

THE WORLD'S BEST-SELLING DIGITAL PHOTO MAGAZINE

28 MARCH-3 APRIL 2024 ISSUE 601

# Photography week



INSPIRATION | IDEAS | IN-DEPTH REVIEWS



**VILTROX AF 27MM  
F1.2 PRO**

WE TEST THE LATEST FAST  
PRIME FROM THE VALUE  
LENS SPECIALISTS

# LANDSCAPE POST-PROCESSING

TAKE YOUR IMAGES TO THE NEXT LEVEL  
WITH PRO TIPS AND ADVANCED TOOLS

# W E L C O M E

# Photography Week



## JOIN THE CLUB...



Welcome to the world's No.1 weekly digital photography magazine. If you're already a reader, thanks for your continued support and involvement; if you're new to *Photography Week*, you've come to the right place! In addition to expert advice, brilliant tips and step-by-step tutorials, every issue features interactive galleries of brilliant photos, how-to videos on

essential shooting and editing techniques, and in-depth reviews of the latest camera kit.

But that's not the whole story. *Photography Week* is more than a magazine – it's a community of like-minded people who are passionate about photography. To get involved, just follow any of the links below and share your shots and comments.

**Jeff Meyer, Editor**

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We're more than just a magazine – read on and discover the many ways you can interact with and enjoy *Photography Week*



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© Liam Willis

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Viltrox lenses have a reputation for delivering pro-grade performance and image quality at an affordable price, so can this latest fast prime repeat the trick?



Cover image © Getty

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# WHAT'S HOT

THE WEEK'S TOP HEADLINES IN PHOTOGRAPHY

## INSTAX MINI 99 LETS YOU TAKE CONTROL AND GET CREATIVE

Fujifilm's most advanced Instax yet gets colour effects and new focus modes



© Fujifilm

**F**ujifilm has unveiled its most advanced Instax camera to date, the Instax Mini 99. The new model, which uses Instax Mini film packs, adds a host of creative options to the 'instant' point-and-shoot experience, including colour effects and vignettes.

The Instax Mini 99 looks a little like a cross between the Instax Mini 40 and Mini 90 Neo Classic, with the same retro rangefinder film camera aesthetic, although in a chunkier Instax form.

On the top of the camera are two manual dials, one of which enables you

to apply colour effects including Faded Green, Sepia, and Light Leak to images via LEDs that flash inside the camera as the film is exposed. Other controls enable you to adjust the brightness of images and add a vignette.

New shooting modes include Sports, which uses a faster shutter speed for action shots; Indoor, which balances exposure for indoor lighting; and Double-Exposure. The flash can now be set to auto (always on), fill flash, or red-eye removal flash, or turned off.

As well as the Macro mode that's

featured on previous Instax cameras for subjects between 0.3-0.6m from the camera, the focus dial can be set to Landscape mode for scenes 3.0m away and beyond, and Standard mode for subjects in between 0.6m and 3.0m.

There's a new self-timer mode for group shots, and the Mini 99 features a 1/4-inch filter thread for mounting the camera to a tripod. There's also a Base Grip Tripod Mount accessory for additional grip when handheld.

The Instax Mini 99 will be available from April 4, priced at £174.99 / \$199.99.

**NATURAL BALANCE**

With careful and targeted adjustments in post-processing, you can turn your landscape images into shots that stand out



© Liam Willis

# COMPLETE GUIDE TO LANDSCAPE POST-PROCESSING

Take your best scenic images further using natural editing techniques

Words Peter Fenech

**V**ery few photographic genres offer the same range of lighting, colour and detail that can be found in a landscape. Changing weather, the shifting position of the sun in the sky, and the steady progress of the seasons afford us the opportunity to capture familiar locations in new ways almost every day, which goes some way to explaining why landscape photography is such a popular genre.

The downside of so many photographers shooting landscape images is that it has become almost impossible to capture a truly unique shot of a well-known landmark. Instagram

is awash with photos of places such as Durdle Door in Dorset, Yosemite National Park in the USA, Lake Louise in Banff National Park, Canada, and, more recently, the misty skeletal forests of Madeira or the wild shores of the Faroe Islands. It doesn't take long for content creators to flock to even the remotest of locations in search of 'the shot'.

The solution is not to try and produce images that could be taken by anybody else, but rather to find new combinations of styles and techniques – and while you can do this in camera to an extent, the editing stage is where you can quickly and easily achieve a distinct 'look'.

Modern image editing software offers a wide range of professional features to play with, both AI and conventional, and although AI hits the headlines regularly these days, there are plenty of manual filters and colour-grading tools that you can use to realise your vision.

Over the next few pages we'll take a look at the key steps favoured by two professional landscape photographers, and how they use these to craft a signature look for their images. We'll then progress onto high-level landscape processing tricks that you can use today to get the maximum drama out of all your scenic shots.



# CREATE A BASELINE

Liam Willis explains how you can process your raw files to provide the best opportunities for later creative editing

One of the aspects you come to appreciate as an experienced digital photographer is that editing is a multi-step process. It's not simply a case of taking the images from a camera, applying a standard set of adjustments and then sending the files to print or archive.

To create the best possible results, it's almost always necessary to 'pre-cook' images in raw processing software, before applying more complex local edits, and, finally, retouching in applications such as Photoshop or Affinity. Landscape photographer Liam Willis keeps his editing process refined and targeted, integrating his shooting and editing workflows.

"Like thousands of others, I travel the length and breadth of the country in search of the perfect shot," he says. "I take inspiration from the work of other photographers, but I also like to give it my own style; slightly changing the focal length, adjusting the composition or even the exposure length."

"My tutorial will take you through my editing process of Tu Hwnt I'r Bont, a tearoom next to a bridge in Llanwrst, Wales. I picked the wettest week of the year, with the River Conwy bursting its banks. I used an exposure length of 0.5 sec and shot at f/22 to give some movement to the water. I choose to edit using Adobe Lightroom for iOS on the iPad, as I don't own a laptop."

## LIAM WILLIS

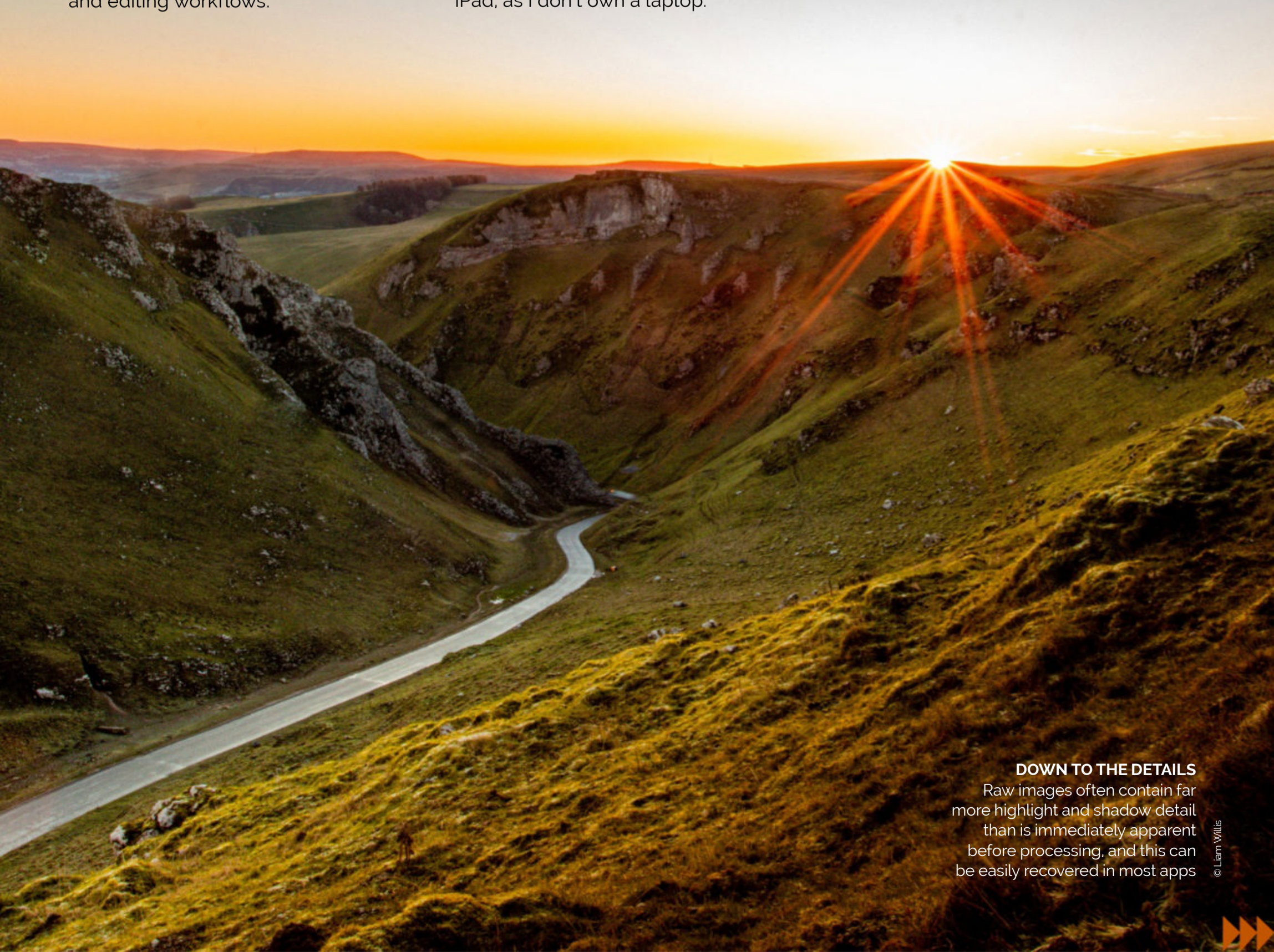


Liam Willis is a wildlife and landscape photographer based in Sussex, UK. He took up photography in 2015, focusing on nature images, but developed a

passion for landscape photography. In 2023, Liam was shortlisted for UK Landscape Photographer of the Year and The British Wildlife Photography Awards, and his picture of a stag, *Morning Breath*, was a finalist at the British Photography Awards in 2023.

