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Digital Camera World

The world's favorite
photography magazine

Issue 302 January 2026

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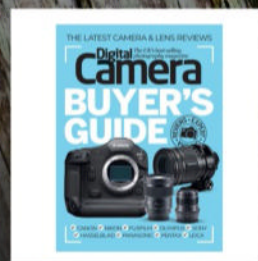


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Welcome

Get the new photo year off to the best possible start with 26 fun and creative ideas – turn to our cover feature (page 52). There are more inspiring projects in Photo Active (p18), and we visit Waterfall Country in Wales for this month's Apprentice reader challenge (p8). Camera Clinic (p72) explains how to get the most from ISO settings, and Hotshots (p44) reveals what impressed the judges of the world's richest photo competition. January's kit reviews include the Fujifilm X-E5 (p106), the Lumix S1 IIE (p110) and Affinity (p116). Season's greetings to all our readers – there's still time to buy a fabulous photo gift (p100) or photo book (p98)! Enjoy the issue.

Niall

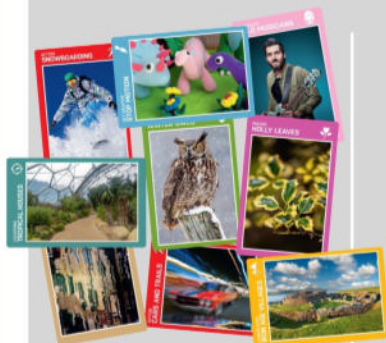
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Nine all-new photo tips cards

Our latest selection of tips cards gives wallet-sized advice on how to take better photos on location



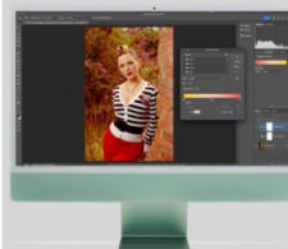
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As seen in this month's tutorials, give your photos a new look in just a few clicks with these bonus software extras



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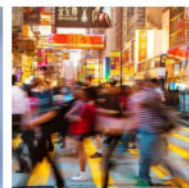
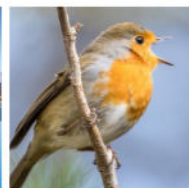
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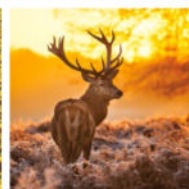
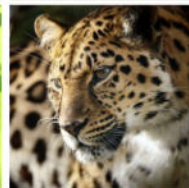
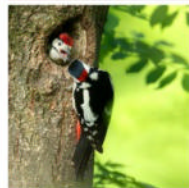
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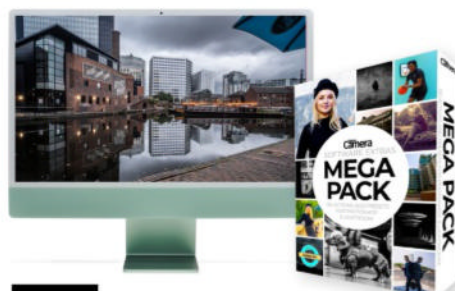


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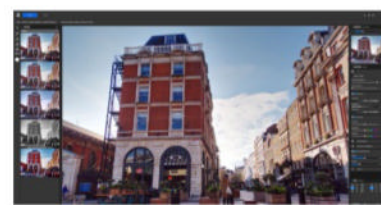
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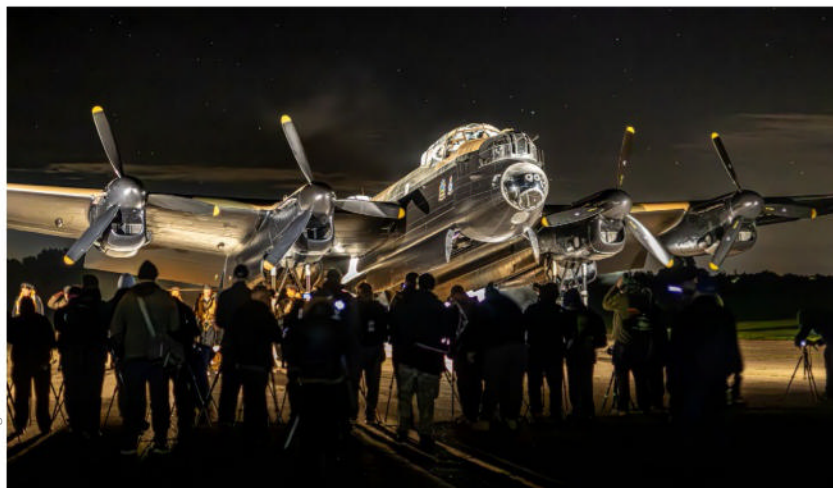
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This month's contributors

Will Cheung



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Camera Clinic _ In the first part of a mini-series about getting more creative with your photography, Will Cheung explains how to explore new possibilities by learning how to take advantage of ISO, the sensitivity of your image sensor

Mike Taylor



Mike Taylor
Photographer

The Street Photography category winner in the world's biggest photo competition has just published an e-book about how to succeed as a photographer. Turn to **page 118**



Will Cheung
Photographer and writer

A fellow of the Royal Photographic Society and the former editor of many photography titles, Will is the man behind Camera Clinic, which continues on **page 72**



