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ISSUE 608

Photography week

INSPIRATION | IDEAS | IN-DEPTH REVIEWS



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WE TEST THE INSTANT
CAMERA WITH A 'PROPER
CAMERA' PRICE TAG

HAPPY FAMILIES

PRO TIPS FOR STUNNING STUDIO PORTRAITS

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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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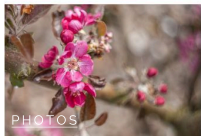


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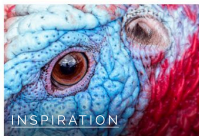
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REVIEW

POLAROID I-2

With glass lens elements and Lidar autofocus, and offering full manual control, the I-2 is an instant camera with a difference – but is it worth its 'proper camera' price tag?



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TTARTISAN 500MM F6.3 RELEASED FOR DSLRS

Affordable superzoom comes to Canon EF and Nikon F mounts

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WHAT'S HOT

THE WEEK'S TOP HEADLINES IN PHOTOGRAPHY

TTARTISAN'S MONSTER ZOOM IS NOW AVAILABLE FOR DSLR

Affordable 500mm f/6.3 is released in Canon EF and Nikon F mounts



© TTArtisan

Third-party lens manufacturer TTArtisan has announced that its super-telephoto 500mm f/6.3 is now available in Canon EF and Nikon F lens mounts, which means this affordable monster prime lens is now available to users of all major mirrorless and DSLR cameras.

The TTArtisan 500mm f/6.3 was originally announced last year for a full range of mirrorless camera mounts – Sony E-mount, Nikon Z-mount, Canon RF-mount, Fujifilm XF- and GF-mounts,

and Leica L-mount. But now the budget-priced full-frame lens is available for the two most popular DSLR mounts too.

The manual-focus lens is constructed with eight elements in five groups, including two extra-low dispersion and two high-index elements, and has a 12-blade aperture diaphragm.

The 500mm f/6.3 offers a 3.3m minimum focus distance, has an 82mm front filter ring, and weighs between 1564 and 1617g, depending on the mount. The lens features a metal body,

and it comes supplied with a tripod collar and a lens hood.

The long focal length makes it an appealing budget option for wildlife, sports, and astrophotography – TTArtisan is bigging up the lens's astro credentials in particular – although the lack of autofocus and image stabilisation means it will be better suited to some subjects than others.

The TTArtisan 500mm f/6.3 for EF and F mounts is available to buy now, priced at £409 / \$369.



PRO
CATHERINE
O'DONNELL

CAMERA:

CANON EOS 5D MK III

Catherine is an award-winning portrait photographer who's been published in magazines globally. She's known for her laid-back approach to family portraiture, which helps her capture natural poses and special moments that don't look forced. Being a mum of three keeps her on her toes, but also gives her ample opportunities to perfect her portraits – making her the ideal person to help Ieuan improve his shots.

<https://bit.ly/44fx8te>

FAMILY BUSINESS

Pro portrait photographer Catherine O'Donnell passes on her top tips and techniques for capturing spontaneous and engaging family photos in the studio

APPRENTICE
IEAUN
WILLIAMS

CAMERA:

CANON EOS R5

Ieuan is a teacher based in South London, and in his spare time he loves to get out with his camera and try everything from landscapes to weddings. He's looking to change career and move into portraiture, and while he has a few weddings under his belt, he admits he sometimes struggles with posing his clients, or choosing the best camera settings. We teamed him up with portrait pro Catherine at Lite Studio in Northamptonshire.



FEATURE

TECHNIQUE ASSESSMENT

Catherine kicked off the day by showing leaun how to set up his camera to capture studio portraits



MANUAL MODE

leaun was well versed in shooting in manual mode, so Catherine suggested that he stick with it, as manual gives you full control of the three core exposure variables: shutter speed, aperture and ISO. Catherine is looking for a minimum shutter speed of 1/100 sec or faster for sharp handheld shots, and will use a wide aperture for single subjects, or a narrower aperture of perhaps f/8 for group shots. It's then just a case of adjusting the LED power and ISO sensitivity to achieve a well-exposed image.

