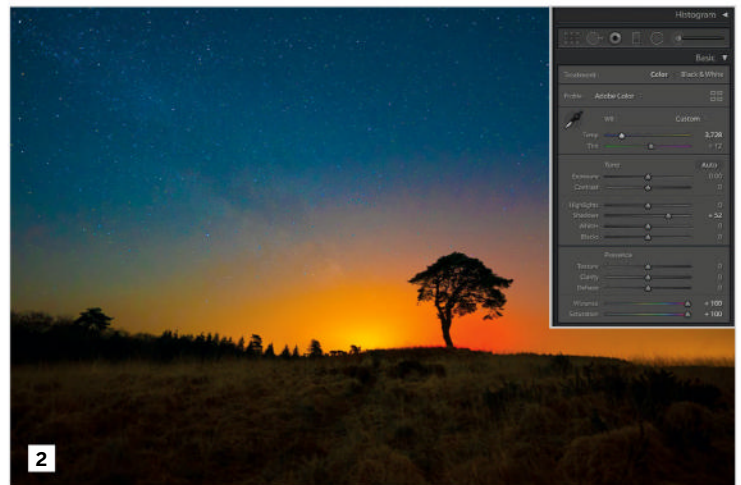
4 Don't over-do the edit. Sometimes, the more natural-looking shots tend to have the most punch. Remember how it was when you saw it.

5 Above all, have fun. The night sky is there to be enjoyed – so embrace the experience of being out there, as there is always a story to tell.

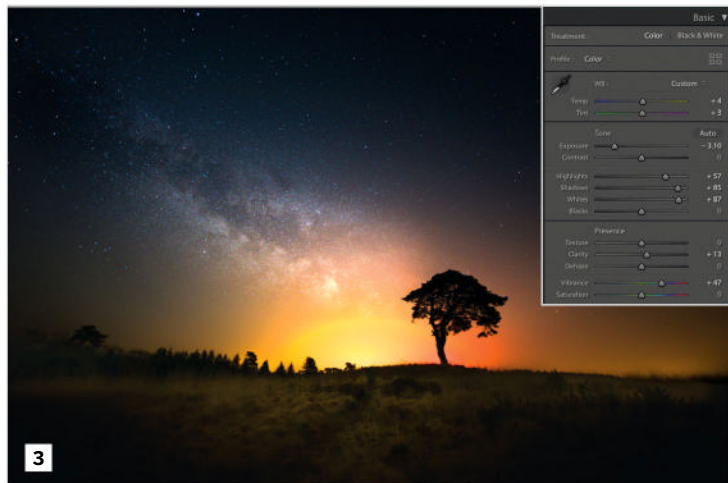




1 Import your images Bring your images into your editing software, such as Lightroom or Photoshop, and have a good look at the images you captured on the night. You may be in for a surprise to find out that even your best shot might have camera shake!



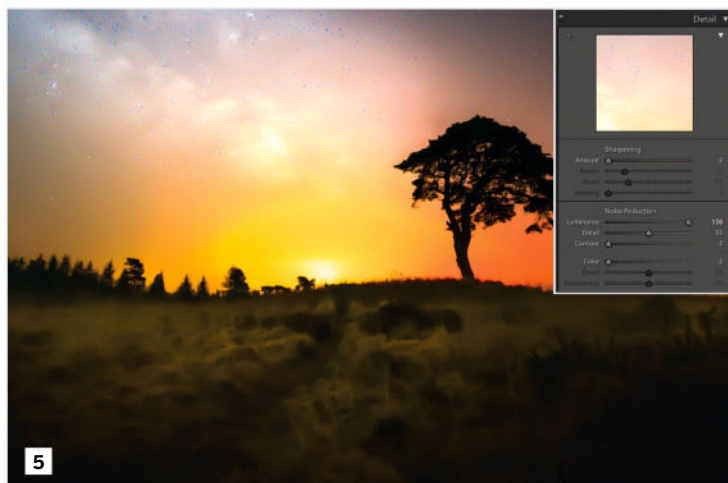
2 Adjust white balance Have a look at the details captured in the night sky and of nearby light polluted subjects. Experiment with the colour temperature and see if you can find a good balance between beautiful astro details and nearby light sources.



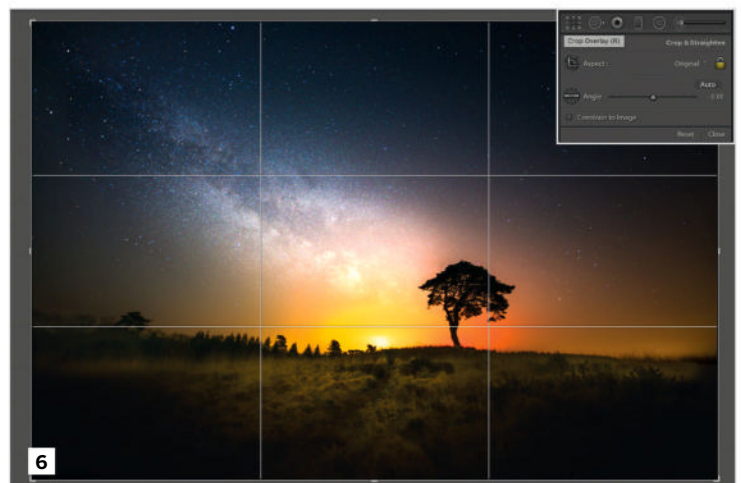
3 Adjust highlights You may notice in some of your images, regardless of the settings you have used, that areas of light pollution might still be too saturated in your shots. Reduce the harshness of these by experimenting with the Highlights slider.



4 Dodge and Burn Your camera cannot account for the intensity of some strong areas of light pollution. When necessary, use Dodge and Burn tools over light sources to control the amount of light in your final image and use HSL and Color Grading to control each tonal range.



5 Noise and Despeckle Because you are shooting in low-light environments, you may need to clean up your image. Try reducing the amount of noise in your shot, using tools like Despeckle. However, don't overdo it, or you might smudge finer details and dimmer stars.



6 Crop the image When you shoot your astro photos, you may also capture some unexpected surprises at the corner of your frames. Inspect your image for any anomalies and, if you feel that it is necessary, crop in a little before saving your final result.

Pictured

Light pollution

This image has avoided the issue of a solid black sky, but the light source on the horizon is dominating and the image is tonally flat

STUNNING STARSCAPES



BEFORE

Pictured

Light show

By applying simple steps in post-production, we are able to draw much more detail from the night sky and bring in some tonal variation

AFTER



Freeze the action

Refresh your settings knowledge to capture fast-moving subjects with precise sharpness

One of the most challenging tasks in photography is to freeze a fast-moving subject in motion, such as a racing car, a bird in flight or a plane at an air show. Taking photos in automatic mode (A) can be frustrating as the camera's settings need adjustments in exposure and focus. This means that some shots may be usable and sharp, but many will lack precision. To capture those dynamic and dramatic moments, technical knowledge and practice are the keys to success. Here, the exposure triangle comes into play, which consists of three elements: shutter speed, aperture, and ISO. These settings all have an impact on each other.

For action shots, the priority is to select a fast shutter speed, such as 1/1,000 sec, to freeze the subject. However, this also means

that less light has time to enter the sensor, resulting in a darker image. You might think that working with an open aperture (low f-stop number) would solve this problem as it enhances the brightness. The problem is that the more open the lens, the shallower the depth of field and therefore the narrower the focus area. This makes it even harder to keep the subject in focus, especially if it is moving unpredictably. Raising the ISO for brightness seems logical, but extreme values cause noise and grain, reducing the image quality in both sharpness and clarity.

By understanding the exposure triangle and by experimenting with different settings, you will learn how to freeze the moment. Fortunately, the camera's automatic modes and focus assistance can help guide you.

Insert

Blurred subject

When photographing this rapidly moving plane, the shutter speed has been set too slow, resulting in motion blur and poor image quality

Main

Captivating action

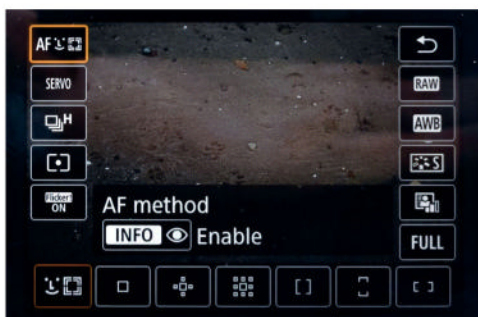
By prioritising the ideal shutter speed and activating appropriate settings, the action was captured in sharp focus, revealing even small details to the viewer



1 Choose an optic To get up close to your subject and for extra flexibility in framing, a zoom lens with a focal length of 200mm or above is probably your best bet. However, these lenses can be expensive, so renting a zoom lens for a special occasion could be a more cost-effective option to consider.

2 Clean the lens We are relying on the autofocus settings to keep up with the speed of the moving subject, so it is important to clean your lens first. This way you ensure that the AF can work accurately and won't be distracted by dirt or spots on the lens. Use a suitable microfibre cloth to clean the lens.

3 Prioritise shutter speed Select the Shutter priority mode and lock the shutter speed. Now the camera calculates an appropriate aperture and ISO value to ensure correct exposure. After doing some test shots, select M mode and experiment to put your exposure triangle knowledge into practice.



4 Set the focus To maximise your chances of getting sharp results, shoot in Servo autofocus mode. This setting tracks the subject as it moves across the frame. By selecting Continuous/Burst shooting mode, the camera takes multiple consecutive shots when you hold the shutter pressed down.



5 Control exposure When shooting in bright conditions, for example, if your subject is directly against a bright sky, using an ND filter helps to control the exposure. A filter works like sunglasses for your lens and reduces the amount of light while improving dynamic range and detail.



6 Track the subject Now it is time to capture a fast-moving subject. Get into position with your legs slightly apart and keep your attention on the subject, panning along with the movement. Take some test shots and review the results. Change your point of view occasionally to add variety to your shots.



Eliminate the blue snow tint

Meet the editing pro



James Abbott is a professional photographer and photography journalist specialising in shooting and editing techniques. His first book was recently released and covers professional image editing skills in both Adobe Photoshop and Affinity Photo. [@jamesaphoto](#) [jamesaphoto.co.uk](#)

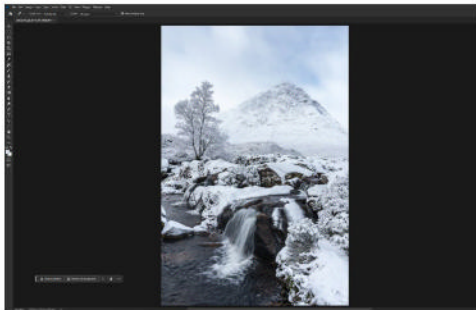
Neutralise your snowy landscapes in Photoshop for more natural colours



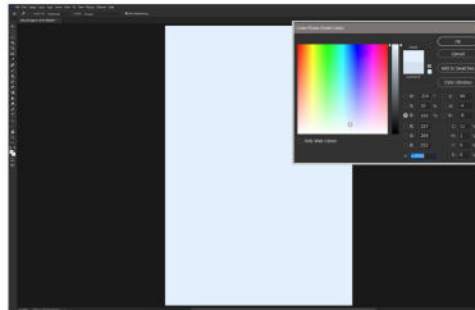
Winter is upon us, and while some parts of the UK have already seen snow, as photographers, we can only hope for more as the season progresses. Snow is a great subject that transforms landscapes, simplifying complex and often barren scenes. However, it can be tricky to edit because of the presence of a blue tint in white snow. In this tutorial, we'll look at how to neutralise that.

What you'll be using

- Eyedropper Tool
- Solid Color Adjustment Layer
- Blending modes
- Layer Opacity
- Gaussian Blur



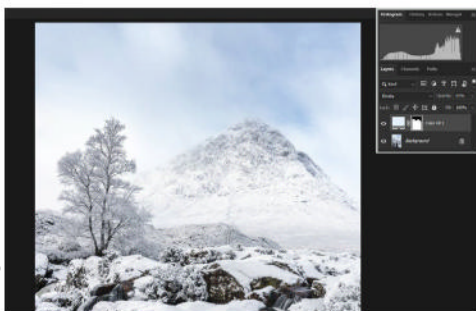
1 Sample the snow colour Select the Eyedropper Tool and make sure that it's set to 3 by 3 Average, although the Point sample also works well for snow. Next, left-click on the snow to sample the colour so it's the Foreground Color in the Color Palette, ready for the next step where we'll use this sample.



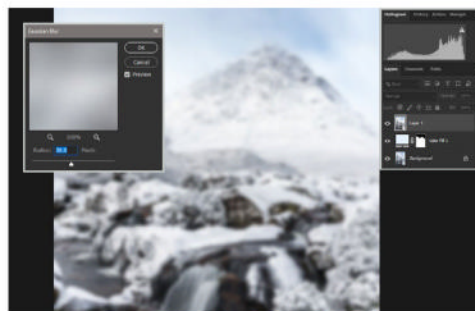
2 Create a Solid Color Layer Click on the Create new fill or adjustment layer icon at the bottom of the Layers panel and select Solid Color. When the Layer is created, it is filled with the colour sampled from the snow. Click on B at the bottom of H, S, B and type 100% before clicking OK to close the dialogue.



3 Adjust the Layer Change the Blending mode of the Layer from Normal to Divide to apply the effect. Your image will look slightly brighter as well as a little warmer. If it is too warm, reduce the Opacity to around 65 percent. This will subdue the colour and brightening effects for a more natural result.



4 Mask out the sky The sky is affected so we need to Mask out this area. Click on the Mask attached to the Solid Color Layer, press D to set the default palette colours and X to toggle between them. Bring black into the foreground and use a large soft Brush to paint over the sky. Paint white over any mistakes.



5 Add ethereal blur To finish, press Ctrl/Cmd+Shift+Alt/Option+E to merge all visible Layers to a new Layer at the top of the stack. Go to Filter > Blur > Gaussian Blur, set the Radius to 30 Pixels and hit OK. Now reduce the Opacity of this Layer to the desired amount – 25% and lower works well here.

KEY TIP

UNAVOIDABLE BRIGHTENING
This technique typically brightens images slightly, which works well with snow but can also impact on highlights and detail. To avoid this, it's best to reduce the Opacity of the Solid Color Adjustment Layer.

Insert Blue snow

Like many wintry scenes, the snow in this image has a slight blue tint. This tint can't be corrected using white balance because that will turn the snow yellow

Main White snow

Using a quick and easy technique, the blue tint of the snow has been neutralised so that the scene now appears closer to how the naked eye saw it




BEFORE



Take control of colour

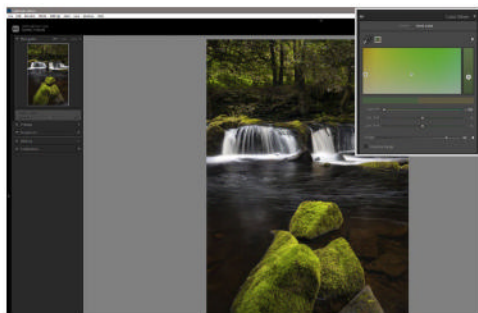
Use Lightroom's Point Color tool for creative control

 With the warmer summer months now a distant memory and also some way ahead of us in the future, you may be craving the days when you had a little more colour to play with in your landscapes.

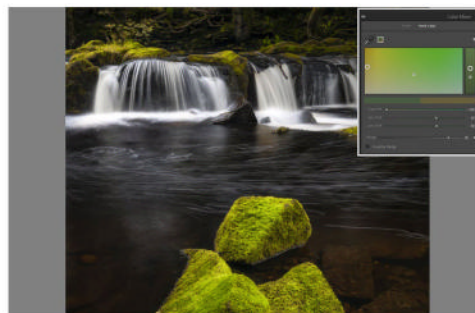
Using the Color Mixer and the new Point Color feature in Lightroom, we're going to edit a summer landscape scene to give it a more atmospheric autumnal look, where the colours take on a slightly surreal appearance.

