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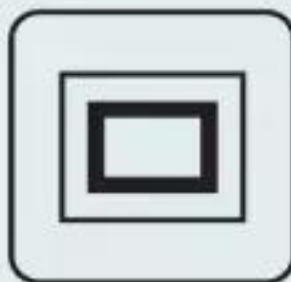
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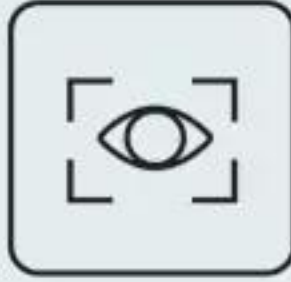


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A LINE IN THE SAND

MIKE O'CONNOR, EDITOR

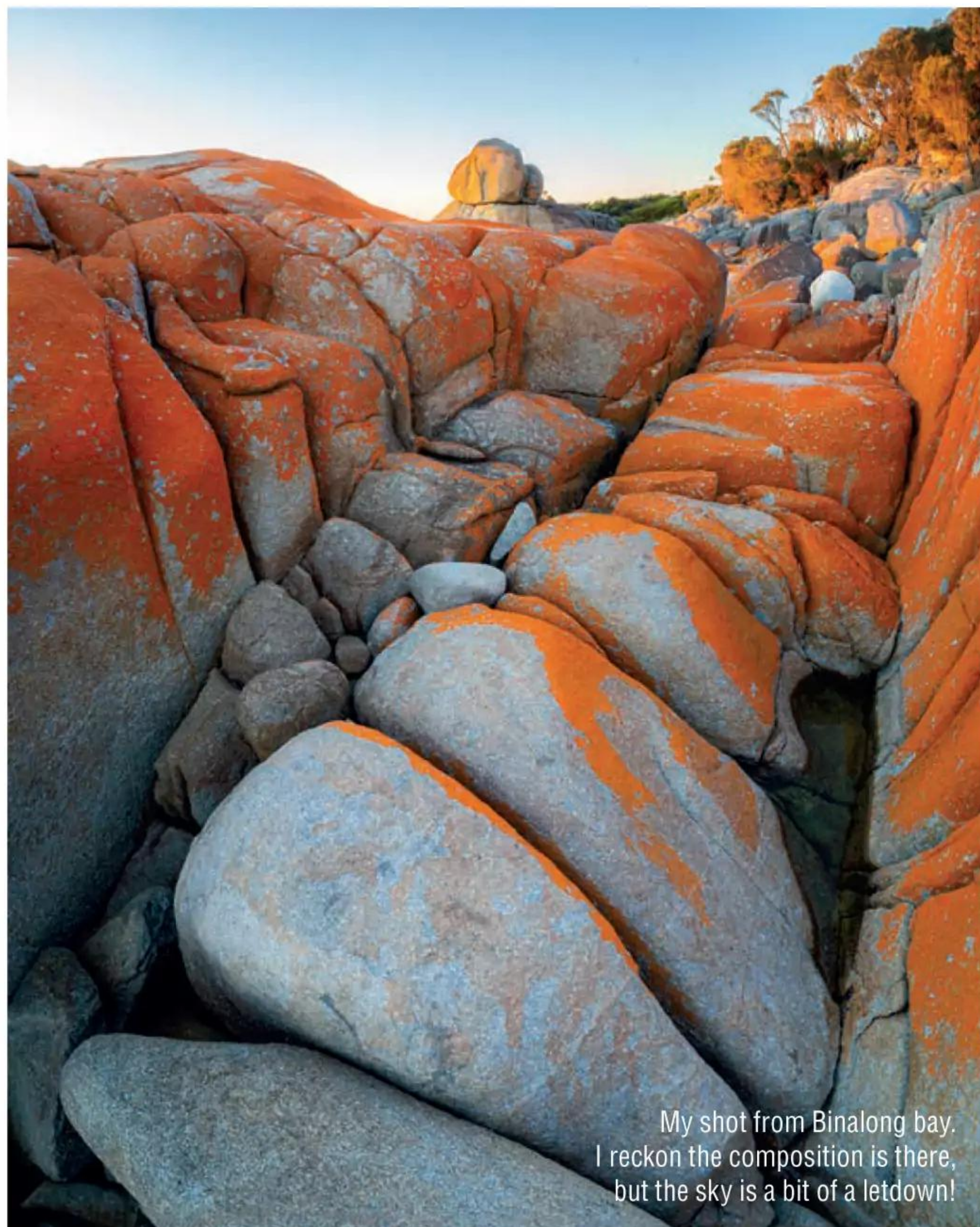
I've found myself in a bit of a dilemma. Last year, I was lucky enough to visit the East Coast of Tasmania and photograph Binalong Bay. It's a stunning location, but despite three early-morning attempts, the sky never quite cooperated. I took plenty of shots, but there was one image I really wanted – a shot captured with a wide-angle lens looking towards Little Elephant Rock. I composed carefully, had the light hitting all the right places and yet...it just didn't come together.

These days, fixing that is almost too easy. When I first started using Lightroom 15 years ago, it was a basic sorting tool with an editor tacked on. Now, local adjustments to specific parts of an image are simple, the interface is intuitive, and tutorials are everywhere. Tasks that once took hours can now be done in seconds. I still remember my friend Mark Galer giving an entire presentation on denoising an image; in 2026, the same result can be achieved with a single click.

Take my nearly-there shot. I dropped in a bright red preset sky in Lightroom, and suddenly the image looked exactly like what I had hoped to capture. Yet in doing so, it pushed the image into pretty uncomfortable territory.

Now, I can't publish it or show it to friends and family in good conscience, and I can't print it at home for my own use either as it would just bug me, sitting on the wall as a reminder that it's not all my own work. And before you suggest it, I can't even swap in a sunrise from one of my own photos as a partial solution—every shot I took those three mornings looks pretty much the same!

Most likely, the image is going to remain stuck in a bit of a grey area on my hard drive, filed away as one of those 'almost' shots, waiting to be upgraded on a day when I get to return and shoot it again perhaps, or



My shot from Binalong bay. I reckon the composition is there, but the sky is a bit of a letdown!

simply never looked at again. But is this a bad thing?

Everyone has a different line in the sand for editing, and mine has changed over time. But what hasn't is the idea that much of the magic in photography comes from capturing every element in the frame yourself. I didn't get it this time, but maybe I will next, or a better shot entirely. Sure, it can be frustrating as hell, but I'm trying to treat this one as a building block. The elements are there, I now just need the other bits to come together and make the magic happen next time.

Do you have images like this one? I'd love to hear about your 'almost' shots and what you end up doing with them, or if you'd be happy enough to swap out bits and call it done. Send me an email with yours, and maybe we can share a few in the next issue. 🌟

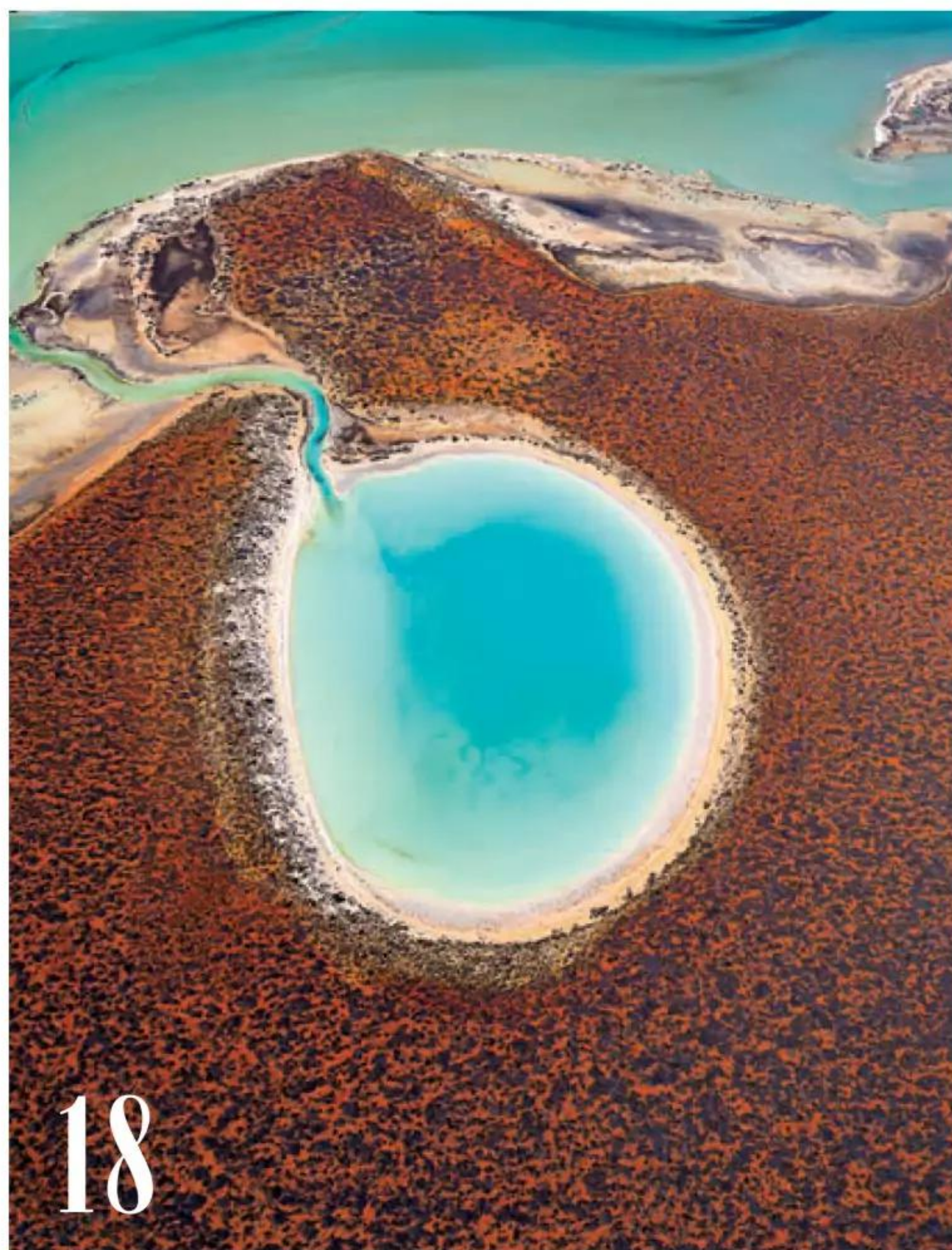


FEBRUARY - MARCH 2026

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Photography

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THIS ISSUE'S COVER

Captured by photographer Jeff Cullen, our cover this month is part of his award-winning image *Gibson Steps Aurora*, featured on page 24. "I'd been struggling to find the motivation to shoot, but despite clouds being forecast I drove an hour to this iconic spot," he explains. "The clouds eventually cleared, and just as I was packing up, the aurora suddenly flared. I ran back down the steps and captured this moment, amazed that such a weak forecast delivered such a brilliant show."

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QUICK SNAPS



SONY ANNOUNCES \$4,699 A7 V

SONY has introduced the A7 V, the fifth-generation model in its full-frame mirrorless A7 series.

The camera features a new 33-megapixel partially stacked Exmor RS sensor and an upgraded BIONZ XR2 processor with integrated AI, bringing improvements to autofocus, readout speed, colour accuracy, and video capabilities.

The update positions the A7 V alongside recent competitors such as the Canon EOS R6 III, Panasonic SIII, and Nikon Z6III.

Autofocus is a major focus for Sony with the A7 V. The company reports a roughly 30% increase in subject recognition accuracy compared to the A7 IV.

The system now supports six subject types plus a configurable Auto mode, with 759 phase-detection points covering up to 94% of the frame and tracking down to EV -4.

Faster sensor readout enables blackout-free shooting at up to 30fps with AF/AE tracking using the electronic shutter.

This is a significant improvement over the A7 IV, which topped out at 10fps, whether using its mechanical or electronic shutter. That said, the A7 V still shoots at 10 fps when using its mechanical shutter.

This is made possible by a new processor, which is an update to the one found in Sony's earlier cameras, such as the A1 II, A7R V and A6700, which used distinct processors for

managing autofocus and processing. Now, both functions are bundled onto the one chip, which Sony says makes the system more efficient when doing the same tasks.

A new Pre-Capture mode that first appeared in the a9 III has also been added. This saves frames up to one second before the shutter is pressed.

The A7 V offers up to 16 stops of dynamic range with the mechanical shutter and introduces AI-assisted auto white balance for more consistent colours in mixed lighting.

Video capabilities have also been enhanced. The camera now supports oversampled 7K-to-4K 60p recording in full-frame mode and 4K 120p in Super 35/APS-C mode. Full pixel readout without binning, upgraded Dynamic Active stabilisation, and improved heat management extend recording options.

However, features like open gate shooting, DCI 4K, and internal RAW capture remain absent, unlike rival models in this price range such as the Canon EOS R6 III, and Panasonic SIII.

The new processor enables algorithm-driven features such as Auto Framing, which crops and follows a subject within the frame.

Users can set up a wide-angle shot while the camera simulates operator-style panning, with three crop levels and an option to briefly show the full frame before zooming in on the subject.

Body design is largely similar to the A7 IV, with the same 3.69M-dot viewfinder (0.78x magnification), but adds a fully articulating 4-axis multi-angle LCD. Other updates include Wi-Fi 6E, dual USB-C ports, and a redesigned grip.

Battery life is rated at 750 shots using the rear screen and 630 shots via the viewfinder, a noticeable improvement over the previous model, which is pretty impressive as it relies on the same battery as that camera.

Alongside the camera, Sony announced the FE 28–70mm F3.5–5.6 OSS II, a compact standard zoom lens designed for high-speed shooting with coordinated stabilisation and improved autofocus.



The A7 V is available now for \$4,699, with the FE 28–70mm lens \$699. More info at sony.com.au.

MOMENTO RELAUNCHES UNDER NEW OWNERSHIP WITH NEW DIRECTION

AUSTRALIAN photobook brand Memento has been revived under new ownership, returning with updated technology, premium materials and a renewed focus on travel photobooks.

The original Memento closed in 2024 after 20 years in business, during which it became a popular platform for Australian photographers to publish their work.

The new company launched in October 2025 after the brand name and website were purchased by Peter Thomas, owner of Melbourne printing supplier PhotobookShop.

PhotobookShop had already acquired many of Memento's assets earlier in the year, but at the time was not able to take over the business itself. That has now changed, and the re-branded operation is officially underway as of October.

