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25 APRIL-1 MAY 2024 ISSUE 605

Photography week

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SONY FE 24-50MM F2.8 G
WE TEST SONY'S COMPACT
AND AFFORDABLE NEW
STANDARD ZOOM



MASTER THE MODE DIAL

TAKE CONTROL OF EXPOSURE AND MORE
FOR PERFECT RESULTS IN ANY SITUATION

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Photography Week



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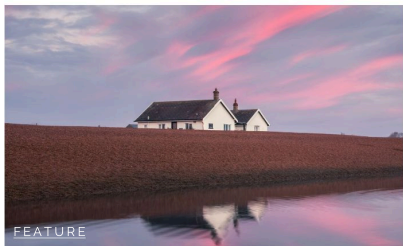
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We're more than just a magazine – read on and discover the many ways you can interact with and enjoy *Photography Week*



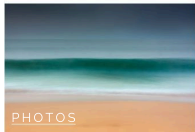
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© Richard Clarke



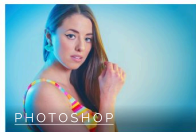
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INSPIRATION



CRASH COURSE



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REVIEW

SONY FE 24-50MM F2.8 G

Sony trims the zoom range to produce a light and affordable take on the standard 'trinity' zoom. Will you miss that extra 20mm? Find out in our in-depth review



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8K INSTA360 X4 TAKES AIM AT ACTION CAMS

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WHAT'S HOT

THE WEEK'S TOP HEADLINES IN PHOTOGRAPHY

NEW 8K INSTA360 X4 RAISES THE BAR FOR 360 CAMERAS

Successor to X3 brings serious upgrades to resolution and battery life



© INSTA360

Insta360 has unveiled the new 8K video-equipped Insta360 X4 – and as well as setting a new benchmark for 360 cameras, the brand is pitching the X4 as the only action camera you'll ever need.

The X4 is the follow-up to the popular Insta360 X3, and arrives packing some notable upgrades. In addition to 8K video, the camera boasts dramatically improved battery life, offering up to 135 minutes of shooting time.

This is the company's first 360 camera that's capable of shooting 8K video. Utilising two 180-degree (approx) cameras, the X4 is capable of a shoot first, edit later workflow, because you know that all the action around you will be captured – and, thanks to the new camera's increased resolution, in greater detail. The single-lens mode can now shoot 4K video up to 60fps, too.

The X4 boasts Insta360's excellent FlowState image stabilisation, and

360-degree horizon lock. Add in the fact that the camera is waterproof down to 33ft / 10m without the need for an additional housing, and you can see why Insta360 is also positioning the X4 as a highly capable action camera, and the only camera that adventurers and extreme sports fans will need to take with them in addition to their phone.

The X4 can even serve as a dashcam for motorcyclists, who can position the camera freely with one of Insta360's



THE WEEK'S TOP HEADLINES IN PHOTOGRAPHY

mounts, control it hands-free from a compatible Bluetooth headset, and capture their journeys automatically with Auto Dash mode and loop recording.

The Insta360 X4 is available to buy now, priced at £499.99 / \$499.99, which we think is a reasonable markup over the X3's launch price of £459 / \$449 given the upgrades on offer (although the X3's price has dropped since launch,

and it's likely to see further reductions in the week of the X4's arrival, making the older model a tempting buy).

A range of optional accessories are available for the X4, including various selfie sticks – one of which is designed to enable you to capture *Matrix*-style Bullet Time effects – and mounts.

2024 is set to be a bumper year for 360-degree cameras. In the last

few years Insta360's impressive offerings haven't faced much in the way of competition, but in addition to the Insta360 X4, GoPro has a GoPro Max successor in the works, while Canon is poised to launch an intriguing 360-degree / 180-degree 3D Powershot concept. However, the Insta360 X4 already looks like it's going to be the 360 camera to beat.

16-25MM F/2.8 G IS SONY'S NEW 'MINI TRINITY' LENS

Sony has announced the FE 16-25mm f/2.8 G, the companion lens to the recently released

Sony FE 24-50mm f/2.8 G (see this issue's review). In both cases, Sony has taken popular trinity lenses – the 16-35mm and 24-70mm – and preserved their widest focal length while trimming the long end of the zoom range in order to maintain the speed but drastically reduce the size – and cost.

In the case of the Sony FE 16-25mm f/2.8 G, that results in a lens that measures just 91mm in length, weighs 409g and costs £1,249 / \$1,199. Compare that to the full-fat Sony FE 16-35mm f/2.8 GM II – which measures 111.5mm, weighs 547g and costs £2,299 / \$2,299 – and you can see that there are immediate advantages to this new 'mini trinity' full-frame lens strategy (not least that Sony now claims to make the smallest and lightest f/2.8 standard and wide-angle zooms).