What you'll be using

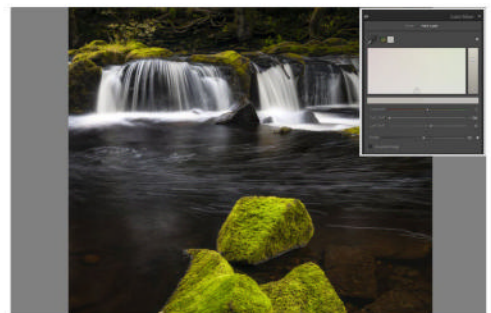
- Point Color
- Color Mixer
- Hue
- Saturation
- Luminance



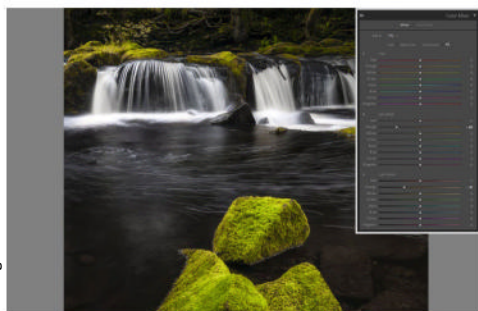
1 Select foliage After processing your RAW file, scroll down to the Color Mixer tab and click on Point Color. Click on the Eyedropper and then left-click on the desired colour in the image. Here, it was the foliage. Hue Shift was set to -100 for more yellow and Range was set to 85 to expand the colour range.



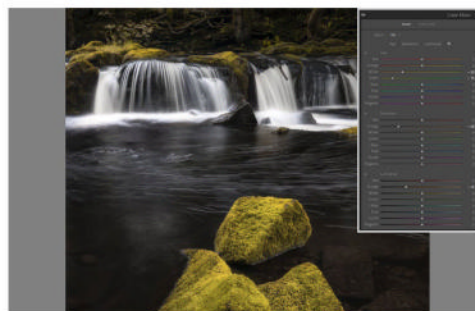
2 Adjust Saturation We can now make further adjustments to the way this colour range appears in terms of saturation and luminance/brightness. Dragging the sliders left reduces and to the right, increases. For this image, Sat. Shift and Lum. Shift were both set to -100 while Lum. Shift was set to 11 to brighten up slightly without burning out the highlights.



3 Neutralise the water Select the Eyedropper and select a different colour range. Here, I left-clicked and selected the white part of the waterfall so I could remove the yellow in the water. Sat. Shift was set to -100 while Lum. Shift was set to 11 to brighten up slightly without burning out the highlights.



4 Mute the riverbed Within the Color Mixer tab, click on Mixer and then all to show Hue, Saturation and Luminance controls together. Here you can adjust individual colour channels. For this image, the focus was on the orange riverbed, where Orange Saturation was set to -60 and Orange Luminance to -41.



5 Tweak the foliage further Here, you can make further targeted adjustments to any of the colour channels using the Color Mixer or go back to Point Color. For this image, the Hue for Yellow was set to -50 and Green to -75 to make the foliage more yellow than possible with only the Point Color controls.

KEY TIP

STACK POINT COLOR ADJUSTMENTS

When using the Point Color Tool, every time you click on a colour in the image with the Eye Dropper, a new swatch is created for making adjustments so you can tweak multiple colour ranges.

Insert A summer scene

The deep greens in this scene make it an unmistakably summer image but there's scope to shift the foliage colour in one of two directions.

Main Surreal autumn

The shift towards warmer and more yellow foliage colour has created a slightly surreal autumnal look to this otherwise predictable landscape

AFTER




BEFORE





Adapt iconic colour palettes

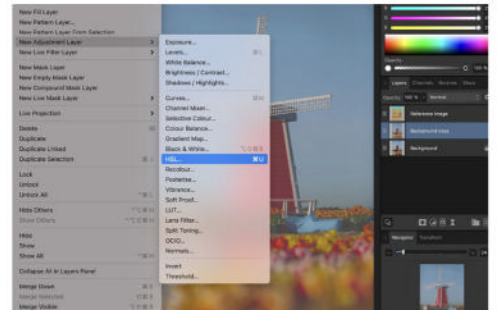
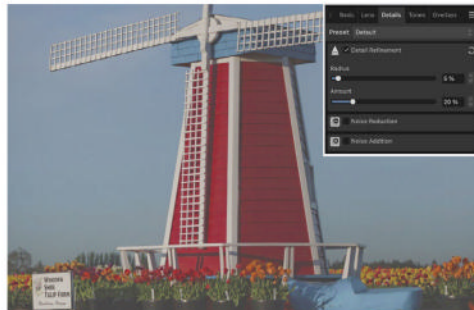
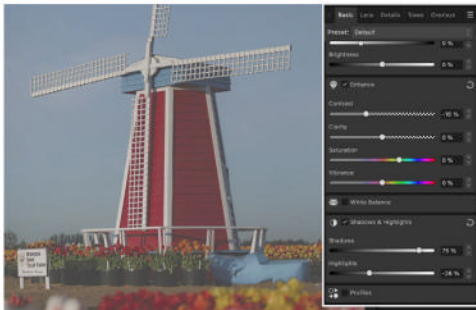
Make your colours pop like a Wes Anderson film

 Movies often create a mood through a unique colour palette and colour grading. For example, Wes Anderson's *Asteroid City* became a sensation on social media, thanks to its striking colour

scheme that leaves a lasting impression on viewers. This has inspired other creatives to adapt a similar colour scheme to their own images, allowing them to display everyday scenes in a different visual aesthetic.

What you'll be using

- Develop Persona
- Exposure and Detail settings
- HSL Shift Adjustment layer
- Hue, Saturation and Luminosity Shift



1 Adapt basic settings Start by adding a new layer to copy in a reference image from the movie. This makes it easier to compare and ensure the colours are accurate. Select the Background layer and open Develop Persona. Work on the Basics and decrease the contrast and highlights while increasing the shadows.

2 Increase saturation and details To achieve this iconic colour scheme, use the saturation slider to intensify the colours. As we decreased the contrast, open the Enhance section to restore lost details. Under the Detail refinement setting, choose a small radius and percentage amount to avoid over-sharpening.

3 Work on hues After developing the image, add an HSL Shift Adjustment layer – you will find the specific colours under the wheel. First, adapt the hues. Decrease the Yellow and Red hues slightly, while increasing the Blue and Aqua hues. If you are unsure about the settings, open the reference image to use it as a guide.



4 Adapt saturation Use the Saturation Shift slider to adjust saturation, paying particular attention to the sky – a crucial element in Wes Anderson movies. Boost the Blue and Aqua tones, particularly Aqua. Decrease the Yellow and Red values until the overall colours match the desired theme.

5 Refine luminance As a final touch, adjust the Luminosity slider. Decrease the values for Aqua and Blue to enhance the depth of the sky. For greater depth, you can use the Dodge and Burn tools to create a subtle gradient. Compare the tones with your reference image and adjust the settings if necessary.

KEY TIP

GO BEYOND AND BUILD YOUR STYLE
This style allows for plenty of creativity and experimentation so feel free to push the boundaries and explore all the possibilities. Above all, have fun with the process, there is no such thing as 'too much' editing. This will also assist you in developing your own colour palette for future projects.

Insert

A documentation

The image accurately portrays the scene with natural colours in a documentary style but it lacks the visually striking hues that make it unique and attention-grabbing

Main

Distinctive look


As a result of the colour grading, the image has taken on a distinctive appearance with a colour palette that resembles a Wes Anderson film



BEFORE

SHOOT, REMIND, REPEAT

Create unique card products to enhance and promote your services

 As a photographer running a business, it can be quite a challenge to keep in touch with existing clients while attempting to attract new customers. However, it is crucial to maintain existing relationships, helping you earn repeat business from previous customers and demonstrating your versatility by showing off the full range of your services.

To run a successful photography business, it is not enough to reach out to the general population; you also need to target specific individuals. This is where personal contact comes

in handy. One of the best ways to stay in touch with your clients is by sending out a newsletter. This can be a good tool to keep your clients updated on your latest projects and services. They are also a great way to showcase your work and keep your clients engaged.

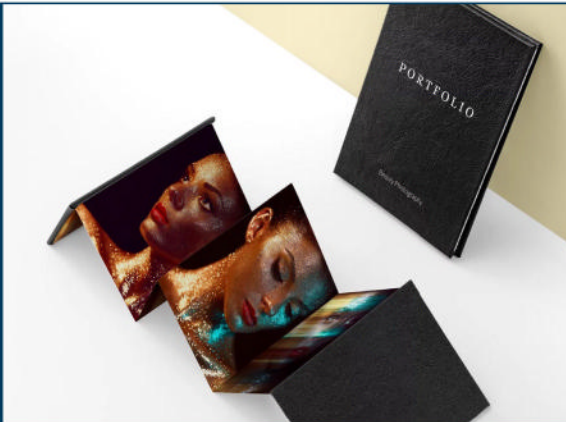
While digital files could be one way to approach this, printed products can take your work to the next level. In today's digital world, printed products offer something different, adding a more personal touch to your photography business.

Conclusion
It is important to choose a provider that offers various thicknesses of printing material. The type of paper is an indication of high quality so making the correct choice should be one of your top priorities. Saal Digital is one such provider that offers cards and leporello in a paper strength of 300g/m². You can choose from three optic types – Classic, Structured and Pearl – to create products that will make a lasting impression.

Create a portable mini-portfolio

Capture your creativity and showcase it in a unique way with a Hardcover Mini Leporello. This innovative product allows you to create a mini portfolio and store your best work safely and securely. The smart design and leporello layout (a type of parallel or concertina fold) make it the perfect tool to show potential clients the whole range of your work in one document.

Websites and Instagram accounts may be run-of-the-mill, but a Hardcover Mini Leporello is a stylish way to showcase your skills and leave a lasting impression. Take some to trade fairs or exhibitions and let your work speak for itself.



Expand your services

If you have a photo shoot scheduled for an engaged couple or a newborn baby, why not ask your clients whether they would like special invitations printed for the forthcoming wedding or the baby's first birthday?

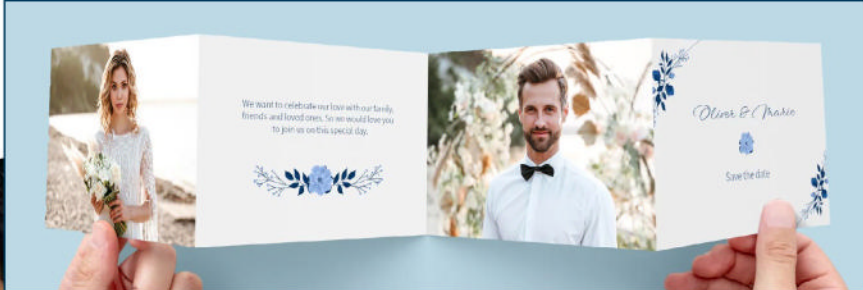
Offering customised invitation cards featuring the images you are taking anyway means you can provide something truly unique. With this, you earn more income for minimum effort, while your customers will appreciate the convenience of crossing another task off their to-do list. Not only does this save your clients time, but it also ensures they receive top-notch print and paper products.



Eye-catching presentations

A mini Leporello with a soft cover is a great and stylish way to present your services and is perfect for when you need to combine visual work and important information in one place. The mini Leporello format lets you present your images alongside written text, giving a refined and sophisticated look without seeming too commercial.

It's also lightweight and easy to send to clients who are interested in finding out more about your services and pricing or simply lay them out around your studio for visitors. The mini Leporello layout is suitable for events that require text, such as wedding invitations – the shape and size give it an ornamental and high-quality look.



Send a 'thank you' note

After completing a project or shoot, sending a personal note in the form of a card is a thoughtful way to show your appreciation for the work. However, designing these cards from scratch can be challenging as you want to choose images that will make the card stand out. It is important not to overload the card, instead, choose one highlight photo and one or two supporting ones. Saal Digital's online configurator allows you to effortlessly customise the cards to your taste, including the format, text, images and type of paper, giving you a preview of the end result.



A thoughtful reminder


Consider sending a postcard to previous clients to remind them of your past collaborations, especially when planning upcoming photography sessions. The classic postcard size is 10x15mm (4x6in), but Saal Digital also offers a larger size of 13x18mm (5x7in). The beauty of a postcard is that it doesn't require an envelope and your photography is immediately visible when it enters the recipient's mailbox. It's a thoughtful reminder that may eventually end up on a fridge or office noticeboard, where friends and colleagues can see it.

GO PRO



START YOUR PHOTO BLOG

Connect with clients, build a following and maintain creative motivation with a successful business blog

 A blog now seems like a standard feature of most creatives' websites. Go back to around 2010 and a blog page was seen as essential if you wanted to portray yourself as a successful photographer. In the pre-Instagram world, come rain or shine, tapping out a few hundred words after every shoot became a staple of the content creator's day.

Writing isn't everybody's favourite task, however, and for many visual artists, it soon became a chore. On top of this, many photographers began writing a blog without any real direction or purpose, choosing to do it simply because everyone else was doing one. Running a blog is no easy feat, so it is

important that if you do choose to set one up it represents a profitable use of your time.

Today, social media is all about rapid output and continuous turnover. If you're used to running an Instagram account, the pace of maintaining a successful photo blog can take some adjustment. It's less about the quantity of content and far more focused on quality and depth. Posts must contain a significant text component and balance the impact of the featured images.

Here, we have some advice on how often you should post, the type of content that works best for blogging and how targeting your content towards the right audience can help further your photoshoot bookings.

Catch up on our career features



ISSUE 273: DIVERSIFY YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY



ISSUE 274: PART-TIME PHOTOGRAPHY

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Pictured **Natural workflow**

Blogging is an important part of putting your style out there for the world to see but needn't be a chore.

With planning, it can be seamlessly integrated into your photography schedule

GO PRO

Below

Make a schedule

Organise your schedule to make blogging feel like part of your work. Plan which events will make good subjects and build in time to write about them

Bottom

Material that matters

Keep images and content relevant to the topics you are focusing on and make sure they complement each other in your blog posts. Write about shoots that matter to you

Tone of voice

Much like your photographic style, the way you write will also resonate with your audience. People will return to a blog if the tone of voice is appealing to them and, importantly, is consistent. Make sure you start writing in a way that reflects your personality. This might seem counter-intuitive, especially if you're a person who has strong opinions or likes joking around, as the temptation will be to present a false sense of professional formality, but whether readers are looking to do business with you or simply enjoy your content with a coffee at the weekend, they will form an impression of who you are. It's no good pretending to be formal and quiet if this isn't you, as it will be disorientating for anyone who might eventually meet or work with you in person.

Pick your platform

While the choice of photo-sharing social media is somewhat limited to Instagram and perhaps some of the up-and-coming players like Vero and Clickasnap, there are a plethora of blog-hosting websites. The main website builders, including Zenfolio, Wix and Squarespace, all provide blogging features. The advantages of hosting your blog on your main photo website are that you can more easily link to photos in your galleries and share content between pages, without leaving the site. Having a 'Blog' tab in the menu of your site also means visitors don't have to navigate away from it to an external location, interrupting their browsing journey. Ultimately, you want them to spend as much time as possible on the site through which you sell or promote most of your work. Other sites such as Blogger (blogger.com) and WordPress (wordpress.com) are popular choices if you don't already have a dedicated photo website.

Text and image balance

You more than likely think of yourself as a photographer before a writer and that's absolutely fine. It's for this reason that getting the proportions of text and image content on your blog correct is critical. People visit a photo blog because they want to see great images, but also to learn the story behind them and get a glimpse into the photographer's world. If you've shot them correctly, your images should speak for themselves so don't waste words describing everything about them. Provide alternatives to those featured in your main galleries – perhaps others from the same shoot – ensure they are of a high quality and then provide a narrative into how and why you shot them. Start with around 500 to 800 words, pushing this up to 1,500 for longer, less frequent posts about big shoots and travel experiences. This gives your images room to breathe while showing Google you have authority, improving your SEO.