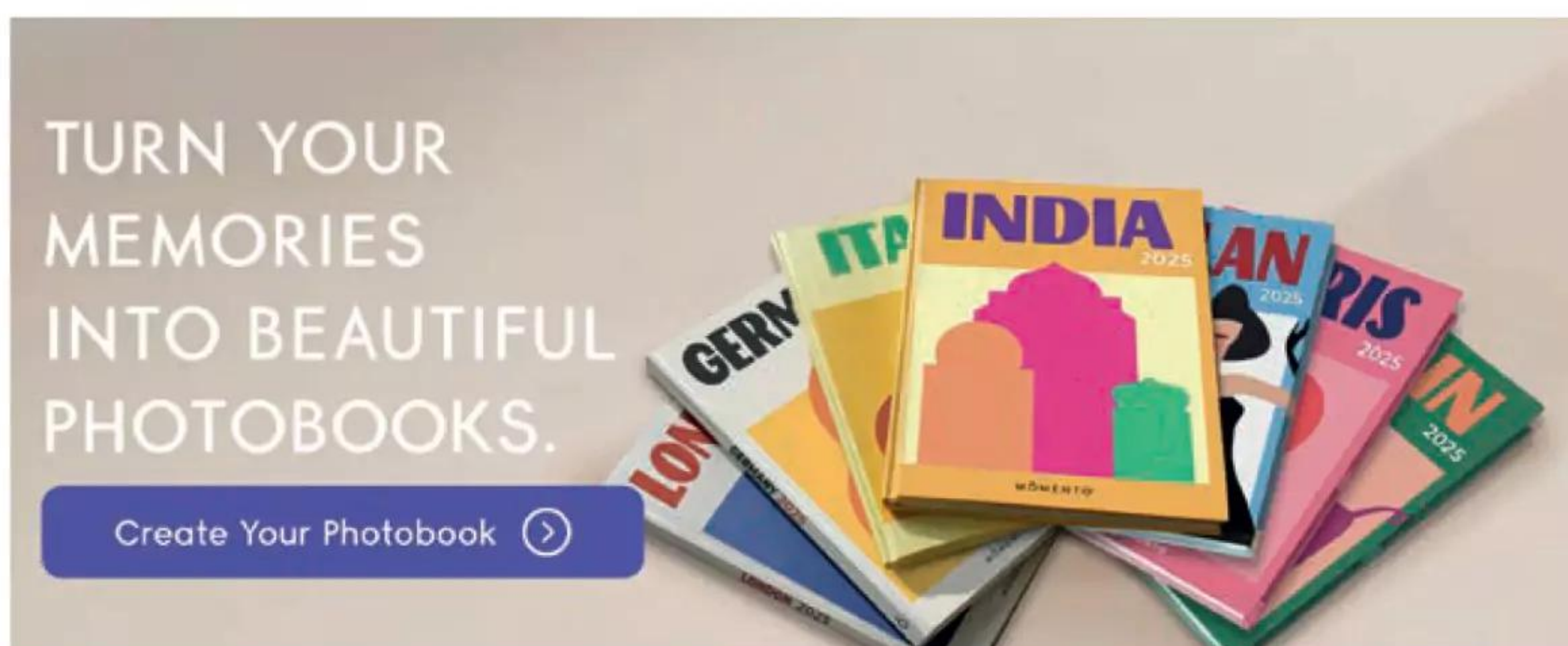
"Memento is a respected brand, and we wanted to keep it going," Thomas said.

Although founders Geoff Hunt and Libby Jeffery are not involved in the new entity, Thomas said the aim is to deliver a product that feels familiar to long-time customers.

"It's the same premium product that Memento users are used to," he said.

The relaunch includes a complete technical rebuild, with new AI-powered publishing software developed from the ground up.

The brand has also chosen not to continue Memento Pro, which previously served professional photographers, as that segment is already covered by its own PhotobookShop Pro.



The new Memento is instead focused squarely on the travel market and positioned as a more premium alternative to PhotobookShop's core offering.

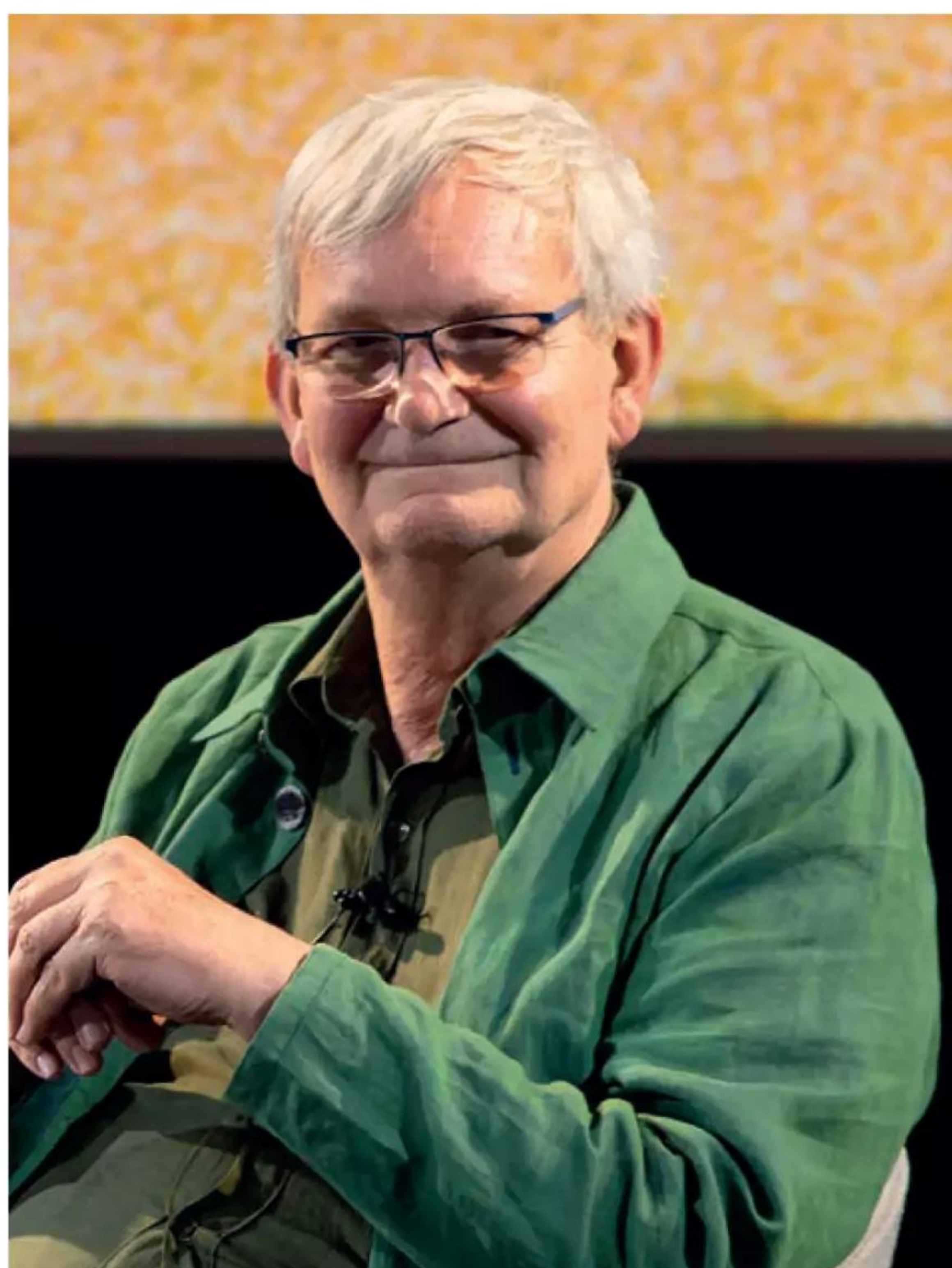
The business is run by a team of five in Melbourne and has launched with a single book size and linen covers, supported by 20 templates and existing design options.

Each photobook includes a custom map on the first page, patterned end sheets and a linen cover. Photos are printed on 170gsm silk paper that is flexible, durable, FSC certified and acid free.

Thomas said the goal is to rebuild Memento as a high-quality, travel-focused brand supported by modern design tools and faster production.

Plans for the future include expanding availability beyond Australia and New Zealand and offering additional binding options.

More information is available at memento.com.au.



BRITISH STREET AND DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHER MARTIN PARR DIES AGED 73

MARTIN Parr, the British documentary photographer known for his sharp eye, saturated colour and wry take on everyday life, died on 6 December at his home in Bristol. He was 73.

Born in Surrey, Parr discovered photography as a teenager and went on to study at Manchester Polytechnic.

His breakthrough came with the 1986 series *The Last Resort*, a vivid and often confronting portrait of seaside holiday-makers that helped reshape modern documentary photography.

Parr was regularly exhibited in Australian galleries, including at Bondi Pavillion in 2015, and his bright, satirical take on beach culture resonated strongly with Australian sensibilities.

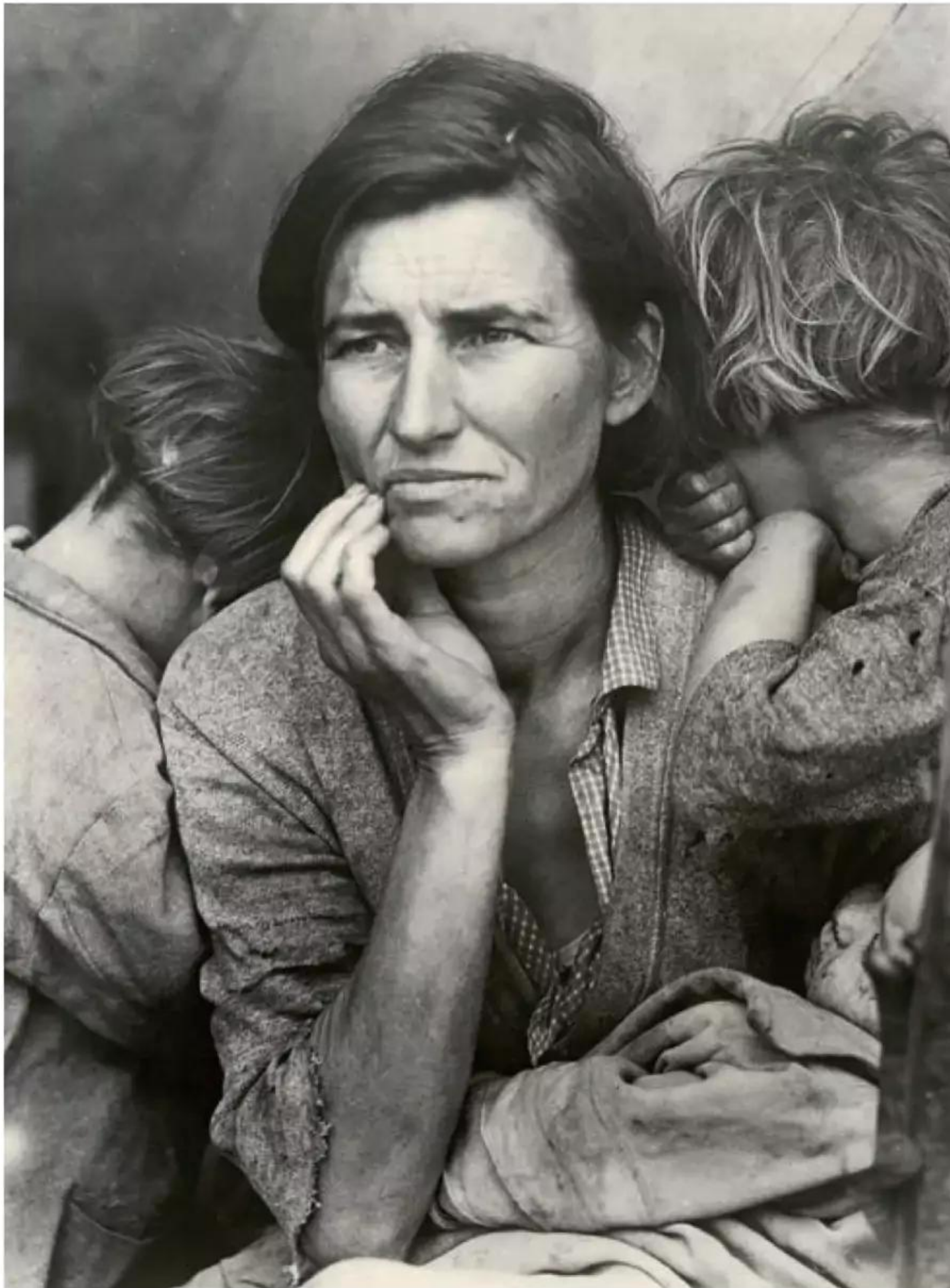
At the same time, he also photographed in Australia several times, producing work that explored everything from our own beach rituals to the peculiarities of tourism and national identity.

His work was also a strong influence on many Australian street and documentary photographers.

Parr joined Magnum Photos in 1994 and later served as the agency's president.

In 2014 he founded the Martin Parr Foundation in Bristol to support and preserve British and Irish photography.

Parr is survived by his wife Susie, their daughter Ellen, his sister Vivien and his grandson George.



NGV INTERNATIONAL OPENS EXHIBITION ON WOMEN PHOTOGRAPHERS

THE National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) International has opened *Women Photographers 1900–1975: A Legacy of Light*, an exhibition showcasing over 300 works by women photographers from the twentieth century.

The large-scale display includes photographs, prints, photo-books, postcards, and magazines, with more than 130 items on public view for the first time.

The exhibition features well-known photographers such as Diane Arbus, Dora Maar, Lee Miller, Dorothea Lange, and Olive Cotton, alongside lesser-known figures including Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore, Lola Álvarez Bravo, and Ponch Hawkes.

Works span portraiture, photojournalism, landscape, fashion, and experimental photography, reflecting social, political, and cultural developments from 1900 to 1975.

Key pieces include Dorothea Lange's *Migrant Mother*, Dora Maar's portraits of Pablo Picasso, Olive Cotton's *Teacup Ballet*, 1935, Ilse Bing's self-portraits, Lee Miller's portrait of Man Ray, and Ponch Hawkes' images of Melbourne's inner-city life in the 1970s.

NGV Director Tony Ellwood said the exhibition highlights historically underrepresented areas of the NGV collection and provides an opportunity to view both familiar and lesser-known photographers, and its launch in November 2025 was also timed with the fifty-year anniversary of International Women's Year 1975.

The exhibition runs until 3 May 2026. Tickets and further information are available at ngv.vic.gov.au.

FUJIFILM'S LATEST INSTAX CAMERA IS A MOVIE/STILLS HYBRID

FUJIFILM has unveiled a new instax camera that blends instant prints with short video clips, adding a playful twist to its traditionally stills-only lineup of compact cameras.

Announced in Tokyo on January 7, the Instax Mini Evo Cinema is the latest model in Fujifilm's Evo Series of hybrid instant cameras. It captures both stills and video, but its standout trick is turning a moment from a video into an instax print that includes a QR code linking back to the full clip.

Scan the code with a phone and the video plays, giving each print a digital "extra" alongside the physical photo.

The camera also leans into nostalgia with a new Eras Dial, which applies effects inspired by different periods of film and video history.