Benedict Brain
Photographer

The former *DC* editor files his last monthly column in this issue, and will appear as a rotating columnist next year. He praises the value of looking closer to home on **page 41**



John Raftery
Photographer

An enthusiast photographer who shoots several different genres, John reveals how he captured a distinctive photo of reflections while travelling in France. **Page 36**



Jon Devo
Photographer & writer

Our resident tech columnist files his last monthly missive this issue – *Scanning Ahead* will return on rotation next year. Read Jon's review of 2025 on **page 104**



Dan Mold
Photographer & writer

The deputy editor of our former sister title, *Photo Plus*, Dan is also an image editing expert and has created this month's Mega Pack of software extras. **Page 93**

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Photo Active _ 10 things to shoot and create this month – learn how to make a stop-motion animation, discover what you can photograph in a botanical hot house and read our five steps for capturing the wonder of owls in winter

Wendy Evans



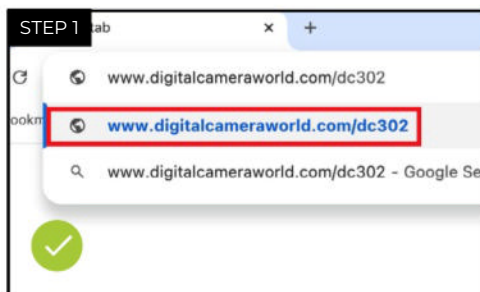
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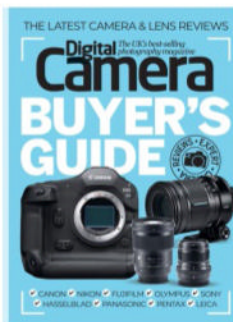
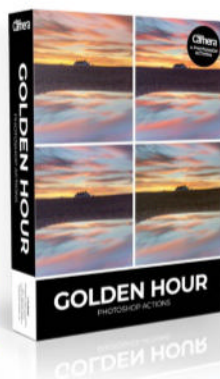
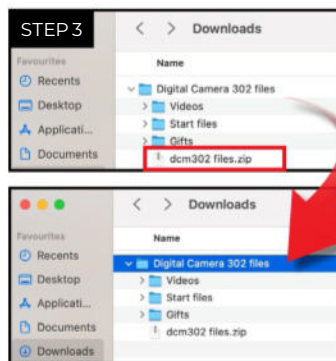
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Go with the flow

One reader, one pro... a keen outdoor photographer chases waterfalls in the company of **Jeremy Flint**

W

elcome to *Digital Camera Apprentice*, where we pair a reader with a professional photographer for a day of shooting together. The concept is simple: the pro acts as a photographic mentor, sharing their expert insights to help the reader improve their favoured genre of photography – it's like having a one-to-one workshop, but a wider audience gets to see what happens. This month, we're in Wales, at Waterfall Country in the Bannau Brycheiniog (Brecon Beacons) National Park, where Canon pro Jeremy Flint will be mentoring a keen reader looking to improve their photography of moving water. Liam Matthews has travelled up from Swansea →

The Pro

Name: Jeremy Flint

Camera: Canon EOS R5

Based in Oxford, England, Jeremy Flint gave up his previous career as an accountant to become a pro travel photographer nine years ago. He has since received various prestigious awards, including one from *National Geographic Traveller*, and has been a six-time finalist in the Travel Photographer of the Year contest.

Insta: @jeremyflintphotography

The Apprentice

Name: Liam Matthews

Camera: Canon EOS 70D

Based in south Wales, Liam is a keen enthusiast who enjoys outdoor and aviation photography. Before joining us in Waterfall Country, he had recently been shooting at the Royal International Air Tattoo at RAF Fairford and was keen to develop his skills at capturing the wonder of waterfalls.

Insta: @liam_matthews_photography

Words and location photos: Niall Hampton

Waterfall photos 101

Things to bear in mind when capturing water in motion



1 Water protection

Working close to water, there's always going to be a risk of spray contacting the front element of the lens. So take a microfibre cloth with you to wipe away any water from the waterfall, but take care to avoid creating streaks.



2 Sturdy tripod

Liam would be the first to admit that his tripod wasn't the most robust on the market, but he needed to travel light. Banish any likelihood of wobble by using a tripod that is substantial enough to offer a rock-solid shooting platform.



3 Shoot raw files

Bring out the best in your captures by shooting raw. There's more latitude for making adjustments at the editing stage afterwards and the sedate pace of waterfall photography means you're unlikely to fill your memory card.



Jeremy and Liam started to the left of Sgwd Clun-Gwyn, so they could shoot it from the side.

to join us today and, as a fellow Canon shooter, speaks the same camera language as Jeremy. And we can thank our pro for bringing us here – the Four Falls Trail is one of Jeremy's favourite locations in the UK for waterfall photography and allows visitors to enjoy the breathtaking sights and soothing sounds of cascading water.

Having said that, though, anyone tackling the Four Falls Trail needs to be in pretty good physical shape: it's a five-mile round trip and, as well as long walks, it involves some deep descents and formidable climbs back up. And visiting during peak school holiday season in August, we'll have something else to contend with – lots of other people will be making the trip here, so there's a high risk of Jeremy and Liam's captures being 'photobombed'.