© Wenbin photo/Getty Images

Pictured **Include BTS shots**

Know your audience – many photographers will want to see behind-the-scenes images of your shoot, so plan ahead and capture multiple options to take viewers behind your main shots

Tag your content

Just like you do when uploading images to Instagram and other photo-sharing apps, tagging is vitally important if you want the maximum number of people possible to see your content. Most blog builders provide fields to populate with keywords, so make sure you fill these out before publishing your posts. It's just as vital to keep tags relevant to the content on the page, so scan through your text when proofreading it to pick out the main themes and standout subjects. If you're writing about a specific camera model or brand, or a particular genre of photography, use these as keywords. Pick the main topic as a primary keyword, ensuring it appears two or three times throughout the post, and make a list of as many secondary keywords as you feel comfortably describe the narrative of the text.

Point to other content

Your blog has to work for you and your business if you have one, so its main function should be to redirect viewers to places where they can view your images, buy prints and book shoots. If you're writing about landscape photography at a certain location, link to a post about the last time you were there. If you're finally travelling to a bucket list destination, write a 'hub' post about where you'd like to go and link to this every time you tick one off. In a post about how well a shoot went, link to a page on your website where viewers can buy featured images or book a similar type of shoot. Don't forget to link to external locations too, such as a post on a camera brand's website or another photographer whose work you admire and who has visited the same location.

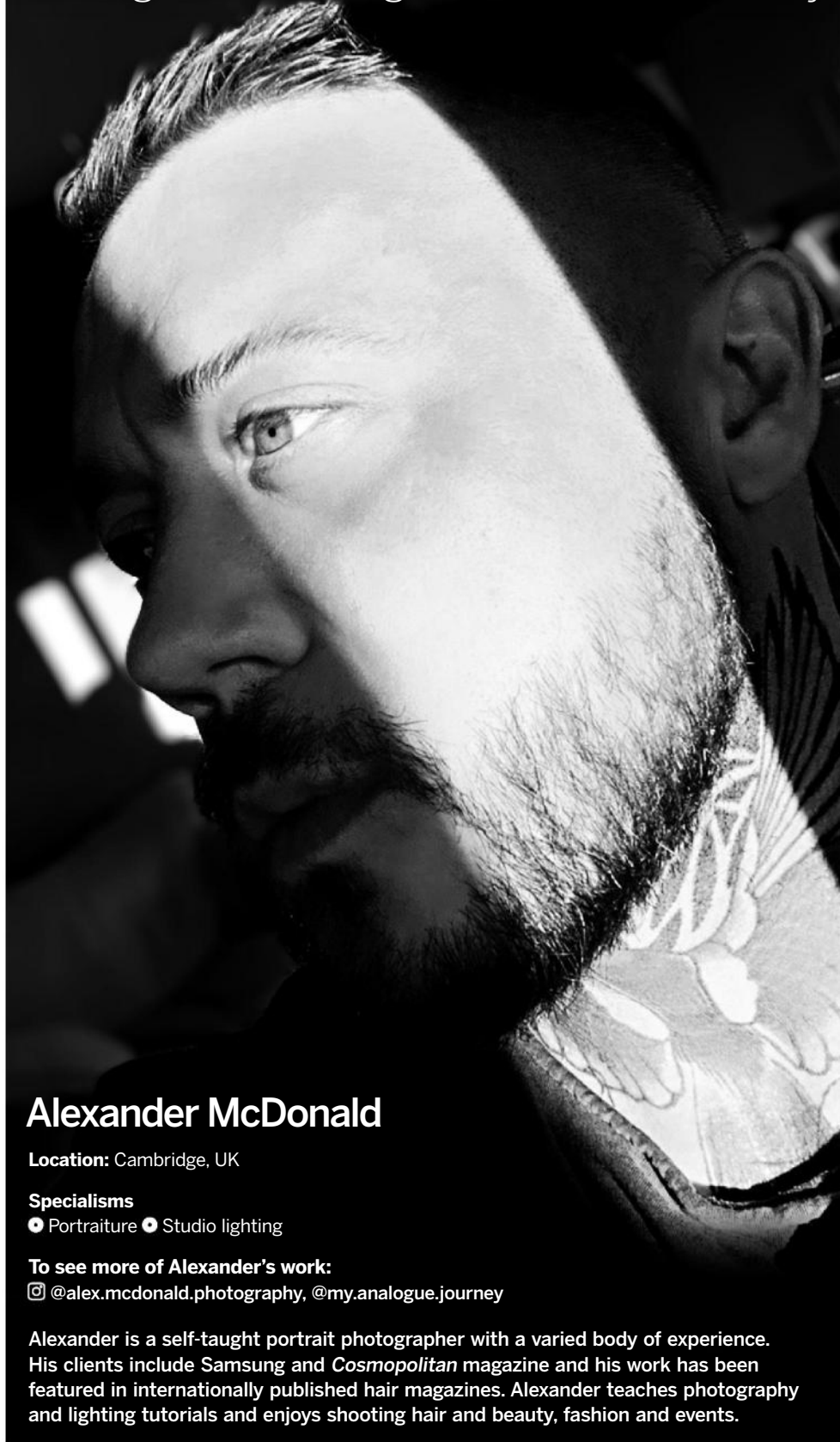
Pictured **Cross-platform success**

People will read your blog on a variety of devices. Make the flow of your posts easy to follow, breaking up large paragraphs with images to reduce scrolling on mobile



Photo CV

We profile an expert photographer's career journey for insight on becoming established in the industry



Alexander McDonald

Location: Cambridge, UK

Specialisms

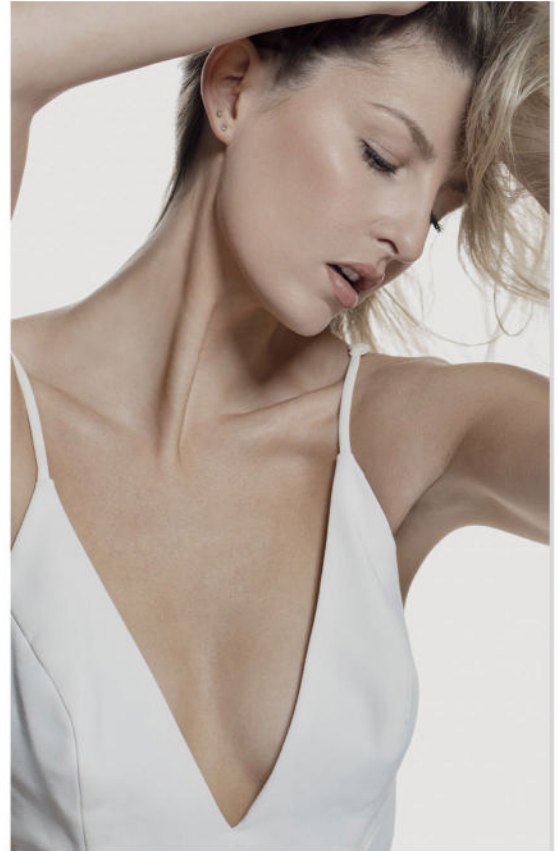
● Portraiture ● Studio lighting

To see more of Alexander's work:

Instagram @alex.mcdonald.photography, @my.analogue.journey

Alexander is a self-taught portrait photographer with a varied body of experience. His clients include Samsung and *Cosmopolitan* magazine and his work has been featured in internationally published hair magazines. Alexander teaches photography and lighting tutorials and enjoys shooting hair and beauty, fashion and events.

© Alexander McDonald



Hair today

Alexander began by photographing portraiture, which led to his career of shooting mainly hair and beauty



Expanding portfolio

"I adore portraiture but felt my work could grow, so I've recently gone back to university to study photography"



Left

Confidence

"Be confident in what you can bring to the table when working with a client. Be realistic with your expectations and help manage theirs too"

Below left

Understanding

"Consider how you want the end product to look and what process it would take to get there"

Below

Communication

"Artistic visions can be hard to communicate. It's important to have a strong idea of what the client is looking for"



Alexander's gear

The essential kit for a professional portrait photographer



CANON EOS 5D MARK IV

"The resolution is essential when working on images that require high amounts of detail. The low-light performance is also wonderful"



CANON EF 85MM F/1.2 L USM

"This lens performs excellently in both the studio and outdoor locations," says Alexander of this ultra-wide-aperture standard prime optic



CANON EF 100MM F/2.8L MACRO IS USM

"I prefer to stick to this range for portraiture. Both this and the 85mm options offer fantastic resolution and contrast"



CANON EF 24-105MM F/4L IS USM

"This standard zoom is a great all-rounder for when you need something that can cover all your bases on a shoot," says Alexander

Career Path

When did you start out in your current photographic genre?

I started photographing portraiture in the early 2000s. That led to a path of mainly hair and beauty in recent years. As a self-taught photographer at a time when digital was still in its relative infancy, I felt drawn towards photographing friends and family and followed an organic route to where I am today.

What challenges did you face as a startup and how did you overcome them?

I found it became competitive quickly when digital photography took off, and now with even greater advances in technology, it's even more important to stay on top of your game and be relevant. As a startup, networking and keeping your body of work up-to-date as well as marketing yourself can be quite challenging on top of everything else that comes with running a business.

What key skills are needed for your line of work?

I'd say the ability to feel confident in what you can bring to the table. In regards to when working with a client, be realistic with your expectations of yourself and help manage theirs too. A good understanding of how you want the end product to look and what process it would take to get there. Technical ability will get you so far and artistic visions can be difficult to communicate, so it's always important to be able to work through a project with lots of inspiration, concepts and a strong idea of what the client is looking for.

Which social platforms are you on, which are your favourites and how do you use each for your business?

I use mainly Instagram for marketing my work, but I also use a website to direct my clients to view my full body of work.

What are your future plans for the business? Are there any other genres you'd like to try or expand into?

I've actually recently gone back to university as a mature student to study photography at degree level at Anglia Ruskin University. I found that whilst I adore portraiture, I felt that my work could grow. I now take on more personal projects and enjoy working on other creative photographic practices, such as analogue photography, as well as shooting different styles of imagery.

How would you describe your style and what are your main influences?

I have traditionally stuck to a commercial style but as I progress, I have found that my style isn't linear and it's developing. I recently did a personal project, inspired by the works of Martin Schoeller's celebrity portraits, that demonstrates the depth of human emotion.

Career advice

This month, **Claire Gillo** has advice on making it in wildlife photography and exhibiting work online

Online exhibition

I'm interested in putting together an online exhibition of my photography. What are the best platforms for doing this?

Hannah Jones

Exhibiting your work online is a great thing to do and you can reach a worldwide audience with a few clicks of a button. During the pandemic lockdowns, this way of exhibiting became far more popular due to the fact no one could go anywhere. However, even now, there is still a strong market for exhibiting online and it can open up many new possibilities.

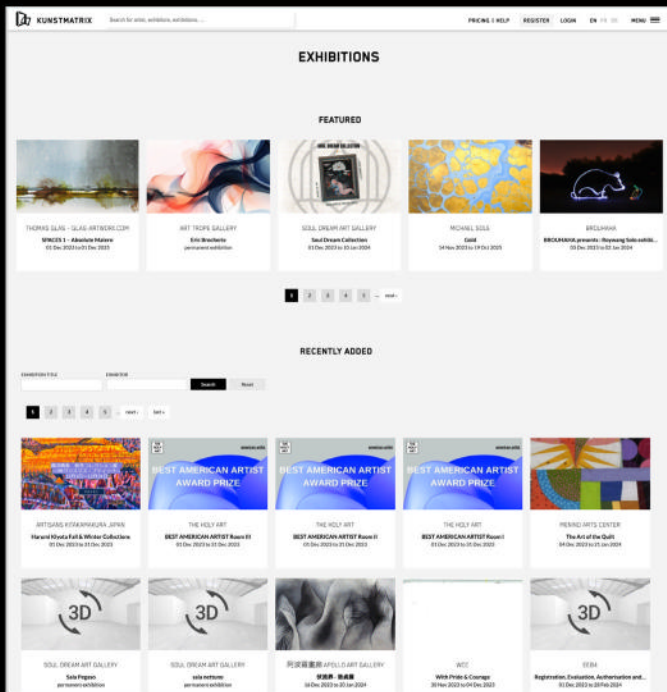
There are many platforms out there that host a virtual 3D gallery and they vary in price and what they offer. We've done a quick roundup of a few of our favourites here.

■ **Kunstmatrix** Start with a free trial to see if it fits your needs. Thereafter, the cheapest package is £10 (\$12) per month. This one Charlotte Bellamy uses (see her interview on the next page). kunstmatrix.com/en

■ **Exhibit** The solo gallery starts at £8 (\$10) per month. This platform has lots of different exhibition spaces and finishes. exhibit.com

■ **ArtPlacer** For just £9 (\$11) per month (billed annually) you can choose from up to 20 custom frames and up to three virtual exhibitions. artplacer.com

■ **Artsteps** Free of charge for the basic package, ArtSteps also has four paid services – the Private Space, the Custom 3D, the Curatorial and the 3D Virtual Events service. artsteps.com



Platforms like Kunstmatrix can host your online photographic exhibitions

Wildlife wonder

I'm an amateur photographer who loves animals. One day, I'd love to become a wildlife photographer but I am completely unsure of how you even do that as a profession. Do you have any advice?

Jason Halls

Wildlife photography is a difficult genre from which to make a living and though we can offer you some general advice, you have to create your own path and make opportunities for yourself.

As a wildlife photographer, first and foremost you need a love of wildlife and a passion for helping the planet, using your photography skills to tell stories and educate people about issues such as climate change, hunting and extinction. Publications such as *National Geographic* are far more likely to pick up a body of work that educates as well as looks visually engaging.



© Getty Images/Mark Bridger

Think about how you can use photography to record the wildlife around you and tell stories

So where should you begin? Think local to your area. You don't have to travel halfway around the world to become a wildlife photographer. Even in the city, there is plenty of wildlife and lots of stories to tell. Scout for local groups such as litter pickers and document them cleaning up spaces – tell their stories and the wildlife they are helping. To get your name out there, you can provide your images to charities – for free to begin with if you are happy to do this. If you are going to succeed, you have to really believe in what you are doing and be passionate about it.

Best camera for video and stills

I want to mix my photography up and venture into videography, but my current camera isn't up to scratch on the video front. What mirrorless camera would you recommend for those wanting to shoot stills and film?

Anonymous

The first model on your list should be the Panasonic Lumix S5II. It comes with a full-frame sensor and class-leading 5-axis in-body image stabilisation. The Phase Hybrid autofocus system is also spectacular but for video, the 4K/60p 4:2:2 10-bit recording internally, S&Q 4K/60p (a high-speed 60fps) and FHD/180p, as well as up to 6K, full sensor readout video recording, makes it a versatile camera. The S5II costs around £1,700 but for something

cheaper, the Fujifilm X-S20 is another good option at around £1,150. This mid-range mirrorless model boasts a 6K30P open-gate video in 4:2:2 10-bit, making it excellent value for money.