There are 10 era styles to choose from, ranging from a 1960s 8mm film look to a 1970s TV-style effect, each adjustable in strength.

Some even add subtle sound effects while shooting, making the experience feel more like using an old movie camera than a modern gadget.

That retro theme continues in the design. The mini Evo Cinema features a vertical grip inspired by Fujifilm's classic Single-8 movie cameras from the 1960s, along with physical dials and a print lever that give it an intentionally hands-on feel.

A companion smartphone app lets users edit clips, stitch short videos together, and print images straight from their phone, so the camera can also be used as a portable instax printer.

Local Australian pricing and availability haven't been confirmed at press time, but keep an eye on fujifilm.com.au for more.



LEICA LAUNCHES Q3 MONOCHROM

LEICA has released the Leica Q3 Monochrom, the latest model in its Q family of compact full-frame cameras.

Like many of Leica's other Monochrome variants, the new camera features a dedicated black-and-white sensor and is designed for photographers who work exclusively in monochrome.

The Leica Q3 Monochrom is equipped with a 60-megapixel

sensor using 'Triple Resolution Technology', offering image capture at 60, 36, or 18 megapixels, as with the Q3.

It supports ISO settings from 100 to 200,000 and can record video in up to 8K resolution.

The camera includes a Leica Summilux 28 f/1.7 ASPH. lens and digital zoom from 28 to 90 mm.

The camera has a 5.76-megapixel OLED viewfinder, hybrid autofocus, and a tilting touch display.

In addition, Macro mode allows close-focus photography at 17 cm.

The Q3 Monochrom has an IP52 rating, providing protection against dust and water splashes.

Leica says it has introduced a new user interface that separates photo and video functions with distinct color schemes and icons.

This interface will also be available for the Leica Q3 and Leica Q3 43 through a firmware update later this year.

The Leica Q3 Monochrom is now available at Leica Stores in Sydney, Melbourne, and Chadstone, the Leica Online Store, and authorized Leica dealers.

The recommended retail price is \$12,090 including GST. More info at leica-store.com.au.



KODAK ANNOUNCES AFFORDABLE 35MM FILM CAMERA: THE RETO SNAPIC A1

RETO, the Hong Kong-based company that licenses the Kodak brand, has announced a new 35mm compact film camera - the Snapic A1.

The \$99 USD camera comes in dark gray or ivory white and has a simple plastic body with a Kodak logo, xenon flash, and small optical viewfinder. It uses a three-element 25mm glass lens with a fixed f/9.5 aperture and a shutter speed set at 1/100 second.

Focus is controlled through a two-step zone system: one setting for subjects between 0.5 and 1.5 metres, and another that relies on the lens's depth of field for general and landscape use.

A switch next to the shutter button allows double exposures by capturing two images on a single frame. The camera also includes a built-in flash but no hot shoe, so external flash units cannot be attached.

On the top plate, a small OLED display shows battery level, remaining exposures, and focus mode. A rear LCD provides similar basic information.

Reto says the camera can shoot around 10 rolls of 24-exposure



film using two AAA batteries.

The Snapic A1 follows other Kodak-branded models produced by Reto, including the Ektar H35 and the Charmera released earlier this year, which sold out in record time.

Compared with those, the Snapic A1 offers a few additional features and shoots standard 35mm frames rather than half-frame. It will be available in a choice of colours rather than randomised packaging. 🌟

You can find out more on the Reto website, retoproject.com.



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YOUR BEST SHOT

THIS MONTH'S WINNER

FOOD

Food, glorious food! Surely the most satisfying genre of photography, particularly when you get to devour the results at the end of the shoot. We love how food photography has the power to elevate the ordinary into something special. Spanning candid moments and carefully staged scenes, these are our picks for this issue.

DAVID POUNDER

The ladle and the look

EDITOR'S COMMENT

It was a tough one this issue, but we decided to pick David Pounder's shot as it had real atmosphere, while also doing a great job of putting the viewer right into the scene.

"I took this photo in a crowded Tokyo izakaya as the chef served steaming soup to guests seated at the counter," says David Pounder. The steam, warm lighting and expressive reactions from both the chef and the bemused diner combine to create a fun, engaging image. The framing works well too, with shallow depth of field compressing the perspective and reinforcing just how busy the restaurant is. It's a lively scene, and your shooting approach helps emphasise that energy. Well done.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Sony A6400, Viltrox 25mm f/1.7 lens. 1/250s @ f1.7, ISO 2000.

Thanks to the team at Blonde Robot, David Pounder has won a Think Tank DarkLight Backpack in 20L size. Also available in 14L, the DarkLight is the ideal blend of tactical style and everyday functionality. Whether you're an enthusiast capturing cityscapes or an advanced amateur exploring the great outdoors, it offers a durable and comfortable solution to carry your gear. Built with a laser-cut MOLLE panel and tactical webbing rails, this rucksack allows you to precisely configure your loadout.

SEE MORE AT THINKTANKPHOTO.COM





BETH SUTTON

Rising to the Occasion

EDITOR'S COMMENT

We really liked the simplicity of Beth Sutton's selfie, which has been cleverly planned to bring out the best in the subject.

"The light was positioned above and to the right, skimming across the seeds, but far enough away to create a slower fall-off," she explains. "I used a black backdrop and dark clothing and apron to ensure the bread was the undisputed hero. I then connected my camera to my phone and used the app's delay to fire the shutter, tossing the phone into my apron pocket."

The resulting image is beautifully composed, sharp where it needs to be and well lit. This is a great showcase image.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Canon R5, EF 100mm f2.8 lens (adapted). 1/125s @ f8, ISO 100. Godox AD 400. Small Rig 60 x 90cm soft box, black backdrop.

HIGHLY
COMMENDED



JASON KING

Spaghetti Brat

HOW I DID IT

This was a dream photograph, the owner of the restaurant had these old clothes for his kid and he was a natural!

The photo was an easy shot in natural light, and we had so much pasta which meant he could play around, but this shot won for me. Edits were also very basic, a pronounced vignette was added at the end.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Sony A7R Mark II, SAMYANG AF 35mm F1.4 lens. 1/1600s @ f1.4, ISO 640.



ADRIAN STAVOVY

Burger Frenzy

HOW I DID IT

A typical street rambling photo session saw me wandering close to Vic Market, Melbourne. Someone got creative with the burgers and stabbed them onto the points of the wrought iron fence. I shot it with a wide aperture to reduce distractions and concentrate on the quirky and repetitive nature of the scene. In post, I deepened and darkened the lowlights, adding a cool colour tone to empathise the burgers while slightly saturating the orange and yellows to further develop contrast in the scene. I suppose this is one way to play creatively with food!

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Olympus OM-5 MK II, M.12-40mm F2.8 lens @ 36mm. 1/320s @ f2.8, ISO 400.



DIANNE MACHEN

The Flower Cake

HOW I DID IT

The project to create the flower cake was a joy to work on as it involved two things I love, cakes and flowers. The flowers were all picked from the garden and pressed over a few months and then the best part was bringing the creation all together.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Nikon D7100, Nikon 24-70 2.8 lens @ 50mm. 1/320s @ f3.2, ISO 400.



RICHARD MISQUITTA

Waffles

HOW I DID IT

I wanted to showcase the contrast in shapes between the squares (waffles, small bowl, cutting board and tea towel) and the large round plate and mainly round fruit. Placing the square elements at different angles created a more dynamic image.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Nikon D750, Tamron SP 24-70mm f/2.8 Di VC USD G2 lens @ 42mm. 1/160s @ f6.3, ISO 100. Godox XPro transmitter triggered a Godox V860ii speedlite in an 80cm x 80cm softbox.



GERHARD UNTERBERGER

Bread is Life

HOW I DID IT

I took this photo during a tour of Cornwall in Great Britain, at the magnificent Lanhydrock House near the town of Bodmin. I was taking a tour of the house and came into the kitchen, where the sunlight streamed in so beautifully. There were various loaves of bread and rolls on the table, creating a perfect combination that I, of course, had to photograph.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Panasonic Lumix GX8, Leica DG 12-60/f 2.8-4.0 lens @ 12mm. 1/160s @ f3.2, ISO 200.

HOW TO ENTER

YOUR BEST SHOT IS OPEN TO ANYONE IN AUSTRALIA. TO ENTER AN IMAGE IN THE COMP, CHECK THE COMPETITION THEMES AND INSTRUCTIONS BELOW AND EMAIL YOUR BEST IMAGE TO YOURBESTSHOT@AUSTRALIANPHOTOGRAPHY.COM

UPCOMING COMPETITION THEMES



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ABSTRACT
31 January 2026



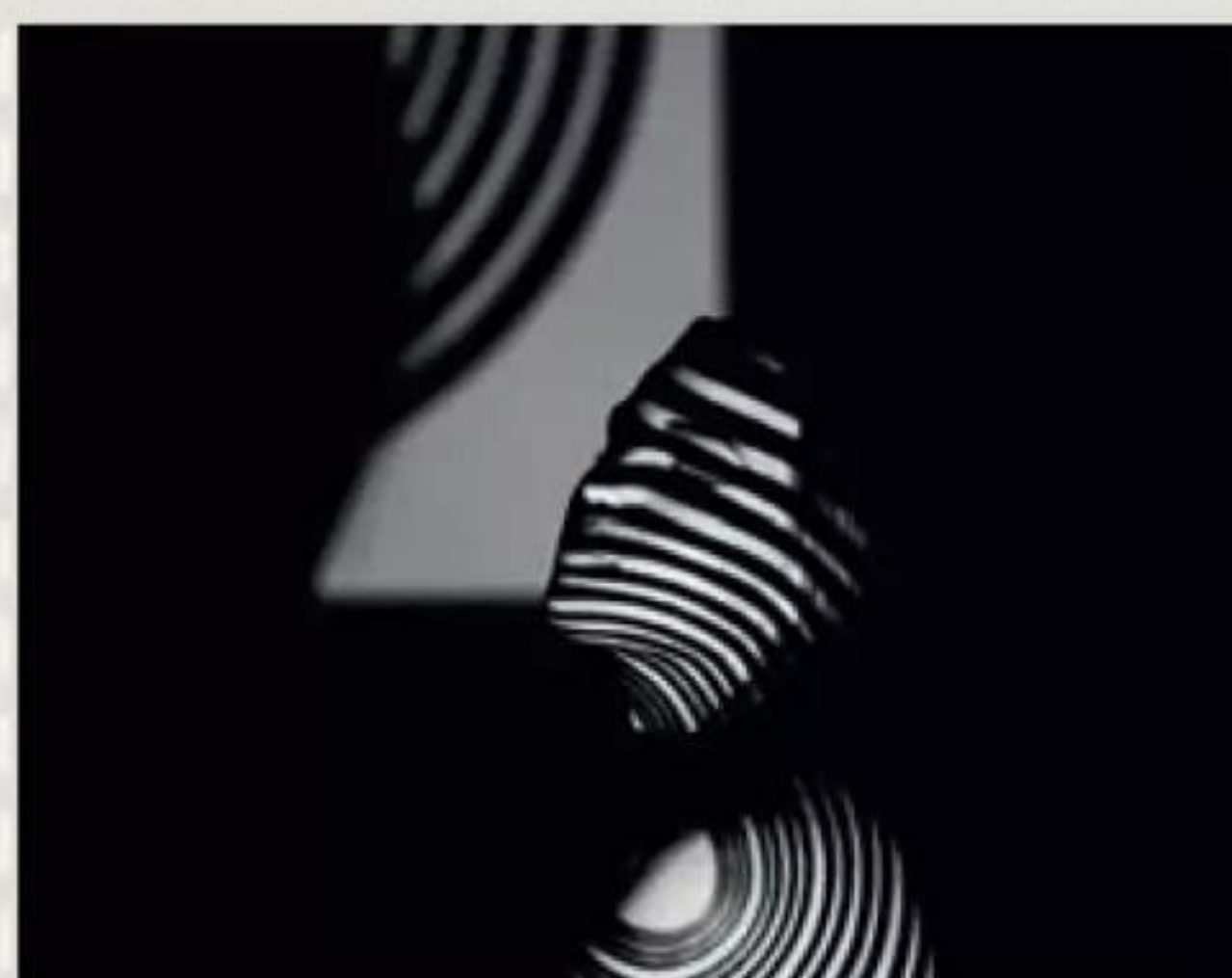
JUNE 2026
BIG AND SMALL
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AUGUST 2026
SOFT LIGHT
31 May 2026



OCTOBER 2026
MINIMALISM
31 July 2026



DECEMBER 2026
LIGHT/SHADOW
30 September 2026

YOUR ENTRY

1. Email your entry to yourbestshot@australianphotography.com with the name of the competition theme in the email subject line, for example: Weather, Abstract, Landscape, etc.
2. The image file must be the same as your name, for example Jane Smith.jpg. If you enter multiple images, each new image file name should be appended with a unique number, eg Jane Smith2.jpg
3. A maximum of three images can be entered per person.
4. Images must be in JPEG format.
5. Email file size must not exceed 7MB.
6. Please include the following information about your entry in the body of your email: Name, image title and up to 200 words explaining how you created your image. Please also include technical details including camera, lens, focal length, shutter speed, aperture, ISO, tripod (if used) and a brief summary of any software edits.



New Zealand Landscape Photography Summit – Punakaiki, West Coast 4–8 June 2026

Master nature and landscape photography with Craig Potton and Richard Young, two of New Zealand's most respected photographers. With its wild coastline, lush rainforest, limestone canyons, and river gorges, Punakaiki provides an ideal setting to explore photography as an art form.

Over five days, the New Zealand Landscape Summit is carefully structured so you'll benefit from a balance of inspirational keynote talks and hands-on fieldwork in small groups (1:4 tutor ratio). Guided shoots, practical instruction, and group discussions help refine your creative vision and develop your skills as a fine art landscape photographer.

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THE EYE UP ABOVE

BY DARRAN LEAL

As photographers, we all love to travel to extraordinary places in search of unique images, and some of the most striking scenes appear from the air.

Whether you are shooting through an aircraft window, or flying with the doors off, aerial photography offers remarkable opportunities for great photos. But it's also a genre with plenty of challenges, and these are often compounded by the fact you typically won't have very long in the air, and you need to get everything right first time.

These challenges mean aerial photography is often described as difficult, yet I've always thought it doesn't have to be if you understand a few basic principles. Most photographers will inevitably take their first aerial images out the window of a flight as their plane descends. These photos can add a lot to a travel project or family album, but they are also a reminder that aerial photography is more accessible than you may initially think.

At the same time, I have seen complete beginners capture award-worthy images from a doors-off flight

over Shark Bay in WA using only a smartphone. Being in the right place at the right time helps of course, but timing and technique matter more.