Agreeable weather

Dedicated to his craft, Jeremy travelled here the night before and has already scoped out what he would like to shoot with Liam today. Meeting at a civilised 9am in the small car park closest to the Sgwd Clun-Gwyn waterfall, we make our introductions and Jeremy goes through the plan with Liam. As none of us are local to the area, shooting all four waterfalls before having to leave for home might not be possible, but our pro and apprentice will try to do as many as they can in the time available.

The weather is agreeable – it's warm and sunny spells are forecast – and crucially, some rain has fallen over the preceding days, so there should be a decent amount of water flowing down the falls. While Jeremy shoots on a pro-grade full-frame mirrorless with



For the first shot, Jeremy used a 0.6 neutral density filter, with a polariser to cut reflections.



Our pro's kit Canon EOS R5

Released in 2020, the R5 has a 45MP sensor and was Canon's first full-frame mirrorless to feature in-body image stabilisation. Other headline features include subject-detect autofocus and fast burst shooting, plus many advanced features designed to appeal to pro photographers. Jeremy packed some native Canon RF glass for our day in Waterfall Country, most notably the RF 15-35mm F4 IS USM and RF 24-70mm F2.8L IS USM, plus a Canon 70-200mm as a backup optic. His 0.6 ND graduated filter was also useful for holding back the sky in his compositions. He also brought a DJI Mini 4 Pro camera drone.

"I love the sound of water, standing in awe of the majesty of the waterfalls"

RIGHT: 'SGWD Y PANNWR'

THE APPRENTICE: "I was drawn to the detail and colour, so I used a shallow depth of field to create a softer, more dreamy look around the edges."

THE PRO: "Liam has captured this image well by shooting in portrait format, framing the falls with the ledge and getting in close to the waterfalls."

SUPER
SHOT #1

Camera:	Canon EOS 70D
Lens:	Canon EF-S 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6 IS II
Exposure:	0.3 sec at f/22, ISO 100

SUPER SHOT #2



Camera:	Canon EOS 70D
Lens:	Canon EF-S 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6 IS II
Exposure:	0.6 sec at f/22, ISO 100

Camera skills Use the LCD

Some photographers prefer to shoot through a viewfinder, as they feel more involved in capturing the image, but using an articulating rear screen means you won't have to crouch over the camera – and it's the only way to compose if you're shooting from low to the ground. Liam liked to use the touch shutter function on his rear screen, in conjunction with the two-second self-timer option, to reduce the likelihood of camera shake.



ABOVE: 'SGWD CLUN-GWYN'

THE APPRENTICE: "I planned this shot to have a strong sense of depth, lining it up so the viewer's eye would follow the water from top to bottom."

THE PRO: "Liam has applied a slow shutter speed to capture the motion of the water beautifully. The fallen branches lead your eye around the waterfall."

various lenses, Liam's setup is all about efficiency and portability. He's using a Canon EOS 70D, a 20.2MP APS-C DSLR, with its kit lens – the EF-S 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6 IS II, equivalent to 29-88mm in full-frame terms. He has also brought a Canon EF 70-300mm f/4-5.6 IS USM telephoto, equivalent to 112-480mm on his 70D, for pulling out detail in the waterfalls, plus a 50mm prime, neutral density filters and a polariser.



Camera skills **Filter choice**

Jeremy attached a 0.6 ND (neutral density) filter to reduce the amount of light entering the camera, in turn enabling the longer shutter speeds required for waterfall photography. He used this in conjunction with a polariser to reduce reflections from the pools of water at the bottom of the waterfalls. When including sky in a waterfall photograph, there's a risk of the highlights blowing out – especially if the sky is an expanse of cloudy white – so the solution for this is to fit a graduated ND filter to the lens. This is a glass filter with clear glass at one end and grey glass at the other, allowing the light and dark areas in the scene to be balanced.

Walking along the path to Sgwd Clun-Gwyn, Jeremy and Liam's first waterfall, our lungs fill with the air of these beautiful surroundings – the ideal balm for having spent hours confined to a car. As we get our first view of the waterfall, I can see that Jeremy is really buzzing about what lies ahead.

"I love the sound of water, being out in nature and just standing in awe of the majesty of the waterfalls," he says. We descend to the bottom of the fall by deviating from the walking route, clambering down some slippery rocks, going slowly because of our backpacks. Once we get to the flat rocks below, Jeremy and Liam start setting up their cameras on the left side of the waterfall.

A sturdy support

Tripods are essential for shooting long exposures, but Liam's doesn't look as sturdy as Jeremy's. Shooting at the widest end of his lens, with a circular polariser mounted to control glare and reflections, Liam's initial settings include Aperture Priority mode, for precise control of depth of field, with an aperture of f/22 to capture as much front-to-back sharpness as possible. So he can expose for the highlights in the scene (the white water), he's using Centre-weighted metering and the Daylight white balance preset. Liam



Pausing to shoot the upper section of Sgwd Clun-Gwyn, Liam had to shoot from the ground as his tripod wouldn't go as low down as Jeremy's.

prefers composing his shots on the rear LCD screen of his camera, rather than through the viewfinder, and takes his pictures using the 'touch control' feature.

The beauty of Sgwd Clun-Gwyn is that it is quite compact – tall rather than wide, it's ideal for capturing in portrait orientation. Jeremy gets straight into mentoring mode, giving Liam some useful insights and suggestions for technique tweaks. Catching up with him after setting up for another view, I ask Liam what Jeremy has been saying.