DRIVE MODES

leaun started off in the High Speed Continuous drive mode on his Canon EOS R5. However, when Catherine noticed that he'd quickly filled a 32GB card with the EOS R5's large 45MP images when firing off at 20fps she suggested he switch over to Single Shot drive mode. This allowed him to slow down and take his time to finesse his compositions before firing the shutter, rather than relying on a fast burst to catch every pose. Burst mode does have its uses though. "It's worth switching to High Speed Continuous for action shots, such as trying to catch a child laughing at a precise moment, or little ones running around," said Catherine.

PRO TIP BACKGROUNDS

Lite Studio is kitted out with a great selection of backgrounds, from the large white infinity curve, to painted walls, and even paper colour rolls. Catherine and leaun set up a background stand and draped Catherine's seamless canvas over it. This adds a lovely beige tone which fitted perfectly with the clothing colours in her mood board, and added some texture too. The canvas was secured to the background stand with large clamps.



EXPERT INSIGHT SET THE MOOD

Putting together a mood board on sites like www.pinterest.com can be really beneficial to help you nail down the themes you'd like to cover in your photoshoot. It's a good idea to share these with your clients and models so that you're all on the same page - it will give them an idea of what you're looking to achieve, and the style and colours of garments they should bring along to the shoot.



HOT SHOT #1



IEAUN'S COMMENT

I met up with Catherine at Lite Studio in Northamptonshire, which had a fantastic range of backgrounds and sets to play around with. She prefers to shoot outdoors with natural lighting, but on rainy days she has no option but to replicate soft overcast sunlight indoors with bright LEDs and window light. When our first family, Millie, Matt and their three-year-old son Maverick arrived, Catherine suggested having a bit of fun to loosen them up, so we had dad put Maverick on his shoulders and I captured some fun, quirky family portraits.

PRO TIP LCD BRIGHTNESS

Always keep shooting, and don't leave out any shots of the families having fun together. As well as allowing the kids and parents to relax and enjoy the space, you may well capture some lovely moments too.



LENS 50mm f/1.8

EXPOSURE 1/160 sec, f/3.2, ISO640



FEATURE

LENS 50mm f/1.2
EXPOSURE 1/400 sec. f/2.5, ISO800

HOT SHOT #2



CATHERINE'S COMMENT

For our next setup we went for a simple canvas background on stands in front of the infinity curve. We still had the window light flooding the room from the right, and I added two large LED lights with diffusers attached to soften the light and fill in any shadows from the front. Matt was very tall, so I had Millie sit on a stepladder, with the two holding onto Maverick sandwiched between them, which fixes any height discrepancies. The mono conversion adds a timeless feel to this shot.

PRO TIP

5-IN-1 REFLECTOR

Catherine never leaves home without her trusty 110cm reflector for portrait shoots. She says: "Silver creates a cool light, while gold can add warmth. The white side reflects a neutral white light and the internal diffusion layer acts as a scrim to soften direct sunlight. I had leaun fan the reflector on Jo's hair to make her look a little windswept!"



HOT SHOT #3



CATHERINE'S COMMENT

After our 'posed' family photos, we let Maverick have a play around in the studio to just let his curiosity run for a while. He took an interest in the large industrial windows in the studio, and Matt lifted him up onto the windowsill and let him play, under supervision of course. leaun and I were shooting away the whole time, taking lots of lovely candid portraits full of fun and smiles. One of the reasons I prefer working with LEDs over flash is that it's not so obvious when you're firing off an exposure, so you can catch wonderfully natural portraits like these.



LENS 50mm f/1.2

EXPOSURE 1/250 sec. f/2.2, ISO640

HOT SHOT #4



IEAUN'S COMMENT

One corner of the studio had a lovely textured wall which fitted in nicely with Catherine's theme of light and neutral colours that the families were dressed in. We positioned a small bench in front of it, and decorated the scene with a large plant and rug for a fresh and airy home vibe. To begin we had Maverick on his own, and Matt slid him along the bench to get a few laughs and smiles. Then we had Matt join him, and eventually Millie too. This is one of my favourite shots - a tender moment between father and son.