The lens's optical formula features three aspherical elements (to minimise aberrations), three extra-low dispersion elements (to suppress chromatic aberration), and an extra-low dispersion aspherical element (to simultaneously



correct chromatic and spherical aberration). It boasts 11 aperture blades, for smooth circular bokeh, and the lens is weather sealed, with a fluorine coating on the front element. It also features the same 67mm filter thread as the 24-50mm, making the duo an excellent tag team for photographers looking to cover the 16-50mm range.

The 16-35mm possesses distinct focus, zoom and aperture rings – the

latter of which can be de-clicked for use in video, where the lens supports focus breathing compensation. It's also fully compatible with the 120fps burst speed of the Sony A9 III.

The lens has a minimum focus distance of 0.18m at the widest end in autofocus mode, and 0.17m when focusing manually. It offers a maximum magnification of x0.20 in auto and x0.23 in manual focus.



SHINGLE STREET, SUFFOLK

Like many pros, Michael Clarke uses manual mode for greater control. "When shooting landscapes, the camera is on a tripod so I can keep to base ISO and play with aperture and shutter speed to get the correct exposure."

© Michael Clarke (michaelclarkephotography.co.uk)

MASTER THE MODE DIAL

Learn when and how to use every exposure mode on your camera for pro results Words Lauren Scott

The mode dial is one of the most important parts of any advanced camera, but also one of the most underused. Usually found on top of the body as a physical dial or selector, it allows photographers to quickly switch between different shooting modes and adapt to varied conditions, subjects, and even creative preferences.

The acronym PASM refers to the four main exposure modes that are found on most DSLR and mirrorless cameras. In Program mode (P), which is

semi-automatic, the camera selects the aperture and shutter speed, but leaves you to adjust settings like ISO, exposure compensation and white balance. In Aperture Priority mode (A or Av), you choose the aperture, and the camera adjusts the shutter speed to achieve the 'correct' exposure. Similarly in Shutter Priority mode (S, Tv, or T), you set the shutter speed, and the camera takes care of everything else. Manual mode (M) enables the photographer to take full control over all the parameters, which

can be both a blessing and a curse.

Over the next few pages we'll explore how the camera behaves in each mode, and explain how you can get more reliable results, in both consistent and changeable light. There's always more to learn about the humble mode dial, even for professionals, and doing so can help you to unleash the full potential of your photography equipment, not to mention make your workflow quicker and easier. Let's find out how to make the mode dial work for you.



WHEN TO WORK IN MANUAL MODE

M mode gives you greater control over your settings – just be aware of the drawbacks



© Andrew Gray/istockphoto.com

INTENTIONAL CAMERA MOVEMENT "For shooting ICM, manual is the only option", says pro Andrew S Gray, as he needs to set the exposure for the change of light and subject position. "I can't let the camera control anything, as I use it in a way it isn't designed for."

Using manual mode demands a thorough knowledge of exposure principles, which can be a hindrance when subjects are moving or opportunities are fleeting. Changing settings manually can be time-consuming, and can cause missed opportunities in fast-paced action or spontaneous moments. And in changeable light, relying on manual mode can yield poorly exposed images.

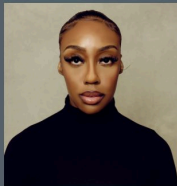
So when should you use manual? When the light isn't going to change suddenly, and you have time to consider your settings. And, when

you're working with high-contrast scenes containing extreme light and shadow contrasts, such as landscapes with dark foregrounds and bright skies, manual mode allows you to balance exposure and preserve details in the highlights and shadows.

If you're out in the middle of the day, or working under constant lighting in the studio, it's more precise. There are creative applications too: mesmerising long-exposure imagery – including astrophotography – when you want to mix a delicate balance of ISO sensitivity, exposure time and aperture.

STUDIO PHOTOGRAPHY

Under consistent lighting or flash, your exposure can be fine-tuned



© Jade Keshia Gordon

One of the downsides of manual mode is that it takes longer to adapt – something that isn't a problem in a controlled studio environment or when you're using flash. In complex lighting conditions, aperture or shutter priority will make a best guess at the situation, rather than capturing the exposure that matches your artistic intentions. Instead, choosing to shoot in Manual mode gives you consistent exposures.

Here, professional Jade Keshia Gordon (@jkgphotography.co.uk) used manual mode with the lowest ISO setting to maximise the flash without introducing noise. "Controlling exposure precisely ensured a clean, focused image," she says.