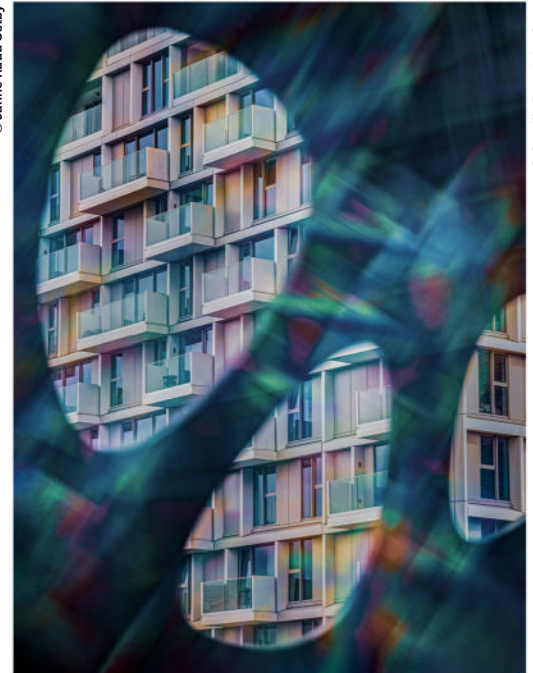
Remember, video takes up lots more space on your memory card or hard drive compared with stills, so you'll need to invest in some storage solutions. Good luck!



The Lumix S5II is a great buy for those wanting to shoot both stills and video



© Janne Rrud Ostby



© Camilla Rutayisire Gore

These images will be featured in Charlotte's online exhibition 'My Journey – My project', which runs from 19 December until 29 February 2024

How do I curate an online exhibition?

Creative landscape photographer and mentor **Charlotte Bellamy** reveals how she put together an online exhibition for a group of nine photographers



Hi Charlotte, tell us more about the online exhibition you curated

The exhibition 'My Journey – My Project' runs from 19 December until 29 February 2024 online. The

exhibition was the result of a year-long project of a group I was mentoring. During the year, we covered a range of skills including how to write an artist statement and how to curate a set of images from a bigger body of work. Every individual exhibiting has followed their own path and the selection of images you see is just the tip of the iceberg of their projects.

How did you come up with the idea?

The idea to have an exhibition came about as I saw each individual's work bloom and develop. I was so proud of the work that was being produced and the commitment and passion I was seeing from each of them that I felt it would be a lovely way to complete the course. The end-of-year exhibition will continue to be a part of the year-long project mentoring group and anyone joining the group can look forward to being part of it. If you are interested in knowing more about the course, you can find more information on my website (details at the end of the interview).

Going forward, I can't wait to curate my own exhibition with my own images. I am in the process of publishing a book as part of

a three-year project and an online exhibition will form part of that release.

How do you curate an online exhibition?

I'd seen a couple of online exhibitions during Covid and loved them. There are numerous online providers, so it was a laborious process researching each one but, in the end, I chose Kunstmatrix because of the flexibility and options. It has been an enjoyable but massive learning curve to curate. It's a completely different level of responsibility to showcase other people's work, rather than just your own. Working with nine individuals meant it was important for each to have an equal share of the space, but rather than trying to make them all match each other, I embraced their differences and left the final selection of images up to each individual.

Essential to delivering the exhibition were clear deadlines, as these not only gave me a structure to work with, but it also meant I had everyone's commitment. The last stage of the curation was to have a one-to-one with each person and make any final adjustments. Every single project is presented differently because each individual has their own input.

The process has not been difficult, but it has been one that requires commitment, vision and passion. My aim was for every photographer to have their story of the year on the wall. The exhibition was never about me, it was about showcasing their work.

What are the pros and cons of displaying your work this way?

Online exhibiting offers photographers from all over the world the opportunity to share their work, plus I love the interactive platform. Being able to walk around the rooms, go up to images or view them from afar as if you were standing in front of them is unique. The only negative is that nothing can replace standing in a real gallery and looking at original prints.

Tell me more about the opening night...

I wanted to make it like a real gallery opening, so many of the photographers gave a talk over Zoom about their projects. It's still available on my YouTube channel if you wish to view it.

What tips would you give to those reading this who are thinking of curating their own online exhibition?

Forward planning is key, and I allowed a timeline of about three months for this one. This gave individuals enough time to pull their chosen work together and for me to organise, check, consult, recheck and check again! Having a clear idea of why you want to hold an exhibition and the end goal is invaluable. It has been a long but worthwhile process and I wouldn't hesitate to do it all again.

For more info on Charlotte's online workshops, visit: charlottebellamy.com View the online exhibition at shorturl.at/gkEOW and YouTube @[charlottebellamycreativephotography](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)

To find out more go to charlottebellamy.com and follow on Instagram @[charlottebellamyholland](https://www.instagram.com/charlottebellamyholland) and on YouTube @[charlottebellamycreativephotography](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)

WHY SHOTS WORK

Name: Midas's Dream

Date: August 2022

Kit:

- Sony A7
- Laowa 60mm f/2.8 macro
- Focal length: 60mm

Instagram: @p.yo_photography



“Photography can change the world and the world is in desperate need for change.”

Macro details

“To achieve this shot, I had to experiment a little before I got it right,” Panagiotis explains. “I didn’t want to sacrifice too much of the contrast and details.” He applied a technique known as focus-stacking, which involves capturing multiple images with various focus points and merging them during post-processing. “At this magnification, f/2.8 covers a minimal part of the subject,” he says. By using this method, Panagiotis has presented a comprehensive view of the subject matter, highlighting every detail with precision.

Panagiotis Dalagiorgos



Panagiotis is an award-winning photographer from Greece, who specialises in nature and macro photography. He bought his first

camera and macro lens during the pandemic lockdowns in 2020 and has been photographing the small wonders of nature ever since. He recently started working as a professional photographer in other genres, but says that nature photography will always be his first love.

Shallow DOF

By working with an extreme open aperture of f/2.8, Panagiotis created a shallow depth of field. “That helped me to isolate the subject from its surroundings, contributing to the sense of depth in the frame,” he explains. “It also worked better with the flaring effect.” When working with low f-stop values, the focus area within the frame becomes much narrower. Therefore, it is advisable to view the image by zooming in at 100 percent on the screen to ensure that the intended elements remain sharp.



Illuminating backlight

"I used natural lighting to illuminate my subject and took advantage of the golden hour for the colours. I used the smaller branches to create a sense of depth in my frame," Panagiotis explains. To underline this effect, he cropped them fairly tightly, so that the branch the mantis is on stands out. But this was not his only goal. "I wanted to create some flaring in my lens for a more dreamy effect," he says. "I was inspired by the story of King Midas, who turned everything he touched into gold. But in my story, he was dreaming of a golden world over which he ruled. So I wanted to evoke a feeling of solitude in this golden world for the viewer."

Rule of thirds

Macro photography shows the small and often unseen wonders of our world but for Panagiotis, it goes even further. "It is a means of expressing my feelings and pushes me to be creative in my compositions. My subjects are usually not that easy for humans to relate to, so I have to think outside the ordinary to evoke some feelings in the viewer." To create a powerful composition, Panagiotis placed the subject on the right of the frame and applied the rule of thirds. "By placing the subject there, it faces towards the left of the frame. Smaller branches indicate that there could be further elements outside the frame that the mantis is looking towards," he explains.

INTERVIEW

TONAL ISOLATION

In his latest work, **Alan Schaller** captures monochrome urban landscapes to highlight the idea of being lost in the modern world

Words by: Kim Bunermann

All images © Alan Schaller

Alan Schaller



Alan Schaller is a London-based photographer who specialises in black-and-white photography. His work is known for incorporating elements of

surrealism, geometry and high contrast while exploring the realities and diversities of human life. Alan is the co-founder of the Street Photography International Collective (SPi) and also an ambassador for Leica cameras. His work has been published and exhibited internationally, and he has collaborated with prominent brands such as Apple, Nokia, Huawei and Philips. In addition to his photography, Alan has written articles for *The Independent*.

alanschaller.com

[@alanschaller](https://www.instagram.com/alanschaller)

Pictured

Florence, 2017

A natural spotlight becomes part of the architecture, emphasising the lone figure within the concrete landscape



Pictured
Budapest, 2018
 Schaller has shifted his focus from capturing faces and expressions to observing how his subjects operate in the urban environment

Alan Schaller's photography journey began while he was still pursuing a career in music production. However, he decided to express his creative vision through the camera lens rather than a mixing desk. With a precise sense of light and composition and a keen eye for capturing fleeting moments with a narrative, Schaller soon established himself in the industry. Starting with a series of images taken on the London Underground, he later photographed people on the streets of cities such as New York and Tokyo.

As one of the co-founders of the Street Photography International Collective (SPI), Schaller is passionate about promoting talented and unrepresented photographers. He enjoys sharing his knowledge with aspiring photographers through his YouTube video tutorials, giving an insight into various techniques. We met up with Alan to find out how to capture that perfect moment and also spoke to him about the inspiration behind his new book *Metropolis*, published by teNeues, in which Schaller uses minimalistic images of urban architecture to visualise the idea of being isolated and lost in the modern world.

Street photography is known as an unpredictable genre but how unpredictable is it in your opinion?

Yes, it's unpredictable – but I think the more experienced you get, the more you can try and, not necessarily predict, but pre-visualise what might happen. I tend to try and control as much of the image as I can. There are controllable factors, for example, where I am standing to frame the scene. I always ask myself what could happen – or what is it I want to see happening? As I progressed through my career, I've learned what I want and what I don't want. It helps cut down the randomness of the street and gives me a better chance of achieving a decent picture as well as some sort of consistency. For example, let's say we're on the London Underground, there's a lovely stairway and the lighting is

perfect. I'll stand there and wait for a person to enter the scene. If the wall is white, I am waiting for a person wearing dark clothes, if the wall is dark, I will wait for someone wearing light colours to arrive.

Have you ever missed capturing the moment? Or do you always carry a camera with you?

I used to joke that the only places I wouldn't go with the camera were in the sea or in the shower, but now I have a waterproof one, so I can do that too. Sometimes, I go out and don't even plan to shoot but it ends in capturing stuff that happens. However, it's not a burden, I love it. I've always said that I'm extremely lucky that I've made this into a career and if it wasn't, I would still be looking for these things. Being with non-

“A friend said the images look like people being dwarfed by the world around them, like they're oppressed by the architecture. I felt I could identify with that message”

ALAN SCHALLER

Main
London, 2018

One of the first images that inspired Schaller's book *Metropolis* was this photo, taken from the Tate, titled 'Pest Control'





Left

London, 2018

The more we explore the streets, the more we discover new angles and hidden places that have always been there but often go unnoticed

Main

New York City, 2018

By removing details from the person's face, the anonymous silhouette becomes an integral part of the environment, which is shaped by light, shadow and geometric elements

photographers on the street is a slightly different matter. I always have a Kindle in my bag to give them something to do in the meantime, and to show them that I've thought of them. My camera is always there, always on – it's not just for show. I keep it on and pre-focus to 1.2 metres. I identify the scene first and then I do something I call fishing. It's like being a fisherman instead of a hunter. I drop the line in and wait for the big fish, whereas a hunter would stalk around. It's always worth having the camera there.

What are the kinds of things that trigger your photographic instinct?

I remember when I was younger I was on a date and this lady was not very happy with me

because I was obsessed with this table next to us. It was interesting and had really nice lighting, so I feel I'm aware of everything that's going on around me. It's hard to explain but once I start seeing it, I am focused and driven to it. I use a lot of everyday objects in my photography, so there is a lot that can make me stop and trigger the thought that there is a photo here. I think it's a skill to observe and analyse the surroundings like that. That's what has become clear to me as I am getting into fashion photography now. However, sometimes it's funny what gets me to press the shutter button. When I was in India, we were going to a spectacular temple, but the best scenes I captured were on the way there and on the way back. It's the most unexpected

times, the little moments that happen. The same happened in Paris at the Eiffel Tower. I was at a hotspot from where everyone photographs the tower. I turned around and there was a staircase so I took this picture. It has nothing to do with the Eiffel Tower but it's my favourite shot that I've taken there.

What was your first camera when you started the journey?

One of my first cameras was a Canon 70D. It was a cheap option but it had too many features. Then I made the decision to get a Leica – for me, that's the ultimate camera brand. I'm interested in things that are well-made, regardless of what it is. I couldn't really afford one at the time but managed to



Below left
Seoul, 2019
Schaller deliberately doesn't name his photographic works, allowing people to view them without any preconceptions

Below
Ōita, 2019
Schaller's book *Metropolis* begins with his darkest images and ends up with the lightest, creating a unique gradient of brightness



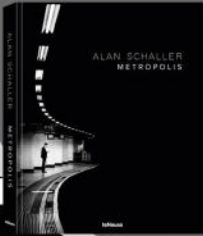
INTERVIEW

Pictured **Singapore, 2019**

The negative space creates a contrast between the people and their surroundings, highlighting the sense of urban isolation

METROPOLIS

Alan Schaller's *Metropolis* book elevates cityscapes to an art form, playing with light and perspective. It features 150 black-and-white images from some of the most visited cities in the world. *Metropolis* is published by teNeues, priced £75 /\$100.



Pictured **London, 2016**

One of Schaller's earliest projects was a series exploring the tubes and tunnels of the London Underground

Pictured
Ascot, 2019
The symmetry of the surroundings is as much in the centre as in the similarities of the two people featured

ALAN SCHALLER

get enough money to buy one. It was such a crazy thing to do. I'd just got a mortgage and then spent like £9,000 on a camera and lens for a hobby. I felt sick, like actually physically sick. I didn't open the box for a couple of days so I could still take it back. I was worried and wanted to earn the money back. I thought I could help with a few weddings – but I wasn't thinking about making a career. But it turned out to be probably one of the single best decisions I've ever made in my life. After that, things started going quickly for me and it was all organic. I was doing as much photography as I could while I was still working full-time in music. I bought a Leica M Monochrom Typ246, then an M10 monochrom and now I'm working with the M11 monochrom.

What is the best part of photographing with a monochrome camera?

I've got used to the M's stylish shooting. I'm spoiled with my monochrome sensors – colour sensors don't really do it for me, or at least, it's a fight. I'm used to this way of shooting. Having the tonality, the black and white look but also the highlight retention is what I like. It's a huge thing because I do a lot of backlight shooting, so it gives me different options on how to expose a scene. On digital, you have to nail this and under-expose a lot, whereas film reacts a little differently. When the subject is backlit, you get some lower levels of contrast compared with digital and when a scene would suit that more than I am doing it. It's not essential but it's the things to consider to fine-tune the look I want.

Would you say that it is essential for a photographer to be in total harmony with their equipment?

Some people say the camera isn't important, that it's all about the photographer, but I think this is a stupid way of looking at it. Ask a professional chef if being dropped in a random kitchen is good for them, probably not. Anyway, it's that kind of thing. Yes, I can produce my look on any camera, but I'd much rather have my setup because I understand it better. For example, with my 24mm lens, I understand its characteristics, when it will flare, when it won't and I know how to focus without really thinking about it. I've shot with the 24mm and 50mm for about six years now and sometimes I'm still surprised by some things, so I am still learning. Learning what it's all about and bonding with your gear makes a difference in capturing the final moment.

What was the visual aspect you were aiming for when creating the images for your new book *Metropolis*?

It has a particularly strong style. The book is themed around urban isolation, so I chose images that expressed this feeling and atmosphere. I wanted to convey the idea that

we're more connected than ever, through things like the internet, but at the same time less connected. Big cities especially can be very isolating places. I felt that many people can relate to being in a busy place but feeling alone and that everyone feels this but pretends to be fine about it. I used to do this thing where I printed about a hundred small images and I put them in a shoebox. I'd put them all out on the floor, look at them and group them into sets. Eventually, one of those sets was five images that had been shot over a year between them showing a lot of black negative space. I hadn't shot those on purpose like that, it was just an idea, so I pinned these up and I was like, 'Right. I'm going to try and make another five', and so on. A friend of mine came around and I asked him what he thought. He said that these pictures look like people dwarfed by the world around them. They look tiny, it's like they're being oppressed by the architecture. I was like 'Thanks! That is it!' I felt that I could identify with the message.

So how much were you involved in the layout of the book?