Technique assessment

Follow these tips for waterfall shots and you won't go wrong



1 Exposure mode

Seeing as the length of the exposure is the key factor, use Shutter Priority (Tv on a Canon). This way, you'll have precise control over the length of the exposure, and you can fine-tune it easily using this semi-automatic mode.



2 Remote release

While the shutter can be fired in the conventional way, some self-timer delay will be needed. The other method of eliminating shake would be to use a remote cable release, which also makes it easy to dial in the exposure duration.



3 Shutter speeds

This choice will be dictated by the visual effect you're trying to capture and the filter you're using. For a sheer curtain of water, try at least 1 sec; for a sense of motion, use 1/30 sec and to freeze the water movement, 1/1000 sec.



Camera:	Canon EOS 70D
Lens:	Canon EF-S 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6 IS II
Exposure:	1/10 sec at f/9, ISO 100

SUPER
SHOT #3



With his considerable experience of this genre, Jeremy offered constant composition tips to Liam during the shoot, allowing Liam to reassess his previous approach to capturing waterfalls.



"He's showing me how to get different shots of the waterfalls by trying out different settings," he replies. "I haven't photographed waterfalls much before today, and when I did, it was trial and error. Jeremy is showing me a few practical tips – like adjusting my viewpoint, choosing the right shutter speed and paying attention to foreground details – rather than just pointing and shooting."

With this fall captured from a couple of angles, it's time to move on. Upper Sgwd Clun-Gwyn is a short walk away, once we manage to negotiate the slippery rocks back up – fortunately, we're all up to the task and there are no slips or breakages. This waterfall doesn't have a deep vertical drop and isn't as spectacular as the previous one, but it allows Jeremy and Liam to shoot from closer to the ground. Jeremy's tripod can go ultra-low,

almost down to ground level; he then sets the ball head at a 45° angle to give himself a level shooting platform. Liam's tripod can't match this functionality, so he pops his camera on the rocks, levels it as best he can, then composes and captures in Live View.

Visiting time

Our next stop will be Sgwd Isaf Clun-Gwyn, around 15 mins away. This waterfall has a particular attraction – the curtain of water is wide and visitors can walk behind it. Jeremy has a particular spot he wants to shoot from, which again requires taking care on the approach, but we all manage to make it intact. Jeremy explains the kind of shot he's got in mind for Liam at this location, and they confer about where to set up before dialling in the required settings to Liam's camera.

Having gathered several long exposures of the scene, we suddenly have company. A stream of visitors has turned up to see one of the most photogenic waterfalls on the Four Falls Trail – one large family takes it in turns to grab selfies and a group of walkers experience standing behind the wall of water.

While we're waiting for the crowds to clear, I ask Jeremy how Liam is getting on. ➡

LEFT: 'SGWD CLUN-GWYN'

THE APPRENTICE: "I wanted a soft, silky look in the water, so I used a long shutter speed and moved the camera to give the falls more height in the frame."

THE PRO: "Changing angles and shooting to the side, Liam has composed this shot well, framing the falls with the branches and moss-covered ledges."

Jeremy Flint



Jeremy Flint



Expert insight Incorporate extra elements

Jeremy is a great believer in incorporating some of the landscape around the waterfall in his photographs to add some extra context and visual detail for the viewer. This means pulling back a little and framing in the areas to the left or the right of the waterfall – it's a technique that helps capture a different perspective and makes waterfall captures more distinctive.

Pro portfolio Jeremy Flint

Jeremy Flint



Loup of Fintry

"This majestic waterfall stands near Stirling in Scotland, and is one of my favourites in the UK. Besides the harmony of the still rocks and flowing water, I love how the cloud formation mirrors the waterfall here."

Jeremy Flint



Iguazu Falls

"During a round-the-world tour in 2011, I captured this image of Iguazu Falls on the border of Brazil and Argentina. As a storm approached, I waited between showers and was rewarded with this beautiful rainbow."

Jeremy Flint



Mount Bromo

"Indonesia has always been on my bucket list of places and I got to visit Mount Bromo earlier this year. It's a spectacular location and if you time it right, you can capture the plume of smoke rising from the crater."

RIGHT: 'SGWD ISAF CLUN-GWYN'

THE APPRENTICE: "I wanted the viewer to follow the water across, not just down. A long exposure helped smooth out the water while retaining rock textures."

THE PRO: "A fantastic capture, with the smooth motion of the waterfall, foreground rocks, cascades of water and a wonderful overall composition."



Liam and Jeremy at Sgwd Isaf Clun-Gwyn, where people were walking behind the falls. Liam was already deploying his new learning to good effect.