@mrliamwillis

[liamwillisphotography.sumupstore.com](http://liamwillisphotography.sumupstore.com)



### DOWN TO THE DETAILS

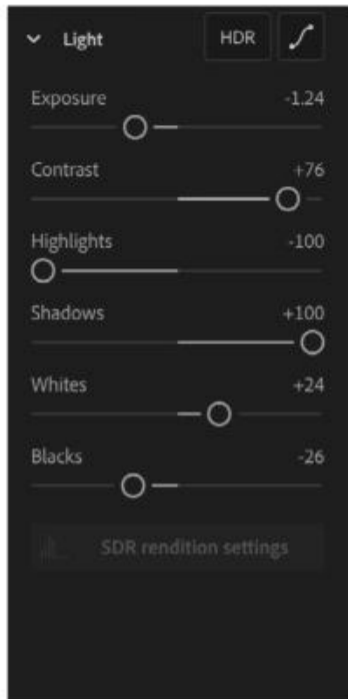
Raw images often contain far more highlight and shadow detail than is immediately apparent before processing, and this can be easily recovered in most apps



# FEATURE

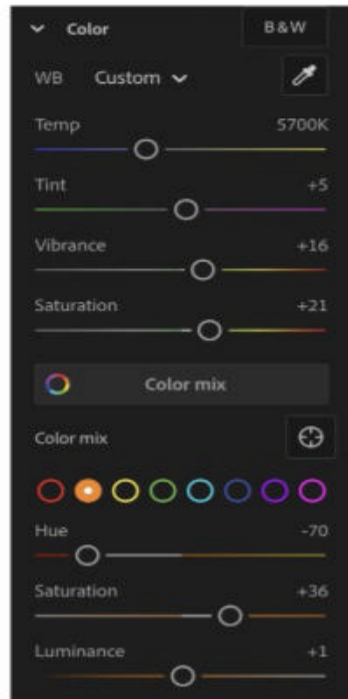
## CREATE A BASELINE CONTINUED

### BALANCE TONAL RANGE Apply first-wave adjustments to raw files for a moody base image



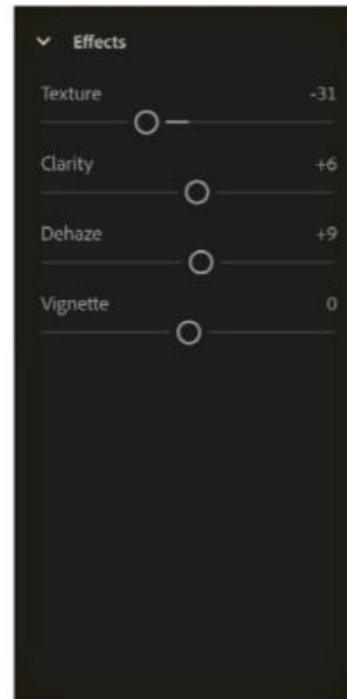
#### 1 FIND A BALANCE

Firstly, I reduced the Exposure and the Highlights to bring out more of the details that had looked 'washed out' in the lighter raw file. This gave more depth to the background, and gave more layers to the shot. The increase in contrast will give better clarity when enhancing colours.



#### 2 COLOUR VIBRANCY

It's easy to over-toggle the Temperature and Tint bars to make something extra vibrant and completely change the colour of the image. I used them slightly on this image to improve the existing colours. I also used the Color Mix to bring out the vibrancy in the autumnal colours.



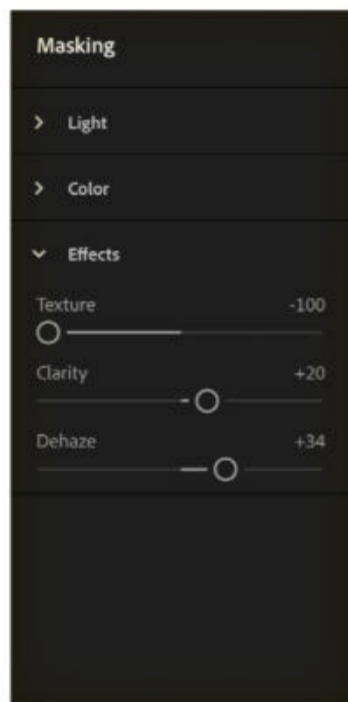
#### 3 SHARPNESS AND DETAILS

For this shot, I increased the Dehaze slightly for a darker and more vibrant finish, but also reduced the Texture to give it a smoother look. I opted not to add a Vignette to avoid taking the detail away from the flowing river, as that's also an important feature of the shot.



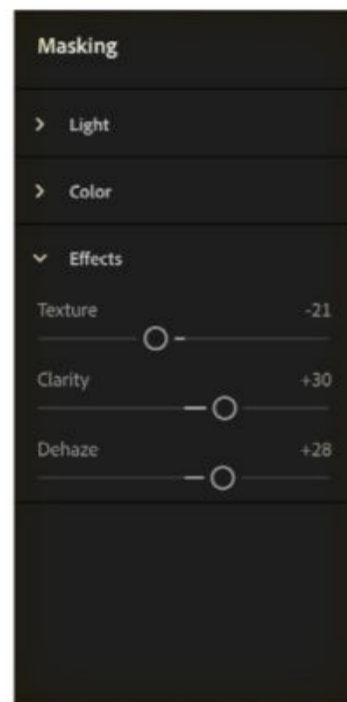
#### 4 APPLY HEALING

I spent some time removing dust particles and spots before any final touches. This is important, as it removes any distractions. Light colours often make them invisible in a raw image, and they're more visible when Exposure is reduced and Dehaze increased.



#### 5 MASKING PART 1

Firstly, the sky: find a balance in the exposures and colours. Here, I added a mask to the sky, increasing Dehaze and reducing Texture, allowing the weather to be evident, but also to blend in with the rest of the shot by removing the previously 'washed out' sky.



#### 6 MASKING PART 2

Secondly, the river: as a vital part of the image, I wanted it to have the right effect. I used a long exposure to capture motion, and I wanted that motion to be evident, so I increased Clarity and Dehaze to enhance the movement. Texture is reduced in line with the rest of the image.

#### Below WASHED OUT

The original shot appears overexposed and lacks depth. It wasn't entirely level either, so required straightening by 0.13 degrees clockwise

#### Right FINAL TOUCHES

Liam removed the sign for the gallery on the right using the Remove Tool in Healing. The final shot is now perfectly balanced, ready for any further treatment



# FEATURE

## CREATE WITH COLOUR

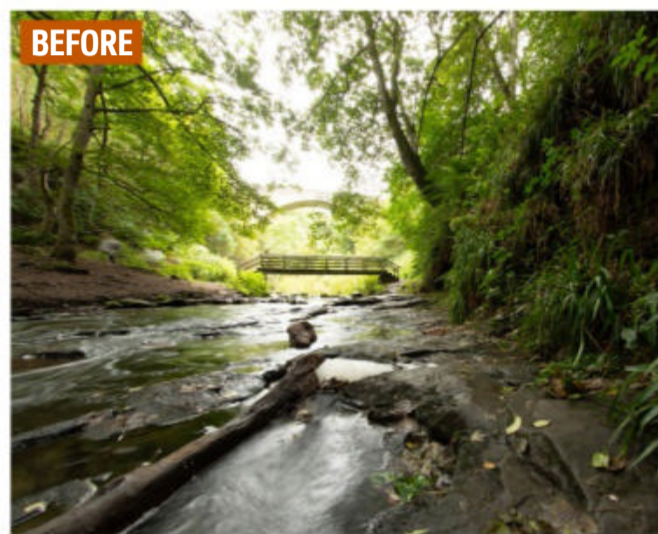
Use colour adjustments to enhance the natural beauty of a scene, or to create a particular mood, says Mark Brion

**T**he range of colours visible in a landscape scene is vast. Even under flat lighting or in seemingly drab locations, there are a plethora of analogous colours hiding in the scene – subtle variations, the sum of which creates a natural palette that the human eye can identify and relate to. This spectrum can be both a blessing and a challenge.

It's one of the aspects that makes landscape photography so appealing, but it also means that becoming a deft hand at post-processing is a crucial skill. Over-working colour can break down the smooth gradations we're accustomed to seeing and introduce uncomfortable jumps and shifts, which instantly make the scene look strange and unattractive.

"Colour adjustment is a vital aspect within post-production, and plays a crucial role in enhancing and refining landscape images," says nature photographer Mark Brion. "Remember, the goal of adjusting colours in a

landscape photo is to enhance its natural beauty, evoke emotion or convey a particular atmosphere. Experiment with colour adjustments in post-processing, whilst keeping the scene intact. Assess your changes to ensure that they complement the overall aesthetics of the landscape image."



**FLAT COLOUR** I was struck by the vibrancy of the red mud in this scene, but it doesn't show through in the out-of-the-camera shot



### SUPER SEPARATION

By selectively editing each colour channel and toning down the green leaves, the soil and bronze foliage stand out more, giving the image added three-dimensionality

## MARK'S MOST-USED EDITING TOOLS

Top tools for editing landscape shots



### WHITE BALANCE

I often use the Basic Panel sliders in Lightroom to correct colour casts, adjust the colour temperature of the scene and control the Tint for a more natural range of colours.



### SATURATION AND VIBRANCE

I use these tools to enhance or tone down colours, as they impact all colours and the least dominant ones, respectively. For more precise control, use Point Color or other sampling tools.



### HSL

Fine-tune specific colours to achieve the desired look. The Hue, Saturation and Luminance sliders alter the shade, intensity and brightness of the selected colour range.



### COLOR GRADING

This will influence the impact of the image, based on the depth of colour. Independently add or neutralise colours in the highlights, midtones and shadows.