LENS 50mm f/1.8

EXPOSURE 1/160 sec, f/3.2, ISO640



LENS 50mm f/12
EXPOSURE 1/500 sec, f/3.5, ISO640

HOT SHOT #5



CATHERINE'S COMMENT

After a few hours it was time to move onto our next family, mum and dad Jo and Harvey, and their three-year-old daughter Sailor, and five-month-old baby boy, Oakley. It was a bit more difficult to get the whole family into one frame with this group as there were a few tantrums, but you don't want to push anyone, so we got some toys out and let Sailor join in the photos when she felt comfortable. While leaun was taking some lovely shots of Harvey and baby Oakley, I spotted mum Jo doing her best to calm down Sailor on the window sill, so simply I had to get a photo. They're predominantly backlit by the window, producing some wonderful rim lighting in Jo's hair, and I shot with my EF 50mm f/1.2L prime at f/3.5, which gave me a relatively loose composition that I could crop into later if needed.

EXPERT INSIGHT THE BENEFIT OF BLACK & WHITE



The B&W treatment works well for portraits, adding a timeless and classic look. It can also be a clever way to process your images if skin colours don't look consistent, or shots are slightly soft, as you can boost the contrast to make images look a little sharper. You can shoot in black and white by changing the Picture Style or equivalent setting to Monochrome, just be sure to shoot in raw so that you can choose to edit for a colour version, or convert to mono.

EXPERT INSIGHT CATCH THE ACTION



From children running around, to bouncing on beds or even being thrown up in the air and caught, like baby Oakley here, you'll need a fast shutter speed to freeze the action. While flash can freeze subjects, this is a luxury you don't have when working with natural light and constant LEDs. Instead you'll need to boost your shutter speed, aiming for at least 1/250 sec (or faster) by opening up your aperture, increasing the ISO, or using more powerful lights.



FEATURE

LENS 70-200mm f/4
EXPOSURE 1/160 sec. f/4. ISO640



HOT SHOT #6



IEAUN'S COMMENT

One of my favourite shots of the day came from this tender moment between mum Jo and baby Oakley. He was getting a little cold, so he's wearing a knitted jumper, which makes him look extra adorable. To get his eye contact I tried holding a teddy bear in my left hand and my camera in my right, and we also tried having dad Harvey stand behind me and pulling silly faces to get his attention and smiling. I had a great day with Catherine, learning her pro tips and tricks. The experience has definitely made me more confident working with families, and it's something I hope to pursue as a career in the future.

EXPERT INSIGHT BRING YOUR OWN PROPS



Catherine always brings a selection of props with her to photo shoots, such as teddy bears, hats, books, toy cars, and even musical instruments. The idea is to help keep the children stimulated and engaged, although they can also help your portraits to look fresh and different. Catherine had a car boot full of props for our shoot, although if she's shooting outdoors she might only bring a few props to save her lugging lots of equipment around on location.

PRO TIP SUBJECT DETECTION



Catherine uses a single autofocus point placed over the subject's nearest eye on her Canon EOS 5D Mark III to achieve sharp focus. Ieauan's newer EOS R5 has Subject-detection AF, which can track faces and ensure the eyes are sharp. Ieauan enabled this using the asterisk symbol on the back of his EOS R5, and was able to override it when needed with the joystick and AF-ON button.



SHOT OF
THE DAYLENS 50mm f/1.2
EXPOSURE 1/320 sec, f/2.5, ISO640**CATHERINE'S VERDICT**

In another breather between family group shots, mum Jo took a break to feed baby Oakley on the white sofa in the studio. One of my favourite shots came from this tender moment after they were all done: little Oakley is looking directly at the camera, and Jo has this wonderful smile. I couldn't have asked for a better student on the day! leaun's enthusiasm shone through, and being a teacher, he clearly already had the people skills needed to communicate effectively with clients and children to get the best out of them. His willingness to try new things and get involved really stood out, and he should be really proud of some of the lovely portraits he was able to take on the shoot. I wish him all the best if he does decide to pursue portraiture full time!

CATHERINE'S TOP 10 TIPS FOR FAMILY PHOTOS



1 ONE LENS TO RULE THEM ALL

Catherine always takes her Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8L USM with her, and says she could happily shoot on it all day on account of its versatile zoom range and f/2.8 maximum aperture.