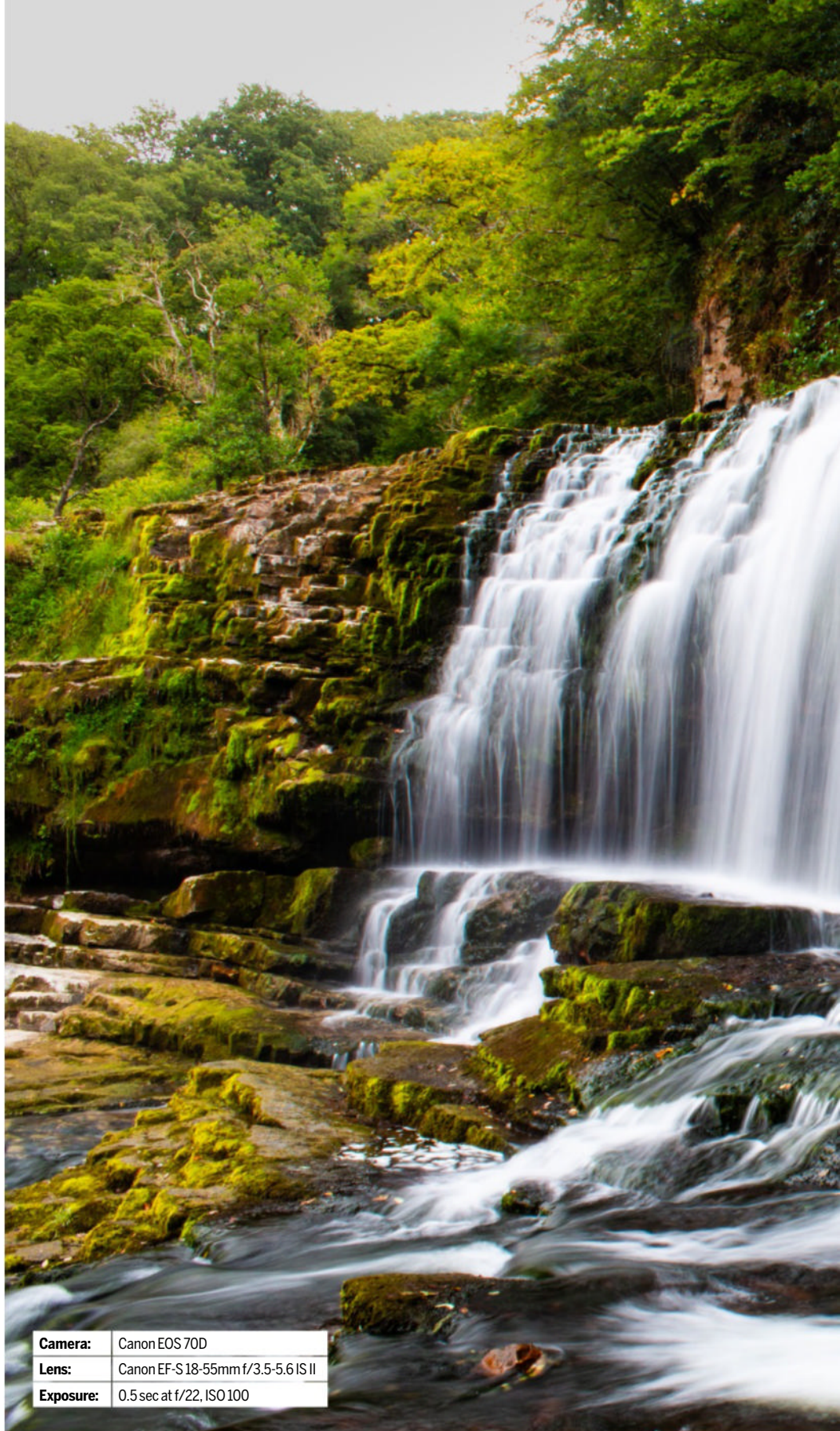
"Liam's doing very well," he replies. "From his first shot to where we are now, he's certainly improving. He's changed his compositions slightly, and is starting to think more about incorporating leading lines."

Long way down

With time running out, it looks like we'll only be able to capture three waterfalls properly, so rather than rushing the fourth, we decide to make Sgwd Yr Eira our last one. Having descended the wooden steps to the bottom of the valley, it's straight back up again – there are too many people obscuring the view of the waterfall, so we set off for Sgwd y Pannwr.

Getting as close as we can to the right-hand side of the columns of water, the views down to the pool below are worth the walk – we've definitely saved the best until last. Liam sets up his camera and starts composing for the scene, applying some of his new learnings from Jeremy. He's shooting at the widest end of his 18-55mm lens to fit everything in, with exposures around 0.3 secs at f/22, ISO 100, with a polariser attached to his lens to reduce glare and add some punch and colour.

Trying both portrait and landscape orientations, Liam is clearly embracing a style of photography that's less frantic than an air show. Soon it's time for us to fly, too, once we've tackled the long walk back to the car. ●



Liam Matthews

Camera:	Canon EOS 70D
Lens:	Canon EF-S 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6 IS II
Exposure:	0.5 sec at f/22, ISO 100



Apprentice verdict

"Jeremy helped me see each scene more clearly and understand how to make the most of the light, the angles and the movement of the water. His practical tips quickly improved my images, and I've since used his advice a lot on more recent projects."



Pro verdict

"Liam didn't have much experience of shooting waterfalls, but he was a good listener and took on board the advice I gave him. He learned how to extend shutter speeds with filters and captured some silky water effects – I think he did really well on the day."