# FEATURE

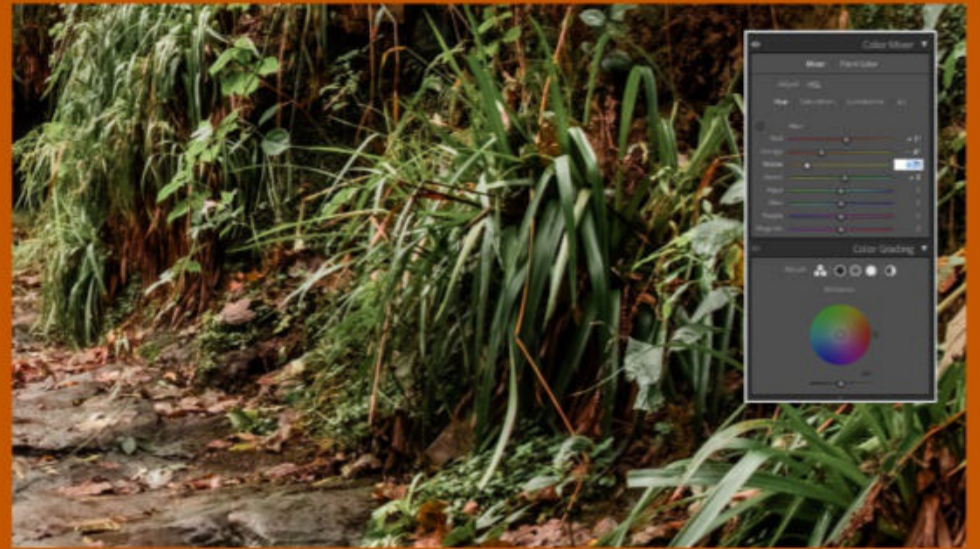
## CREATE WITH COLOUR CONTINUED

### COLOUR GRADE TO PERFECTION Balance grading to create images with maximum tonal separation



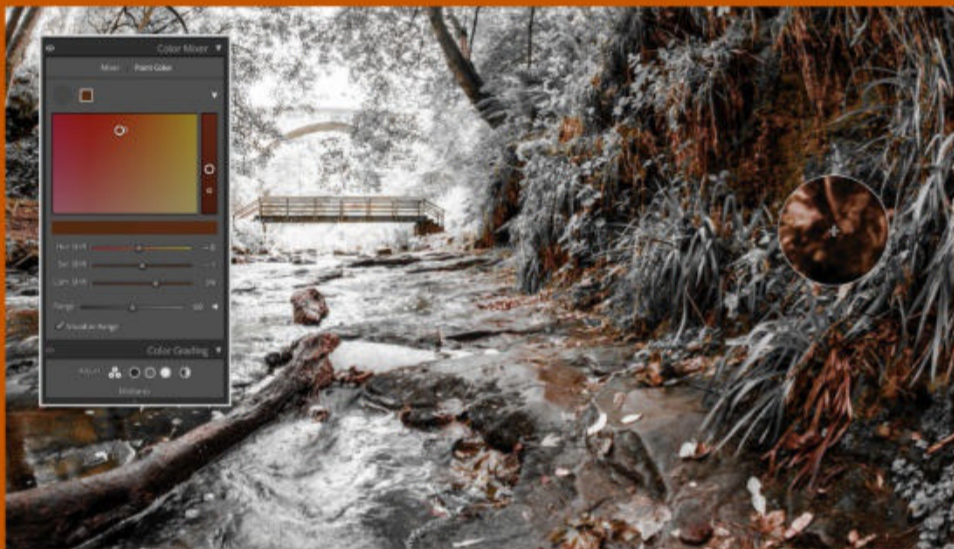
#### 1 BLACK AND WHITE POINTS

Most raw workflows should start by setting the black and white points, which define the tonal parameters of the file. Hold down the Alt/Option key to visualise when clipping starts to occur, setting the sliders to just before warnings appear.



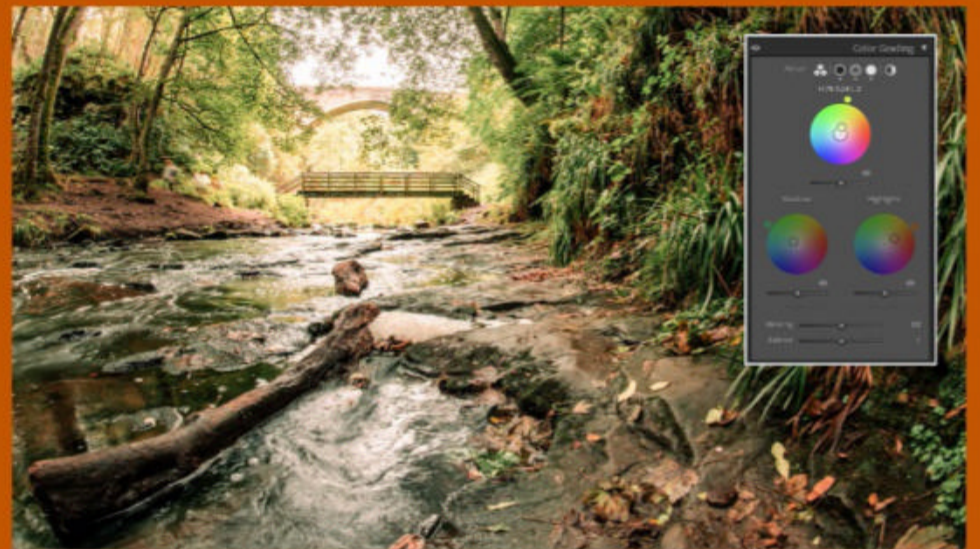
#### 2 ADJUST HSL

I needed to create separation between the green foliage and the bronze leaves and mud behind. To do this I reduced the yellow hue and saturation, which makes natural greens 'fresher'. I also reduced green luminance to remove the presence of sheen.



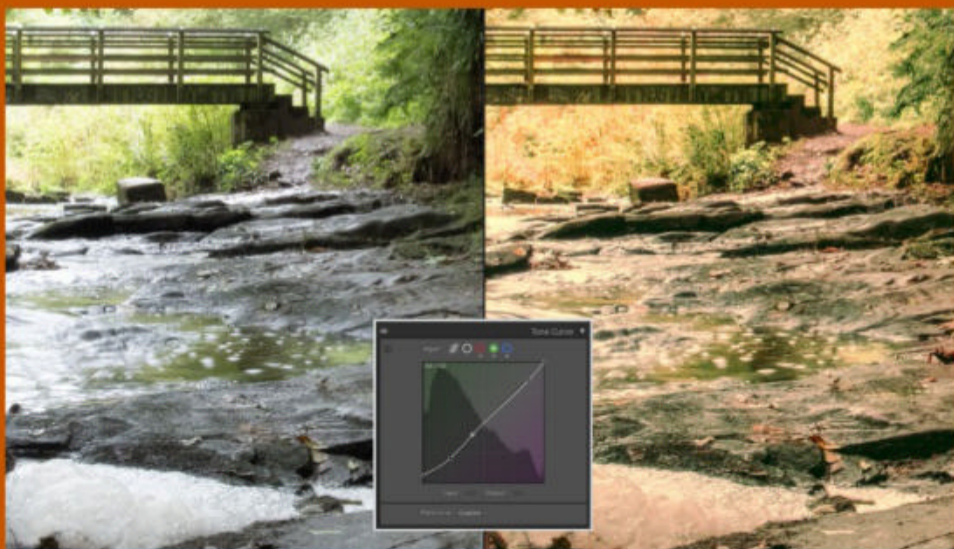
#### 3 USE POINT COLOR

To target the underlying reddish soil and brown foliage, I used the eyedropper in the Point Colour tab in Lightroom to select this range. I checked 'Visualise Range' to see which colours were selected, then further adjusted the HSL of these colours.



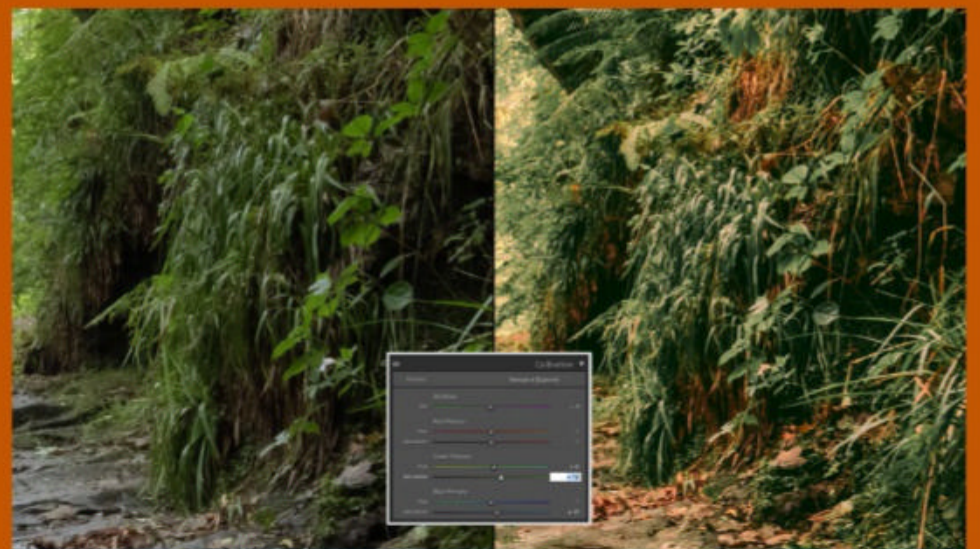
#### 4 GRADING WHEEL TECHNIQUES

For a subtle split tone, I added green to the shadows and orange to the highlights, using the grading wheels in Lightroom. This complemented the scene's existing colours. To fill out the range, I added a midtone halfway between these.



#### 5 TONE CURVE TARGETING

Adding more complex tones to the colour palette ensures that the grade looks natural. Using a tone curve, I added more green to the darks, magenta to the upper midtones, and yellow to the highlights, creating a warm glow.



#### 6 CONTROL CALIBRATION

Finally, I made some minor adjustments to the colour process by increasing the green and blue primary saturation and shifting the green primary hue to the right. This completed the cinema-like grade style I was looking for.



# CRAFT LIGHTING AND EXPOSURE

Control tonal balance using local adjustment tools

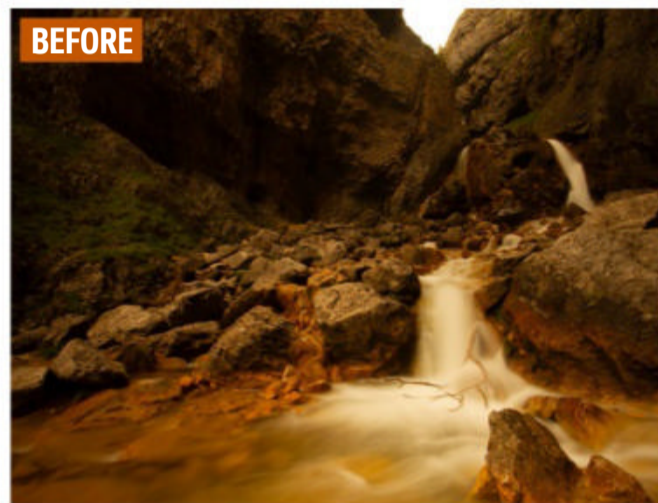
**E**xposure and colour in photography are often discussed independently as if they're unrelated topics; however, it's important to remember that the brightness of an image directly impacts the appearance of colours. In landscape photography, the decision is often taken to underexpose slightly to maintain highlight detail but also to create richer colours that appear more saturated. This means that you need to be mindful of how your exposure choices affect the colour fidelity of your photos.

In scenic imaging, this can be challenging due to the tonal range of many compositions. The sky is usually brighter than the foreground by a significant margin, which means colours will be impacted differently in each area of the frame. This is why localised adjustments are hugely important in landscape editing.