WHEN TO WORK IN MANUAL MODE

CONTINUED

ON TOP OF THE WORLD

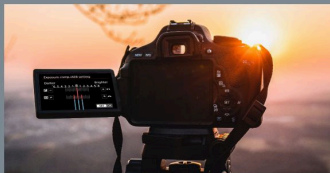
Macro photographer Geraint Radford uses manual mode when focus stacking. "I can adjust the flash power to ensure the subject is well-lit."



© Geraint Radford

MANUAL EXPOSURE BRACKETING

Customise your bracketing based on the scene



© George Fiske

Manual exposure bracketing can be used to capture greater tonal detail in scenes with high dynamic range – think sunrises and sunsets, where the sky is much brighter than the foreground. In manual mode, with the camera on a tripod, set up everything for a balanced exposure, shoot at the 'correct' metered exposure, then deliberately over and underexpose by enough increments to avoid clipping. Blending these frames when editing provides more highlight and shadow data than just one single shot. Many modern cameras offer automatic exposure bracketing, but manual mode lets you adapt to any lighting by choosing how you bracket.

MEASURE EXPOSURE DIFFERENCES

Discover the brightness difference between two subjects

There are several reasons to measure the exposure difference between two subjects in the frame. One is to ensure they're both properly exposed (one isn't significantly brighter or darker), or you might compose your shot more effectively by balancing the exposure between them. To measure the exposure difference, the easiest approach is in manual mode with spot metering selected.

First, point the lens at one subject, depress the shutter halfway to take a reading, and then use exposure lock, which allows you to reframe the scene, but maintain the current exposure settings, to focus on the second subject. You can also measure the reflected light by observing the stop difference on the exposure scale at the bottom of the viewfinder, and use this information to select an appropriate ND grad filter, for example.



© iStockphoto/Robyns

WHEN TO USE SHUTTER PRIORITY

CONTINUED



© Estaban Frey/istockphoto.com

SELF-DRIVE SAFARI! I was in Kruger National Park and spotted an elephant and birds flying around," says Estaban Frey. "Shutter priority mode allowed me to focus solely on adjusting the shutter speed to capture the bird's movement."

LIMIT YOUR ISO

Set the ISO values to avoid unwanted noise



In shutter priority mode your camera sets the ISO as high as it needs to for a "proper exposure". Set the ISO range you're comfortable with – you'll find the minimum and maximum ISO range settings in your camera's menu – to ensure the camera doesn't leave you with grainy results. Every camera handles ISO differently. ISO800 will look much noisier on an ageing DSLR than a new mirrorless one with up-to-date processing algorithms, so experiment on non-critical shots to find the usable range.

LINK EXPOSURE TO THE AF POINT

Shoot in changeable light where exposure is the priority



A key reason why photographers choose shutter priority mode is for the quickest reactivity with active targets. By linking your chosen autofocus point to spot metering mode, as the focus point moves in order to make your subject sharp, the metering point moves with it. Ideally, this means you'll get the perfect exposure on your subject every time. Some cameras have the metering point linked to your chosen AF point automatically. If not, check the AF/MF settings in your menu.

BWARE OF BACKGROUND DETAIL

With varying depth of fields, be mindful of the backdrop

When you lose aperture control, you may end up with a greater depth of field than you anticipated. It's important to keep an eye on your backdrop, and consider recomposing the frame to avoid clutter or unsightly elements – no one wants a branch or piece of litter ruining their otherwise perfect composition, even if it's possible to remove it in post-production. Conversely, if you end up with a shallower depth of field but want to incorporate certain elements behind your main subject, you may need to move closer or, if possible, reposition them.



© Estaban Frey

WHEN TO USE APERTURE PRIORITY

Control the depth of field for smooth or sharp background detail



MOTORSPORTS MOVEMENT

Instead of relying on shutter priority to freeze motorsport subjects, Michael Clarke often switches to aperture priority, "particularly if the light is constantly changing."

A perture priority mode is used in situations when controlling the depth of field is crucial. It's popular with professionals who value the aesthetic quality of their images but want to make quick adjustments in changing lighting conditions. Think wildlife or portrait photographers who want to isolate a subject with a shallow

depth of field, or landscape pros setting a smaller aperture to ensure maximum sharpness throughout the frame.

To set up your camera for aperture priority mode, turn the mode dial to 'A' or 'Av' and use the control dials to select your desired aperture value. The camera will meter the scene and automatically adjust the shutter speed accordingly.

While aperture priority mode is versatile and widely used, it isn't suited to fast-moving subjects or use in low light, as there's a danger that the shutter speed might dip too low for a sharp result. It can lead to exposure variations, so avoid it for panoramas, stitched shots, or any application where you need a series of consistent exposures.