2 DISCREET CAMERA BAG

Catherine has been using her Jo Totes Gracie for years – it looks like an ordinary brown leather handbag so it doesn't scream 'photographer'.

3 SHOOT AT EYE LEVEL

Rather than shooting down at kids from your head height, go down on one knee, or use the vari-angle screen to get lower to blur backgrounds easily.

4 PHOTOSHOP TIPS

Catherine does minimal editing for a more natural look. "I use Lightroom Classic CC to batch-edit my raw files, and Photoshop CC for advanced edits

like spot removal," she says. "I also use Exposure XP for a filmic look.

5 SHARE YOUR SHOTS

Get the kids involved, and show them some of the shots you've taken on your Canon's rear LCD screen to keep them engaged.

6 KEEP THE CONVERSATION FLOWING

Be chatty, and build a rapport so that the families feel comfortable and you get the best poses out of them. Playing music in the background helps to keep the mood light and avoid any awkward silences.

7 SYNC SPEED FOR FLASH

If you're using flash it's important that your shutter speed is lower than the max sync speed, which is usually 1/200 sec on most cameras, so that you don't end up with a black band across your shots.

8 FLICKER-FREE LED LIGHTING

With budget constant lights you'll usually see an undesirable flickering effect when using fast shutter speeds. This isn't an issue with Catherine's premium Jinbei EF-200 LEDs though.

9 HIGHLIGHT ALERT

It's important to retain highlight detail, so be sure to shoot in the raw file format to capture more exposure data, and also enable the Highlight Alert in the Playback Menu to check for blown highlights.

10 DON'T FORCE THE FAMILIES!

You'll do well to get more than 45 minutes out of little ones as their attention wanes. Be sure to keep things fun with props, toys and activities you can get them involved in, but if you run into tears and tantrums don't force it; photograph other family members until they're ready to be involved again.



ESSENTIAL GEAR

The kit Catherine relies on for capturing engaging family photos



1 SIMPLE STUDIO LIGHTING

Catherine predominantly shoots outside with natural light. However, on rainy days there's sometimes no option but to replicate this lighting indoors. Catherine uses a bright Jinbei EF-200 LED fitted with a large globe diffuser which has a Bowen mount. This large semi-transparent orb does a brilliant job at softening the light for better portraits. While LEDs are predominantly used for video, Catherine finds them essential for indoor stills, as you don't get the distracting flash that can distract some children. It's also easier to work, with because the lighting you see is exactly what you get.

2 FULL-FRAME CANON EOS

After more than six years of use, Catherine's workhorse camera remains her EOS 5D Mk III, which goes to show you don't need the latest kit to take top professional portraits. Her full-frame DSLR outputs 22.3MP images. leau's EOS R5 is a newer full-frame mirrorless model that can capture 45MP images at 20fps. It also has modern conveniences like a flip-out LCD, 4K video and a stabilised sensor, though as Catherine's older camera proves, these aren't essential.

3 PRIME LENS

Catherine likes to use prime lenses – lenses with a fixed focal length, as opposed to zoom lenses – such as her Canon EF 35mm f/2 IS USM and Canon EF 50mm f/1.2L USM. Primes often have fewer moving parts than zooms, so they can be calibrated to a specific focal length and therefore often deliver better image quality. As 50mm is roughly what the human eye can see, images taken with this lens result in a natural field of view, while 35mm is a little wider, and great for larger group shots.

4 SHORT TELEPHOTO LENS

Also in Catherine's kit bag are her short telephoto lenses, the EF 70-200mm and 135mm. These longer focal lengths are great for tighter head-and-shoulders portraits, and for cropping out distractions so the eye is focused on the subject. We got hold of a Canon RF 70-200mm F4L IS USM for leau so that he could compress the perspective and pick out poses from afar.



FEATURE

PRO TIP BEDTIME PHOTOS

We hired Life Studio, which came equipped with a double bed on casters that Catherine moved against a painted white brick wall next to a large window to flood the scene with light. Shooting on a bed is a fun way to give family portraits a cosy and 'homely' feel, with the whole family getting involved. Catherine and leaun also shot close-ups of baby Oakley on bright white fabrics and Maverick having fun jumping up and down – something he's not allowed to do at home! You can try taking shots like this in your own home, but the studio setting meant there was plenty of space for us to work with.