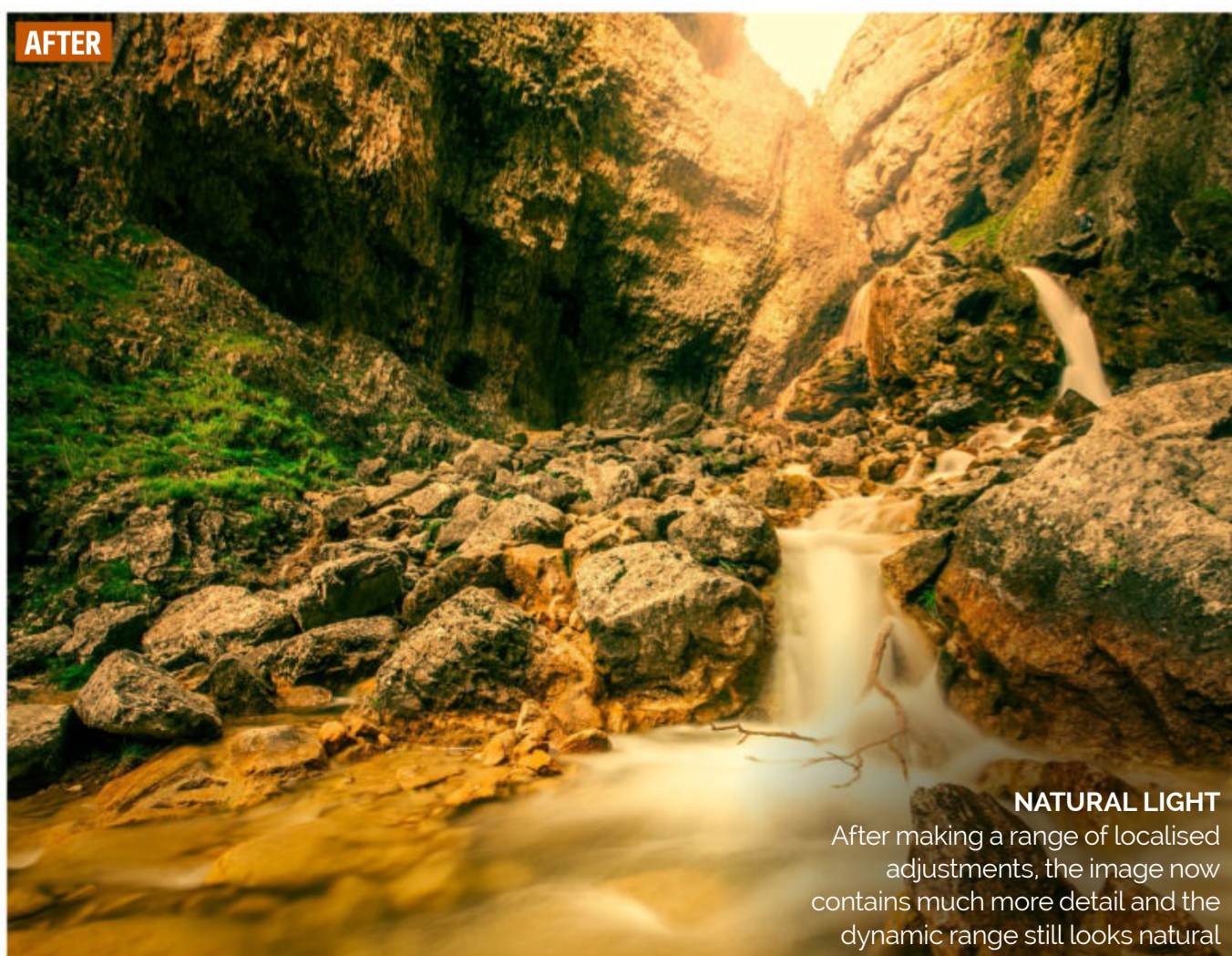
Most advanced software applications offer adjustment tools that allow you to make localised edits to many parameters, including exposure, colour saturation, white balance and clarity. This workflow is far more flexible than simply applying global adjustments. However,

when we make changes to the tonality of an image, especially in local areas, we must keep the dynamic range natural. We must also ensure that we don't change the lighting structure of the shot, creating hotspots where none could exist in reality due to the lack of a light source.

A professional approach is to work in rounds of edits that get progressively more concise. Start with global edits, then move down to working using local adjustment tools, before finally targeting the brightness and intensity of specific colour ranges.



**ON STREAM**  
The exposure range in this shot is wide, but the topography results in isolated areas of clipped detail, and using grad filters was impractical



**NATURAL LIGHT**  
After making a range of localised adjustments, the image now contains much more detail and the dynamic range still looks natural

## ESSENTIAL LOCAL ADJUSTMENT FEATURES

Mark Brion's pick of software tools



### LOCAL ADJUSTMENT BRUSHES

Editing software offers brush tools, so you can paint onto specific areas of the image and then make selective exposure adjustments.



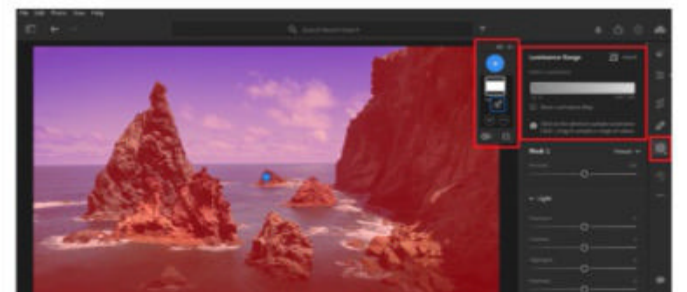
### GRADUATED FILTERS

Enables gradual exposure adjustments across the image, such as darkening the sky while keeping the foreground unchanged.



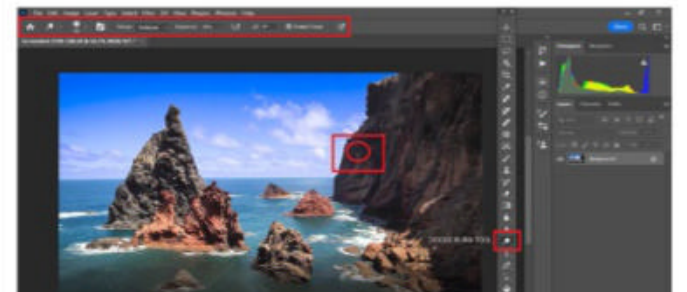
### RADIAL FILTERS

Creates circular or elliptical selections with controllable feather measurements so you can brighten or darken specific areas.



### LUMINANCE RANGE MASKS

Layers and masks allow complex exposure adjustments to specific parts of an image. Range masks allow precise tonal targeting.



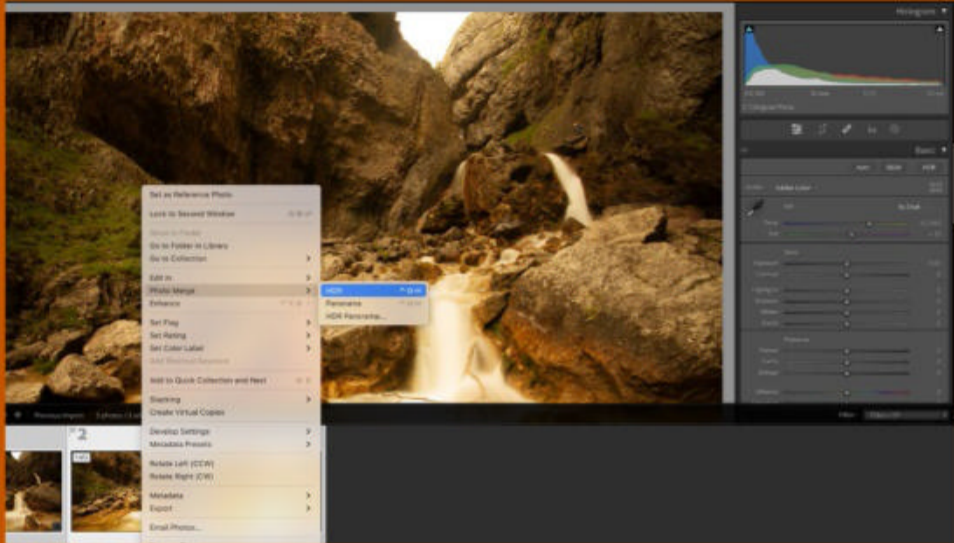
### DODGE AND BURN TOOLS

These are commonly used to selectively lighten (dodge) or darken (burn) targeted areas based on a specific tonal range.



# CRAFT LIGHTING AND EXPOSURE CONTINUED

## PERFORM COMPLEX BLENDS Merge images with challenging moving elements and tricky lighting



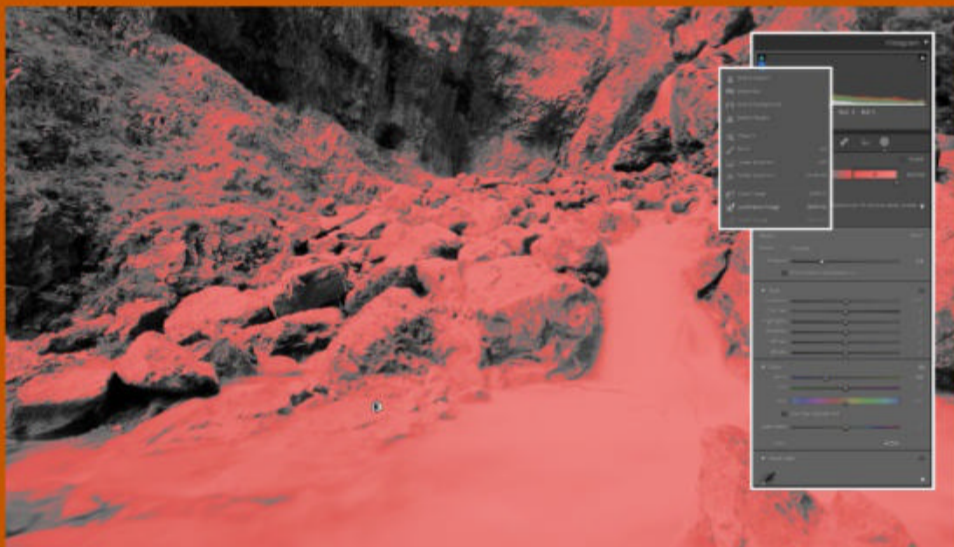
### 1 AUTO BLEND SHOTS

In this high-contrast scene, I captured a bracket of three exposures, which I then blended together using Lightroom's Merge to HDR function, loading all of the tones into a single frame for later adjustment.



### 2 ADJUST MAIN PARAMETERS

On the merged image, I set the black and white points, introduced some extra clarity, and pulled back some of the highlight detail. In order to monitor clipping, I toggled the clipping alerts by clicking on the triangle symbols on the histogram.



### 3 ADJUST TONAL SHIFT

The use of a strong ND filter has given the image a yellow tone. I wanted to remove this from the shadows, so to target this range I created a luminance range mask, selected a highlight with the eyedropper, and refined the luminance range.