WHEN TO USE APERTURE PRIORITY CONTINUED

SHOOT IN BURST MODE

Continuous shooting maintains sharpness in variable lighting conditions

On days when the lighting is changing quickly, such as sunlight passing behind fast-moving clouds, capturing multiple frames rapidly with burst mode increases your chances of a sharp image.

This is especially helpful in aperture priority mode, where the shutter speed isn't the most important part of the equation. For wildlife, burst mode combined with aperture priority can freeze the action and keep motion blur to a minimum, but it relies on having a fast camera buffer and plenty of storage. Simply fire off a burst at the peak of the action.



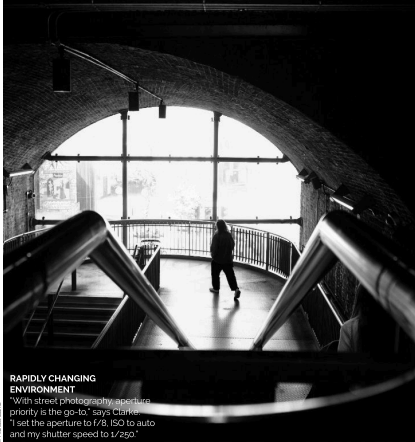
SET MINIMUM SHUTTER

Ensure your exposure isn't too slow



In aperture priority mode, setting a minimum shutter speed range allows you to prioritise the shutter speed as a variable in exposure control. This way, you still benefit from the semi-automatic exposure adjustments, but the shutter speed won't fall too low for optimal sharpness. In lower light, setting a minimum shutter speed range can prevent motion blur. Some lenses have image stabilisation built-in, while others require you to use faster minimum shutter speeds to avoid camera shake. Set the minimum shutter speed from your camera menu, and experiment with your gear's limitations.

UNDERGROUND



RAPIDLY CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

"With street photography, aperture priority is the go-to," says Clarke. "I set the aperture to f/8, ISO to auto and my shutter speed to 1/250."

CHECK RESULTS LIVE

Use depth of field preview on mirrorless for real-time results



One of the benefits of mirrorless cameras is that you can preview the effects of your chosen aperture settings through the electronic viewfinder or the camera's LCD screen. This real-time visualisation helps you gauge how much of the scene is in focus at any given aperture setting – and review its creative potential – before taking the shot. Similarly, if your camera features manual focus peaking (an on-screen visual aid), enable it to check that the right parts of the scene are in focus.

F E A T U R E

CUSTOMISE YOUR CAMERA

Set up and use custom modes to access preconfigured settings



HUMMINGBIRD, COSTA RICA

Nature photographer Esteban Frey frequently uses Manual mode and custom preset modes "for situations where specific settings are needed unexpectedly, such as capturing a fast-flying bird."

Most advanced modern cameras have custom modes that allow you to preconfigure settings tailored to different shooting scenarios, subjects, locations or lighting setups. That way, you can quickly access your favourite settings combinations with just one twist of the mode dial. Custom modes are often overlooked, even by pros, but they're easy to configure, will speed up your workflow, and will help you to maintain consistency across shoots.

Wedding photographers might configure one custom mode for indoor ceremonies with controlled lighting and another for outdoor portraits with changing conditions, saving time during a fast-paced event. If you work in the same studio with controlled lighting setups, storing your preferred settings will give you the same results across sessions. Even landscape pros, who often encounter varying weather, can benefit from using custom modes. They might set aperture priority and a narrow aperture for maximum depth of field, and use specific ISO settings and white balance adjustments for the environment.



FEATURE

CUSTOMISE YOUR CAMERA CONTINUED



© LARRY SCOTT

ADAPT TO THE DAY If you have settings you often use or switch between, custom modes are convenient and easy to set up. At a wedding, you might use different custom modes for the ceremony, static portraits, and candid party shots

SET CUSTOM MODES

Using the custom mode dial

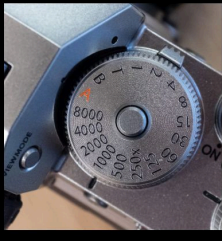
To set up custom modes, find the custom section of the camera menu. Select the parameters, such as aperture, shutter speed, ISO, white balance and autofocus, and save them to one of the available custom mode positions. To activate the mode, turn the dial to the assigned position. How these modes are labelled differs between cameras – on Canon's EOS R6 Mark II, for example, they're C1, C2 and C3, while on the Nikon Z7 II they're U1, U2 and U3.



NO MODE DIAL? NO PROBLEM

How to use cameras without a mode dial

Classically styled cameras such as the Fujifilm X-T5 and Nikon Z fc don't have a dedicated dial to change between the standard P, S, A and M exposure modes, but they still offer them. For shutter priority, you rotate the shutter speed dial for the right value and set the aperture ring to A, while for aperture priority mode, the shutter should be set to A with the lens aperture mode set to infinity. Manual mode is more obvious: rotate the shutter dial to choose a speed, and the lens aperture ring to choose the f /stop.