PLANNING AND FLIGHTS

Firstly, for the sake of brevity this article doesn't cover drones, but they remain the cheapest and most accessible entry into aerial photography. In this article I'm mainly talking about doors-off flights, as they offer unmatched clarity and the thrill of the open air. Some Australian locations, including Lake Eyre, Shark Bay and Purnululu, offer them as standard. Others require a special charter or do not allow them at all, which makes pre-trip research important.

Once you gain experience, you will learn to choose suitable altitudes and consider the timing of your flight. Ask yourself whether first light, low tide or a



The Tadpoles are just one of the unique landscapes in Shark Bay (Western Australia) that you can only truly see from the air. The shot was made easier as we had control of direct and height with the pilot. Sony A7R Mark V, FE 24-70mm F2.8 GM II lens @ 24mm. 1/3200s @ f5.6, ISO 400.



PHOTO TIPS: AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY



ABOVE: One of my favourite aerial locations is the Whydam mud flats in the Kimberley of Western Australia. This view looks back to El Questro Station where we started from. Here, timing for low tide helped maximise the patterns. I also used Dehaze in Lightroom to help cut through the haze. Sony A1, FE 20-70mm F4 G lens @ 20mm. 1/500s @ f5, ISO 100.

OPPOSITE: This old image from Namibia is one of my favourites. It was shot through the plexiglass window. The original raw result (below) is flat and hazy but Lightroom features like Contrast and Dehaze can do so much to recover information, even with old files. Canon 5D, EF24-105mm f/4L IS USM lens @ 47mm. 1/750s @ f5.6, ISO 100.

specific season will offer the strongest colour and texture for your images.

Most of us can afford one flight at a location, but if possible, try for two. The first teaches you the landscape. The second lets you refine timing and composition.

Seat choice varies with aircraft. In a helicopter I often prefer the rear centre because it gives access to both sides. Most fixed winged flights with doors off are one side only doors off. The reality is no choice is perfect and much of the success of your flight will come down to your pilot and clear communication with them before your flight about what you're seeking. Remember, if your needs are very specific, consider a private charter.

Before you take off, check everything twice. Ensure batteries are charged and you have spares, your memory cards have space and are in your camera and you have any accessories you need – a polariser can be useful to cut glare in both water and through windows.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

You're up in the air – now what? Start by looking for patterns and textures. Things like rivers, coastlines, sand dunes, or forest canopies are often great subjects, and repeating shapes and textures within them will stand out from above. I like to look for natural frames like river bends (see left), tree lines, or mountain ridges to contain and guide the viewer's eye. I'm also natu-

“AS WELL AS YOUR CLASSIC ‘ZOOMED IN’ SHOTS, IT’S WORTH TRYING TO INCLUDE A FEW THAT TELL A WIDER STORY, BY INCLUDING THE WING TIP OR PART OF YOUR HELICOPTER IN THE FRAME...”



PHOTO TIPS: AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY



KEY STARTING POINTS

Camera

Any camera can work. Shoot in raw, and use image stabilisation if you have it.

Lens

A range of roughly 20 to 200mm is generally suitable. A wider lens allows you to capture sweeping landscapes, cityscapes, or coastlines, and emphasise scale and patterns. A longer lens is ideal for isolating details, distant subjects, or compressing perspective. My current favourite is the Sony 20–70mm f4 lens for its flexibility and compact size. My son Frazer carries two bodies, usually one with a 24–70mm and one with a 70–200mm.

Settings

Use any mode you understand well, as movement from the aircraft is the main challenge, and you'll need a fast shutter speed to overcome motion blur from aircraft vibration. For years I used Aperture Priority, ISO 400 and f5.6. My current default is Manual, 1/1000s, f5.6 and Auto ISO. In rough conditions I increase shutter speed to 1/2000s, and in low light I'll open the aperture to help my shutter speed. Everything is effectively at infinity, so either single-shot or continuous autofocus works well. I often use multi-point AF for low-contrast subjects like water.



PHOTO TIPS: AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY



I know, I know, this article isn't about drones, but I'm still astounded by the great results I can get from one, even after a few years of flying. They remain the best way to get into aerial photography.
DJI Air 3. 24mm. 1/500s @ f1.7, ISO 100.

rally drawn to areas where light, shadows, or seasonal changes highlight contrast. Bright sand against deep water is a classic Australian example.

As well as your classic 'zoomed in' shots, it's worth trying to include a few that tell a wider story, by including the wing tip or part of your helicopter in the frame. This helps convey scale and the vastness of a scene and can add to the wider series.

PROCESSING

Once you have a strong aerial image, your choices around processing determine whether it becomes an accurate record or an artistic interpretation. Much modern aerial work is deliberately pushed to create bold colour and abstract patterns, and it's a genre that really lends itself to this.

In Lightroom Classic I start by correcting the overall brightness and defining the midtones before adding creative edits.

Dehaze and Clarity are powerful tools for enhancing texture and reducing atmospheric haze, especially over water or landscapes, while increasing Vibrance and Saturation makes patterns and features pop. Just try not to overdo these two sliders.

Finally, I will always correct lens distortion, and especially so if using a wide-angle lens, as these can curve horizons.

THE JOY OF AERIAL PERSPECTIVES

What I love most about aerial photography is it enriches my understanding of a landscape, and the creative challenges that come from it are always fun. It's not for everyone of course, but if it's for you, it's an amazing way to see the world with your camera. 🌟

WHAT ABOUT WINDOWS?

While doors-off flights are what you really want, I'm always surprised by how many good images I've captured through glass. Aircraft windows are made from layers of stretched acrylic, such as Lexan or Plexiglas, chosen for clarity and strength. The main drawback of this is older aircraft with scratched panels, but even then, a bit of editing in post can help clean scratches up. Here's a simple method for capturing photos through glass: place a fingertip on the window and rest your lens a millimetre or two behind that finger to reduce reflections and vibration. When contrast is too harsh for the main camera, I often switch to my iPhone which manages contrast quite well.



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STARBOUND

BY THE AP TEAM

Travel photography blog Capture the Atlas has released the eighth edition of its annual Northern Lights Photographer of the Year, with two Australian photographers, Jeff Cullen and Sara Aurorae, earning places in the 2025 top 25 for their Aurora Australis images captured in Victoria.

Their work reflects a year of unusually strong southern lights activity that pushed deep across Australia during major geomagnetic storms.

Published each December to coincide with peak aurora season, the curated collection brings together 25 standout images from photographers representing 15 nationalities.

This year's images span locations across Iceland, Norway, Finland, Greenland, Sweden, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand.

The 2025 edition follows another exceptional year for aurora chasers. Although the solar maximum has now passed its peak, geomagnetic activity remained remarkably high throughout the year, producing widespread Aurora Borealis and Aurora Australis displays.

Editor Dan Zafra compiles the list of his favourite shots throughout the year, selecting images for their technical quality, the story behind the shot, and the sense of inspiration they offer.

He says the project aims to highlight both established aurora photographers and emerging talents, as well as images from less commonly photographed locations.

Capture the Atlas is a travel and photography blog that focuses on landscape and astrophotography, offering guides, tutorials, and resources for photographers at all levels. 🌌

You can see more winners on the *Capture the Atlas* website, capturetheatlas.com.





PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION: NORTHERN LIGHTS PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR



1. *Gibson Steps Aurora* by Jeff Cullen. Canon 5DS, Samyang 14mm f/2.8 lens. 30s @ f2.8, ISO 1000.

2. *Twisting Turn* by Virgil Reglioni. Sony A7CII, 15mm Laowa 2.0 lens. 1.3s @ f2, ISO 2500.

3. *Lights & Ice* by Tori Harp. Sony A7R IV, Sony 20mm f/1.8 G lens. Sky and ice cave: 20s @ f1.8, ISO 2000, Abseiler: 1/50s @ f2.8, ISO 1250.

4. *Essence of the Arctic Night* by Giulio Cobiauchi. Nikon Z6II, Nikon S 14-24mm f/2.8 lens @ 14mm. 21 shots in 2 rows: Sky: 10 shots, 10s @ f2.8, ISO 5000, Landscape: 10 shots, 13s @ f3.5, ISO 5000, Subject: 1 shot, 8s @ f3.2, ISO 6400.

5. *Celestial Fireworks on New Years* by Sadeq Hayati. Samsung Galaxy S23. 23mm lens, 8s @ f/1.7, ISO 3200.



6. *Sueños en Eystrahorn* by Pablo Ruiz. Nikon D810, Nikon 14-24mm f/2.8 lens. Panorama, 2 rows of 8 photos: Sky: 6s @ f2.8, ISO 6400, Ground: 15s @ f2.8, ISO 6400.

7. *Celestial Fireworks on New Years* by Sara Aurorae. Nikon Z7 II, Nikon Z 20mm f/1.8 S lens. 6 Frames: 13s @ f2.5, ISO 1250.





Intentionally breaking all of the rules of photography by shooting into a sunset with a full spectrum converted camera, 720NM infrared filter and shooting in JPEG! I've shot on this Southeast Asian bridge several times, and at evening rush hour there's a lot of interesting traffic heading to a local market. This was exactly what I'd hoped to get; a perfectly timed slow shutter pan shot of a family as other motorbikes crossed in the opposite direction. This was pre-focussed in full manual mode. Fujifilm X-E2, 35mm f/2 lens. Zomei 720ND filter. 1/125s @ f11, ISO 200.



STREET LIFE

BY STEVE THOMAS

Street photography is a genre many photographers are drawn to, yet it is also one of the most misunderstood. Here's how to develop an approach that works for you.



Street photography can be many things. It might be a stolen hour wandering unfamiliar streets on holiday, a lunchtime walk through places you know by heart, or long evenings waiting patiently in backstreets for something to unfold. It is a broad and endlessly popular genre.

From the romanticised black and white work of Henri Cartier-Bresson and the posthumously discovered images of Vivian Maier, through to the bold colour and flash of the late Martin Parr and the vibrant street scenes of Joel Meyerowitz, some of the most compelling photographs ever made fall under the banner of street photography.

It's also a genre notoriously tough to make a living from (at least in the form of scoring commissions and selling images), which makes it truly a passion-first genre, but also one that's democratic and open to just about anyone.

At the same time, and perhaps more so than in other genres of photography, street imagery is highly personal. Its impact is often quite subjective, where imperfection plays a central role in what can make an image work.

STYLES AND APPROACHES

There are strong opinions about what qualifies as street photography, with these often centred on classic traditions. I like to think of street photography as a genre that comfortably overlaps with travel, portraiture, architecture, documentary and fine art.

I've long thought that many photographers known for their street work are not street purists at all. Their primary careers in other genres strongly influence how they approach the streets.

Australian Magnum photographer Trent Parke is a good example, blending elements of sports, documentary and personal narrative into his street work. Likewise, Don McCullin's later documentary images carry clear echoes of his early street documentary photography of local London gangs.

I mention this because finding your own style and approach in street photography is key to enjoying it.

Your work doesn't have to be a carbon copy of Cartier-Bresson, or anyone else for that matter.

What it should be is something personal that reflects the environment you occupy and the opportunities that interest you.



PHOTO TIPS: STREET PHOTOGRAPHY



OPPOSITE: I've shot a lot in the main market in Ubud, Bali, while walking around looking for interesting people and scenes. This lady was taking a nap on one of the many parked motorbikes outside, while also selling produce from a small stall. I included the produce in the scene to give it more context. Fujifilm X-T1, XF18-55mm lens @ 35mm. 1/200s @ f5.6, ISO 200.

LEFT: I've walked and shot on the streets of Urgup in Cappadocia, Türkiye, many times over the past decade, often while shooting the Cappadocia Ultra trail. I was scouting this backstreet the day before the race, and was waiting for a couple of runners to pass when the house owner walked out. For me it sums up the real Cappadocia tourists rarely see. Fujifilm X-T2, XF18-55mm lens @ 20mm. 1/1600s @ f5.6, ISO 200.

**“SHAPES, SHADOWS,
DETAILS,
SILHOUETTES
AND REFLECTIONS
CAN ALL MAKE
FOR COMPELLING
IMAGES WITHOUT
INTRUDING ON
ANYONE’S PRIVACY.”**

TIPS AND TRICKS

- Make the most of the light you have. Early morning and late afternoon offer beautiful long shadows and softer light, but every time of day brings different people, traffic, weather and shadow patterns. Learn to work with all of it.
- Work the scene thoroughly. Look around, change direction, vary your angles and experiment. Waiting for a decisive moment can pay off, but time is limited, and waiting too long can mean missing something even better nearby.
- Use reflections, rain and visual complexity to your advantage. These elements can add depth and atmosphere, especially when supported by strong contrast or bold colour that reads well on smaller screens.
- Put safety first. Stay aware of your surroundings, keep gear discreet and secure, and avoid risky or controversial situations. Be especially cautious around government buildings in unfamiliar places and avoid sketchy back streets at night.
- Look up and look down. In busy urban areas and markets, bridges, stairways and buildings often provide elevated viewpoints that reveal strong patterns and unexpected scenes.



PHOTO TIPS: STREET PHOTOGRAPHY





TOP ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT: Two porters struggle up a steep cobbled backstreet bellow the Grand Bazaar in Istanbul. Getting close was key here. Fujifilm X-T1, 18-55mm f/2.8-4 lens @ 18mm. 1/180s @ f6.4, ISO 400.

Dalat market in Yunnan, China, has some amazing and rough cut characters. Here, I deliberately shot with the evening light partly obscuring this woman's face. Fujifilm X-E1, 18-55mm f/2.8-4 lens @ 50mm. 1/250s @ f4, ISO 200.

Also captured in Dalat, this was a busy scene. It was nice in colour, but a BW conversion in Nik Analog Efex (and a crop) really transformed the image. Fujifilm X-E1, 18-55mm f/2.8-4 lens @ 27mm. 1/120s @ f4.5, ISO 800.

BELOW: Ubud, Bali. I came across this man sat behind his bike in a backstreet. The antiquity of the bike and the intensity of his stare make for a different take on the polished perfection of Ubud. Fujifilm X-T1, 18-55mm f/2.8-4 lens @ 55mm. 1/220s @ f4, ISO 400.

If you can bring this to your imagery, and keep working, learning and crafting your own art, you'll create something authentic.

ON THE STREETS

Photographing people in public has undoubtedly become more complex. The rise of social media and on-line sharing has blurred boundaries and heightened privacy concerns. This has also led to confusion about what is legal, acceptable and ethical.

At the same time, laws vary widely between countries and are changing quickly – in Uzbekistan for example, it is likely it will soon be illegal to photograph people in public without their permission.

Wherever you shoot, it is essential to research local laws and follow them carefully, and especially in places with severe penalties. All this has helped make street photography a different and more volatile prospect than it was in the past.

My strategy is to be polite and unobtrusive. I try to move slowly, avoid sudden movements, respect personal space and use a smile or gesture when appropriate. Asking permission can change the feel of an image, but it is often better than having a lit cigarette or a rotten apple thrown at you (both of which I've had!).