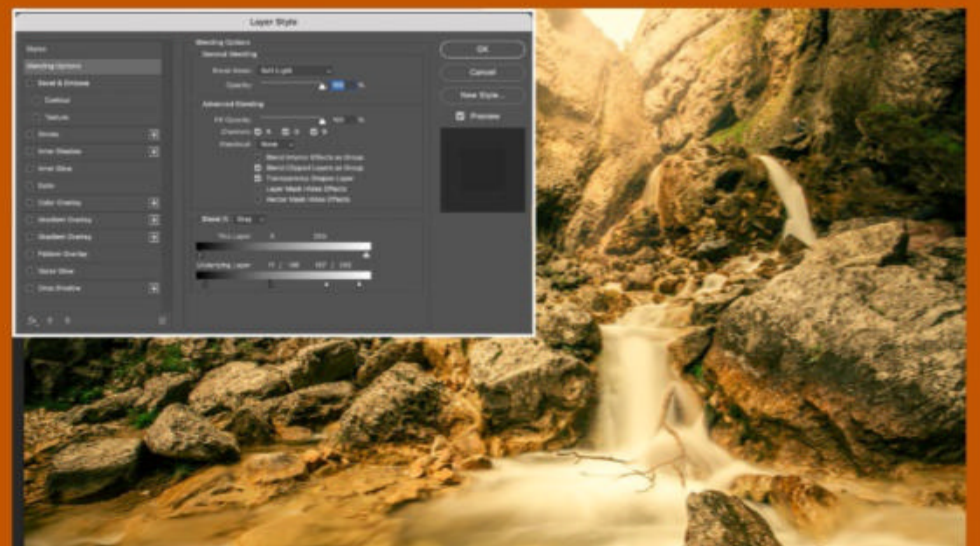
### 4 RESTORE NATURAL COLOUR

After adjusting the temperature of that range, the greens remained an ugly brown, so I adjusted them using HSL, increasing the green hue until the colours looked more natural. I also applied +33 green primary hue under Calibration.



### 5 REMOVE GHOSTS

The moving water has created blending artefacts, so I stacked the HDR file and one of the original bracketed images in Photoshop. I made a selection around the foreground water in Quick Mask mode, feathered the selection and applied a layer mask.



### 6 CREATE A LIGHT GRADIENT

For a sunset feel, I added a Radial Gradient layer with a yellow foreground and magenta background and applied the Soft Light blending mode. For a smoother gradient, go to Layer Styles and, in Blend If, adjust the Underlying Layer markers.



# FEATURE

## WORK WITH SPECIAL EFFECTS

Explore advanced software techniques to make your shots stand out

### MAXIMUM IMPACT

If getting people to connect with your final image is your ultimate goal as a photographer, you should use all tools possible to achieve that



© Mark Brion

Landscape photography can often be seen as a literal genre, with the aim of simply capturing the scene before the camera exactly as it is. However, this attitude has changed over recent years, thanks to the advent of social media trends, and AI software features such as Generative Fill in Adobe Photoshop. Although these tools can be controversial, and have stretched the definition of digital photography, they have also opened up a whole world of creative and cultural possibilities.

I've always believed that the impact of the final image is the end goal for a photographer, and that we must be free to take whatever steps are necessary so that the viewer can connect with our subject. If that means adjusting the

colours and lighting conditions of a scene because they had less impact on the day we conducted our shoot, or because we had to shoot at a sub-optimal time of day, we should explore all the possible options to enhance our images.

Modern software is packed full of filters and advanced functions, such as layer masking and gradients, which can be used to simulate exposure effects. The key is to use them with restraint, and only apply filters where there's a clear advantage in doing so. Special effects, as in any photo genre, aren't necessarily enough to justify an image on their own. Instead, they should enhance the lighting and detail already in the scene, or complement the intended tone of the shot at the moment of exposure.

### MARK BRION



Mark Brion is an award-winning photographer, based in Oxfordshire UK. He served in the British military and the police, before becoming a pro

photographer in 2013. Initially, he worked in events, portraiture and real estate before specialising in natural world imagery. Teaching photography is now Mark's passion, and he leads workshop groups to destinations both in the UK and abroad.

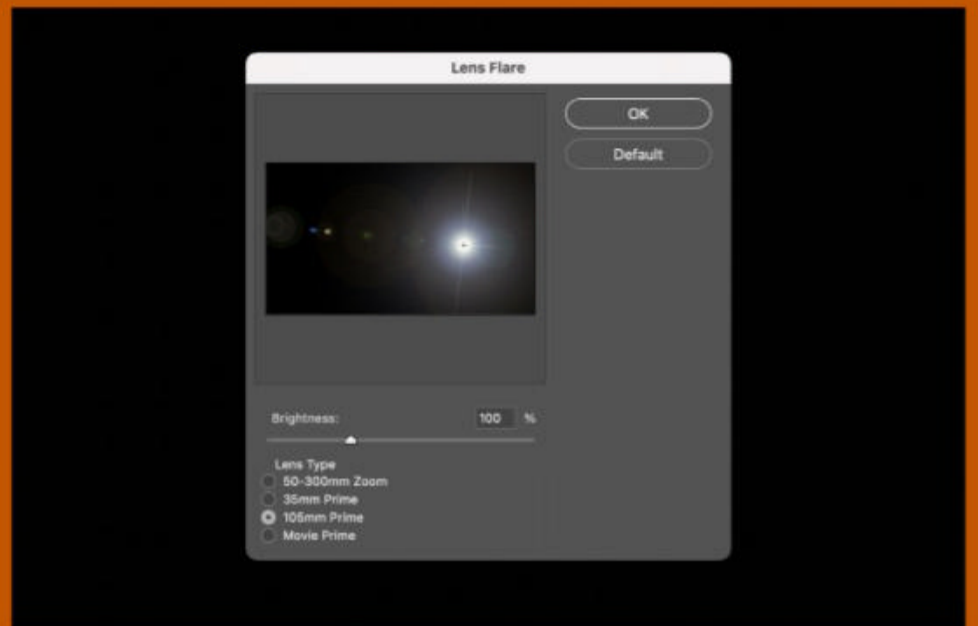
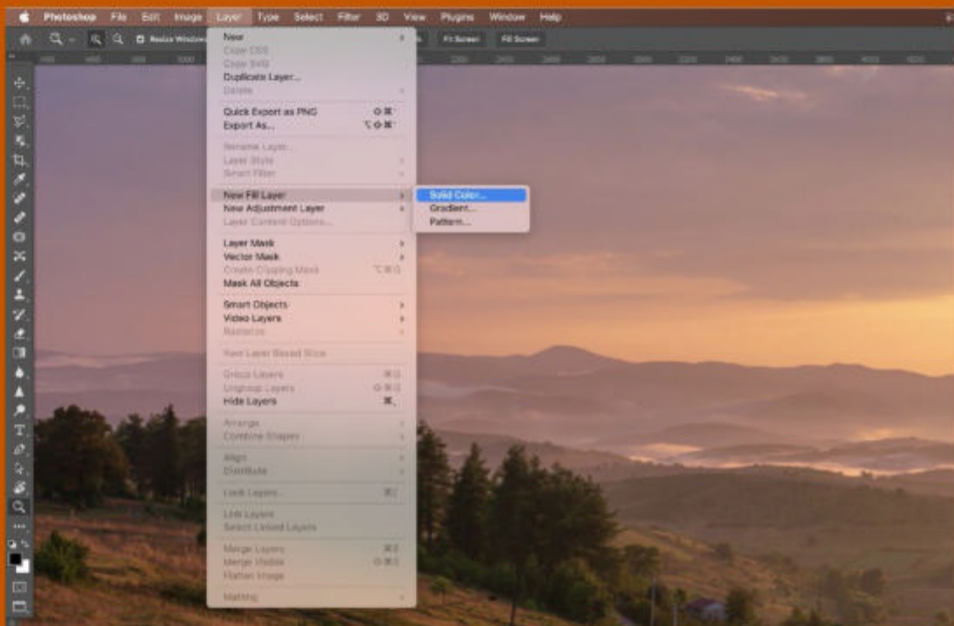
@markbrionphotography  
markbrion.com



# FEATURE

## WORK WITH SPECIAL EFFECTS CONTINUED

### RELIGHT THE SCENE Introduce lighting effects to your shots to overcome flat conditions

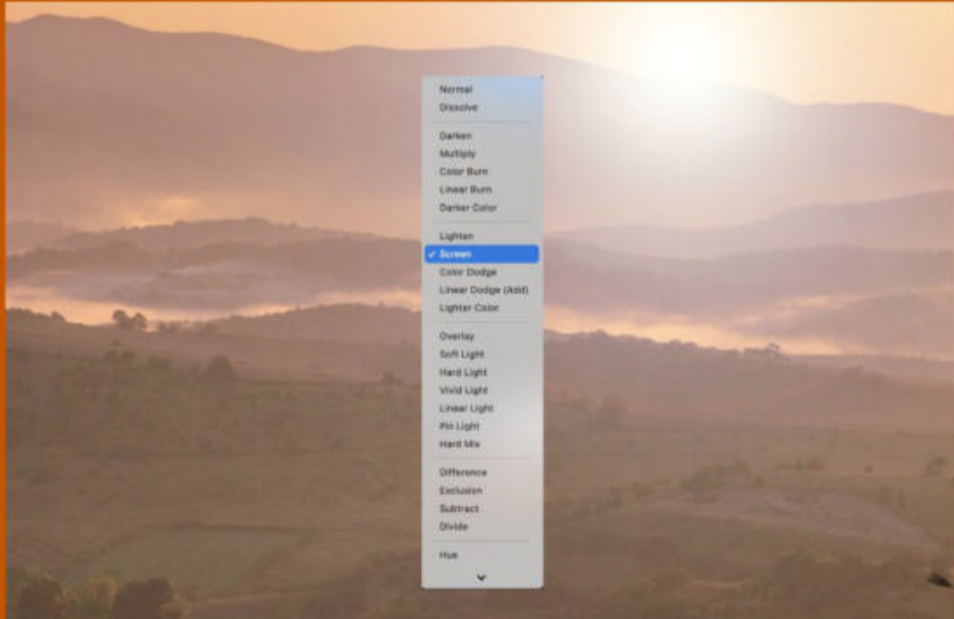


#### 1 ADD A MOVABLE LAYER

Start by adding a black Solid Colour layer above your Background layer – the black background will make it easy to move the lighting effect around at a later stage. You can toggle the layer on and off by clicking the layer visibility (eye) icon.