WHAT ABOUT VIDEO? Where to set the mode dial for video

Many pro hybrid cameras have a dedicated video mode, such as Panasonic's 'Manual Video mode', where you can manually set the shutter speed, aperture value and ISO for recording. A general rule is to use a specific shutter speed around double the frame rate you're filming at – for example, $1/50$ sec at 25fps. If your camera doesn't have a video-specific mode, use manual mode for the most control. Manual white balance will also keep your content consistent, and make any colour grading when editing footage smoother.



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GALLERY

XPOSURE

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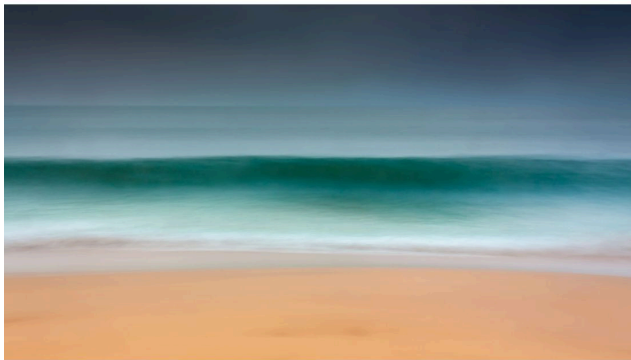
TOM DRESSEL

"When I'm visiting the National Aviary in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania I always try to get interesting shots of the flamingos, as they like to twist themselves into odd poses. I was fortunate enough to catch this one curled up with its neck and head close to its body."

<https://bit.ly/3HmfT3V>

GALLERY

THE WEEK'S MOST INSPIRING READER PHOTOS



LAYERS OF A MOODY SEA

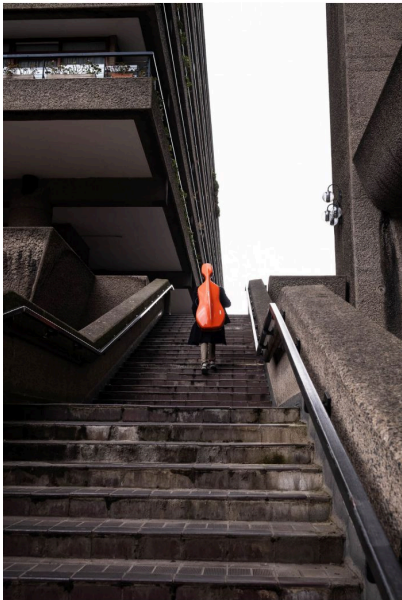
RUBEN ALEXANDER

"I've been working on a project titled 'Photos with Intentional Camera Movement'. This is an ICM photo made at Quilon beach in Kerala, India, showing the moods of the sea on an overcast day, much like revealing layers."

<https://bit.ly/4a0dqnC>

GALLERY

THE WEEK'S MOST INSPIRING READER PHOTOS



ORANGE

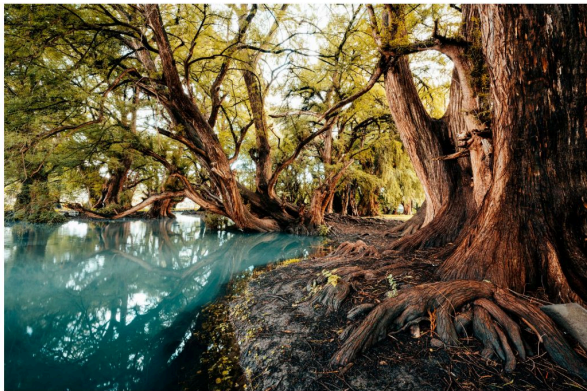
JUSTINE GORDON

"I was at the Barbican in London, looking to get an edgy shot of the brutalist architecture, and this man happened to be walking up the steps with his orange instrument case on his back."

<https://bit.ly/4a1MQK0>

GALLERY

THE WEEK'S MOST INSPIRING READER PHOTOS



LAGO

RODRIGO GODINEZ

"I took this photo in the Lago de Camécuaro National Park in Mexico's Michoacán state."

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



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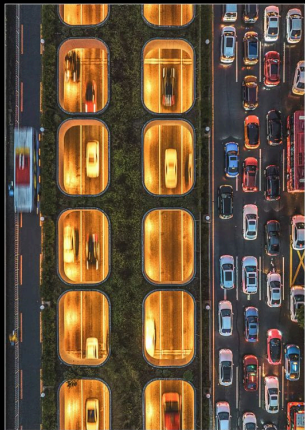
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I N S P I R A T I O N

IT'S COOL, THAT

THE BEST THING WE'VE SEEN THIS WEEK



Patrick Wong, Top 10 Winner, Architecture



Pham Huy Trung, Top 10 Winner, Nature



Jonas Hoffmann, Top 10 Winner, Nature

THE ONLY WAY IS UP FOR THESE AERIAL PHOTO ACES

SkyPixel contest showcases stunning stills and video captured using drones

SkyPixel, the aerial photography and videography community set up in conjunction with drone maker DJI, has announced the winners of its 9th Annual Photo & Video Contest.