CATHERINE'S TOP 3 PORTRAIT PICTURES Capturing the look of love in magical moments



BEAUTIFUL BELLE

Taken in a lavender field, this is a favourite of mine. I was exhausted after running up and down after this beautiful little lady. This picture is also framed and hangs in her parents' home, which is extra lovely.



A MOTHER'S LOVE

There's something really special about this portrait to me. In the mother's eyes I just see pure love, and I adore how her daughter is nestling into her. That moment in time that goes by too fast.



DADDY'S GIRL

A personal portrait of my husband with our daughter. She was about a week old, so tiny and delicate; my husband is holding her on our bed, and it captures the love he has for our baby girl.

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GuruShots

We've joined up with online photo game GuruShots to print the winning images from the Spring Snapshots challenge

GuruShots is billed as the world's leading photo game. It's an online photography platform conceived to give global exposure to people who love taking photographs. GuruShots members start out as Newbies and compete with other photographers to win challenges, increase their ranking on the site and eventually

progress to coveted 'Guru' status.

Challenges are voted on by Gurus and the wider GuruShots community, and there's a fresh competition brief – such as this Spring Snapshots challenge – every day. Challenge winners receive prizes from GuruShots' sponsors, including Lowepro, Kodak and Lensbaby.

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Above, from top-left to bottom-right: **Pavlina Rolincová** (Czech Republic), **Gil Shmueli** Israel, **Fernando Coelho** Portugal, **Unnamed** United States, **Arta Berzina** Latvia, **Debbie Squier-Bernst** Canada.



Above, from top-left to bottom-right: **Catalin Todireanu** Romania, **Charlotte Rhodes** United Kingdom, **Xelima Ph** Spain, **Nessy Agnes Brunner** Hungary.

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GURUSHOTS 'SPRING SNAPSHOTS' CHALLENGE



Above, from top-left to bottom-right: **Jennifer Henn** United States, **Gregor Kobitica** Slovenia, **Teri Kelly** Australia, **Andrew Park** United States.



Above, from top-left to bottom-right: **John C. Wragg** United Kingdom, **Nate Riggins** United States, **Roy Egtloff** Switzerland, **Yevgeniy Gladkikh** United Kingdom, **Ryan Riley** United States, **Colin Lambe** Australia.

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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



Images © Jamie Smart and courtesy RSPCA Young Photographer Awards

MEET THE YOUNGSTER WITH A EYE FOR A WINNING PHOTO

Jamie Smart won a top contest aged just eight, and she's only just getting started

Jamie Smart became one of the youngest winners of a major photo contest when she was crowned the overall winner of the 2023 RSPCA Young Photographer Awards aged just eight. The youngster wowed the judges with her striking portrait of her pet turkey Frederick looking through the bars of his pen – Jamie titled the image *Not Guilty*, because she said it looked like Frederick was in prison – and she also won the portfolio category for

her series *A Year in the Life of a Turkey*.

Our sister publications N-Photo - The Nikon Magazine and Digital Camera World spoke to Jamie about how she captured some of her prize-winning images, how she got into photography, and why she loves taking photos. The talented youngster is looking to build on her early success, and pursue a career as a wildlife photographer.

Click the link to read the full interview with Jamie at Digital Camera World.



READ MORE
<https://bit.ly/3UAProW>

CRASH COURSE

ESSENTIAL PHOTO SKILLS MADE EASY



UNDERSTAND COLOUR THEORY

Adam Waring takes you back to art class with a primer in colour theory

Colour is one of the most important ingredients of photo composition, and while it's often forgotten about until the editing stage, colour can be used in portraits, landscapes and still-life shots to add depth, create mood, or draw the viewer's eye to a certain part of the frame, so it's important to understand the basics of colour theory when you're shooting, as well as when you're editing.

You may recall from art class in your school days that the primary colours are red, yellow and blue, and that by mixing

these colours in varying proportions you can create all other possible colours.

If we arrange our primary colours equally spaced around a circle, and add the in-between shades by mixing neighbouring colours in varying quantities, we can produce a colour wheel (see the next page), and then select colours based on their proximity to one another on the wheel. A pair of complementary colours sit opposite each other on the wheel – so for our pink flower, the complementary shade is green. Because these two colours contrast with each other, images

that are dominated by them are usually bolder and more dynamic.