#### 2 ADD A FLARE

The process varies between software. In Photoshop go Filter > Render > Lens Flare. Select the 105mm Prime option, resize using 'Brightness' based on the focal length and resolution of your image, and place the flare where your light source would be.



#### 3 REMOVE THE BACKGROUND

Click OK to apply the filter. Change the layer blending mode to Screen to remove the black background, and then adjust the placement and size of the flare layer, considering the ambient lighting and matching its direction.



#### 4 MATCH THE AMBIENT COLOUR

Tone the flare layer to match the ambient colour balance. Go to Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Hue/Saturation and, with the flare layer below, go to Layer > Create Clipping Mask. Check Colorize in the H/S dialog, and shift the Hue slider.

### USE FILTERS LIKE A PRO Other special effect tools to try on your images

#### DIFFERENCE CLOUDS

In Photoshop, go to Filter > Render > Difference Clouds. This applies a fog-like effect that can be scaled, transformed and blended using the Screen blending mode. Use this at an Opacity of less than 40%, and ensure the scaling matches the focal length of the frame.

#### RADIAL BLUR

When shooting in the middle of the day, it can be a challenge to achieve a long exposure without using a 10-stop ND filter. Select the sky, and with the selection active, choose Filter > Blur > Radial Blur. Select Zoom as the method, and adjust the Amount to suit your image.

#### DIFFUSE GLOW

For a fairytale look, this filter subtly diffuses the highlights, creating a soft-focus effect. Use this sparingly on high-key images or those with a defined light source. Alternatively, go to Select > Color Range, sample a highlight and add a light Gaussian Blur effect.

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G A L L E R Y

# XPOSURE

THE WEEK'S MOST INSPIRING READER PHOTOS



## MACRO MARBLES

**NICK STRONG**

"This is a close-up image of some marbles, which I shot in my home studio."

<https://bit.ly/3tXh6GI>

# GALLERY

THE WEEK'S MOST INSPIRING READER PHOTOS



## DARLING HARBOUR, SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

**PHILIP EDWARD WOOD**

"This is the Darling Harbour Woodward Water Feature in Sydney, Australia. The angle of the sun against the wet spiral pattern caught my eye, inspiring me to capture my own interpretation of this piece of architectural art."

<https://bit.ly/30v32dU>



# G A L L E R Y

THE WEEK'S MOST INSPIRING READER PHOTOS



## THE SILENT DISCO IN THE CLOUDS

**DOM HAUGHTON**

"Fanal Forest on the island of Madeira is an extraordinary location, quite unlike any other I've visited. Each tree has a unique shape and character, and it was fun to observe how they interacted with one another. In this image I saw a dancefloor, with the main subject strutting across the stage in front of a supporting cast. The fog that so often fills this high-altitude forest adds even more atmosphere to the scene."

<https://bit.ly/3AtIfBe>

# GALLERY

THE WEEK'S MOST INSPIRING READER PHOTOS



## HARDWARE ART

**KEITH TODD**

"To photograph this collection of nuts, bolts, and screws I experimented by arranging them on a mirror, with two filtered LED lights off to the side."

<https://bit.ly/3RAkCyH>



FACEBOOK

<http://bit.ly/39py9lg>



FLICKR

<http://bit.ly/2VIgsJ0>

## PHOTOGRAPHY WEEK WANTS YOUR PHOTOS!

Taken a portrait you're particularly proud of? Shot a sensational sunset you'd like to show off? Then join the *Photography Week* Facebook community and share your best photos today! You'll get feedback from fellow readers and the *Photography Week* team, plus the chance to appear in *Xposure*, or even on our cover!

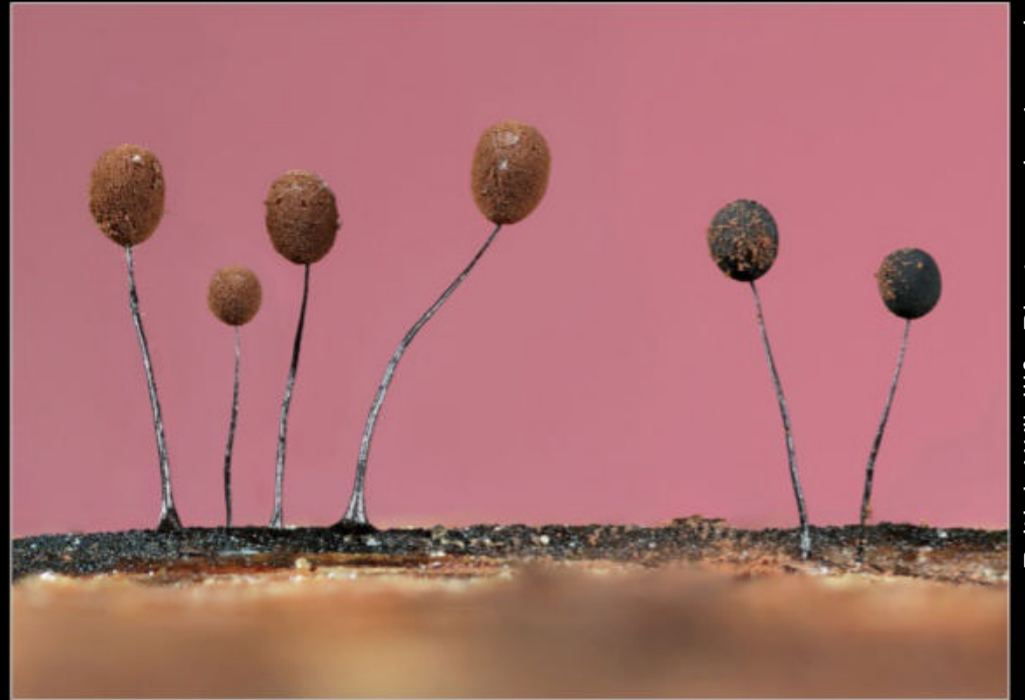
I N S P I R A T I O N

# IT'S COOL, THAT

THE BEST THING WE'VE SEEN THIS WEEK



*Ocean Drifter* by Ryan Stalker, Overall Winner



*Tiny Forest Balloons* by Jason McCombe, Winner, Botanical Britain



*A Precarious Pose* by Alastair Marsh, Highly Commended, Portraits



*Three's a Crowd* by Ross Hoddinott, Winner, Hidden Britain

## PHOTO CONTEST CELEBRATES BRITAIN'S NATURAL WONDERS

British Wildlife Photography Awards feature amazing images of fauna and flora

**T**he British Wildlife Photography Awards, which celebrate the incredible diversity of animals, plants, and ecosystems across the UK, have announced the winners of the 2024 contest.

This year's overall winner is Ryan Stalker, for his striking image of a football covered in goose barnacles that washed up off the coast of Dorset after drifting across the Atlantic. The goose barnacle is a non-native species to the UK, normally being found in

the tropics, and the image illustrates how ocean waste can enable the migration of invasive species, as well as harming marine life and causing pollution.

Stalker's image, entitled *Ocean Drifter*, also took first place in the Coast & Marine category. Other categories include Animal Behaviour, Animal Portraits and Botanical Britain. Click the link to see more winning and commended images at the British Wildlife Photography Awards website.



SEE MORE IMAGES  
<https://bit.ly/3INmiB6>

S K I L L S

# CRASH COURSE

ESSENTIAL PHOTO SKILLS MADE EASY



## PATCHWORK PORTRAITS

Mike Harris uses the Brenizer method to shoot and edit a bokeh panorama with a super-shallow depth of field

**T**he Brenizer method is the brainchild of renowned wedding photographer Ryan Brenizer. It's sometimes referred to as the bokeh panorama, owing to the wide frame and super-shallow depth of field that characterizes the style of these images.

Bokeh panoramas boast shallower depths of field than are achievable with a wide-angle lens, and give APS-C and full-frame users the ability to produce portraits with a large-format

aesthetic. The key to this technique is to use a fast telephoto lens to achieve the characteristic portrait depth of field, and constant camera settings that won't change between frames to create a seamless blend.

Once you've settled on a white balance preset, locked your exposure, and used AF to focus on your subject, you need to switch to manual focus so as not to change your point of focus as you begin to shoot your panorama sequence. Exactly how many

photos you take is down to personal preference, but we recommend overlapping each frame by around 30% to ensure you don't leave any gaps.

Photoshop makes it easy to blend your sequence by automatically merging your images together. You then simply need to check the blend for any inconsistencies, and crop as desired. If you like the idea of creating a wide portrait with a super-shallow depth of field, here's how to shoot and edit your own bokeh panorama...



# SKILLS

## HOW TO SHOOT A BRENIZER



### QUICK TIP

You'll find it easier to shoot on a day with consistent sunlight or even cloud cover. Patchy clouds can make light conditions change between shots, which will make it harder to blend the images seamlessly.



### 1

### FAST LENS

A fast lens is essential for achieving a shallow depth of field: we used an 85mm f/1.4, but a 50mm f/1.8 would also work well. You're not limited to just prime lenses though – a fast telephoto zoom, like a 70-200mm f/2.8, will still produce a suitably blurry background.

### 2

### CONSISTENCY IS KEY

As you'll be merging several frames, they need to be as consistent as possible. To prevent the white balance from changing mid-sequence, head to your camera's White Balance menu and select the desired preset. We'd suggest shooting in raw so that you can tweak the colour temperature later if needed.



# S K I L L S

## HOW TO SHOOT A BRENIZER



3

### FRAME YOUR SHOT

You'll have plenty of room to crop your large panorama in post-production, but you should still consider your composition. Visualize your final image, and position yourself accordingly before you start shooting. Still leave enough space to crop, though, as your blended image will be an irregular shape.



4

### CAMERA SETTINGS

Select aperture priority mode and choose a wide aperture – we'd recommend f/2.8 or wider – then adjust the ISO until you get a shutter speed of 1/200 sec (or higher). Now switch to Manual mode, and input the same settings to lock your exposure; just as with the white balance, consistent exposure is vital.



5

### MANUAL FOCUS

Your focus needs to be consistent throughout your sequence. If you're using back-button focusing you can simply release the back button after you've focused on your subject. If not, focus on your subject using AF and then switch to manual focus – your focus will then remain locked as you capture your bokeh panorama.