Prizes are awarded for still images and video across several categories, and the latest contest attracted a record 130,000 entries from professional and enthusiast photographers and videographers around the globe, highlighting the growing

popularity and accessibility of drone photography and videography.

SkyPixel describes the competition as "a testament to the power of innovation-led imagery, honoring stories that shape the art of image capture both on solid ground and amidst the clouds". Prizes include DJI drones and action cameras.

Click the link to see all the winning and commended images, and watch the winning video entries, at the SkyPixel website.



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S K I L L S

CRASH COURSE

ESSENTIAL PHOTO SKILLS MADE EASY



INFRARED ON A BUDGET

Mike Harris shows you how to shoot infrared images without investing in a costly camera conversion

The human eye has the ability to see an extraordinary amount of colour and detail, but we're only able to see one part of the electromagnetic spectrum. Just outside our visible light range is infrared, and while we can't see these light waves, we can capture them to create striking images.

If you're serious about infrared photography you'd probably opt for a permanent camera conversion, but the

method we're going to show you is a much more affordable way of shooting infrared, and doesn't require you to tamper with your camera, so it's the perfect solution if you want to have a go at this niche genre. All you need is a DSLR or mirrorless camera, and an infrared filter that's compatible with the filter thread of your lens.

Cheap infrared filters can be easily picked up online, and you'll usually find the size of your lens's filter thread

on its barrel or the inside the lens cap. The filter works by allowing only infrared light to enter your lens and reach your camera's sensor, blocking all other wavelengths of light.

Digital cameras have a filter that cuts out all but a trickle of infrared light (it's this filter that's removed if you have your camera permanently converted), which means you'll need to use a very long exposure to get a photo that's suitably exposed. Here's how it's done...



HOW TO SHOOT INFRARED ON A BUDGET



1

INFRARED FILTER

You can pick up an infrared filter for around £20/\$20, so it's much more cost effective than having a spare camera permanently converted. We used a Zomei 950nm IR filter, and a step-up ring to make its 82mm filter thread compatible with our lens.

2

USE A TRIPOD

You'll need a very long exposure in order for your camera to take in enough infrared light to capture a well-exposed image, so mounting your camera on a stable tripod is a must. Once you've composed your shot, set your focus (you won't be able to do this with the filter attached).



3

SECURE YOUR FILTER

Switch to manual focus – this will prevent your AF system from hunting when you press the shutter button – then attach the infrared filter, taking care not to knock the zoom or focus rings on your lens. If you look through your viewfinder it will now be completely black.



HOW TO SHOOT INFRARED ON A BUDGET



4

CLOSE THE CURTAINS

As a precaution for DSLR users we recommend covering the viewfinder to prevent any light leaking through during the super-long exposure. Some high-end cameras feature built-in viewfinder curtains, but if yours doesn't have these you can simply cover the viewfinder with a lens cloth.

5

SUPER-LONG EXPOSURE

In Bulb mode dial in ISO1600 to increase the sensor's sensitivity, and use a wide aperture (we chose $f/4$). Set a five-minute timer, and lock the shutter release button on your shutter remote. If your image is too dark, increase the exposure time slightly, and if it's too bright decrease it.



6

EDIT THE IMAGE

When you open your image in Camera Raw it will appear bright magenta, so you'll need to desaturate it by setting Saturation to -100, or checking Black & White in the Basic tab. We added a little punch to our image by boosting Contrast (+25) and Clarity (+50), and lifting the Exposure slightly.



QUICK TIP

Shooting on an overcast day is a must if you want to maximise the contrast of your infrared shots, because clouds

reflect infrared light (but blue skies don't). Use a weather app or website to help you plan your shoot.

E D I T I N G

AFFINITY PHOTO

LEARN ESSENTIAL EDITING SKILLS FAST!



HOW TO...

BOOST RAW PORTRAITS

James Paterson shows you how to use the Develop Persona in Affinity Photo to enhance portraits

When it comes to enhancing your portraits, a few simple techniques can take your images in all kinds of interesting directions, and in this issue's video tutorial we'll explore a range of edits you can make in Affinity Photo. Most of these are carried out in the Develop Persona, which is the workspace for raw editing. This is where you process and enhance your raw images before taking them into the main Photo Persona for further editing, if necessary.