I don't think I've talked about this but the layout and curation were done in a special way. We created a tonal graduation throughout the book. It starts off with the darkest images, ends with the lightest ones and, in the middle,

it's kind of grey. The publisher teNeues said that they don't think anyone has done that before. I don't know much about bookmaking honestly, but I'm learning. There are so many things around photography to learn, like doing exhibitions or choosing printing paper but also the business side of it, licensing, contracts and more. It's a never-ending process and I love it.

Do you have any tips or advice for photographers who want to work on a longer series or even a book?

It's important to have a theme that's relatable. I think photographers often make work for other photographers. It's like 'Look at the silhouette I created' but the average person won't care about this silhouette. But if you use a silhouette to tell a story that's interesting to the viewer, they can understand and appreciate the technique. There is a saying that one single picture can say more than a thousand words and I like the fact that you don't need to always understand everything. Even though a lot of those pictures for the book were taken with a photojournalistic edge or with the intention of telling a story, they still just scream something on their own. Hopefully, this is a piece of work that, 50 years from now, I can look back on and be like, 'Yeah, that is how I felt back then'. However, maybe next time, I'll do something a little more cheerful.





TOP PHOTOGRAPHER WINNER: Bruno Ribeiro Portugal

GuruShots

We joined up with online photography game GuruShots to print the winning images from the Night Photography challenge



GuruShots is billed as the world's leading photography game. It's an online platform that gives global exposure to people who love taking photos.

GuruShots members start as Newbies and compete with other photographers to win challenges, increase their ranking on the site and eventually progress to 'Guru' status.

Challenges are voted on by Gurus and the wider GuruShots community, and there's a fresh competition brief, such as the Night Photography challenge, every day.

All the winners receive prizes from GuruShots' sponsors, including Lowepro, Kodak and Lensbaby. For more information, visit www.gurushots.com



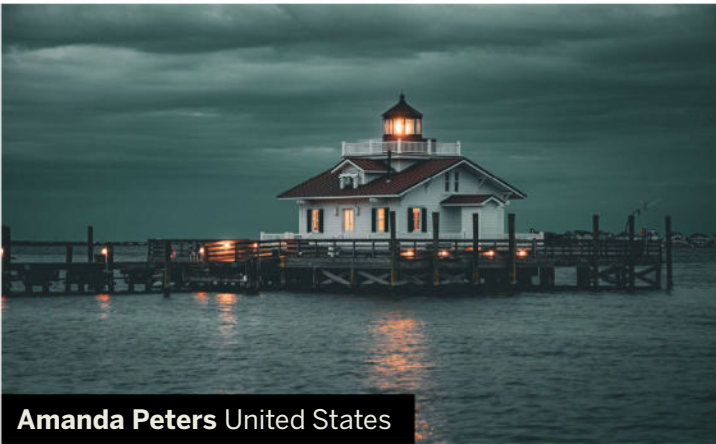
TOP PHOTO WINNER: Jón Þórðarson Iceland



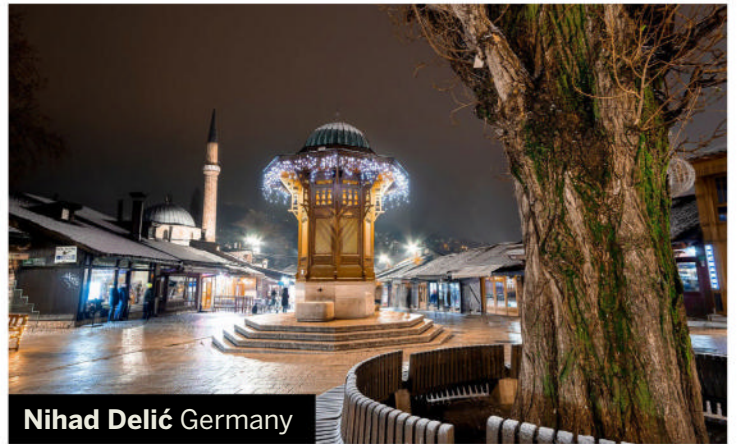
GURU'S TOP PICK WINNER: Marko Sauna-aho Finland



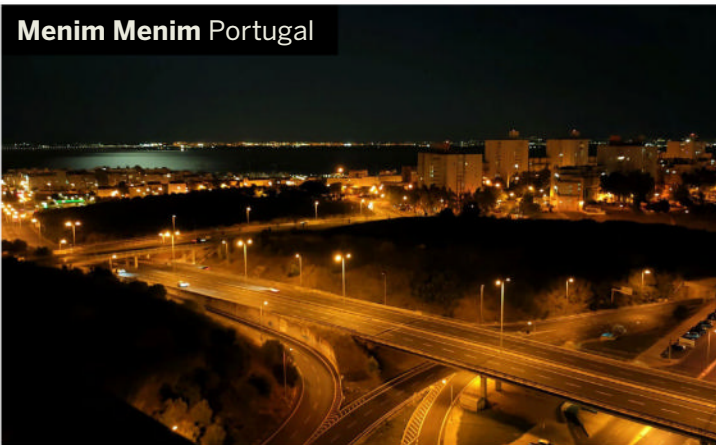
Bruce Ni China



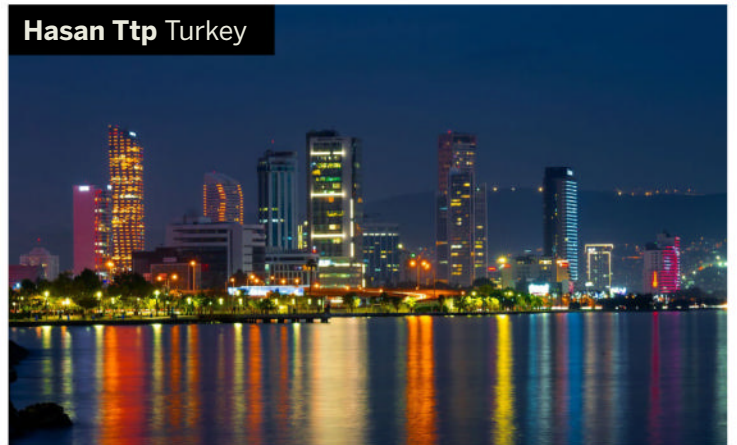
Amanda Peters United States



Nihad Delić Germany



Menim Menim Portugal



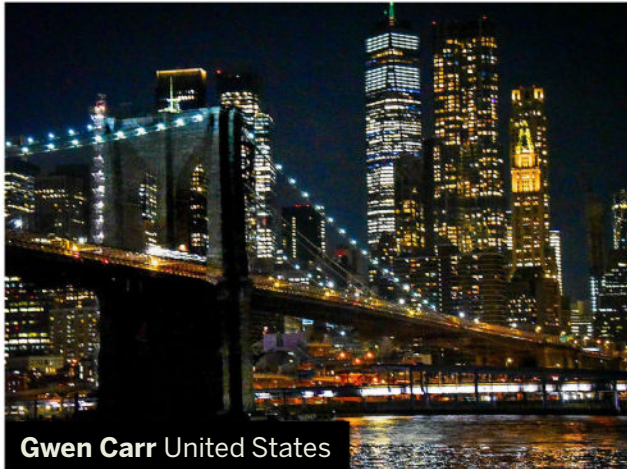
Hasan Ttp Turkey



Liviu Ivanescu Canada



Jan Rechenberg Germany



Gwen Carr United States



Stephen Pitkin Cambodia



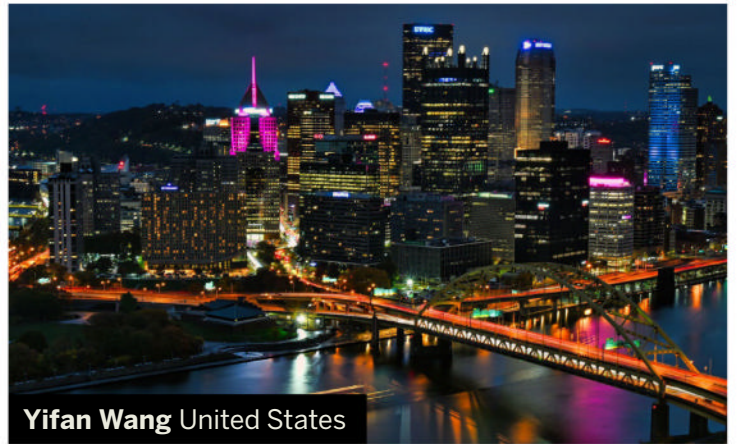
Gil Shmueli Israel



Darren Turner United Kingdom



JM Schneider Belgium



Yifan Wang United States



Roberto Crucitti Cambodia



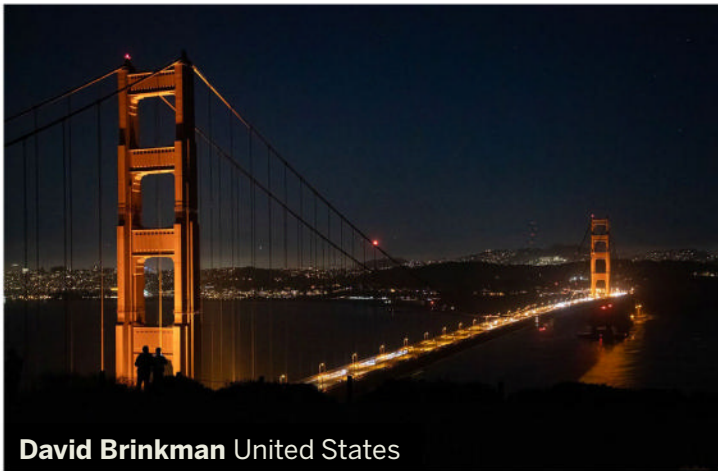
Patrick Bredimus Luxembourg



Maggie Portugal



Edward H Cordes United States



David Brinkman United States



Yana Raaga Latvia



Jack Zhou Canada

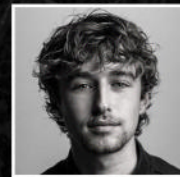


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MICRO SDXC MEMORY
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Every issue, one *Digital Photographer* reader wins a Samsung 256GB PRO Plus MicroSDXC memory card with SD adapter. Boasting up to 160MB/s and 120MB/s read/write speeds, the card is perfect for high-res stills and Ultra HD video. It is the go-to card for the modern content creator using mirrorless, smartphone, action cam and drone cameras. Find out more at samsung.com/uk/memory-storage



SHOT OF THE MONTH



Photographer: Jacob J. Watson-Howland
Title: Resilient Little Egret in a Changing Landscape
Location: Helford River, Cornwall, UK
@naturewithjacob
jacobwatsonhowland.com

About the shot: I was photographing Little Egrets in a flooded inlet and stumbled upon this lone figure standing poised, its gracefully preening silhouette contrasting with the dark foliage and highlighting the delicate balance between nature and the challenges it faces. This photograph captures the resilience of the Egret navigating a changing environment. As rising sea levels transform estuaries into rias (or inlets), Little Egrets face the loss of their natural habitat, emphasising the urgency of climate action. Converting the image to black and white accentuates the fragility of their existence, with the muted tones underscoring the uncertainty of their future. Little Egrets are crucial subjects for research, providing insights into avian behaviour and their ability to adapt to climate change. Their presence in urban estuaries also highlights the need for sustainable human-wildlife interactions and serves as a reminder of our responsibility to protect and restore natural ecosystems.



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for a chance to feature here**

Every issue, we'll be sharing the best images from our Instagram community. Tag us on @dphotographermag



THE BEST OF WINTER LANDSCAPES

The winners of our latest contest with Photocrowd have been revealed

For our latest competition in association with Photocrowd, we challenged you to submit your best Winter Landscape images. After working through all the entries, the winners have been selected. As a prize, the expert winners will get a licence for Affinity Photo professional editing software. Congratulations to all of the winners – as usual, the standard of submitted images was extremely high, and it was a difficult task to select the best ones.

1ST PLACE WINNER Peaceful

Photographer Steven Zhou

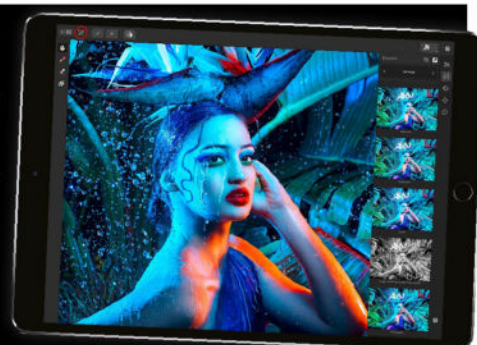
We love the simplicity of this shot. We saw many amazing images of far-flung locations in this round, but the great thing about such scenes is that they can be found anywhere. The photographer has turned what is otherwise a flat, empty landscape into a minimalist study with great compositional features. Well done!

WIN! Prizes from Affinity

Enter our Minimalistic Masterpieces contest before 7th February for a chance to win Affinity Photo

For this round, less is more. Create atmospheric frames with a minimalistic and surrealistic approach, whether it's by including negative space, reducing colour or long exposure techniques. Enter at photocrowd.com/digitalphotographer from 25th January for a chance to win a licence to Affinity Photo (worth £49 for Mac or Windows), a toolset for photography professionals. Whether you're

editing and retouching or creating multi-layered compositions, Affinity Photo has the power you need, with non-destructive editing, RAW processing, real-time edits and colour management as standard. Winners will be notified by email and can choose between Mac, Windows or iPad versions. Winning images will be revealed in issue 277 of *Digital Photographer*, on sale 15th March.





2ND PLACE

From the inside looking out

Photographer David Feuerhelm

This one is a classic composition of an increasingly famous location. This image's alignment is ideal for using the cave entrance as a natural frame for the distant mountain. The colour palette is almost monochromatic, allowing us to focus on smooth and rough textures. Nicely conceived and put together.

3RD PLACE

Brina in pianura

Photographer Alberto Cocco

When the snow falls, the temptation for many landscape photographers is to capture big, broad scenes. However, looking closer is a great strategy for capturing engaging details. We are drawn to the naturally deep contrast of this scene, the bright snow excellently rendered against the dark shadows. It's a beautifully quiet composition. Well done!





RUNNER UP **The breath of a frosty morning**

Photographer Krzysztof Tollas (*top*)
This a gorgeously tranquil shot. It's also a little different in that it embraces colour when many winter images focus on bleak, barren landscapes. The placement of the sun in the centre of the image, framed by the snow-frosted trees is a magnet to the eye and the white balance has been handled with expertise.

RUNNER UP **Loneliness**

Photographer Marta (*above left*)
Here, we have another wonderful display of minimalism. The sparseness of detail allows the skeletal form of the tree to stand out against the plain background and sky, while the off-centre composition draws in the eye. We like how the contours of the snow-covered ground almost look like paper cut-outs.

RUNNER UP **Lake Louise**

Photographer Trevor Cole (*above right*)
What an iconic winter landscape! Although we have seen many images of this location, the arrangement of detail in this shot is exceptional. The subtle reflection, wintery hues and low clouds add atmosphere. The balance created by the focal length choice is also spot-on and the exposure is perfect. Nicely done!



**100
DJI Air 3**
Drones are increasing in popularity and DJI is a clear leader in this specialist field of photography products, with options for all user levels and budgets. *Adam Juniper* tests whether this addition to its lineup offers true value

Kit intro

The expert and independent reviews of gear we've bagged this issue



96 Nikon Z f

Angela Nicholson tries out Nikon's latest retro-themed, full-frame mirrorless camera to see if it truly lives up to the reputation of the FM2, the camera that inspired its design

104 Leica M11-P

In classic Leica style, this rangefinder camera is missing lots of bells and whistles. *Gareth Bevan* asks whether it has enough to justify the price

108 Lenses

This issue, we explore the Nikon Z 600mm f/6.3 VR S, Leica 24-70mm Varo-Elmarit-SL f/2.8, Sony FE 300mm f/2.8 GM OSS and the innovative Canon RF 24-105mm f/2.8

112 Accessories

It's the little things that can enhance your photography, so we've rounded up the best photo gadgets and gifts to add to your kitbag

Our ratings

Our team of trusted and expert reviewers score gear thoroughly to help you make better buying choices.