6

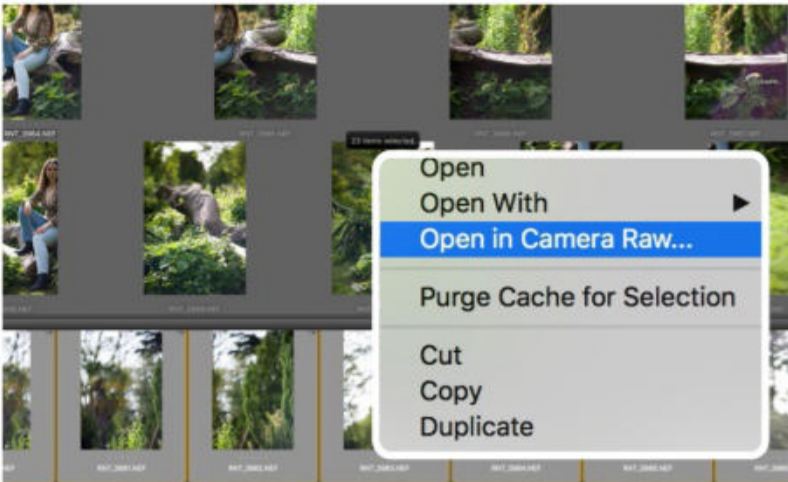
### SHOOT THE SEQUENCE

We framed and captured our subject, and then shot three frames to her left and three frames to her right, and three more frames just above her head and three below her feet. There's no hard and fast rule for how many or how few images you should capture; just make sure you overlay each image by around 30% to prevent any gaps between frames.



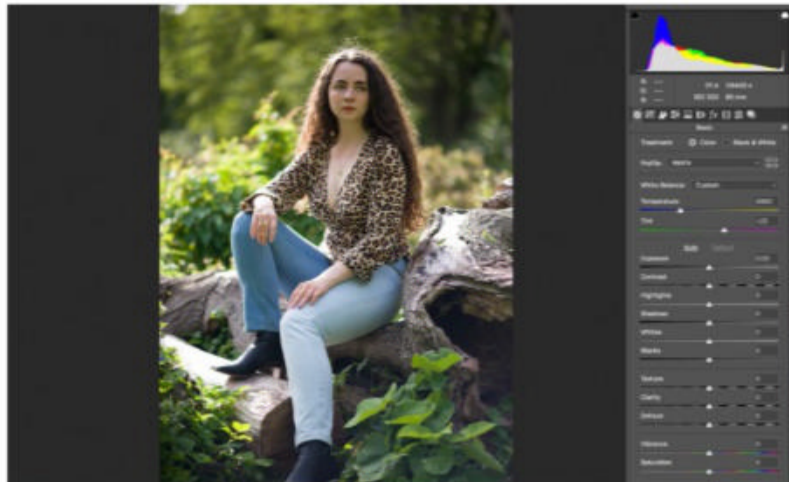
# SKILLS

## HOW TO EDIT YOUR BOKEH PANORAMA



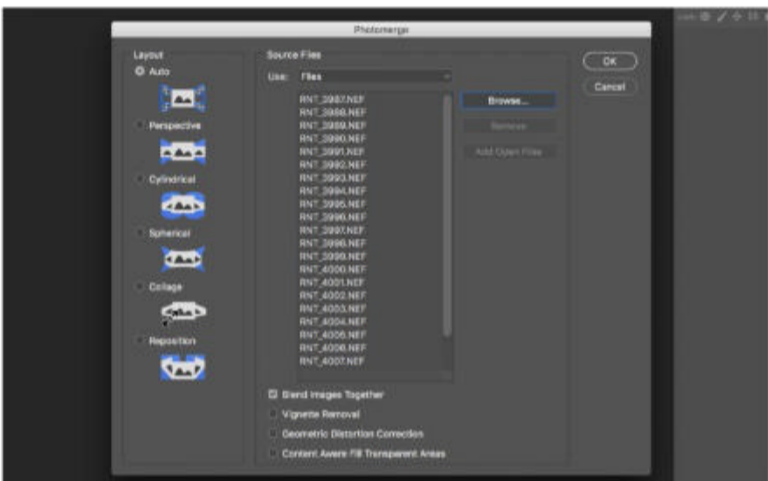
### 1 OPEN IN CAMERA RAW

Highlight your sequence in Adobe Bridge (select the first image, hold down Shift and select the last image), then right-click and select Open in Camera Raw. Hold Shift and select the last image in the left panel to highlight the sequence; your edits will now be applied to all the images.



### 2 COLOUR TEMP

Select Remove Chromatic Aberration and Enable Profile Corrections in the Lens Corrections tab, then check the exposure and colour temperature of each image, ensuring that you fix any inconsistencies before blending your panorama. Click Done.



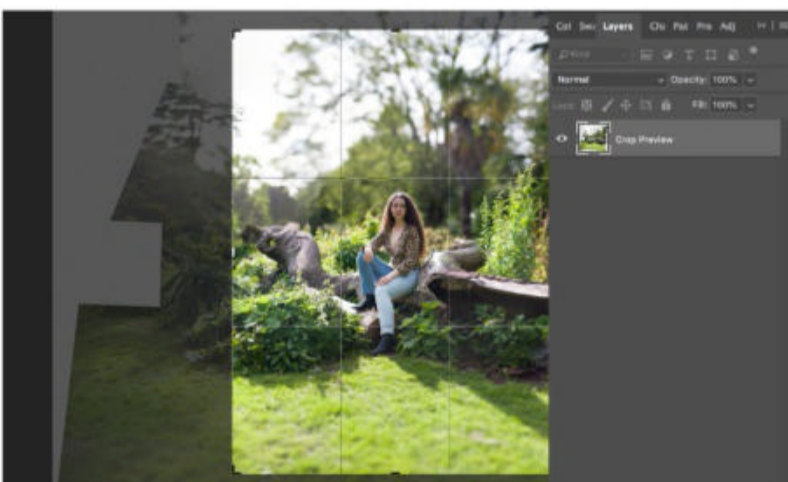
### 3 IMPORT INTO PHOTOSHOP

With the images still selected, click Tools > Photoshop > Photomerge. Make sure Auto and Blend Images Together are selected when the Photomerge window opens, and click Browse to select the images from your sequence. Hit OK to start the merging process.



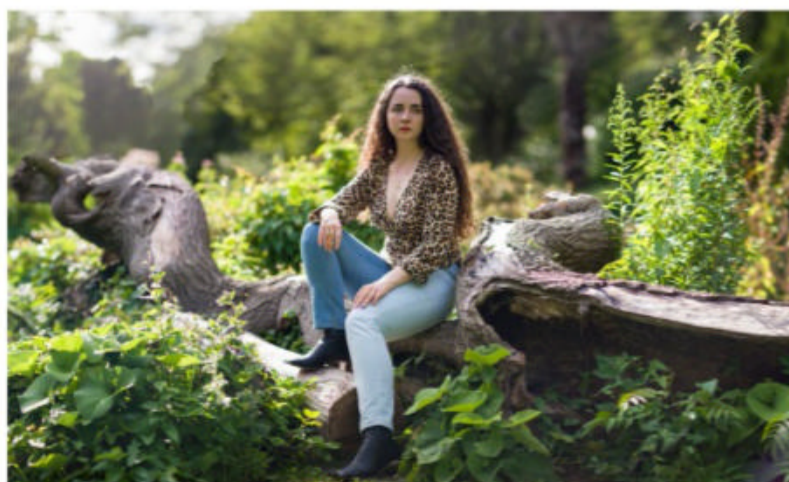
### 4 BOKEH PANORAMA

You'll now have a large medium-format-style image that's spliced into multiple layers. Photoshop generally does a good job of blending images together, but it's worth looking for any obvious inconsistencies, which you can rectify with the Clone Stamp or Healing tools.



### 5 CROP YOUR IMAGE

Your image will likely be a rather irregular shape, so fix this using the Crop tool. It's worth remembering that the photo is a blend of multiple frames, so you have plenty of room to play with if you opt for a tighter composition.



### 6 FLATTEN AND FINISH

Make a flattened copy of your image by selecting the topmost layer and pressing Ctrl+Alt+Shift+E (Cmd+Alt+Shift+E on a Mac). You can then proceed with your normal editing regime to finish the image off.

### QUICK TIP

Working with multiple raw files can be a challenge even for powerful computers, especially if you're using an extremely high-resolution camera. An easy fix is to do the bulk of your editing in Camera Raw before saving the images as JPEGs, which enables you to control the size of your files. It's then just a case of finding and selecting the JPEGs in Adobe Bridge, and following the same blending process. Another way to reduce the workload on your computer is to take fewer images – a panorama portrait can be as few as two images.

E D I T I N G

# PHOTOSHOP

LEARN ESSENTIAL EDITING SKILLS FAST!



HOW TO...

## MASTER SHADOWS AND HIGHLIGHTS

This powerful tool has more to it than meets the eye, and it's ideal for landscapes

**P**hotoshop's Shadows/Highlights command has long been one of the most useful tonal tools on offer in the software. Initially, the tool offers two simple sliders: one lets you lift the shadows, while the other darkens the highlights. However, as you'll discover in this issue's video tutorial, hidden away are

a wealth of other options that give you a fine degree of control over the balance of tones in your scene.

Shadows/Highlights really comes into its own with landscapes. Like our Icelandic seascape here, a typical landscape photo will be dominated by very bright and very dark tones, as skies tend to be lighter than the land

below. This makes it tricky to achieve a balanced exposure, as the contrast between the two areas is so great.

Thankfully, there's often far more detail hidden in the highlights and shadows than meets the eye. The trick is in knowing how to tease it out, and the Shadows/Highlights command is one of the best tools for the job.



G E A R

# LENS TEST

EXPERT OPINION ON THE LATEST KIT



## VILTROX AF 27MM F1.2 PRO

A 'pro' lens with a consumer price tag

[www.viltroxstore.com](http://www.viltroxstore.com) [£420/\\$545](#)

**T**he Viltrox AF 27mm F1.2 Pro picks up the baton from some seriously good f/1.4 lenses that are available in Fujifilm X, Nikon Z and Sony E mount options. We were impressed by the Viltrox AF 23mm F1.4 Z, Viltrox AF 33mm F1.4 Z and Viltrox AF 56mm F1.4 Z, which are all pretty much the same size and weight, plus the slightly larger Viltrox AF 13mm F1.4 Z. Personally, I was so impressed by these four lenses that I bought them outright as my go-to lenses for when I'm shooting with my Nikon Z fc camera.

Combining fast and consistently accurate autofocus with good handling characteristics, Viltrox's back catalogue of lenses include de-clicked aperture rings and are terrific value at the price, although

the 23mm, 33mm and 56mm lack weather seals. The newer 27mm lens, which so far is available in Fujifilm X and Nikon Z mounts, sets the bar higher with its 'Pro' badge and super-fast f/1.2 aperture, along with a feast of upmarket features. It's naturally bigger and heavier than the trio of 23mm, 33mm and 56mm f/1.4 lenses, and getting on for twice the price, but is still standout value for money.