As photographers such as Fan Ho demonstrated so well, it doesn't always have to be about people, or at least not recognisable people, that make for great street images.

Shapes, shadows, details, silhouettes and reflections

can all make for compelling images without intruding on anyone's privacy.

How far you want to go with your street imagery is ultimately up to you, but always prioritise your own safety and people's privacy rights over the image.

And do remember, that not even a verbal okay or nod to shooting images of people is a legal go-ahead to do what you want with, or to post those images however you wish.

THE GEAR

Unlike other gear-heavy genres, street photography doesn't traditionally require much gear.

In fact, I strongly believe less is more when it comes to gear. The smaller your setup the easier it is to carry around, and the less intrusive and intimidating it will be to your subjects.

My own preferred approach is a small camera body with a fast prime, such as my Fujifilm X100T or an XT/XE body with prime lenses (18mm or 35mm). I also increasingly rely on my smartphone as they are widely accepted and always available.

That said, when looking through the exif data of my street work, the majority is shot with a small mid-range 18-55mm (APS-C sensor) zoom lens. Street photography is often a one shot opportunity, and having the ability to change focal lengths quickly can make your life easier.

For local photography in locations you can revisit, low light, or situations where you can use a slower approach, fixed lenses come into their own.



“I TRY TO MOVE SLOWLY, AVOID SUDDEN MOVEMENTS, RESPECT PERSONAL SPACE AND USE A SMILE OR GESTURE WHEN APPROPRIATE...”

ABOVE: Niquero is a small town in southeast Cuba, a place I used to know well, and one of my favourite places to shoot Cuban life. This was really early in my digital transition era, and was shot on a basic Canon Rebel. It was sunset, and there was so much character on the streets. I was shooting the various bikes and horses here when this young girl walked past and just stood in the middle of my shot, politely bemused at the sight of a gringo with a camera. I spoke and smiled at her, and she didn't blink an eye, so she became part of the scene. Canon EOS Rebel XT. 17mm. 1/80s @ f8, ISO 100.

WHAT FOCAL LENGTH?

What focal length you use is a personal choice. In recent years, there has been a trend toward wider lenses and working closer to subjects. While some photographers swear by 35mm, many of the greats preferred 50mm. For me, it's a mix depending on the situation. As I prefer not to intrude on personal space, a focal length around 50mm works best for capturing candid images of people.

I mostly shoot manual or aperture priority, and keep my ISO as low as possible, while shutter speeds vary depending on what I want to achieve. I only go below 1/125th for pan/long exposure or static night images.

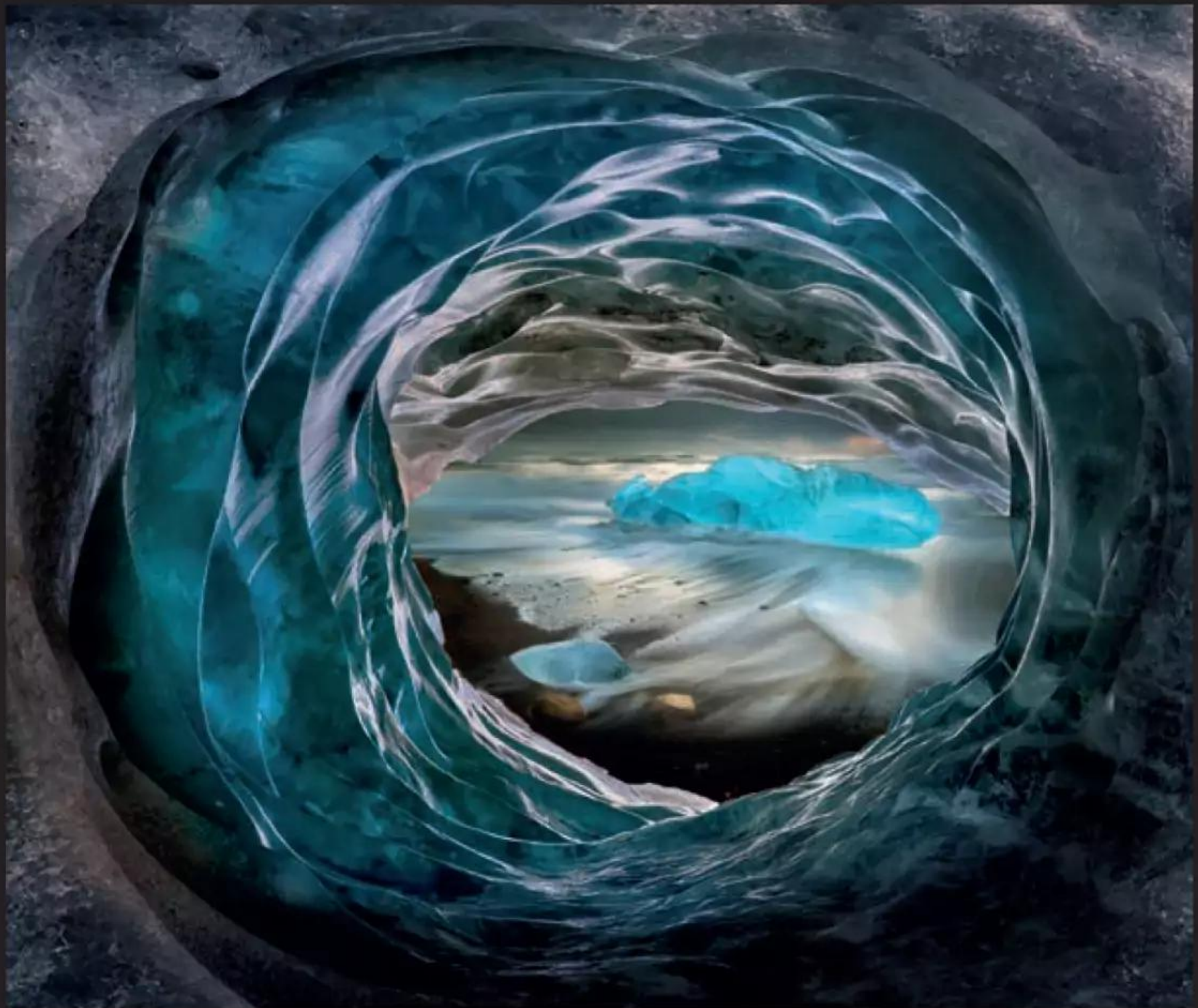
PREPARING YOUR IMAGES

Street photography is often associated with black and white, probably because of limitations of the cameras used when it was at its most popular. Today, your choice is up to you. I set my cameras to capture both JPEG and RAW, and I shoot in colour, leaving the decision to put the end result in black and white for later.

One of the things that has always appealed to me about street photography is that it encourages getting the shot right in-camera. as a result, post-processing doesn't need to be complex. I find most of my images are finished with simple adjustments in Lightroom's basic panel, usually Exposure and Contrast, with the occasional tweak to Vibrance or Saturation. For a select few, I'll take them into my old favourite, Nik Silver Efex, to finish in BW. But like everything with editing, experimentation with the sliders will help you settle on what works best. ☼

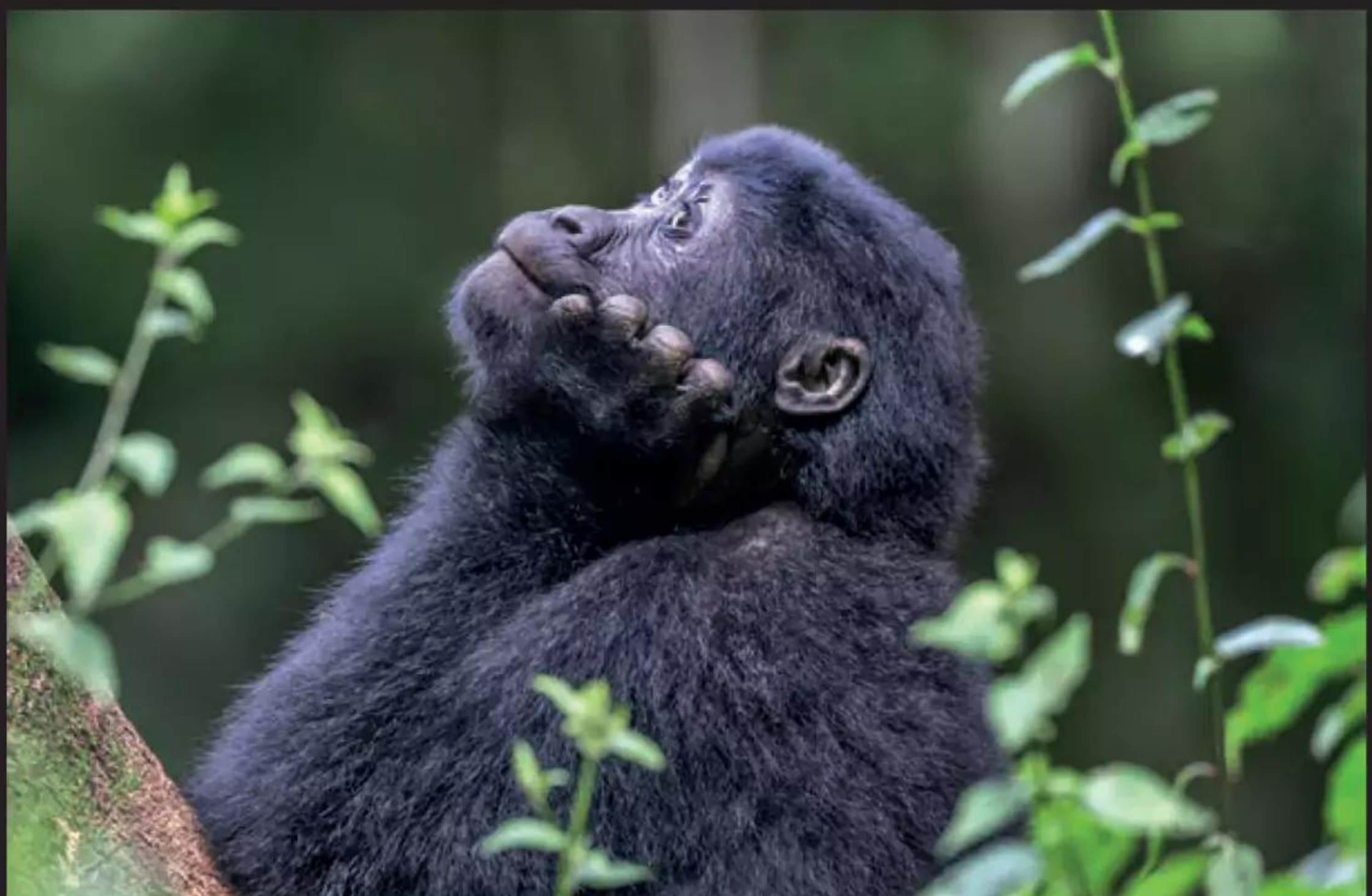
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KEEP IT LOCAL

BY MIKE O'CONNOR

Have you ever wanted to add punch, softness or a cinematic fade to only a selected area in your image, such as a sky, foreground, subject, or background, without affecting the rest of the image? Many Lightroom users don't realise the Tone Curve is also available inside masks, and is an easy way to do just that. Let's show you how.



STEP
1

FIRST, WE'LL CREATE A MASK FOR THE AREA YOU WANT TO AFFECT. OPEN THE MASKING PANEL AND CHOOSE AN APPROPRIATE TOOL

The Linear Gradient works best for skies, or subjects with a defined, straight edge. The Brush and Radial Gradient work best for specific subjects. You'll want to refine the mask so it cleanly covers only the area you want to edit.

Adobe's AI-powered Select Subject or Select Sky tools also do a pretty good job and can help speed up the process.

If you're editing a Landscape and having trouble selecting the entire foreground, you might find it quicker to first select the sky and then tick 'Invert', just to the right on the panel. That's what I did here.

Tip: You may need to 'zoom in' to target a particular area of your image. You can do this by clicking off the masking panel and clicking on the area you want to target. Lightroom will zoom in to 200% when you do this, allowing for more detailed selections.



EDITING TIPS: APPLY A LOCALISED TONE CURVE

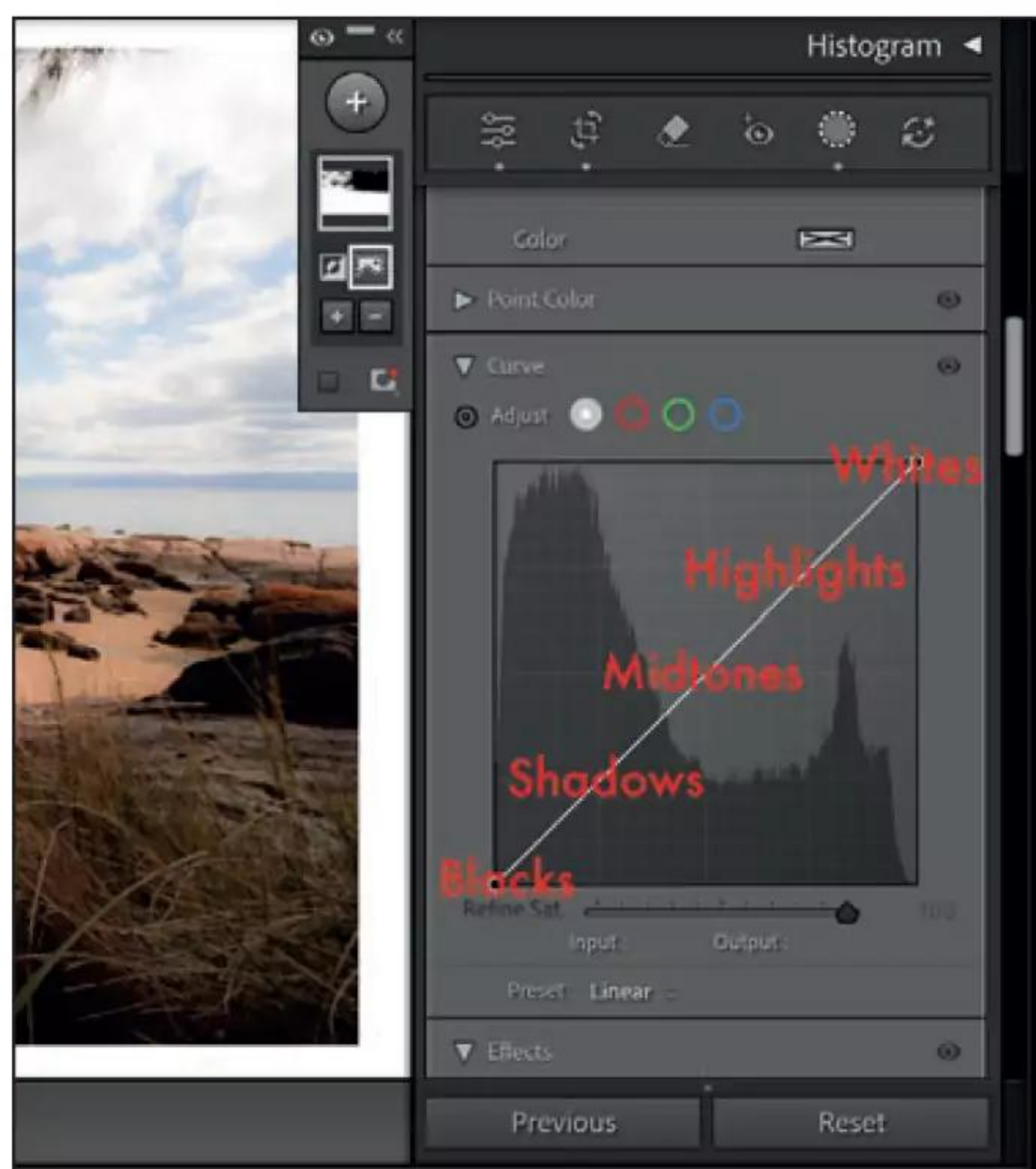
STEP 2

OPEN THE TONE CURVE INSIDE THE MASK

With the mask active, scroll down to Curve in the local adjustment controls.