- Don't go there ★★★★★
- Could be better ★★★★★
- Solid performer ★★★★★
- Excellent bit of kit ★★★★★
- Best on the market ★★★★★

Product awards

Digital Photographer's awards are given out when a product really catches our attention. Here are our three most used accolades.



Lab testing

Some of our product reviews also have in-depth lab data, graphs and scores. This means that the kit has been subjected to more rigorous testing. Lens tests are carried out using Imatest, and cameras are tested in our laboratory using DxO Analyzer hardware and software to check the image noise and dynamic range.




Price: £2,299/\$1,999

Website: nikon.co.uk

Nikon Z f

Nikon's retro-styled Z f combines the Z 6II and the Z 8 in a body inspired by the FM2

 The Nikon Z f combines a retro aesthetic, reminiscent of the Nikon FM2 from the 1980s, with advanced technology from the Nikon Z 6II and the Z 8. It's a full-frame mirrorless camera with the 24.5MP backside-illuminated (BSI) CMOS sensor from the Nikon Z 6II and Z 6, but it's combined with the powerful Expeed 7 processing engine that's found in the top-tier Nikon Z 9 and Z 8. Its body design also harks back to the Nikon Df DSLR of 2013 and it's the

full-frame counterpart to the APS-C format Nikon Z fc, but with superior build quality.

The camera's impressive capabilities stem from this fusion of the sensor and processor and together, they enable a top native sensitivity setting of ISO 64,000, 0.3 of a stop higher than the Z 6II. The Z f also features the advanced autofocus algorithms from the Z 8; its impressive subject detection system can be set to detect people (including eyes, faces, head and torso), animals (whole bodies, plus

heads and eyes for cats, dogs, birds and some other animals), cars, motorbikes, bicycles, trains and aeroplanes. Helpfully, the system continues to work in manual focus mode to optimise the exposure for the detected subject. In addition, the autofocus system is sensitive down to -10EV, so it doesn't falter in gloomy conditions.

The Z f is capable of shooting JPEGs at up to 30fps and RAW files at 14fps, or both simultaneously at 7.8fps. Nikon's Pre-release Capture feature is also on hand. This records images at 30fps for one second before the shutter release is fully pressed, so it's useful for capturing unpredictable action.

Like Nikon's other current full-frame mirrorless cameras, the Z f has image stabilisation (or Vibration Reduction (VR), as Nikon calls it). In the Z f, the VR system is claimed to give up to eight stops of shutter speed compensation and is compatible with Synchro VR in Nikon's VR lenses.

The Z f also debuts an innovative feature called Focus Point VR: this prioritises the stabilisation around the focus point, which should be useful with subjects that are off-centre. There's also Pixel Shift shooting, which is new to Nikon Z-series cameras and enables images of up to 96MP to be created. However, this system is only suitable for static subjects and tripod setups.

Like many recent cameras, the Z f supports HEIF files (as well as RAW and JPEG), offering a broader tonal range than JPEG. It also





introduces new Picture Controls, including Rich Tone Portraits and two additional options for monochrome photography. Deep Tone Monochrome produces higher-contrast images, similar to those shot using a red filter, while Flat Monochrome produces low-contrast images, with more scope for post-capture processing.

Naturally, the Z f is capable of recording video, and there's support for 4K 30p recording plus slow-motion options (4K 60p or Full HD at up to 120p). The best-quality video is captured in 10-bit H.265 format, but 8-bit H.264 is also available.

Nikon has given the Z f a magnesium alloy body with brass dials, weather-sealing and a fluorine-coated sensor. It adds up to a robust-feeling camera that looks great and

should age attractively, although the grip is shallow, and many photographers are likely to seek out the optional grip to give themselves a more assured hold.

As you'd expect given the Z f's retro credentials, the control layout is distinctive, with top-plate dials for ISO, shutter speed, and exposure compensation complementing the mode switch and command dials. This setup works well, but it's important to keep an eye on the exposure mode setting, as this dictates whether or not the setting on the shutter speed dial is relevant.

The camera is equipped with a 3.2-inch vari-angle touchscreen and a 3,690k-dot OLED viewfinder, providing clear and flexible viewing options. There's also a B&W mode switch that allows you to switch quickly to shooting

monochrome images. Unusually, one of the Z f's two memory card slots accepts microSD cards, while the other accepts the more standard SD-type media.

The Nikon Z f's image quality is impressive: it delivers detailed, natural images with well-managed noise, even at high ISO settings. The dynamic range is commendable, and the Z f handles challenging lighting conditions effectively while maintaining detail in shadows and highlights. The colours are generally pleasing and the new Picture Control options, especially Deep Tone Monochrome, are a nice addition too. The autofocus system performs well in low light and accurately detects a wide variety of subjects, although it is slightly less sensitive than those systems on the Z8 and Z9, due to the lack of a stacked sensor.

You might also like

Which cameras are the Nikon Z f's main competitors?

Within the Nikon range, the Z 6II, the Z 8 and the Z fc are the natural alternatives to the Z f. While the Z 6II has the same sensor, its subject detection system lags well behind that of the Z 8 or the Z f, making it less attractive for wildlife, pet and motorsport photography. Meanwhile, the Z fc has a less robust build than the Z f, and it's APS-C format rather than full-frame.

If it's retro styling and controls you're looking for, the Fujifilm X-series is strong, albeit based around an APS-C format sensor. The 40MP X-T5 is especially enticing and, unlike Nikon, Fujifilm produces lenses with a dedicated aperture ring.

Summary

Ease of use	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Quality of results	★★★★★

Overall



The Nikon Z f is an attractive blend of classic design and modern technology. Its primary appeal lies in stills photography and it performs well, with images that balance detail, noise control and file size perfectly.




Price: From £999/\$999

Website: apple.com

iPhone 15 Pro

The Apple iPhone 15 Pro is a powerful, compact camera phone that nails the basics without rocking the boat. **Basil Kronfli** explores an unremarkably excellent update



 The iPhone 15 Pro is the epitome of a safe bet. The phone is expensive, but not the most expensive; its cameras are specced out but don't rock the boat and its screen is expansive without being oversized. Packing all of Apple's latest iOS highlights and a refined design with its titanium build, as well as that coveted USB-C port, this is an iPhone that's easy to like.

If you dare to look beyond Apple's iPhone line, though, much of what we love about the iPhone 15 Pro can be had for less in an Android alternative. Compact options like the Asus Zenfone 10 and the Sony Xperia 5 V also offer flagship power and advanced camera tech. Apple's refined design feels great, but Android takes design further, with phones like the Samsung Galaxy Z Flip 5 and Oppo Find

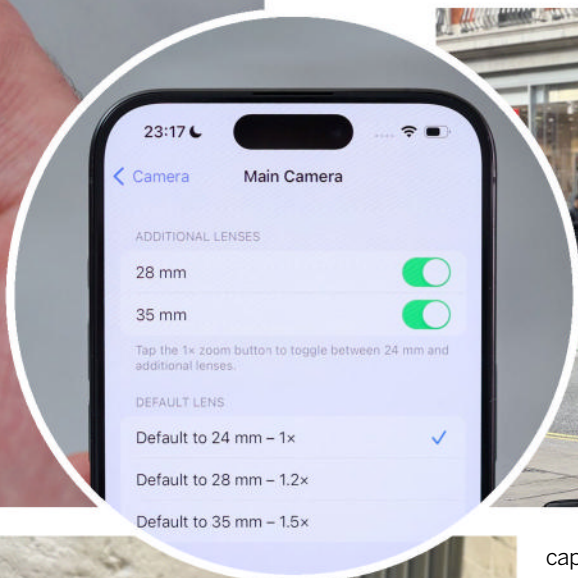
N3 Flip literally folding in half; and lower-cost camera phones like the Pixel 7 Pro serve up more range, as well as Google's imaging smarts. However, if you have an iPhone, you'll probably want to upgrade to an iPhone.

Apple's Pro line has always kept things palm-friendly, and the 15 Pro is no exception; with its 6.1-inch screen and lightweight 187g body, it's comfortable to use with one hand; even with a case, it isn't unwieldy.

Unlike past iPhones, the 15 Pro has a stronger, lighter titanium frame that's better at fending off fingerprints than polished iPhone rims of old. Around the back of the iPhone 15 Pro is a glass panel that curves up to form the camera surround, with three large rings framing each lens. With smaller bezels than last year's 14 Pro, the 15 Pro has less border than any iPhone before it, making for a more immersive canvas for your content.

Last year's iPhone 14 Pro camera is back for round two, with a wide, ultra-wide, and 3x telephoto set-up on the 15 Pro. The iPhone 15 Pro's primary camera has a 48MP resolution matched with a 1/1.28-inch sensor and a 24mm f/1.78 aperture lens. Using Apple's second-generation sensor-shift OIS and capturing 48MP and 24MP photos, it's clear that Apple's switched up its computation photography, even if the hardware specs look familiar. The 12MP ultra-wide camera has





The screen

A great device for viewing your photos as well as taking them

The 6.1-inch Super Retina XDR display on the Pro won't be as immersive as the 6.7-inch panel on the iPhone 15 Pro Max, but it still enjoys the best-quality display tech of any iPhone. At the heart of the viewing experience is OLED screen technology: as you might expect, blacks are inky, and colours pop with panache. The iPhone 15 Pro has a 120Hz refresh rate for smooth scrolling and features HDR support with a DCI-P3 wide colour gamut and Apple's True Tone display tech, so it dials warmth up or down based on ambient lighting. Smartphone screens really have hit an excellent standard at the premium end and the iPhone 15 Pro is no exception.



capture. Specifically, thanks to the new USB-C port, it's now possible to capture ProRes video at up to 4K resolution, recording 60fps directly to an external drive. This is potentially game-changing for mobile filmmakers.

The iPhone 15 Pro's picture quality is quintessentially Apple, with characteristics that include a balanced take on noise reduction, a fair bit of sharpening and contrast, and a warmth to photos that produces generally flattering shots. The iPhone does a reasonably good job in mixed-lighting environments, embracing warmer tones, while still balancing colours. In bright environments, the 15 Pro pulls out stacks of detail across all three cameras, although you'll want to lean on the higher-resolution main camera if you plan on cropping your images.

The iPhone 15 Pro's wide camera's large sensor means shots are packed with natural depth, while the ultra-wide can get really close to an object for macro photography. The iPhone's Portrait Mode is powerful too, creating an impressive detail falloff.

The iPhone 15 Pro is an excellent shout for iPhone users looking to upgrade, with some caveats. Unless you're happy with a daily charge and occasional top-ups throughout the day, you might struggle with the 15 Pro's battery life. Finally, anyone who wants maximum zoom should go for the 15 Pro Max.

a 13mm focal length and an f/2.2 aperture lens, while the 12MP 3x telephoto camera has a handy 77mm focal length and a fast f/2.8 aperture. The telephoto camera has the smallest sensor of the three around the back and it isn't a periscope module like the 15 Pro Max. As a result, we're not expecting class-leading reach or noise handling, but in a specific focal range in abundant light, having a 77mm camera is a handy addition.

One area where the iPhone 15 Pro camera looks set to best its predecessor is video

Summary

Ease of use	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★☆
Features	★★★★★
Quality of results	★★★★★

Overall



Despite a couple of niggles, the iPhone 15 Pro is a powerful phone with a reliable camera, a slick user experience and excellent display and sound performance – all in a pocketable, great-looking and feeling package.



1 The DJI Air 3 doesn't rotate its camera for 9:16 portrait video, but uses the full height of the 4:3 sensor

2 With a claimed maximum noise level of 81dB, the Air 3 can boast quieter propellers than many of its main rivals

Price: £959/\$1,099 • [dji.com](https://www.dji.com)

DJI Air 3

Adam Juniper tries out the latest Air's lower-resolution dual-camera system

SPECIFICATIONS

- Cameras:** 24mm EFL and 70mm EFL
- Image sensor:** 1/1.3-inch 48MP stacked CMOS (same on both cameras)
- Still image size:** 8,064 x 6,048px
- ISO:** 100-6,400 (or 100-1,600 in high dynamic range modes), 100-12,800 night mode
- Video:** 4K 60fps normal mode, 100fps slow-motion mode
- Max frame-rate:** 200fps at 1080p
- Colour modes:** 8-bit or 10-bit 4:2:0 (HLG / D-Log M)
- Radio/Range:** DJI O4/20km (12.4 miles)
- Max speed:** 21m/s (19 m/s in EU)
- Flight time:** 46 min perfect/42 min hover
- Dimensions (LWH):** 207 x 101 x 92mm (folded)
- Weight:** 723g (with battery)
- Controller weight:** 375g



DJI's consumer line of drones has plenty of choice in the ultralight category – that's drones weighing around 250g – and two distinct airframes above that, the Mavic 3 and now the Air 3, before things start getting pretty expensive. These two drones eschew the lowest weight limit in favour of the advantages a heftier aircraft can offer, not least of which is a sturdier performance against the wind, but also enough power to lift a better camera.

Given that the DJI Air 2S competed as much with the Mavic 3 as any other drone, DJI offered surprisingly little compromise on that front. The 20MP 1-inch CMOS sensor captured video at up to 5.4K (at 30fps). That's not too bad at all.

The new Air 3 is looking to drop into the same slot in the range but, rather than chase higher resolutions, DJI has taken a leaf out of the Mavic 3's book – and that of most smartphones – by offering multiple cameras. This actually comes at the cost of the 5.4K option, so the question is: have things got better or worse? Or have we taken a sidestep into a new world?

Key features

The Air 3 is a folding drone with dual 4K cameras, a wide-at-24mm EFL and a tele-at-70mm EFL. Both have a 48MP sensor size, making the Air 3 more consistent than previous hybrid cameras. It comes with the phone-ready DJI RC-N2 controller and a battery; or in a choice of Fly More Kits, with three batteries, a charging hub, and either the RC-N2 or the RC 2 with a built-in screen. The drone has quieter propellers than many rivals, and DJI offers a choice of charger power draws.

While the Air 3 doesn't rotate its camera for 9:16 portrait video, it uses the full height of the 4:3 sensor rather than simply cropping 16:9 video. The airframe is equipped with DJI's all-round collision sensing system while in the normal and slow video-friendly flight modes (as usual, not in sport mode). It also has AI subject tracking and waypoint route planning.

Build and handling

Our review sample included DJI's Air 3 Fly More Kit with the new DJI RC 2 controller, so the first thing to do was open the elegant shoulder bag into which every component is



3 At 720g, it is heavier than the Air 2S (595g), but past 250g it matters little. The portability is excellent

6 The Air 3 feels as strong as you'd expect from DJI and its collision detection system is excellent

4 Each top corner of the frame has a fish-eye camera for the collision-sensing vision system

7 The Air 3 isn't quite as steady as its sibling the Mavic 3 when landing or taking off from its feet

5 At 207 x 101 x 92mm when folded, the Air 3 is compact enough to fit in a shoulder bag

8 The full pack comes with a controller and a battery or in a kit with three batteries and a charger

neatly arranged. Here, I found a drone built to pretty much the same standard as the Mavic 3 Pro, but feeling noticeably lighter in the hand. On the underside, there is a similar metallic base, almost like a heatsink, with cut-outs for a downward-facing LED lamp, as well as vision and distance sensors and a sticker claiming a noise level of 81dB and an EU C1 class marker. Weighing 720g, it is noticeably heavier than the Air 2S (595g), although that matters relatively little once you're past 250g, and portability is still excellent.

There are no real surprises in the design. The battery contains the power button and familiar four-step LED charge meter; the drone has a USB-C charging socket next to the Micro USB socket; and, of course, from the front, the camera housing has two lenses. Each top corner of the frame has a fish-eye camera for the collision-sensing vision system. The gimbal can pan up to 60° above the horizon as well as down to the typical -90° (straight down) with DJI's finger wheel. It can also pan 5° under control (from a full range of 27° pan movement).