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Photo Active

10 things you can shoot and create this month, from animated features to owls and Iron Age villages

1 | CREATIVE

Let's make a movie

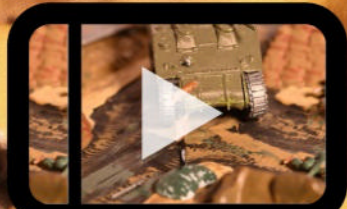
Your digital camera is ideal for creating stop-motion animation, as **Wendy Evans** explains

Pixar movies are all good and well with their slick CGI and high-quality graphics, but if you want to create your own animated enterprises, without learning how to draw or taking three years to master 3DS Max or Blender, then stop-motion is the way to go. All you need is an idea, a set, possibly some lights, maybe some sound effects and music, but definitely a digital camera.

Stop-motion works by setting your scene up, taking a photo, then moving whatever needs to move, very slightly, then taking another photo. Actual film has 25 frames for every second of action, but you won't need that many. A large 3D set with figures that have facial expressions, for example, by using posable clay figures as in *Chicken Run*, should be shot at 15fps, but for small sets with more limited movements, 10fps is fine. If it's a small set that you're shooting with a macro lens, then 5fps is also an option. Whichever option you choose, when you've finished shooting, you will need some video editing software to put it all together.

Right and below: Creating a stop-motion animation is a time-consuming project, but it's also lots of fun. It is best to plan out what the story is going to be first, and then prepare your set accordingly.





MOVIE

Download the animation

You can see how this animation worked out by downloading it with this month's giveaways. See page 92 for details.





More camera settings

Here, I pushed the ISO to 640 so that I could get a shutter speed of 1/20 sec. However, you won't need photography-level resolution, so reduce it down to the lowest file size available, as long as it's more than 1920 x 1080 for Full HD or 3840 x 2160 for 4K UHD. Don't waste memory space shooting raw format; jpegs are easily good enough quality.



Three steps to shooting a stop-animation camera movie

1 Plan it out

It's important to plan out what will happen in each scene, where you are going to focus and how long it will all take. If you're using a 3D set, like here, re-using our project from issue 288, rather than animating a 2D scene (such as moving fruit about), then you also need to work out your scale of movement. That's how far objects such as the soldiers and the tank can move in one second.

2 Light it up

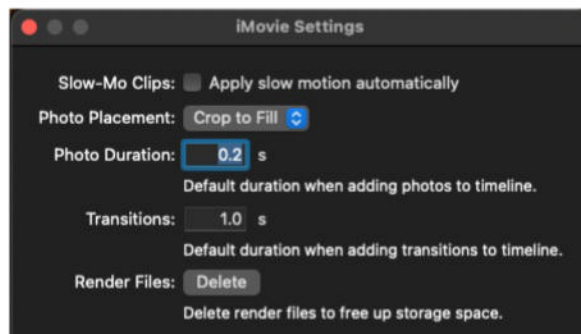
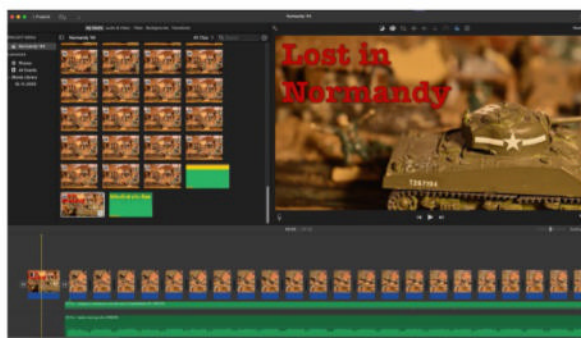
You'll need lighting, so consider where to place it. If you don't have much room, another key consideration will be ensuring that you can physically reach the set to move the elements, without knocking them or the camera. The camera must be on a tripod, and it's better to use manual focus to pick out the elements you want. Set the aperture to what you need; we used f/11 here.

3 Start capturing

Meter the scene, then switch to Manual mode and enter the aperture and shutter speed. If the shutter speed is quite low, you might need to increase the ISO. Also, either use a remote release or put the camera on a two-second timer for each shot. Take your first shot, move the pieces, then take a second shot. Break it down into each second of movement so that you are counting the shots each time.

Tips for editing the video

Two key things to remember when putting this all together in a video editing package are what your output resolution is going to be and the time that each single frame will take up. Both are customisable. The images were 4128 x 2752 (3:2), but were cropped to fit into a 1920 x 1080 resolution (3:1.68). For 10fps, each image needs to be displayed for 0.1 sec. After doing a test video, I changed this to 0.2 sec for the video from this project, which gave it a frame rate of 5fps, but slowed it down more. You can then add the titles, audio and captions.





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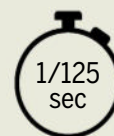
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The late afternoon sun illuminates the Broch of Gurness on Orkney. A 19mm focal length is wide enough to show the defensive ditches.

Getty

2 | LANDSCAPES



Travel back in time

Explore Iron Age villages and see what you can shoot, says Wendy Evans

The Iron Age in Britain is generally believed to have ended with the Roman invasion of 43AD, though it continued in some more remote areas. The key difference between it and the preceding Bronze Age is that farming implements and weapons became much stronger and sharper, which allowed larger settlements. Today, remnants of these settlements are scattered across the country for you to visit and photograph.

For a shot of the entire village, look to incorporate it into the landscape, showing where it was located with a view to surrounding features such as rivers for water supply and hills for defence. Use a wide-angle lens and set the aperture to f/5.6 or f/8 and focus 2-3m into the scene for the hyperfocal point and the best front-back sharpness.