Analogous colours, on the other hand, are those that sit next to one another on the wheel, such as yellow and orange or blue and purple. Combining these colours can create a sense of balance and calm in an image.

We'll apply these ideas in a practical sense with some vibrant flowers, and equally colourful craft papers. So let's play around with palettes, and discover how we can put colour theory into practice in the real world.



SKILLS

STEP BY STEP CONTROLLING COLOURS



1

WHAT YOU NEED

We used a variety of flowers for our shoot, and we bought a pack of coloured paper from a craft shop. We also had a few clamps to hand, to hold our flowers in place in front of the paper. A mid-zoom lens was used for speedy recomposition.

2

THE LOCATION

There's no need to go overboard with studio lighting – plentiful natural light, such as that from a large window, works well here. It's better to shoot in a room that has plain white walls, as brightly painted walls can add a colour cast to your subjects.



3

CAMERA SETTINGS

Use aperture priority mode with an aperture of around f/8. Set the white balance to auto and shoot in raw, so that you can tweak the colour temperature more easily later. Set the ISO to suit the ambient conditions, so that you have a fast enough shutter speed if shooting handheld.



THE RYB COLOUR WHEEL

Red, yellow and blue are the three primary colours, and they form the basis of the RYB colour wheel,

which we're using in this project. The secondary triad of colours are purple, orange and green.



STEP BY STEP CONTROLLING COLOURS



4

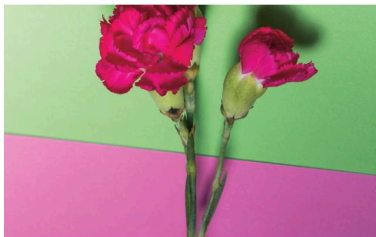
HANDHELD OR TRIPOD?

You can use a tripod or shoot handheld. We found it much easier to compose our shots by shooting handheld and moving closer to and further away from our subjects, although if you have to shoot handheld in rooms with lower light levels a tripod may be necessary in order to avoid camera shake.

5

COLOUR COMBINATIONS

Position the coloured paper behind your subject, and use a colour wheel to come up with complementary colour palettes (two colours that are opposite each other on the wheel, such as yellow and purple), or analogous palettes (colours that sit next to each other).



6

TAKE IT FURTHER

To create a double-complementary palette, combine pairs of complementary colours. We used pink and green paper, and positioned the flower diagonally, with the pink head against the green paper and green stem against the pink paper, to build contrast and complexity.

QUICK TIP

Computer screens use a palette of red, green and blue primary colours – this is because they are 'additive' colours, and can be combined to produce white light.

E D I T I N G

AFFINITY PHOTO

LEARN ESSENTIAL EDITING SKILLS FAST!



HOW TO...

GO MONO WITH PROFILES

James Paterson shows you how to create brilliant black-and-white images with ease using Profiles

There are lots of tools in Photoshop and Lightroom for converting colour images to black and white and fine-tuning the mono look. Most are easy to get the hang of; the challenge often lies in committing to a certain look, especially when there are so many sliders and settings to choose from. Should you go for a bold, contrasty look? Or will a more subtle matt effect be more suited to your photo?

How about adding a vignette? Opening up the shadows? Dropping the blues? And so on – it's the age-old editing conundrum: stick or twist?

Thankfully, there are features that can help you overcome image-editing analysis paralysis, and one such tool is Profiles. As you'll discover in this issue's video tutorial, they give you a range of options for one-click treatments, offering just the right amount of choice. Profiles

are a bit like Presets, but offer greater control and flexibility, and there's an excellent set of B&W Profiles in Adobe Camera Raw and Lightroom that gives you a range of different mono looks.

Simply mouse over each Profile to see how it affects the image, then choose the one that works best. If you want to take things further, you can adjust any setting you like – and you also have the option to save your changes as a new Profile.