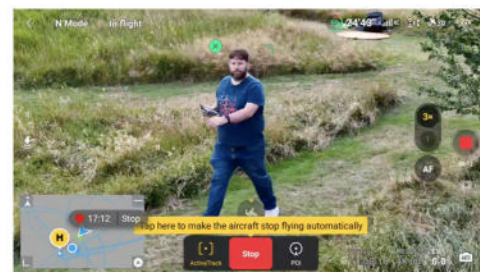
However, the DJI RC 2 does have a significant and obvious difference from the model it supersedes and that is fold-out antennas. We don't know if Operation Authorisation rules call for these or if practicality has simply trumped elegance here, in what is otherwise a similar, if slightly bulkier, design (416g compared with 380g). The screen remains adequate, though it is a little



The DJI Air 3 comes with the phone-ready DJI RC-N2 controller and one battery, or in a choice of Fly More Kits with three batteries, a charging hub and controller

difficult to see on a bright day. It's also a darker shade of grey; although that matches the Air 3, DJI's range now seems to get darker as it moves up the range.

Control is via the app; if you're using the DJI RC 2, this is embedded in the device running on top of an Android system (you'll recognise the keyboard when you enter the Wi-Fi password, and you can even take screen recordings). You can switch easily from camera to video mode, and the camera button also performs a tap focus. The USB-C port at the bottom is DisplayPort-capable, so if you have Augmented Reality glasses, such as the TCL Nxtwear S, they will act as a kind of first-person view.



ActiveTrack allows the drone to follow a moving subject using AI. While it doesn't work as well as Skydio's AI system, you can be confident that it will avoid obvious obstacles – though subtle ones proved more of a risk during our testing



At times, the Waypoint window appears to need more screen real estate than it has been given, but it's good to finally see the return of waypoints to DJI drones



The DJI Air 3's stand-out feature is the dual 24mm EFL and 70mm EFL sensors, here compared side-by-side

The Air 3 has the power to cut through the wind and, while it isn't quite as steady as the Mavic 3, that is only to be expected



Software

DJI's software hasn't seen a lot of change in recent versions, so there isn't much new to report here. Waypoints have arrived, although the interface needs some work. On the plus side, it remains easy to invoke subject tracking, and the drone can follow a moving person or vehicle from multiple angles while avoiding collision; it can also perform preset shots, such as orbiting an object.

Video shooting appears to max out at 60fps, but a sub-menu reveals a night mode that caps out at 30fps and slow motion, which manages 100fps at 4K or up to 200fps at 1080p. That these aren't available from the standard frame rate menu is perhaps DJI's way of hinting that a degree of compromise might be happening here. Maybe it's just me, but I'd prefer it to all be within the same menu.

Performance

The drone's two-camera system is great. In one way, it surpasses that of the Mavic 3 Pro by being even better balanced. The Mavic 3 Pro is a lot better than the launch version when it comes to colour balance between processors, but it's still a case of 'the Hasselblad camera and some others'. Here, both seem to be created equally, and that's great. Having the same resolution in both cameras makes things easier to work with and means choosing your framing is an artistic choice, not something you feel pushed into by the tech. Bravo!

Our test images don't come from the best of days and, to be honest, it shows. It was breezy and a storm was rolling in, as the Hyperlapse in our test video footage rather gives away. Still, flying the drone didn't feel difficult – it certainly has the power to cut through the wind, even more so than the Mini 3 series. It isn't quite as steady off its feet as the Mavic 3, but that is to be expected. The full JPEGs from the system are about 22MB in



The DJI Air 3 has reasonable handling abilities overall. We shot a timelapse video on a particularly stormy day and the drone remained fairly stable

size, while the RAW files are upwards of 70MB, meaning that there is a lot of data there to play with in either format. Zooming in to our images using Photoshop reveals plenty of fine detail to be found from a distance. Pleasingly, you won't have to spend long worrying about fringing either – even near the edge of the image. The 2.4µm pixel size on both sensors provides good detail.

Taking video with the DJI Air 3, I was able to shoot a Hyperlapse segment, which nicely demonstrates how the drone deals with the onslaught of high winds. I was also able to shoot video of the drone nipping down paths, two automated orbits (one at 1x and the other at 3x), and a brief clip of the 16:9, which is an impressive 2.7K stream cropped from the full height of the 4:3 sensor.

Testing the AI in normal mode, I tried flying full pelt at a bush with lots of leaves: the drone swerved around it, although it wasn't quite as good at spotting individual tall weeds rising from the grass. In terms of following me, the drone did a good job – I didn't detect any improvement over the Mavic 3 Pro's AI, but that's an accomplished machine. The Air 3 was able to 'follow' me from in front, for example, and reposition as I changed.

Summary

FEATURES	★★★★★
DESIGN & INTERFACE	★★★★★
PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★★

Overall



The Air 3 is another noticeable shift for the least consistent of DJI's sub-brands. The dual lens arrangement is a huge benefit – more so than its higher-definition video at 30fps.

While DJI has reserved the largest sensors and pixel counts for the Mavic 3 series, the Air 3 will have the flexibility most serious users demand. What's more, by sticking with similar image sensors, the video doesn't seem to have consistency issues when switching cameras, though it does beg the question: why doesn't the drone have full hybrid zoom?

The Air 3 has great battery life, is confident in the air, and has gained the ability to use waypoints so that missions can be planned and repeated, which is great for creative videographers. Nervous pilots will be happy that omnidirectional collision detection is finally here.

Costing significantly less than the one-lens Mavic 3 Classic, the Air 3 seems like excellent value for all but the most pixel-peeping of obsessives. There is lots of creative freedom, high-resolution imagery and a real choice of optical zoom at a price that is affordable for more people than a Mavic 3 Pro.



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Price: £8,000/\$9,195 • [leica-camera.com](https://www.leica-camera.com)

Leica M11-P

The M11-P leads the fightback for AI accreditation – and looks great doing it. **Gareth Bevan** explores this discreet street shooting specialist rangefinder



All of Leica's cameras are iconic in their own right, but it is Leica's M series of cameras that perhaps has the most fervent following. Since last year's reveal of the latest generation of the M-series with the Leica M11, we have been waiting for Leica to unveil its usual collection of variations on that core camera. So far we have seen the black-and-white-sensor M11 Monochrom, and now it is the turn for this generation's Leica M11-P variant.

The Leica M10-P was unique for its focus on a redeveloped silent shutter for quieter street photography or photojournalism, where discretion is absolutely paramount. The M11-P is also a camera that is aimed at these audiences, but a quieter shutter is not

the focus of the M11-P. Instead, the camera has a new trick to combat the rise in photos being misappropriated by AI.

The Leica M11-P's new content credentials are the start of a real fightback by imaging companies and photographers to protect works from being misused by AI image generators while providing appropriate accreditation for photographers. Leica's implementation of content credentials is hardware-based, with a dedicated chip in the camera that encodes the file with the photographer's details. These credentials can then, in theory, travel across the internet with the image, so credit remains with the photographer, even if the image is manipulated using editing or AI.

Unfortunately, for anyone with previous Leica cameras, due to the hardware aspect, this support won't be coming in a future update to your camera.

Like other cameras in the M-series, the M11-P is also a manual-focus-only rangefinder-style camera, with no video. But then, this is its charm, with the experience of photography placed first and foremost. The triple-resolution 60.3MP colour sensor used in the M11 features again here; it's capable of shooting at 60MP, 36MP or 18MP, gaining a stop of dynamic range with reduced resolutions.

Photo performance is distinctly Leica: images were rich, punchy, and sharp (when focused correctly), with a great dynamic range. In real-world testing, the ISO performance is also excellent: in the gloomy London Underground, the noise was kept well under control but, like all modern cameras, the ISO tops out at unusable numbers.

The M11-P has a tendency to expose images on the darker side, giving scenes more of a grittier look. It's an approach beloved by many

In terms of aesthetics, the M11-P takes its cues from the sleek, minimalist design of the M11 Monochrom

FEATURES

FULL-FRAME SENSOR

The M11-P features a full-frame back-side-illuminated chip, capable of capturing images at 60.3 megapixels.

FILTERLESS DESIGN

The CMOS imaging sensor lacks a low-pass filter; this is common in many newer specialist cameras, making the most of the available resolution to increase image-critical detail.

FILE FORMATS

Instead of a proprietary RAW format, the Leica M11-P uses the more universal DNG. This offers greater back-compatibility with RAW processing software, especially Adobe apps.

LIVE VIEW

Despite inheriting a vintage design, the M11-P is a modern digital camera. The rear LCD is not fully articulated, but focusing can be done in Live View mode, assisted by a real-time focus-peaking function. The screen is also touch-sensitive.

REDUCED BRANDING

Savvy thieves recognise the iconic red dot of Leica cameras. As such, for the M11-P, this has been removed for greater subtlety.

DRIVE MODES

In addition to a 60-minute maximum shutter speed, the camera also features an interval shooting function. The burst rate is rather slow at 4.5fps or 3fps in continuous low mode.



a Leica fan but, personally, I wish the images were a bit brighter. There are some alternate photo styles in the settings, including a Monochrome look, but I found the Natural style suited me a little more.

One recurring issue I had with the processing was that sometimes the M11-P would make skies a powerful deep blue, which just did not reflect reality. This was mostly only in bright scenes. I suspect this was a way to keep highlights from clipping, which is appreciated, as underexposure is easier to fix than overexposure. But this did mean that a few photos were not ready to go straight out of the camera.

The M11-P is available in black aluminium or brass chrome versions. The chrome version comes in heavier than the aluminium, but both benefit from the same Leica build quality. The iconic red dot that usually adorns the front of Leica cameras is gone, for a more discreet-looking camera. I like my cameras not to stand out, especially when I am out on the street shooting, and the M11-P fits the bill perfectly.





x4 © Gareth Bevan

Above
Eyes have it
There is no autofocus or eye-tracking tech in the M11-P: this is about pure photography

Left
Mono world
Picture styles you can select in the M11-P include a monochrome option

The camera is nice and compact, although, with no grip as standard on the body, the camera is not the most comfortable to hold for long periods. I found the bottom corner of the camera digging into my palms or fingers a lot. Speaking of awkwardness, the SD card slot on the camera is also under the battery, so you need to pop the battery out each time you want to access your photos or change the card. However, with a built-in 256GB hard drive, you might find you are connecting the camera via USB-C more.

In terms of aesthetics, the M11-P takes its cues from the sleek, minimalist design of the M11 Monochrom. However, it isn't just about appearances. Inside, the M11-P mirrors the M11, guaranteeing the same exceptional image quality. The M11-P produced impressive images that popped, with deep and rich colours. Leica's lenses continue to stand out, with their almost ethereal-looking out-of-focus areas, upholding the iconic Leica look. What's more, the content authentication component could yet prove to be a valuable weapon in the ongoing battle against AI.

TALKING POINT... Leica's anti-AI technology

Content Credentials are the big new feature of this camera and it is incredible to see companies trying to help protect photographers' work in this way. The Content Credentials feature is simple to use – simply enter your details on the camera and that's it. Each photo you take will then have the details coded in. Credentials can be tracked across image-editing software, as well as uploads or downloads from platforms that support the feature. Adobe and X (formerly Twitter) are two of the biggest partners, with Photoshop already having Content Credentials in beta in its latest versions. You can also upload images to the Content Authenticity Initiative website to check the credentials of an image.

However, for protecting work from unwanted manipulation, right now the system seems just too easy to get around – and unfortunately, there are a lot of people out there who will not be deterred by a few extra barriers. It remains to be seen how robust the system is and how well it will be supported.



KEEP UP WITH THE LATEST CAMERA RELEASES AT: [X @DPhotographer](#) [f facebook.com/DigitalPhotographerUK](#)



Leica M11-P

Megapixels

60.3MP

Max resolution

9,528 x 6,328 pixels

Sensor information

Full-frame BSI CMOS
(36mm x 24mm)

Shutter speed

60min to 1/4,000 (M)
60sec to 1/16,000 (E)

Processor

Maestro III

ISO sensitivity

64 to 50,000

Drive speed

4.5fps

Buffer

15 DNG at 60.3MP, 30 at
36MP, unlimited at 18MP

Internal storage

Yes (256GB)

Metering options

Spot, Centre-Weighted,
Multi-Field

Connectivity

Wi-Fi, Bluetooth,
USB 3.1 Gen1 Type-C

Batteries

Rechargeable Li-ion
(Leica BP-SCL7)

Storage

SD/SDHC/
SDXC, UHS-II

LCD

2.95in fixed touchscreen,
2.33m dots

Viewfinder

Direct vision rangefinder,
0.73x mag, parallax
compensation

Focus range

70cm to ∞

Weight (body only)

455g (black)
565g (silver)

Dimensions

139 x 39 x 80mm

FEATURES

Typically lacking in bells
and whistles, this is a
classic, stripped-back
Leica rangefinder

★★★★★

BUILD QUALITY

The metal-heavy
build ensures the
body can take its fair
share of knocks

★★★★★

HANDLING

You buy a rangefinder
for the small size, but
the body design can
be uncomfortable

★★★★★

QUALITY OF RESULTS

The triple-resolution
sensor produces lovely
images, with a tendency
to underexpose

★★★★★

VALUE FOR MONEY

Some people can't put
a price on the Leica
experience, but £8,000
is certainly not cheap

★★★★★

Overall

The Leica M11-P continues
Leica's blend of classic style
and cutting-edge technology.
So far, it is the M11 variant
that we most want

★★★★★

Photo performance
is distinctly Leica;
images are rich,
punchy and sharp



1 CLASSIC LEICA DESIGN

The camera offers a distinctive tactile
experience, with simple controls

2 RANGEFINDER

The M11-P lacks autofocus, so you must
instead rely on the direct-view rangefinder

3 LEICA M-MOUNT

The camera features a Leica M bayonet
with additional sensor for 6-bit encoding

4 STORAGE

While only one SD slot is present, the
body features 256GB of internal storage



PRICE:
£4,999/\$4,797

FOCUS DISTANCE:
4.0m

WEIGHT:
1,470g

Nikon Z 600mm f/6.3 VR S

Matthew Richards discovers an infeasibly light package for the reach offered

Build and handling

The Nikon Z 600mm f/6.3 VR S follows on from a couple of other super-telephoto lenses that have really impressed us. The most similar is the Z 800mm f/6.3 VR S, which has the same kind of design, based on the use of a Phase Fresnel element in the optical path. Build quality is everything you'd expect from one of Nikon's top-flight, S-line lenses. The lens feels solid and robust, and features a comprehensive set of weather-seals. For added security, there's also a Kensington lock slot. It's not just the relatively lightweight build that makes for easy handling. Thanks again to the Phase Fresnel element, the centre of gravity is near the rear of the lens, so it feels very natural in handheld shooting.

Performance

Although the f/6.3 aperture rating isn't particularly fast, the long focal length of the lens does enable a tight depth of field. Defocused areas look smooth, with very nice bokeh. For outright sharpness, the lens performs excellently right across the image frame, even when shooting wide-open. Coupled with advanced tracking options in recent Z cameras, the lens's autofocus system proved super-quick at acquiring subjects, and agile while tracking them. All in all, every aspect of image quality and all-round performance is absolutely top-drawer.

Verdict

A crafty design makes this lens a joy to use, enhanced by terrific image quality, exotic handling characteristics and great all-round performance – but it doesn't come cheap.