Because we've masked the area we're editing, this is separate from the global

Tone Curve and only affects the masked area. Just like basic global corrections in Lightroom, the Tone Curve allows you to adjust blacks, shadows, highlights, and whites, as well as midtones, but with more granular control.



STEP 3

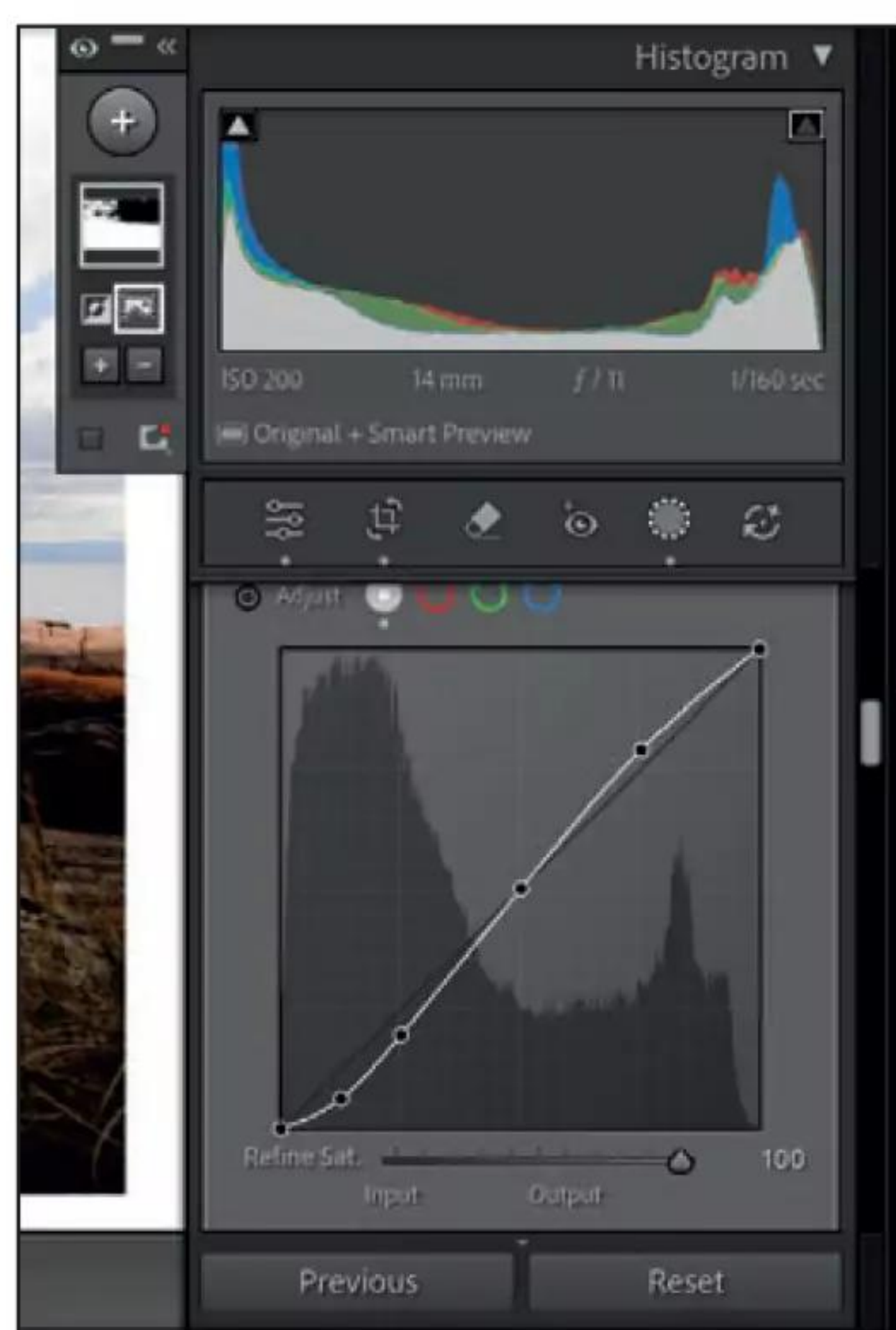
ADD A CURVE FOR CONTRAST

There's a few ways you can use the tool. The most popular is to use a gentle S-curve. This lifts highlights slightly while simultaneously pulling shadows down slightly. You can add points simply by clicking anywhere in the grid and you can remove points by double clicking them.

With this image, I've increased the contrast in the shadows here slightly. Notice how I use a very subtle change to the curve

to do this. This is enough to lift shadows but also increase contrast locally without making the whole image harsher. Small movements go a long way.

Tip: You can reset the Curve by choosing Linear from the Preset menu. There are also presets for medium and high contrast here that can be a good starting point.



LIFT THE BLACK POINT FOR A SOFTER, CINEMATIC LOOK (OPTIONAL)

Another trick is to raise the left-most point of the curve slightly to lift the black point. This gives the selected areas a somewhat faded/flat film look which can be an entire style of its own, and is pretty popular on social media.

Certain images benefit from lifting the black point better than others, but it works particularly well on textured subjects, skies or misty landscapes, and creates separation without obvious dark edges.

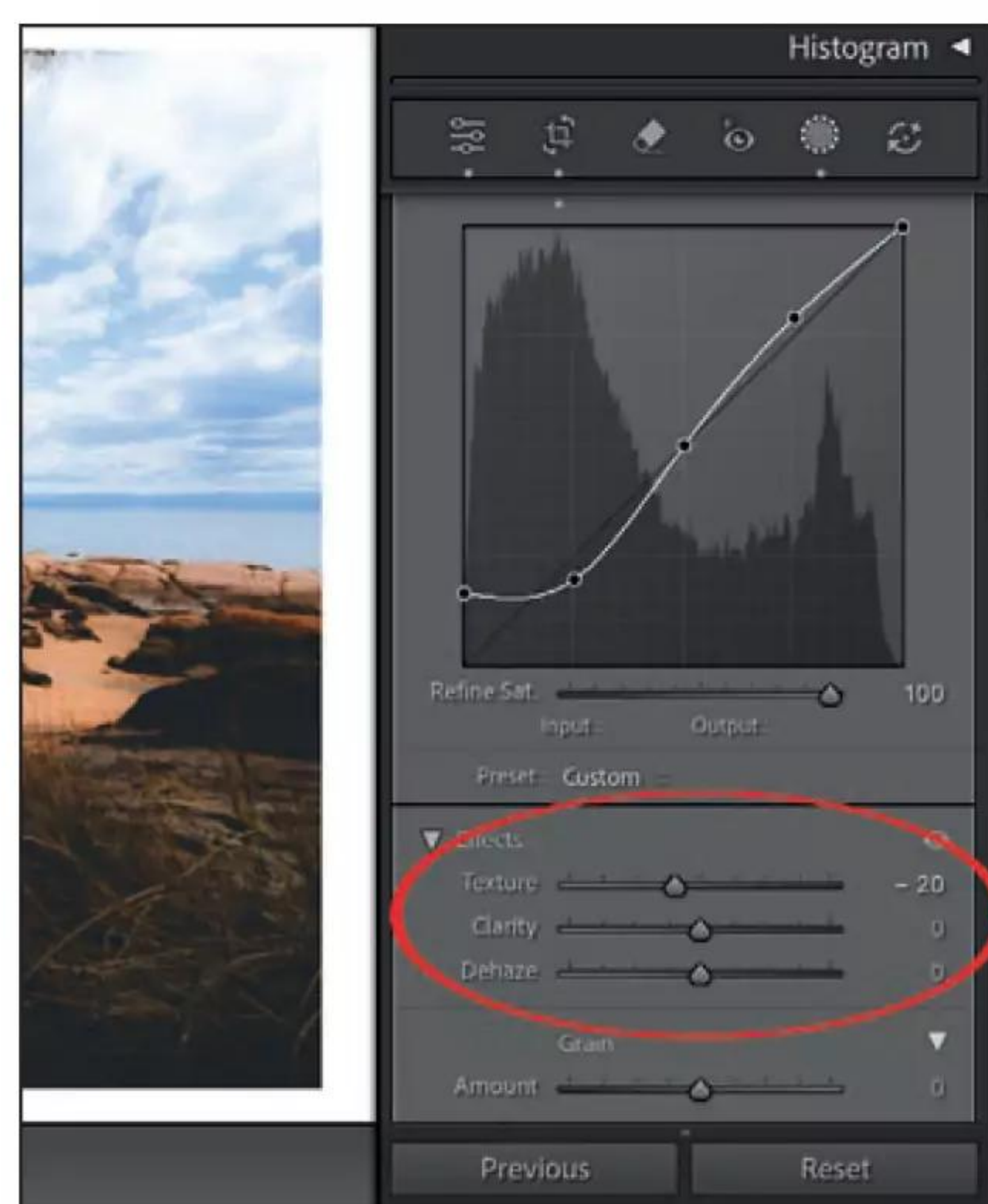
STEP 4



STEP 5

FINE-TUNE YOUR LOCAL ADJUSTMENTS

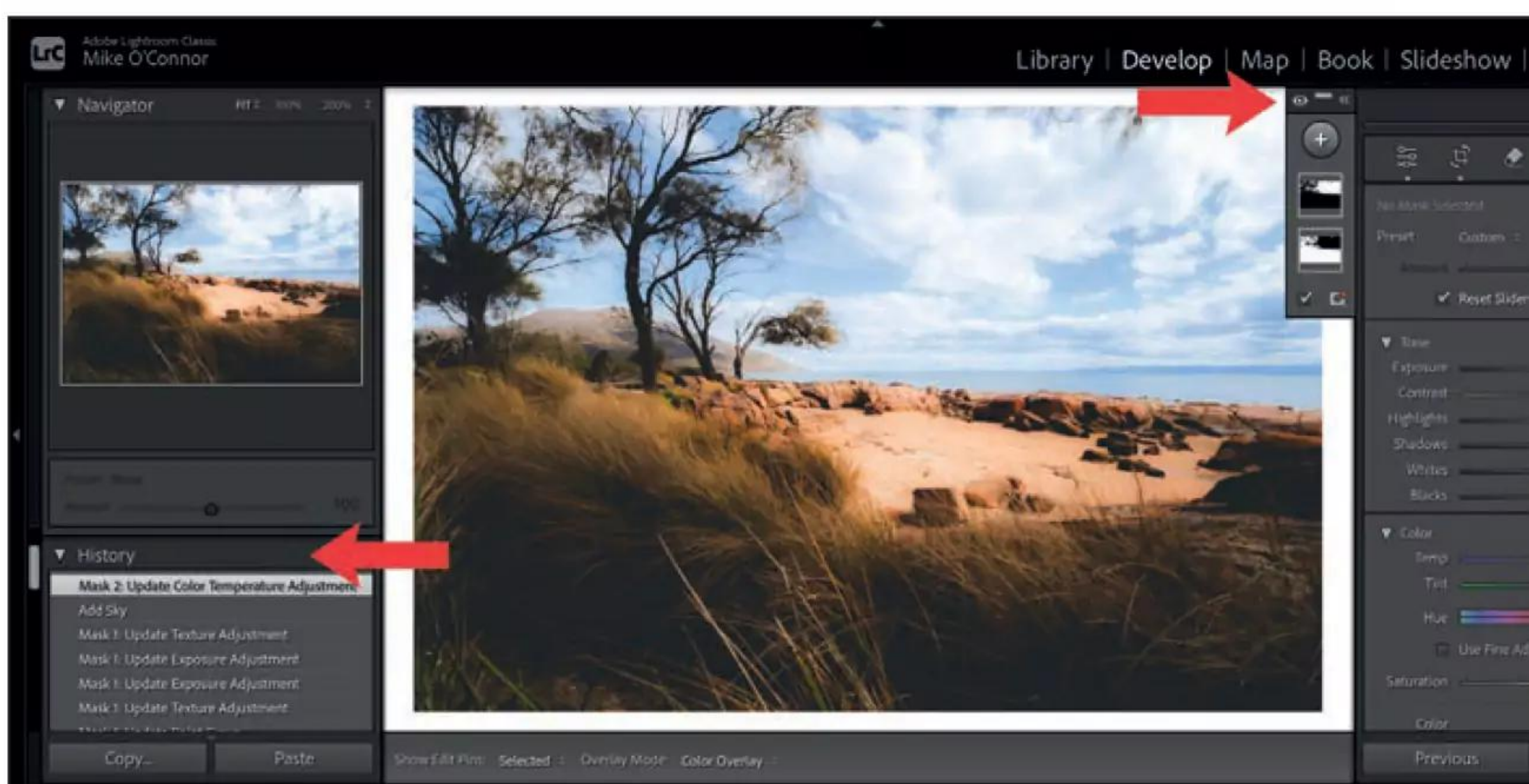
After shaping contrast with the curve, your image might benefit from a couple of other local adjustments. Here for example, I adjusted Exposure in the Tone panel a little to balance brightness, and reduced Texture to control the perceived sharpness and play up the softer filmic look, while avoiding crunchy detail. I also pumped up the blues in the sky a little with a sky specific mask.



STEP 6

TOGGLE THE MASK ON AND OFF TO CHECK REALISM

Finally, you can use the mask visibility toggle (the eyeball) to compare your before and after. If the effect draws attention to itself, back off the curve slightly, and remember that all changes aren't permanent, just go through the History tab on the left to walk back any changes.





PUSHING THE BACKGROUND BACK

FINAL IMAGE



While most photographers associate Clarity with adding punch, that's not the only way you can use this tool in Lightroom. It also happens to be surprisingly effective when applied negatively and selectively as a depth tool.