Raw images tend to look a little flat straight out of the camera – this is because raw is designed to give you the best possible starting point for

editing. Raw files contain greater dynamic range and more colour data than JPEGs, and we can use the tools in the Affinity Photo Develop Persona in to make the most of this extra data.

This is why, as a rule of thumb, it's best to take a raw image as far as you can using the raw development tools, and only then open it into the Photo Persona for any further editing that's required. While the raw tools in the Develop Persona lack the depth of features of the tools in the Photo Persona, there are still several powerful features, such as Curves and Overlays, that we can use to enhance our portrait by making global and local adjustments.



DOWNLOAD THE
PROJECT FILES

<https://bit.ly/3l6xa0E>

ON A PC OR MAC



WATCH THE VIDEO

<https://bit.ly/3l6RP4A>

We've supplied a portrait for you to work on, but you can also use your own, and it needn't even be a raw file. You can edit JPEGs or TIFF files in the Develop Persona too – just click the icon at top-left to open any image into Affinity Photo's Raw workspace.

EXPERT TIP

We've also supplied a set of colour lookup tables (LUTs) for applying colour treatments in Affinity Photo. To load them, go to the Photo Persona, then Window > Adjustments. Expand the LUT section, click the cog and choose Import LUTs, then click through the LUTs to try them out. If an effect is too strong, go to the Layers panel for the LUT adjustment layer and reduce the layer opacity.

LENS TEST

EXPERT OPINION ON THE LATEST KIT



SONY FE 24-50MM F2.8 G

A compact standard zoom with compromises

www.sony.co.uk £1,149/\$1,098

Sony has been going about its full-frame mirrorless business for over 10 years now, racking up 73 E-mount lenses along the way. New for 2024, the FE 24-50mm F2.8 G standard zoom and the simultaneously released FE 16-25mm F2.8 G wide-angle zoom are designed to be the most compact and lightweight options in the class of full-frame compatible constant-aperture f/2.8 zooms.

So-called 'trinity' wide-angle, standard and telephoto zooms with a constant f/2.8 aperture are highly popular the world over, but they're

often bulky, heavy lenses that can feel a bit cumbersome. I often prefer zoom lenses with a slower f/4 aperture, especially for shooting with slinky mirrorless cameras rather than chunky DSLRs, as they're generally more compact and lightweight, as well as being cheaper to buy. The downside is that they're less ideal for freezing motion under dull lighting conditions, and can't deliver such a tight depth of field.

The FE 24-50mm F2.8 G is refreshingly lightweight, but comes with a compromise in terms of outright zoom range. It has plenty

1 There's a keep-clean fluorine coating on the front elements.

2 Compact at 50mm, the inner barrel extends as you zoom out towards the widest setting.

3 The AF-hold button can be customised for other functions.

of wide-angle potential, matching the more usual 24-70mm f/2.8 zooms, but can't stretch to anything beyond a standard focal length, which makes it less versatile. I find



LENS TEST SONY FE 24-50MM F2.8 G

Autofocus is super-fast for stills, and smooth and silent for video. In real-world tests and during our lab testing, AF proved consistently accurate



the maximum focal length can feel limiting, not just for portraiture and still-life photography, but also in plenty of other more general shooting scenarios.

Key features

The FE 24-50mm F2.8 G isn't the first standard zoom to sacrifice zoom range in pursuit of a compact, lightweight design. There are the Canon RF 24-50mm F4.5-6.3 IS STM and the Sony FE 28-60mm F4-5.6, to name but two. But both of these lenses have a narrower, variable aperture rating. While the new lens weighs 440g, the full-size Sony FE 24-70mm F2.8 GM II weighs in at 695g and costs around twice as much. The Sigma 24-70mm f/2.8 DG DN Art is even heavier at 835g, but costs around the same as the lightweight FE 24-50mm.

Other constant-aperture f/2.8 choices include the Tamron 28-75mm f/2.8 Di III RXD G2, which

has a modest weight of 540g, and the Tamron 20-40mm F2.8 Di III VXD, which is even lighter at just 365g. The latter is more wide-angle oriented, but both lenses undercut the FE 24-50mm on price. For further comparison, the simultaneously released Sony FE 16-25mm F2.8 G is also a little lighter, at 409g.

Design and handling

The big thing about this lens's design is its compact form. It's not just the relatively limited zoom range that helps squeeze the dimensions to 75 x 92mm, along with a relatively small filter thread of 67mm. The lens also has an extending inner barrel, so while it's compact at the 50mm mark, there's a noticeable physical extension as you zoom out towards the 24mm wide-angle setting. Another factor that contributes to the downsizing is the inclusion of four aspherical elements, which helps reduce optical aberrations. There are

also two ED (Extra-low Dispersion) elements to enhance clarity and minimise chromatic aberration.