### Key features

The 27mm focal length of this APS-C format lens gives an 'effective' 40.5mm in full-frame terms, with a viewing angle of 55.3 degrees. It's a little wider than a standard 50mm lens, but not quite as wide as a 35mm lens (again, in full-frame terms). I find the focal length works

1 Viltrox's HD Nano multi-layer coating is applied to the lens.

2 There's no locking switch, but the aperture ring has a firm 'click'.

3 The USB-C port can be used for applying firmware updates.

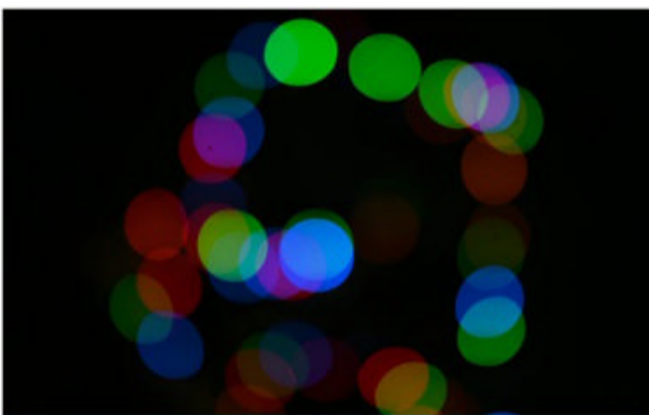
well for everyday walkabout shooting and street photography.

A key feature of the lens is its super-fast f/1.2 aperture rating. This enables a tight depth of field, which is always more challenging with crop-sensor cameras that with full-frame models. The quality of bokeh comes to the fore and, to help maintain good bokeh when stopping

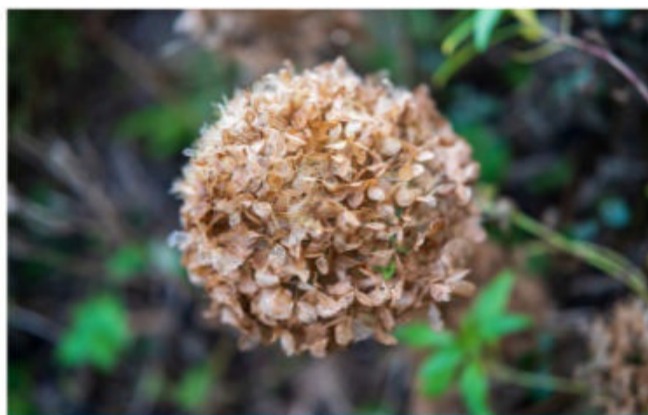


## LENS TEST VILTROX AF 27MM F1.2 PRO

This shot, taken wide open at f/1.2, demonstrates the Viltrox's good control over axial/longitudinal chromatic aberration or 'bokeh fringing', as well as the level of vignetting at the corners of the frame



Bokeh discs from defocused lights look smooth, with minimal 'onion ring' effect



Defocused areas look soft and smooth, with a natural transition in the roll-off between areas

down a little, the lens features a particularly well-rounded 11-blade aperture diaphragm. A further bonus of the speedy aperture rating is that you can retain fast shutter speeds for freezing action, even under gloomy or indoor lighting conditions.

As we've come to expect from a lens with a linear stepping motor-based autofocus system, it enables fast autofocus for stills, as well as being adept at delivering smooth and virtually silent transitions when shooting video. The optical path is based on no less than 15

elements, arranged in 11 groups. To maximise sharpness and clarity while minimising unwanted aberrations, the high-tech glass includes one aspherical element, five HR (High Refractive index) and two ED (Extra-low Dispersion) elements. Viltrox's HD Nano multi-layer coating is applied to minimise ghosting and flare.

A neat feature in terms of ensuring compatibility with forthcoming cameras is a USB-C port, which you can use for applying firmware updates. It's an update over the old-style micro USB port we've seen

on the other previously mentioned Viltrox lenses.

#### Build and handling

Build quality feels consummate with the lens's 'Pro' label. The construction is based on a metal casing and a coated brass mounting plate, and unlike the 23mm, 33mm and 56mm lenses, this one features a full set of weather seals. There's also a AF/MF focus mode switch, which is quicker and more convenient to use compared to delving into camera menus to make the change. Another welcome addition is a customisable L-Fn button that falls neatly under the thumb, and which we used for AF-hold.

One criticism of the 23mm, 33mm and 56mm lenses is that the aperture ring has no click steps and no locking switch, and it was easy to inadvertently nudge the ring from its Auto position to a narrow aperture setting. The 27mm still has no locking switch, but there's a much firmer 'click' from the Auto position, and throughout our testing we found that



## LENS TEST VILTROX AF 27MM F1.2 PRO



The lens comes with a petal-shaped, bayonet-fit hood, plus a stylish soft pouch for stowage

we didn't engage manual apertures accidentally, not even once. Furthermore, the aperture control ring has one-third f/stop click steps, more ideal for stills, along with a Click on/off switch, enabling stepless aperture control for video.

The lens comes complete with a petal-shaped, bayonet-fit hood and a stylish soft pouch for stowage. The filter attachment thread of 67mm is pretty modest for an f/1.2 lens, even by crop-sensor standards. It's actually the same size as on the 13mm F1.4 lens, but larger than the 52mm thread shared by the 23mm, 33mm and 56mm F1.4. The lens measures 82 x 92mm and weighs 560g – that's noticeably larger and getting on for twice the weight of the f/1.4 trio of 23mm, 33mm and 56mm lenses, but it feels manageable and well balanced on slimline Fujifilm and Nikon crop-sensor cameras.

### Performance

Autofocus is quick, virtually silent, and proved consistently accurate in

## S P E C S

**MOUNT:** FUJIFILM X, NIKON Z **FULL-FRAME:**  
**NO LENS CONSTRUCTION:** 15 ELEMENTS  
 IN 11 GROUPS **ANGLE OF VIEW:** 55.3°  
**AUTOFOCUS:** YES **MAX APERTURE:** F/1.2  
**MIN APERTURE:** F/16 **DIAPHRAGM BLADES:**  
 11 **MIN FOCUSING DISTANCE:** 0.28M **MAX**  
**MAGNIFICATION RATIO:** 0.15X **FILTER**  
**SIZE:** 67MM **DIMENSIONS (L X D):** 92 X  
 82MM **WEIGHT:** 560G

our tests with a Nikon Z fc. Naturally, though, fast autofocus and great handling are of little use if the optical quality doesn't hit the spot, and we're happy to report that the Viltrox shines through with excellent sharpness and clarity, even when shooting wide-open at f/1.2. And for such a 'fast' lens, wide-open sharpness bears up well even at the extreme edges and corners of the image frame. As an aside, we used the lens to shoot some product photography, and it was sufficiently sharp to draw attention to even the smallest lettering and microscopic particles of dust.

For creative photographers, the quality of bokeh is arguably every bit as important as sharpness, and the Viltrox does very well in this respect. Defocused areas in images look soft and smooth, with a natural transition in the roll-off between focused and defocused parts. Bokeh discs produced by defocused pinpricks of light and other bright points are smooth and have soft outlines, although they take on irregular shapes away from the centre of the image frame, which is common.

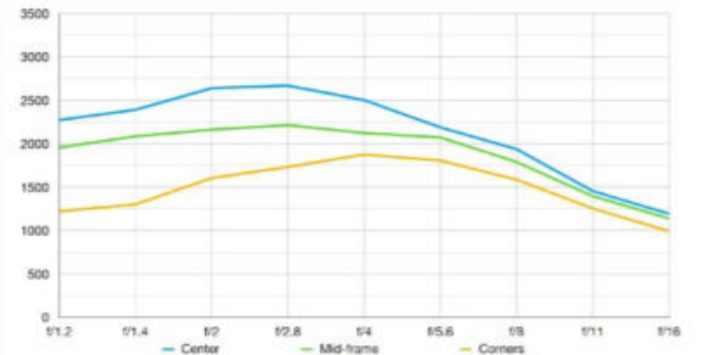
Super-fast lenses often produce noticeable axial/longitudinal chromatic aberration when used at their widest apertures, and this shows up as colour fringing around high-contrast transitions in scenes, just in front of and behind the plane of focus. The Viltrox does well to keep this aberration to a minimum, and the same goes for lateral chromatic aberration, which is more commonly a problem towards the edges and corners of the frame, at any aperture setting.

There's very little distortion, but vignetting can be noticeable when shooting at the widest aperture, although this might actually be viewed as attractive from a pictorial point of view. Either way, it can be reduced with automatic in-camera corrections if desired.

All in all, performance is excellent and entirely consistent with the lens's 'Pro' tag, and it holds its own against pro-grade lenses that cost massively more to buy.

Matthew Richards

## SHARPNESS



For such a fast f/1.2 lens, sharpness is nothing short of astonishing when shooting wide open, and it holds up very well even out to the extreme edges and the corners of the frame. From f/2 through to f/8, corner sharpness is simply epic.

## FRINGING

0.56

There's very little lateral chromatic aberration, even at the edges and corners of the image frame, throughout the entire aperture range. The lens also keeps a tight rein on lateral/axial chromatic aberrations, scoring very well on both counts.

## DISTORTION

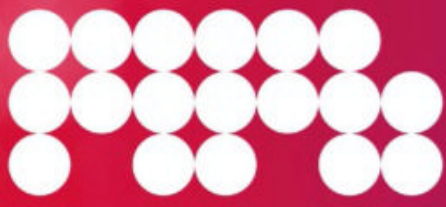
-0.91

There's just a slight hint of barrel distortion but, as with lateral chromatic aberration, this is easily within the remit of automatic in-camera corrections.

## VERDICT

We've been impressed by the range of fast f/1.4 autofocus prime lenses from Viltrox for Nikon Z DX and other brands of crop-sensor mirrorless cameras. The new 27mm F1.2 sports a 'Pro' badge, and takes everything to a new level. It offers superb build quality, sublime handling and a super-fast f/1.2 aperture, and delivers fabulous image quality and all-round performance. And there's an extra wow factor in the price – we'd happily pay three or four times as much for a lens of this quality.





mpb.com



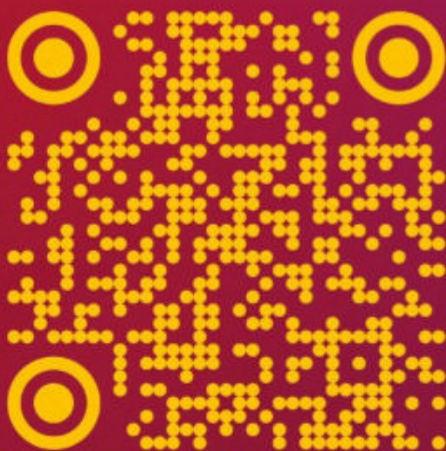
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A P P S

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