Get among the individual structures, using footpaths as leading lines, and discover the sheltered dwellings or storage areas with stone roofs. If you are inside one in the dark and there is light outside, try to retain a little detail in the sky and pull the details out of the shadows in photo editing later, rather than exposing for the shadows and blowing the highlights. Highlight metering or Centre-weighted metering from the sky are both good options.

Consider your composition and lighting



Wendy Evans



Use leading lines

Use pathways to lead the eye through the image from the bottom into the remains of an underground area, placing the horizon on the top third of the image. Try a wide-angle lens for this.

Shoot from inside

Get inside to reveal the details of the habitat. Here, an aperture of f/5.6 with an 18mm focal length was used. To look the other way into the darkness, consider using a torch to help light it up.



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3 | MACRO

Go hunting for holly

Wendy Evans gets festive with a guide to photographing this spiky-leaved plant

There are about 480 species of holly, although some estimates put it as high as 600. While it's an evergreen plant, it's most often thought about in winter, particularly the varieties with red berries. Whether the type you've got your eye on has berries or not, the spiky leaves make for an interesting macro project, which is what we're tackling here.

Being on a bush or a small tree, one of the immediate problems is that of movement, so you can't use a really slow shutter speed. In dull light, even with the aperture wide open, that may mean increasing the ISO rating. Quite how wide you open the aperture is your choice, but looking at this example of *Ilex aquifolium* (known as Madam Briot), the aperture of f/3.3 didn't offer much depth of field. The front leaf is out of focus, but the key leaves in the middle are in focus. The upside of the wide aperture is that the leaves on the second rank are pleasingly out of focus, but still discernible, whereas the ones at the back of the photo are just blurred colours. If you want more depth at the front, f/5.6 or f/8 would be better.

The key, besides the shutter speed (1/100 sec here), is composition. The focus is on the leaves at the front; the rest are background decoration.



Wendy Evans

How to compose the shot

If you consider where the lines run, the bottom third horizontal line goes right through the middle of the key grouping, with the bottom right intersection of horizontal and vertical being one of the key points. The second layer of leaves is also positioned along the top third horizontal line. There's also sufficient space at the bottom of the image for the branch so that it doesn't look cramped.



Pick a macro or telephoto lens

We used a 105mm macro lens here; however, an 85mm lens would have revealed slightly more of the scene without physically moving closer. You could also use a telephoto lens, as some will give you a 1:3 reproduction ratio – if you have a large sensor (48MP, say) and then crop into it, you can get a similar result. Also, crop-sensor cameras have a narrower field of view so allow you to get closer.



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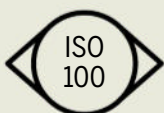
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4 | PORTRAITS

Going solo with musicians

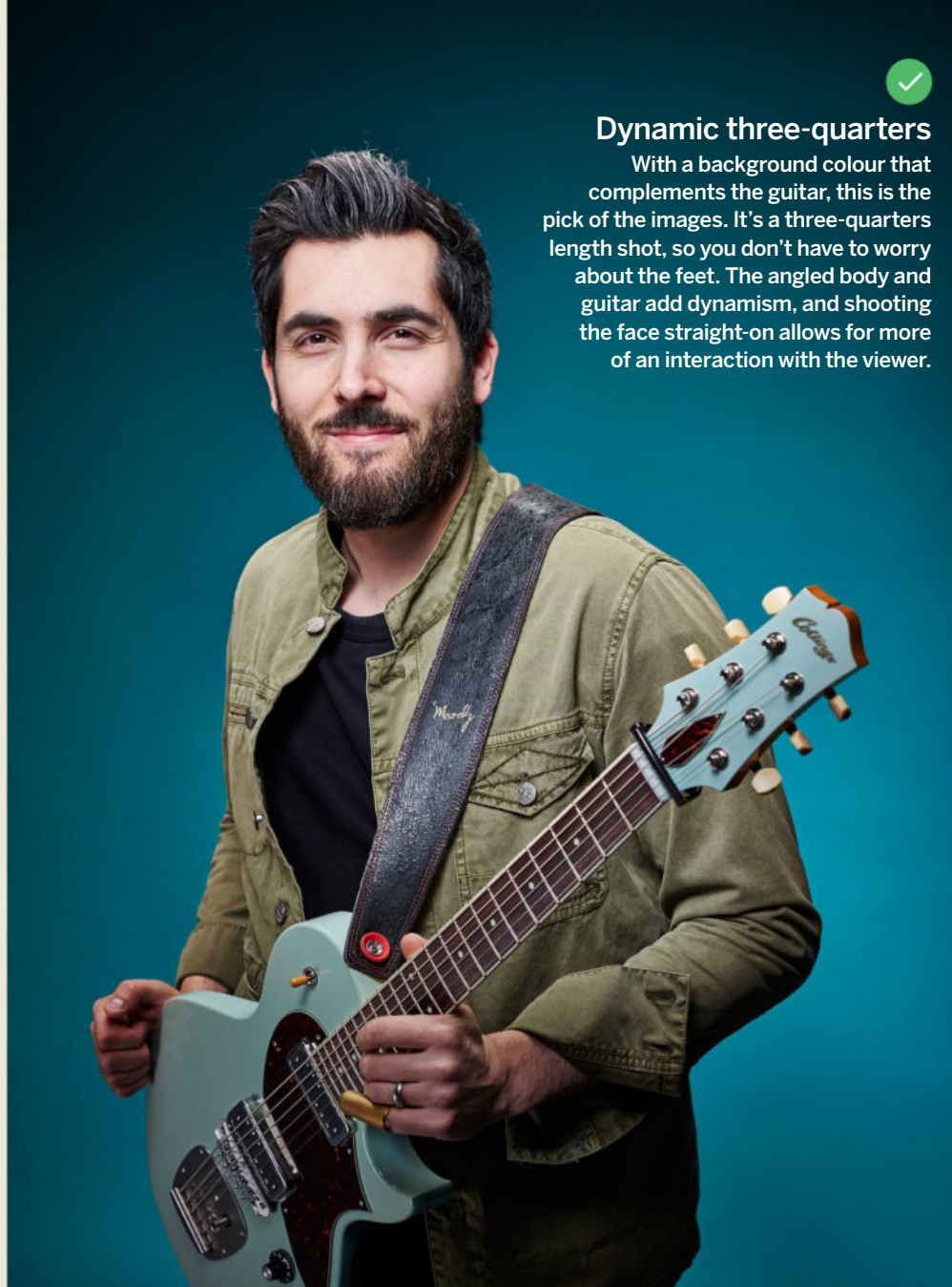
How to shoot a perfect portrait with a guitar hero