Left

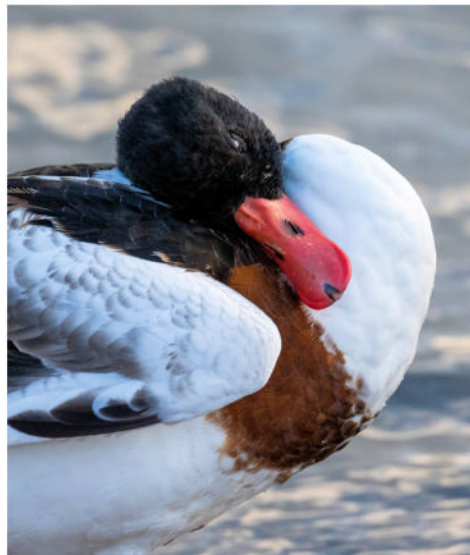
Image quality

Colour is faithfully rendered and, despite the smaller maximum aperture than f/2.8 models, the long focal length produces reasonable bokeh

Below left

Close encounter

The 600mm focal length allows frame-filling shots on full-frame cameras without the need for a teleconverter. Detail is sharply rendered, thanks to the VR system



Images by Matthew Richards

Technical specs

Manufacturer	Nikon
Model	Z 600mm f/6.3 VR S
Web	nikon.co.uk
Elements/construction	21 elements in 14 groups
Angle of view	4.2°
Max aperture	f/6.3
Min aperture	f/32
Min focus distance	4.0m
Mount	Nikon Z
Filter size	95mm
Length	278mm
Diameter	107mm
Weight	1,470g (with tripod ring)

BUILD QUALITY	★★★★★
IMAGE QUALITY	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆

Overall ★★★★★

- +
 - +
 - +
 -
 -
- Comparatively lightweight
High-spec build and handling
Superb image quality
Pedestrian f/6.3 aperture
Pricey to buy



PRICE:
£2,390/\$2,895

FOCUS DISTANCE:
0.18m

WEIGHT:
856g

Leica 24-70mm Vario-Elmarit-SL f/2.8

Sebastian Oakley investigates what might be the best do-it-all lens around

Build and handling

While I don't typically like external zoom mechanism lenses, I have to eat my words when it comes to the 24-70mm Vario-Elmarit-SL f/2.8 ASPH. Its build quality is out of this world: even the extension barrel feels really solid while zooming, better than any other external zoom lens I've used before. As soon as you mount this lens to your Leica SL2 or Leica SL2-S, you can feel how well it is constructed; it is perfectly balanced, even without a battery grip. Its focus ring is also super-smooth to operate, making this lens a dream if you still love manual focusing.

Performance

Every image I took during testing was pin-sharp. Obviously, this optic is able to shoot wide open at f/2.8, which lets in a tonne of light and makes shooting in the most dimly lit surroundings a total breeze. The glass produces images with rich tonalities and high clarity that I haven't seen in many other zoom lenses.

Centre sharpness is excellent at all focal lengths and apertures though, by comparison, corner sharpness is a little disappointing. Only at 24mm does fringing become barely visible. At all other focal lengths, it's essentially a non-issue. There's a trace of barrel distortion at 24mm, but at all other settings the lens does a superb job of eliminating any distortion.

Verdict

If you're thinking of investing in the Leica SL system and you want to keep the cost down, but also want a good lens that has a versatile range, this is your best bet.



Left

Biting sharpness

The image quality from this Leica zoom rivals some prime lenses for overall sharpness, bokeh characteristics and contrast



Below left

Dynamic framing

The lens is designed to offer all of the standard focal lengths, thereby assuming the role of several prime lenses and saving money overall

Technical specs

Manufacturer	Leica
Model	24-70mm Vario-Elmarit-SL f/2.8 ASPH
Web	leica-camera.com
Elements/construction	19 elements in 15 groups
Angle of view	82.3° to 35.3°
Max aperture	f/2.8
Min aperture	f/22
Min focus distance	0.18m
Mounts	Leica L
Filter size	82mm
Length	123mm
Diameter	88mm
Weight	856g

BUILD QUALITY	★★★★★
IMAGE QUALITY	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★

Overall ★★★★★

- +
 - +
 - +
 -
 -
- Great zoom range
Near prime-level sharpness
Excellent build quality
External zoom design
No image stabilisation

Images by Sebastian Oakley



Sony FE 300mm f/2.8 GM OSS

James Artaius gets hands-on with the world's lightest lens in its division

Build and handling

I've been waiting a long time for this lens, given that the last one from Sony was for the A-mount back in 2008 – but the wait has been rewarded with the lightest 300mm f/2.8 ever made. That's not just compared with full-frame rivals, it includes the Olympus M.Zuiko 300mm f/4 Pro, which is a Micro Four Thirds lens! The optical formula backloads the heaviest elements towards the camera body, so it feels very well-balanced. Long lenses like this can be very nose-heavy, but I found it nimble in use.

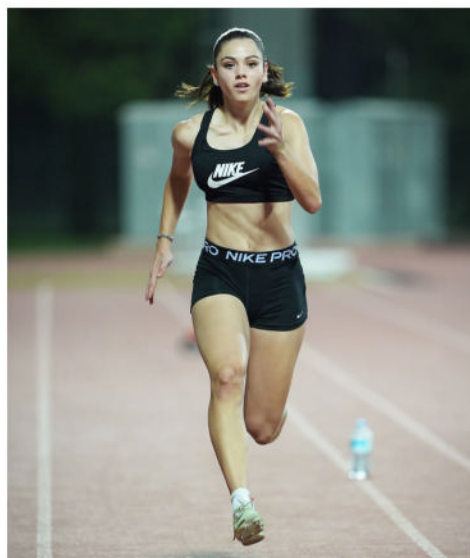
The magnesium alloy construction feels as rugged and robust as you would expect of a premium pro lens, with weather sealing and a fluorine coating. I got a little closer than expected while photographing a long jumper, and ended up with a lens (and a face) full of sand – but the 300mm took it in stride.

Performance

I was able to torture-test the Sony FE 300mm f/2.8 GM OSS under the most extreme conditions. It kept up every step of the way. Its dual XD linear motors are quick as a hiccup, flicking from far-away to close-up subjects as fast as a starter's pistol. Ghosting and flare are very well-controlled, although the bokeh balls in wide-aperture images aren't quite as circular as you might expect. I'm pretty blown away by the sharpness too.

Verdict

The FE 300mm f/2.8 GM OSS is a truly phenomenal lens, both in terms of its physical size and its optical performance. It might be the best 300mm prime I've ever used.



Left

All in hand

Lenses with this combination of focal length and aperture usually fall squarely into tripod territory, but handholding long shots is a breeze with this model

Below left

Quick shot

Autofocus is highly responsive, and is designed to keep up with the rapid AF tracking and burst modes in the latest pro Sony mirrorless cameras

Technical specs

Manufacturer	Sony
Model	FE 300mm f/2.8 GM OSS
Web	sony.co.uk
Elements/construction	21 elements in 17 groups
Angle of view	8°10'
Max aperture	f/2.8
Min aperture	f/22
Min focus distance	2.0m
Mount	Sony E
Filter size	40.5mm (rear)
Length	265mm
Diameter	124mm
Weight	1,470g

BUILD QUALITY	★★★★★
IMAGE QUALITY	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★

Overall



- + Extremely lightweight
- + Very well-balanced
- + Weather-sealed
- No focus ring stops
- No 90° stops on collar

Images by James Artaius

DOWNLOAD TEST SHOTS
<https://bit.ly/DPH275>



PRICE:
 £3,439/\$2,999

FOCUS DISTANCE:
 0.45m

WEIGHT:
 1,350g

Canon RF 24-105mm f/2.8L IS USM Z

Gareth Bevan feels this will change the way you think about stills and video

Build and handling

This is a 24-105mm lens with a constant f/2.8 aperture, which has been the dream of many photographers for a long time. The RF 24-105mm f/2.8L IS USM Z is a big lens, more akin to something like a 100-400mm than any of Canon's standard zooms, so it can accommodate the new focus and aperture rings. Due to its extended length and intended hybrid use, the RF 24-105mm f/2.8 comes with a tripod foot, which perfectly balanced the camera body and lens in my testing.

Performance

The performance of the lens was exceptional in my initial hands-on testing. All the way from 24mm up to 105mm, images are sharp with great contrast. My images also had consistent lighting, contrast, and colour temperature throughout the zoom range, which is so essential for professional lenses like this.

Canon's Nano USM autofocus system has proved itself time and time again, but it is worth saying again just how silent and fast it is, even when it is pushing bigger lenses like this one. Focusing is snappy and breathing is also completely controlled. This is key in the first of a new line of photo/video lenses. I tested the lens with the Canon EOS R5, and the 45MP sensor resolved details beautifully.

Verdict

The first in a proposed series of new hybrid lenses has made an impressive debut. Designed for stills and video, its large size won't shock regular cine lens users, although stills photographers might be surprised. The quality is sublime, but it's very expensive.



Left

Perfect combination

The new lens optimally blends the versatility of a traditional 24-105mm f/4 standard lens and the brightness of a 24-70mm f/2.8 trinity zoom

Below left

Bokeh quality

The reasonably close minimum focusing distance of 45cm and the wide aperture allows for pleasant background blur effects – excellent for portraits



Technical specs

Manufacturer	Canon
Model	RF 24-105mm f/2.8L IS USM
Web	canon.co.uk
Elements/construction	23 elements in 18 groups
Angle of view	84° to 23° 20'
Max aperture	f/2.8
Min aperture	f/22
Min focus distance	0.45m
Mounts	Canon RF
Filter size	82mm
Length	199mm
Diameter	89mm
Weight	1,350g

BUILD QUALITY	★★★★★
IMAGE QUALITY	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★

Overall ★★★★★

- +
 - +
 - +
 -
 -
- Constant f/2.8 aperture**
Brilliant for stills and video
Image quality
Large lens for stills
Aperture ring only works for video

Images by Gareth Bevan

ACCESSORIES

A collection of the best fun-yet-functional products out there for photographers

TENBA AXIS V2 32L

uk.tenba.com

(£240/\$300)

Tenba's Axis V2 bags are designed with professional photographers, videographers and content creators in mind: they can accommodate pro-level kit and have good organisation features.

With a capacity of 32 litres, the Tenba Axis V2 32L is the largest backpack in the range; there are also 16L, 20L and 24L versions. The 32L backpack's rear-opening main compartment is spacious and deep so there's enough room to fit a lot of kit. We were able to fit a Fujifilm GFX100 II and three lenses, plus a Sony A7R IV and three further lenses, including a 70-200mm telephoto zoom. The customisable dividers are slim but dense, so you can be confident that your kit is protected.

A large opening at the top and a smaller side opening allow you

quick access to your camera and lenses, while a large front pocket has space for filters, batteries and memory cards. This sits in front of the dedicated laptop compartment, which can house a laptop of up to 17 inches. There's also Molle webbing (with reflective thread) that can be used to attach additional items such as

a tripod, and a side pocket that can hold a tripod or gimbal.

The shoulder straps are well-padded without being bulky, making the Axis V2 32L very comfortable to carry – even with the load mentioned above.



VALLERRET MILFORD PHOTOGRAPHY GLOVES

photographygloves.com

(£61/\$70)

While the Milford gloves may not have the warmest rating in the Vallerret Photography Glove range, they are made from Polartec Windbloc Fleece, which gives them a cosy and soft feel. They are also supplied with a 10K water-repellent ripstop shell, which can be pulled over the top of the fleece if it starts to rain or you need a little more protection from the elements. Conveniently, the shells pack into a pocket on the back of the fleece gloves when they're not in use.

Two of the fingers and the thumb on each of the fleece gloves have flip-back tips, which are held back by elastic loops.

This means you can get your fingers directly onto the dials and buttons of your camera when you need to. There's also a non-slip grip printed across the palm to give you extra purchase on your camera. Milford gloves are designed for mild winter conditions and are perfect for a day out with your camera when there's a chilly wind blowing.



3 LEGGED THING LEXIE

3leggedthing.com

(£60/\$65)

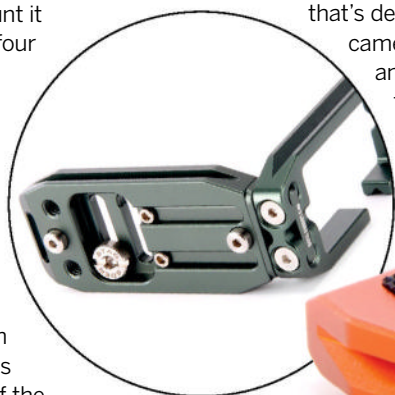
3 Legged Thing's Lexie is an Arca-Swiss compatible L-bracket, with a modular construction that makes it suitable for use on many cameras. It's available in Copper, Metallic Slate Grey or Darkness (matte black), and is made from anodised aerospace-grade magnesium alloy, with a 1/4-inch-20 stainless steel Stagsden screw to mount it on a camera. There are also four 1/4-inch-20 threads (two in the upright plate and two in the base plate) for attaching accessories such as a light, accessory arm or monitor.

3 Legged Thing supplies the two plates of the Lexie unconnected, so the first step in using it is to slot them together and tighten the bolts before adjusting the length of the horizontal plate (if necessary) to fit your camera. This means using the tiny hex key supplied in the box, which is a little fiddly.

With this done, it should be possible to mount the camera on an Arca-Swiss-type

tripod head, in either portrait or landscape orientation, without shifting the focal plane and while keeping the centre point of the camera directly above the tripod for maximum stability.

Naturally, being a Universal L-Bracket, the Lexie may not fit as snugly as a bracket that's designed for a specific camera, but it costs much less and has the bonus of being transferable.





RELAXATION ZONE

Jacek Durski photographs urban spaces transformed into places of rest

All images © Jacek Durski

My photo series, 'Relaxation zone', documents places that look simple but are anything but straightforward. I found all these places in Katowice, a town in Poland with over 300,000 residents. The Silesian metropolis, of which the city is a part, is inhabited by two million people. Historically, this area was connected with heavy industry, such as copper mining and stone quarrying.

In the middle of this city, spaces have been transformed into resting places with the 'furniture' being made from whatever was available, from things that might be considered redundant, and created with a unique sense of aesthetics. At first glance, they look ugly but they are intriguing too. We often wonder how one could even function here. To grasp that, we need to understand the creators' perspective and put ourselves in their shoes.

Each of these photos tells a story of a specific person or family. It shows their social status, interests and sometimes aspirations. Have a closer look at the

details, they tell us much about the economic, political and cultural transformations that have occurred in Poland in recent years.

I captured the first 'Relaxation zones' in 2018 as stand-alone works but I kept stumbling upon such places. I looked back at my work and saw a pattern, a connection between those settings – that's how the idea of creating a series came to be. I kept working on that project and, at this point, it features over 60 locations from Katowice and nearby cities.

There is no point in searching for people in these photos – I have excluded humans on purpose. Firstly, I do not intend to stigmatise anybody. I want to avoid creating awkward situations, caused by somebody misunderstanding what I'm trying to convey. Especially because, at times, the exhibitions are located fairly close to where the photo



JACEK DURSKI

Based in Katowice, Poland, photographer Jacek Durski focuses on long-term projects exploring sociological themes and architecture. He began photography as a teenager and later graduated from the Academy of Photography in Krakow. His works have received numerous commendations and have been displayed at galleries.

www.jacek.durscy.pl
@jacekdurski.bnw @jacekdurski

was taken. Secondly, the artefacts should speak for themselves – I want the viewer to look for them and be inclined to reflect. As for me, the details are by far the most exciting aspect. I sometimes go back to revisit those places – it's like checking in on an old friend and asking 'What's up?'

The name of this series is a reaction to the strange, yet increasingly popular way of describing certain areas, such as 'Parking zone', 'Passenger zone'... and 'Relaxation zone'. When it is being displayed in galleries, I enjoy observing the guests during the exhibition – at times, I even eavesdrop.

When I do, I often hear: "We had a table like this 10 years ago", or "Look! Your mother has the same sofa". That's fascinating – the fact that viewers do not detach, but instead identify themselves with what they see.

IF I HAD SOMEWHERE TO LIVE...

I COULD GO ANYWHERE IN LIFE



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Postcode	
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