INSTANT CAMERA TEST

EXPERT OPINION ON THE LATEST KIT



POLAROID I-2

With full manual controls and a huge price tag, is this instant camera worth the big bucks?

www.polaroid.com £599/\$599

When I first heard about the Polaroid I-2, I was thrilled. As a lifelong fan, the idea of a Polaroid camera with full manual control, a high-quality glass lens, and a fast aperture was exciting. Could this be a move back towards the quality and performance of the SX-70 and Spectra? The answer is a resounding yes. Not only does the Polaroid I-2 officially feature “the sharpest-ever Polaroid lens”, but its $f/8$ aperture matches that of the SX-70 – it can even shoot on SX-70 film. And while that iconic camera limited the user to adjusting exposure compensation, here we have full

manual control over the aperture and shutter speed. Throw in a LiDAR autofocus system (albeit at the expense of manual focus) and this is the company’s best and most advanced camera ever. The Polaroid I-2 is easily the best instant camera for creative capacity; but is it much better than the Polaroid Now+ or even the crossstown rival Instax Square SQ40?

Key features

Polaroid claims this is “the first analog instant camera with built-in manual controls” – and that’s the I-2 in a nutshell. This is an almost fully manual camera, enabling you to

adjust the shutter speed and aperture. However, what comes as a huge surprise is that (unlike the Spectra and SX-70), there’s no option for manual focus. Instead, the I-2 features LiDAR – the 3D laser-based autofocus system that has found its way into drones and camera phones.

The I-2 has five shooting modes: Auto, Shutter Priority, Aperture Priority, Manual and Multi-exposure. These can be accessed via the camera body, using the new LCD screen and the physical controls (including an aperture ring on the lens) or using the great Polaroid app. Exposure isn’t just limited to the modes and exposure



INSTANT CAMERA TEST POLAROID I-2

- 1 The I-2 is an instant camera with built-in manual controls.
- 2 The lens features a filter thread (49mm) for more versatility.
- 3 The LCD panel displays info such as aperture, mode and battery level.

controls; the camera boasts a flash sync port that enables you to get creative with supplemental lighting. There's also a tripod thread on the bottom to facilitate the various slow-shutter options, as well as precise composition.

The 38mm-equivalent lens is a glass affair with a trio of elements, resulting in sharper images than other instant cameras with plastic lenses. It even has a filter thread (49mm), giving you even more creative options. In addition, while modern Polaroid cameras can accept both i-Type and traditional 600 film, the I-2 can also shoot with SX-70 film – the Polaroid's premium stock, which at ASA160, is slower than the others (both ASA640) and offers richer contrast and tones with finer grain.

Build and handling

Ergonomically the Polaroid I-2 has a lot in common with the Now family, being broadly the same shape and size. It has a similar build quality – a satisfyingly chunky hunk of plastic that feels pretty bomb-proof. However, the addition of manual controls means that the I-2 sees some notable additions. Most prominent are the exposure control dials on the lens, set off in a striking silver and grey finish. The rear of the camera on the right side is home to the new LCD panel, which displays your aperture, shutter speed, shooting mode, film count, light meter and battery level. A new input button is set into the panel, enabling you to interact with the different modes and settings.

Below it are the traditional circular power button and the flash override button, with the red shutter button taking its familiar place on the front of the camera. Here is the only real



ergonomic difference from the Polaroid Nows, which have a 'pinch grip' on the right side where you can place your thumb when taking a shot. On the I-2, however, the rear right side mirrors the left, with a sloping body that accommodates the electronics of the LCD screen and additional internals. This means your thumb cannot sit directly behind the shutter button, potentially offering less

purchase while holding the camera.

The viewfinder is large and clear, though obviously as a non-SLR it does not truly represent what the camera lens actually sees. To help offset this, the finder has a target area set to the top-right of the scene to indicate what will be within the lens's field of view, to help better compensate for the parallax and aid composition. Helpfully, the viewfinder also displays



INSTANT CAMERA TEST POLAROID I-2



The I-2's lens gives some super-sharp results, and its manual options are a revelation. If you want to shoot creative images, or just get the best possible quality from your instant photography, this is the best tool for the job

the same information as the LCD panel – shooting mode, exposure, metering and so on – enabling you to stay aware of what your settings are without having to constantly look away and check the screen.