By strategically applying negative Clarity in selected areas, you can push parts of an image back to reduce distractions, enhance depth, and simulate atmospheric separation. And, unlike targeted blur, this technique only reduces midtone contrast, not sharpness. That means it preserves edge definition, making it my preferred approach for images with plenty of texture I want to retain, but not distract.

Let's take a look at how it works with this portrait of my nephew Llewyn.

BEFORE





EDITING TIPS: USING NEGATIVE CLARITY TO CREATE DEPTH AND ATMOSPHERE

STEP
1

IDENTIFY BACKGROUND AREAS THAT COMPETE WITH THE SUBJECT

Firstly, you'll want to look for areas in your image with texture or contrast that pull attention away from the main subject. With this portrait it's obviously the foliage, but things like distant hills, or busy foregrounds can have the same effect on your image.



STEP
2

CREATE A BACKGROUND MASK

Next, open Masking and choose Select Subject, then Invert the mask. Or, depending on your subject, you may need to use the Linear or Radial Gradients, or the Brush for manual control.

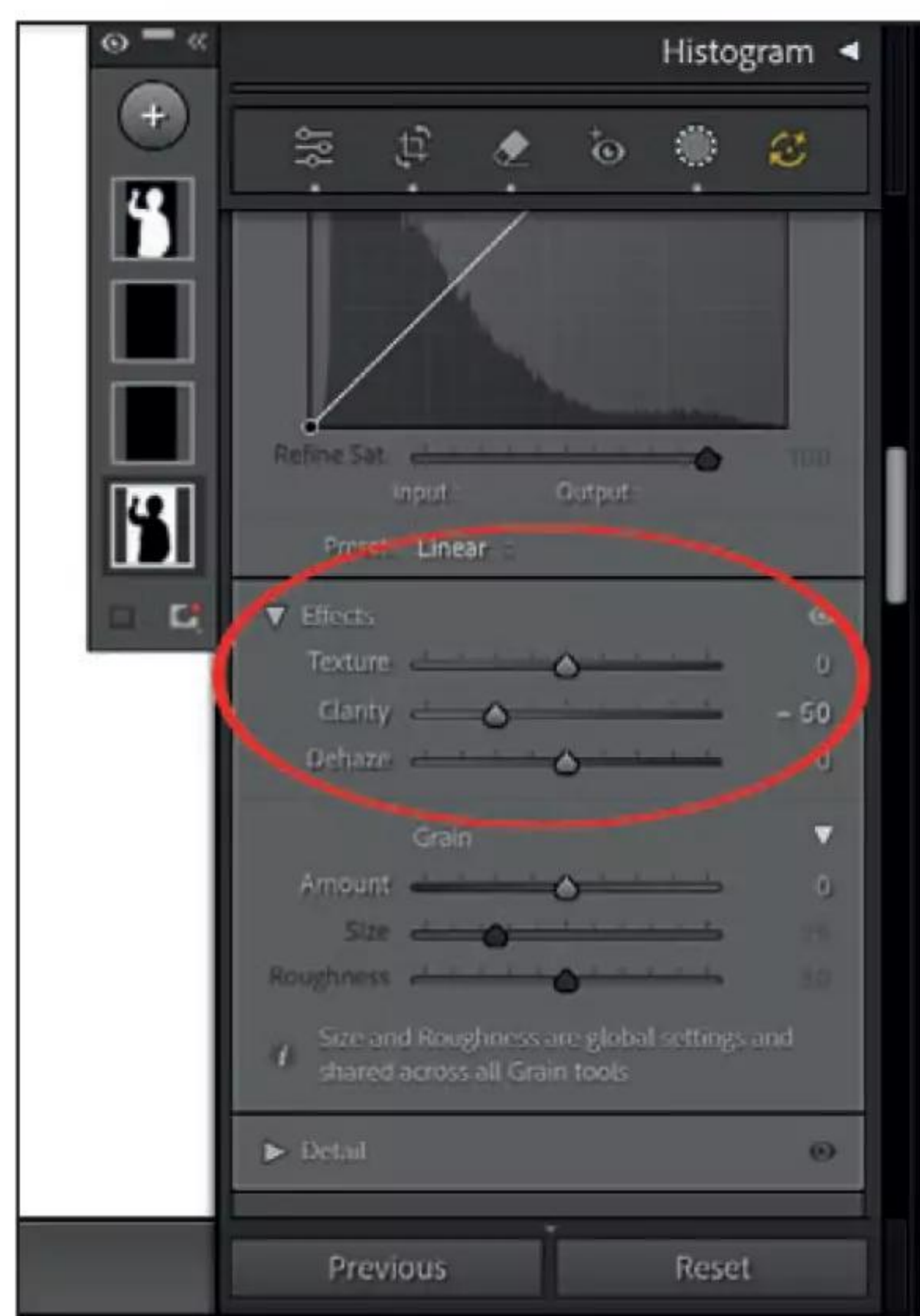
Your aim is to select all the areas that are pulling attention away from your main subject. If you do use the Brush, I also recommend you use a feathered edge to avoid any horrible haloing around your main subject (adjusted via the dropdown arrow on the right).



STEP
3

REDUCE CLARITY IN THE MASKED AREA

Now, we're going to lower Clarity to somewhere around -20 to -60. This softens midtone contrast without blurring detail, helping the background recede naturally. You can experiment with more extreme values, but these have a habit of looking artificial – although they should show you how much impact the changes can make, so give them a try.



STEP
4

ADJUST DEHAZE CAREFULLY IF NEEDED

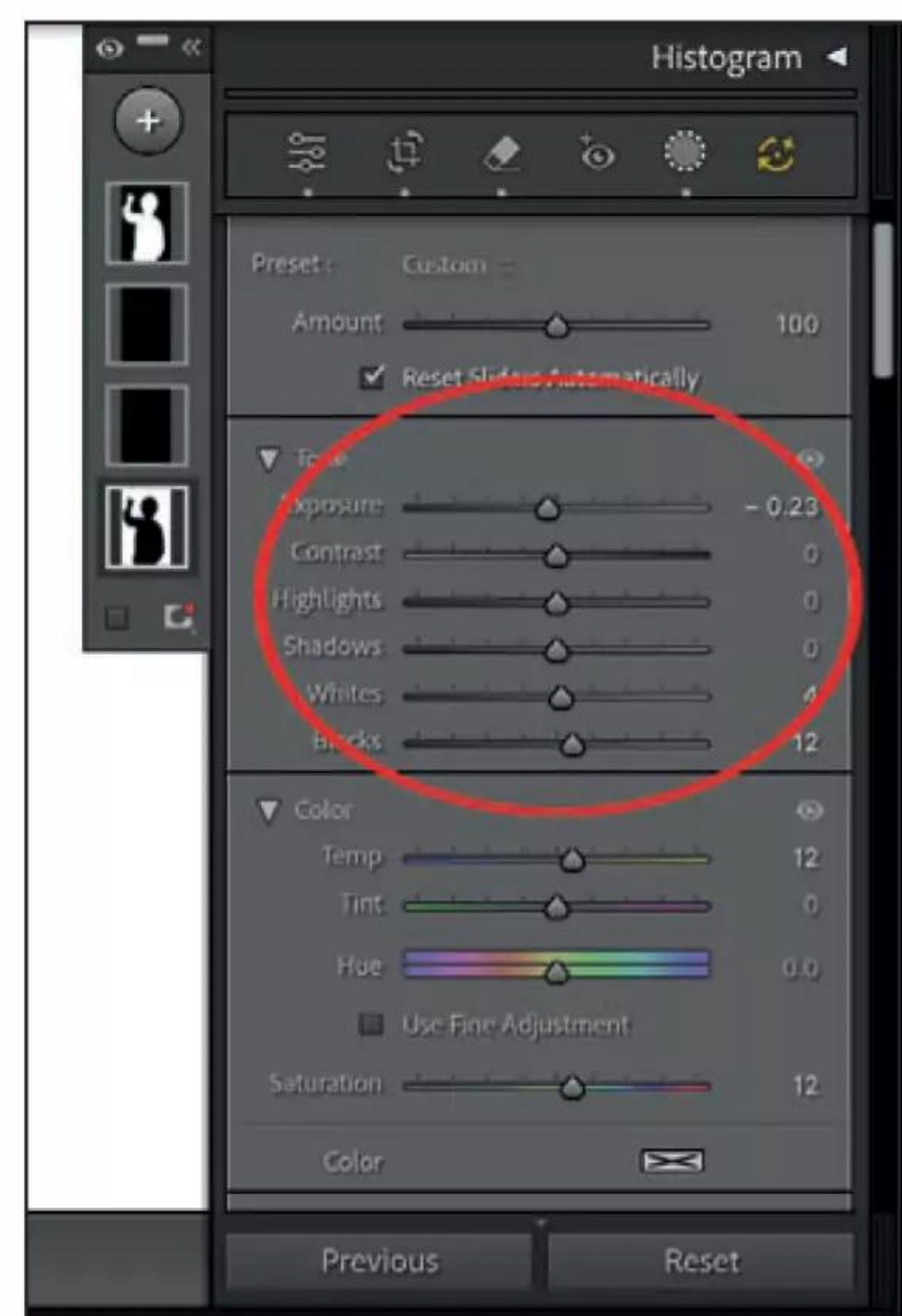
In this image, even with the Clarity reduction, the background still feels a little heavy. A very small amount of negative Dehaze (-2 to -8) helps mimic atmospheric haze and also increase depth separation.



STEP
5

BALANCE WITH LOCAL EXPOSURE OR BLACKS

Finally, you may like to fine-tune the effect by slightly lowering Exposure or lifting Blacks to prevent the background from feeling muddy. For most portraits, I also like to warm the colour temperature just a little to add a dash of colour to my subjects' skin and lift the feel of the image, which I've done here too. Toggle the mask on and off to see your results, while also double checking the subject remains the clear focal point, and you're done.



HOW TO EDIT VIDEO TO MUSIC

BY TIM ROBINSON

Editing to music is an easy way to make your videos feel polished and professional.

First, you're going to need to start by selecting the right track. What kind of mood or style matches your footage? For a wedding, you may choose something that's emotional or cinematic. But for fast paced action or sports, something upbeat might be more appropriate.

Once you've selected your track, import it into your editing program and add it to a timeline. Then, add a marker to each beat of the music. This will give you a great starting point for your edit. Add your footage, using the markers as key points for your cuts, camera movements and transitions. This will create a sense that the footage belongs to the soundtrack.

You don't always need to cut on every beat but use these markers as a guide. Listen closely to the dynamics of the music and edit to the pace and emotion of the track. If a section is soft or slow, cut less frequently, and as the music intensifies you can cut at a faster pace.

Editing to music isn't just technical, it's emotional. So next time you're working on a video project, let the music be your guide. 🎧



RECOMMENDED EDITING SOFTWARE

- Premiere Pro (Mac and PC - Paid subscription only)
- DaVinci Resolve (Mac and PC - Free and paid versions available)
- iMovie (Mac only - Free and available on iOS)

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REVIEW: INSTA 360 X4

INSTA 360 X4

The recently released Insta360 X4 Air 8K 360 camera is billed as a beginner-friendly, lightweight option at a budget price. Steve Thomas takes a look.



Down under, the Insta360 X4 is priced at around \$525 for the standard bundle, while the Insta360 X5 ranges from approximately \$790 to \$930 depending on the retailer and bundle.

So while the X4 could be seen as a stripped-down version of its bigger, pricier sibling, the X5, it may have more power and value than is initially suggested - let's take a look.

THE TECH

Weighing just 165 grams, the X4 Air shoots 8K video at 30fps, 50fps at 6K, and higher frame rates at lower resolutions. It captures 29MP 360° stills and offers time-lapse and motion-lapse modes. It features twin 6.4mm f/1.95 lenses, a 1/1.8-inch sensor, a single processor, a 2.5-inch touchscreen, a removable battery, and microSD storage.

The 46×114×37 mm rugged plastic and polycarbonate body has one front function button, two side buttons, and a standard 1/4-inch screw mount.

The camera is waterproof to 15 metres and comes in black or white.

IN USE

As a longtime Insta360 user and non-technical stills photographer, I found this camera very easy to use. Auto modes are much improved compared with older models, and even a manual user like me found switching between modes in run-and-gun situations straightforward.

Editing through the mobile and desktop apps is simple and makes creating 360 content enjoyable even for beginners.

IMAGE QUALITY

Video quality is strong, provided you learn how to use the camera effectively. Low light is its only real weakness com-



pared with the X5. Active HDR performs well in bright and contrasty scenes.

Stills are solid at 29MP with file sizes around 7 to 11 MB. They are smaller than the X5's 72MB files but sufficient for most non-commercial uses. HDR mode works well in some situations, though it can look over-processed.

AE bracketing allows for more controlled editing later. PureShot helps with low-light stills but very dark or moving scenes remain challenging.

With a little practice, results are impressive, especially compared with older models. Reframed videos are comparable with many newer action cameras.

A single 170-degree POV lens mode provides full 4K output and 2.7K vertical output, which action camera users will appreciate.

While it does not match the X5, the performance at this price is remarkable. Low-light performance remains its main limitation, but even then the results are usable.

THE WRAP-UP

The X4 Air is a lightweight, affordable, and user-friendly 360 camera.

Coupled with Insta360's mobile and desktop apps, it offers great value and ease of use. Low-light shooting is its relative weakness, but even then it performs better than some modern action cameras.

For most photographers, it is a versatile and handy tool. However, those seeking higher-quality virtual tours or regularly shooting in low light may find the X5 worth the extra investment. 🌟

RESULTS

BUILD QUALITY ★ ★ ★ ★

Solid, well-sealed, with easily replaceable lenses.

IMAGE QUALITY ★ ★ ★ ★

Excellent in good lighting but slightly behind the X5 in low light.

VALUE FOR MONEY

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Excellent bang for the buck, especially with its replaceable lenses.



REVIEW: VILTROX 14MM F/4 AIR (SONY E-MOUNT)



14mm is a fun focal length for landscapes as it allows you to make foreground subjects feel big in your frame. Sony A7 IV, Viltrox 14mm F4.0 FE lens. 1/30s @ f11, ISO 200.

VILTROX 14MM F/4 AIR

Lens manufacturer Viltrox has impressed us with its low-cost primes, and after reviewing its \$300 50mm f/2.0, we were keen to test something wider.



Viltrox pitches the 14mm f/4 Air as an ultra-wide prime suited to landscapes, travel, and architecture. It's available in Nikon Z and Sony E-mount, as tested here.

It enters a competitive 14mm market, though. For Sony, at the premium end there's the Sony FE 14mm f/1.8 GM and Sigma 14mm f/1.4 Art—large, fast, and priced well above \$1,500. More affordable options like the Samyang AF and MF 14mm f/2.8 and TTArtisan 14mm f/2.8 also offer faster apertures than the Viltrox. For Nikon, at the premium end there's the pricey Sigma 14mm f/1.4 Art, and the budget-friendly Laowa 14mm f/4 Zero-D and Pergear 14mm f/2.8 for around \$360.