Everybody likes sharp lenses, but, for f/2.8 zooms and faster primes, I feel that the quality of bokeh is also an important factor. This lens delivers a fairly tight depth of field, especially for close-ups, and the minimum focus distance becomes even shorter if you're willing to switch from autofocus to manual focus mode. The quality of bokeh when stopping down a little is helped by a very well-rounded 11-blade aperture diaphragm.

For a small lens, I'm impressed that the Sony FE 24-50mm goes large in terms of handling prowess. Useful features include an aperture control ring, complete with a click/de-click switch, which makes it eminently suitable for both stills and video.

I like the AF-hold button, which can be customised for other functions via camera menus. I'm

LENS TEST SONY FE 24-50MM F2.8 G



also pleased to see an extensive set of weather seals, so rain needn't stop play, and there's a keep-clean fluorine coating on the front element. The overall build quality feels tough and solid, despite the lightweight construction.

Performance

Autofocus is super-fast for stills, and delivers smooth, virtually silent transitions for video. That's nothing less than I'd expect from a focus system based on a linear stepping

LENS TEST SONY FE 24-50MM F2.8 G



It's impressively sharp throughout its zoom range, even at f/2.8. Our tests revealed similar sharpness to the pricier Sony FE 24-70mm F2.8 GM II lens

motor. In real-world tests and during our lab testing, autofocus proved consistently accurate. Only the middle group of elements moves during focusing, so the mechanics are fully internal and there's no rotation nor extension of the front element. In terms of outright sharpness, the lens is impressive throughout its entire zoom range, even shooting wide-open at f/2.8. Indeed, our lab test results revealed similar levels of sharpness to those of the much pricier Sony FE 24-70mm F2.8 GM II lens.

The quality of bokeh is nice and

smooth, and comes to the fore when shooting wide-open towards the long end of the zoom range. Axial chromatic aberration or 'bokeh fringing' is also well controlled.

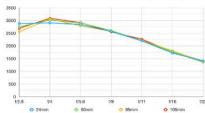
Lateral chromatic aberration is quite minimal at the short end of the zoom range, but can be a little noticeable towards the long end, at least with automatic in-camera correction disabled. Distortion is a different story. Optically, the lens produces so much barrel distortion in the 24-35mm sector of the zoom range that it's all but unusable without automatic correction. Indeed, the in-camera correction for distortion can't be switched off in the menu, nor when editing raw files in Sony's supporting Imaging Edge Desktop software. If you use a third-party app such as Adobe Lightroom or Photoshop, a lens profile update should be available soon. The pair of wide-angle shots on the previous page show the difference between automatic correction being applied, and processing raw images with no correction.

Matthew Richards

S P E C S

MOUNT: SONY E (FE) **FULL-FRAME:** YES
LENS CONSTRUCTION: 4 ASPHERICAL, 2 ED
ELEMENTS/ANGLE OF VIEW: 84-47° **MAX APERTURE:** F/2.8 **MINIMUM APERTURE:** F/22 **DIAPHRAGM BLADES:** 11 **MIN FOCUS DISTANCE:** 0.19-0.3M (0.18-0.29M MF) **MAX MAGNIFICATION:** 0.3X (0.33X MF) **FILTER SIZE:** 67MM **DIMENSIONS (L X D):** 92 X 75MM **WEIGHT:** 440G

SHARPNESS



Throughout the modest zoom range, sharpness is excellent across most of the image frame, even when shooting wide-open at f/2.8, and holds up well at the extreme edges and corners. There's the typical drop-off at narrow apertures due to diffraction.

FRINGING

SHORT 0.18 LONG 0.67

There's minimal lateral chromatic aberration in the 24-28mm range, even at the edges and corners of the frame, although it creeps up towards the long end. Automatic in-camera correction is available.

DISTORTION

SHORT -8.28 LONG -1.88

The lens is all but unusable without automatic in-camera correction. Although our lab tests reveal the extreme extent of barrel distortion when uncorrected, there's virtually no distortion in images once in-camera correction does its job.

VERDICT

The Sony FE 24-50mm F2.8 G is small and weighs a mere 440g, making it easy to live with for an f/2.8 constant-aperture standard zoom. The handling is great, with its click/de-click aperture ring and customisable AF-hold button, and the lens is well built, with a comprehensive set of weather seals and a fluorine coating on the front element. It's missing a stretch beyond a 50mm focal length but, if you're into standard and wide-angle photography, this comparatively small lens is a smart buy.





mpb.com



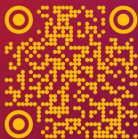
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