Performance

To test the Polaroid I-2, I shot a bunch of packs of film side by side with the Polaroid Now+ Gen 2 for comparison; I wanted to see the differences between the £600/\$600 I-2 and the £140/\$150 Now+ to see whether this really is Polaroid's best-ever camera. First, that lens: it is indeed very sharp. With regular packs of 600 and i-Type, it gave me some super-sharp results, which I know is in equal parts due to the glass lens elements and the accuracy of the LiDAR autofocus.

I would have liked the option for manual focus; however, given that this is a viewfinder camera (and not an SLR, like the SX-70), that would mean we'd need a distance-based

manual-focus system like the Spectra. And since that was a lot more about estimation than actual focusing, I'm happy to live without it.

The manual options here, however, are an absolute revelation – it's the equivalent of taking your mirrorless camera off Auto mode and getting rid of the pop-up flash. Being able to shoot wide-open, even at f/8, means that depth of field is now a thing. Being able to adjust the shutter speed means that you can drag the shutter, shoot streaky car headlights, and even light-paint. Being able to change the film (from 600/i-Type to SX-70) means you can change the film speed (from ASA640 to ASA160) to change the quality and accommodate the light. You can even shoot with off-camera flash or strobes.

More than just depth of field, the I-2's f/8 aperture has another huge advantage over the maximum f/11 of the Polaroid Now+: basic light transmission. When shooting

outdoors, the I-2's images came out fine, while the Now+ images were almost completely black. I should also mention the brilliant Polaroid app, which automatically pairs with the camera the moment you turn on the I-2. It gives you full control over the modes and exposure settings, and also gives you a countdown when shooting on the self-timer (unlike the Now+, if you don't want to use the app, you can still access all the camera's features).

For all its home runs, the I-2 does whiff a few pitches. First of all, there's no macro mode. Second, the close focusing isn't that great, and there isn't much space between the bottom of the lens and the part of the body that houses the film, which limits the kinds of filters you can attach to the 49mm thread, not that many will want to fit a filter, but you won't have quite the flexibility you might have imagined.

On the subject of confined space, depending on the kind of tripod



INSTANT CAMERA TEST POLAROID I-2



The Polaroid app automatically pairs with the I-2 when you turn it on, giving you control over modes and exposure settings, plus a self-timer countdown

S P E C S

FILM TYPE: POLAROID I-TYPE, POLAROID 600, POLAROID SX-70 **LENS:** 98MM F/8 (38MM FULL-FRAME EQUIVALENT), 49MM FILTER THREAD **SHUTTER SPEED:** 1/250-30 SEC (BULB MODE: 99 HOURS) **FLASH:** AUTOMATIC (WITH OVERRIDE) 2.5M AT F/8 **TRIPOD MOUNT:** YES **CONNECTIVITY:** USB-C (CHARGING), BLUETOOTH, 2.5MM FLASH SYNC PORT **POWER:** USB-RECHARGEABLE LITHIUM-ION BATTERY **DIMENSIONS:** 149.9 X 119.3 X 91.2MM **WEIGHT:** 1,260G

plate you have, you might not be able to open the film door. Two of my plates are fine, but the third is slightly too big, meaning I needed to unscrew the camera to change the film cartridge. And finally, the camera sometimes exposes towards green. I would have thought this was a characteristic of the film; it's not like you can adjust the white balance or hue on a film camera. Nonetheless, on two different packs of film, images had a green hue – both with and without flash. Very strange!
James Artaius

The I-2's manual options are a revelation – the equivalent of taking your mirrorless camera off Auto mode and getting rid of the pop-up flash



VERDICT

The I-2 is the best camera Polaroid has ever made. It's also the best instant camera for anyone who wants to create with as much freedom as a mirrorless camera. The £600/\$600 price tag is high for an instant camera – but the I-2 isn't meant to be compared to a Polaroid Square or even to a Polaroid Now, because they do completely different things. If all you want to do is take simple snaps with your friends at the beach or with your family on a day out, this camera is total overkill. However, if you want to shoot creative images, if you're a professional user, or just want the best possible quality from your instant photography, this is the best tool for the job – in fact it's the only tool for the job.

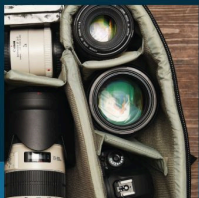




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