At just \$230 then, the 14mm f/4 Air sits alone in the true budget category.

BUILD QUALITY

The lens is compact and very lightweight, making it easy to carry on long shoots or slip into a jacket pocket. The largely plastic construction feels basic, and the focus ring has a rather lifeless feel, but the stripped-back design does everything you need. Unfortunately there's no weather sealing though, so it's not the best for wet or dusty conditions.

IMAGE QUALITY

The 14mm f/4 Air delivers sharp centre performance wide open, with strong corner sharpness by f/5.6 and excellent results through f/11. Chromatic aberration and distortion are well controlled, and tonal rendering pairs nicely with Sony's sensors. Vignetting is visible at f/4 but improves

when stopped down. Flare resistance is its biggest weakness compared to more expensive lenses, but expected at this price. The f/4 aperture also limits low-light versatility; it can handle astro in a pinch, but faster glass is probably what you want for this kind of work.

AUTOFOCUS

The STM motor is quiet and generally fast, and it supports Sony's eye and face detection. Low-light performance is less reliable, where it may hunt a little.

THE WRAP-UP

The Viltrox 14mm f/4 Air is a practical, highly portable ultra-wide prime that punches above its weight. It's a great option for landscapes, interiors, and general wide-angle shooting if you don't need weather sealing or strong low-light capability. And for just \$230, it's also excellent value and another example of Viltrox shaking up the budget lens market. 🌟

RESULTS

BUILD ★ ★ ★ ★

Plasticky – but functional.

IMAGE QUALITY ★ ★ ★ ★

Very good. Some softness on the edges, but not much.

AUTOFOCUS ★ ★ ★ ★

Solid, although does hunt a little in low light.

VALUE ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Hard to beat at just \$230.

CHASING RAINBOWS

One of Australia's most iconic birds, the rainbow bee-eater is a stunning photography subject.



WITH TRUNG NGUYEN

I took up photography in 2011, but it was not until I retired in 2016 that I had the time to fully pursue my love of bird photography.

This type of photography allows me to immerse myself in nature, which I find very calming. Watching and observing birds in their natural environment without interfering also helps me focus and be present in the moment.

There is incredible variety within each species, from different colours to unique behaviours, and capturing each one can be magical. Bird photography can be challenging, as most birds are agile and fast. I have had to learn the right camera settings and adjust them for each situation, which has significantly improved my skills. It requires finding the perfect location, exercising patience, and having a bit of luck to capture the perfect shot.

The Rainbow Bee-eater is one of my favourite birds to photograph. Its vibrant plumage of greens, blues, golds and black and its precise flying and swooping to catch insects in mid-air make it a stunning subject.

My image of a Rainbow Bee-eater feeding on a butterfly was taken at Jerrys Plains in the Hunter Valley, about a two-hour drive from my home on the Central Coast. Jerrys Plains is well known among birdwatchers and pho-

tographers for its abundant birdlife and has become a favourite spot of mine. There are several good areas for spotting birds, but I especially like a large open field near the Hunter River. Dead trees along the river serve as perches for Rainbow Bee-eaters as they scan for prey. I can usually locate them by their distinctive birdcall, which sounds like a cricket, allowing me to focus my camera without disturbing them.

It took at least five visits to capture this image. Rainbow Bee-eaters eat hundreds of insects a day, so it is possible to photograph them feeding at almost any time. I find the best time is in the morning, between 8:30 and 11:00, when they are most active.

After observing this bird for over an hour, I noticed it tended to return to the same branch after each flight. I set my camera to multi-shot burst mode, anticipating that the bird would bring its prey back to the branch to stun it before eating. At the time, I could not even see what insect it was carrying, as I was too far away, but sometimes a photographer's instincts kick in, and I was lucky enough to capture this moment.

**NIKON Z8, NIKON Z 800MM F6.3 LENS. 1/4000S
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FINDING IMAGES

Great photographs are not always planned, as Brian Rope explains.



WITH BRIAN ROPE



Sometimes we find ourselves with a few minutes on our hands. For me, that often happens when I drive a family member to an appointment which will take

just 5-10 minutes or, if I'm fortunate, a bit longer. I could just sit in my car – reading, listening to a podcast, looking at social media posts on my phone, or dozing.

But I prefer to go for a walk, even if it's only for ten minutes, especially if I am somewhere unfamiliar, and see what images I might find close by in the limited available time.

I've long been an advocate for looking everywhere around and about us when we are photographing our surroundings. What is directly in front of us, what is above, below, beside us? Even what's behind us – did we miss something or will something we've just passed look more interesting from the other side?

There is always something worth photographing. If we don't properly look, we might fail to appreciate something which would have made a very special image.

About three weeks ago, I dropped my wife at the gym, and while she went in for her class, I set off to walk round the block. I was surprised to find a park just around the corner with a small pond surrounded by walking paths, and with a footbridge going over the water in one spot.

A fair number of shrubs and trees on the pond edges and overhanging the water caught my eye and I pulled out my phone camera to grab a few images of shadows and reflections in the surface of the pond water.

In some areas the light was such that there was little colour to be seen anywhere in my viewfinder. When I later looked at the captured images on my computer back at home, I was tempted to convert many shots with minimal colour to black and white, but after printing one in colour and in black and white, I decided that the small areas of colour added something special. The adjudicator at our local club also thought so and chose my print of it as Print of the Night in the set subject of H2O.

So next time you have some spare moments, go for a wander – you never know what you might see. 🌿

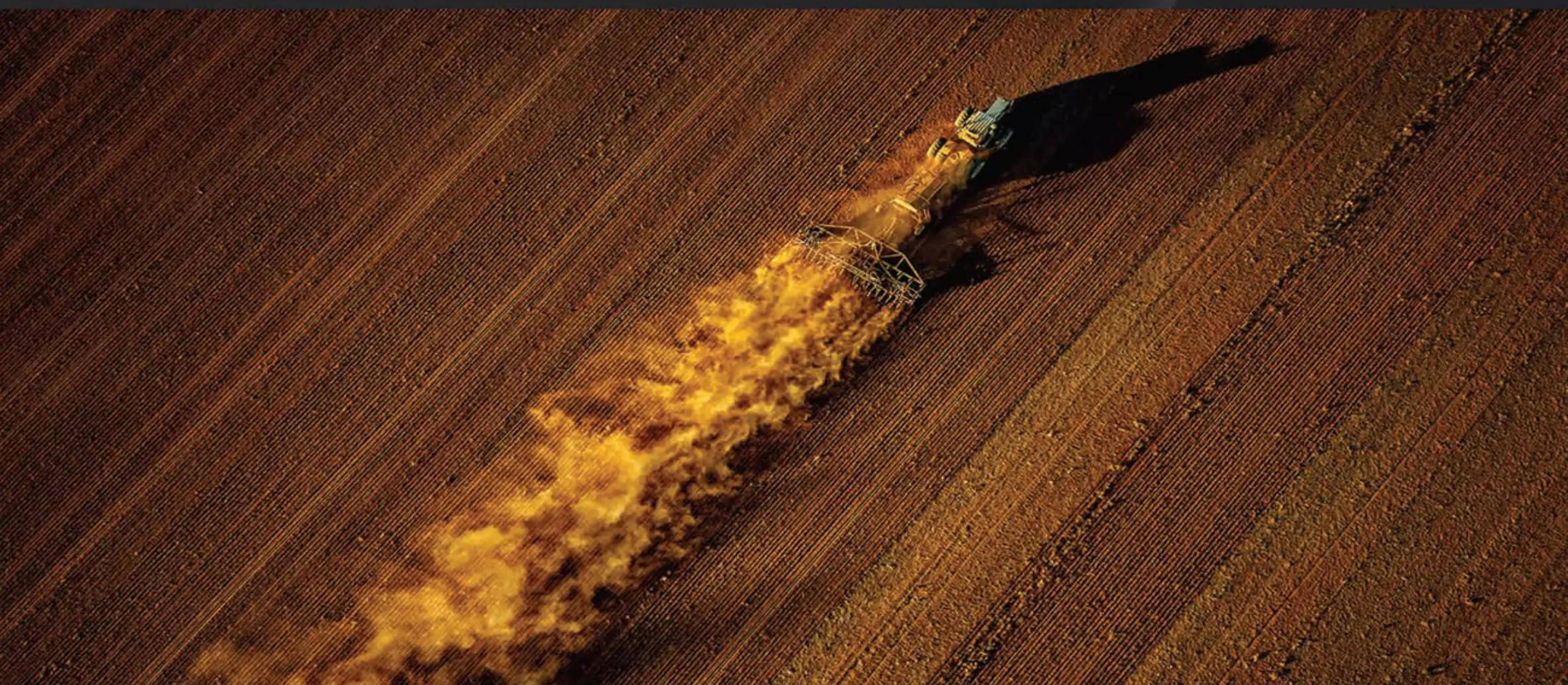


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IMAGE DOCTOR

IMAGE DOCTOR

Images need a pick-me-up?
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BY ANTHONY MCKEE





THIS MONTH'S WINNER

A MINOR CORRECTION

"This image was taken on Aegina island in Greece. Cats are synonymous with Greece, and the blue and white colours of the Greek flag are representative of the sun and the Mediterranean. This photo was taken using portrait mode on my iPhone 15 so I could slightly blur the background".

ANTHONY'S TIP: Hi Peter, if you didn't mention that this photo was made using an iPhone, I don't think most people would have ever guessed. The "portrait" mode does do a great job of softening a background. The exposure is also very good. The one thing that I would have changed with this image though, is the geometry. As you look at the photo you notice that while the left side of the door is upright, the right side is tilting outwards, and because the verticals are not parallel the image is a bit unsettling. There are two tricks to resolving this problem; one is to hold the camera a little lower and tilt it upwards, square with the door as you make the photo. Another option though, is to open the photo in your iPhone's Photos app, go to the crop tool and use the perspective adjustment tools to straighten the photo. Otherwise, great effort.

TITLE: Aegina Idyll
PHOTOGRAPHER: Peter Thompson
DETAILS: Apple iPhone 15. 1/2200s @ f1.8, ISO 64.



COULD I CROP DIFFERENTLY?

"I made this photo while passing through Stuart's Point (NSW) on a long road trip from Noosa to Melbourne. This pelican was the only local I could find at 8.30am; it had a partner out of shot and it was hoping for a free fish but I was just passing through. I have a sequence of shots as they came toward me, this one jumping onto the ramp having a quick preen then deciding I was not worth waiting for so off he went, still hungry. I particularly liked this exit shot with some motion blur in the wings and a nice sharp eye as he bid me farewell. Would love your opinion on possible cropping or does it elude to a story that would suit a sequence of photos?"

ANTHONY'S TIP: Hi David, I enjoy photographing pelicans too, and like you, I like the challenge of capturing extra narrative by including more birds in the image. Of course, this doesn't always work and so we have to make do with what we have. About the only thing I would do to this image is crop it to 9:16 ratio and bring in the right of the picture by about 15-percent. Otherwise, good work.

TITLE: Pelican at Stuarts Point
PHOTOGRAPHER: David Brown
DETAILS: Canon R8, Canon 24-105 F4 L lens @ 105mm. 1/500s @ f8, ISO 1000.



LOOK TO THE LIGHT

“The Gold Coast Photographic Society arranged a photoshoot with local multicultural communities to photograph their members in their national costumes. This Maltese woman’s outfit reminded me of “Little Red Riding Hood” so I asked her to pose accordingly. I have no images of a wolf so a lion seemed scary enough. The final image is a composite of this Maltese woman photographed on the Gold Coast, a forest from Tasmania and a lion photographed in Africa”.

ANTHONY’S TIP: Hi Ray, advertising photographers have been making composite images together for decades, and always, the biggest challenge is making the final image look convincing. As I look at your photo I can see that the

light on the woman’s face is coming in from the right, but the light on the trees is coming from the left! The simple solution here would have been to flop the landscape image horizontally to bring the light on the trees and the woman into harmony. Next, I would add an “Exposure/Contrast” adjustment layer and then selectively add shadow (darken) the left side of the lion and the left of the woman’s dress. Do this and things will start to appear more realistic. Keep working on this technique; practice makes perfect!

TITLE: I Swear I Heard Something

PHOTOGRAPHER: Ray Richards

DETAILS: Pentax KP, Sigma 18-300 lens @ 43mm. 1/125s @ f4.5, ISO unknown.

COULD YOU SLOW DOWN, PLEASE?

“Recently I had the opportunity to spend a couple of days at the V8 Supercars Townsville 500. I hadn’t spent much time using the Canon R6, so took it on the second day to get used to it and practice my panning techniques. Understandably, I took hundreds of photos over that time, but after reviewing with a critical eye, I think this was the pick of the bunch.”

ANTHONY’S TIP: Hi Jason, Panning is definitely a useful technique, particularly when you have a four-metre fence between you and the action. Technically you have done everything right to capture this image by dropping the ISO closing down the aperture to achieve a slow shutter speed (1/100s in this instance). Personally though, I would put on a polariser or a Neutral Density (ND) filter on my lens to start getting the shutter speed even slower. Some sports photographers in this situation will use filters to get the shutter speed down to 1/15th or even a 1/4s. As the shutter speeds get slower, another trick is to move back from the



fence and use a longer focal length so that you get less rotational distortion in the picture. Otherwise, great effort.

TITLE: Thomas Randle driving in the Townsville 500

PHOTOGRAPHER: Jason Herrmann

DETAILS: Canon EOS R6 II, RF70-200mm F4 L IS USM lens @ 70mm. 1/100s @ f11, ISO 100.

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EYE ON THE DETAILS

“I was returning to North Haven from South West Rocks but ended up on the wrong road and passed under the bridge instead of over it. The view was impressive and I moved until I could get the best shot. It was quite a trip to regain The Pacific Highway but well worth it. It is claimed to be the second longest bridge in The Southern Hemisphere.”

ANTHONY’S TIP: Sweeping structures and repeating elements always make for great photographs. First off, well done on keeping the architecture accurate; the verticals are well aligned and this makes a structure look stronger. The one thing that I would do though, is to crop the image so that we are not seeing so much of that

dirt in the foreground, and (if it is still available in the original file) lets you see more of the blue sky above the cloud. And now to the details; I get the feeling you tried to erase a truck or some other vehicle near the centre of the bridge, and in doing so you have also smudged out some of the structure. Maybe just repair that bit of structure too. The secret to being a great photographer is keeping an eye on the details!

TITLE: Long Bridge
PHOTOGRAPHER: Rob Taylor
DETAILS: Canon EOS 6D II, EF24-105mm f/4L IS II USM lens @ 85mm.
1/800s @ f16, ISO 800.



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