Unlike photographing a live band, shooting musicians who aren't playing becomes a portrait session with an added musical instrument. The good thing is that this gives people who aren't used to posing something to do with their hands. We're using guitar players here, but it applies to any hand-held musical instrument. So let's have a look at four examples of how to pose and shoot a motley crew of musicians.



Dynamic three-quarters

With a background colour that complements the guitar, this is the pick of the images. It's a three-quarters length shot, so you don't have to worry about the feet. The angled body and guitar add dynamism, and shooting the face straight-on allows for more of an interaction with the viewer.



Future

The headshot

Although there's a hand and enough of the guitar to let you know that it's a musician, this is essentially a headshot. As such, you will either need a dynamic pose or some fancy lighting. What you don't want is someone entirely in black clothing shot against a black background, like this image.



Future

Static three-quarters

Just as photographers choose portraits of themselves holding a camera, guitar players like shots holding a guitar. However, this is a fairly static three-quarters shot, with the musician clutching the guitar. Although there has been some effort with the background lighting, the location doesn't help.



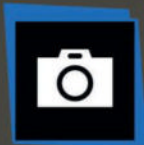
Future / Olly Curtis/Bass Guitar Magazine

Full-length

If you're going to shoot full-length, then the subject has to be doing something interesting. Here, the musician has delivered by coming up with a dynamic pose in both body shape and what they're doing with the guitar. It also has a distinctive location and natural light, adding to the overall effect.



Getty / Peatheegee Inc



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PLACES TO GO

Here are some more of the botanical hot houses around the country.

- 1 Palm House, Kew Gardens, London
- 2 Belfast Botanic Gardens, Belfast
- 3 Glasgow Botanic Gardens, Glasgow
- 4 Bickton Park Botanical Gardens, Devon
- 5 National Botanic Gardens of Wales, Carmarthenshire
- 6 Eden Project, Cornwall



The most futuristic-looking hot house is The Eden Project in Cornwall, which has tropical and Mediterranean zones.

5 | LOCATIONS

Inside the steamy windows

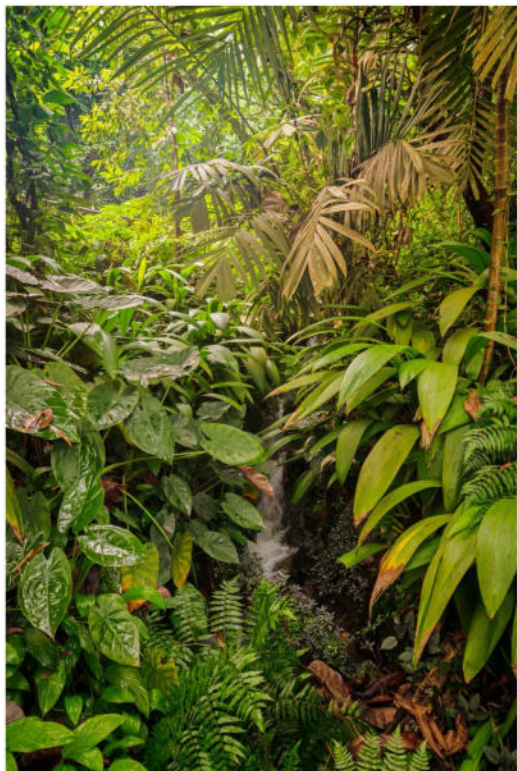
Discover what to photograph inside a botanical hot house, with **Wendy Evans**

The Victorians felt that the exotic flora they had gathered from the furthest reaches of the British Empire would look good at home, if only they could manage the miserable weather. And so, the idea of the botanical hot house was born. There are examples of these magnificent Victorian structures

all over the country, packed with exotic plants, trees and fruits, sweltering in tropical heat throughout the long, cold British winter. One of the most modern incarnations of these homages to biodiversity is, of course, the futuristic-looking Eden Project in Cornwall, which is where I went for this feature. Check out our location guide for a tropical hot house near you. —→



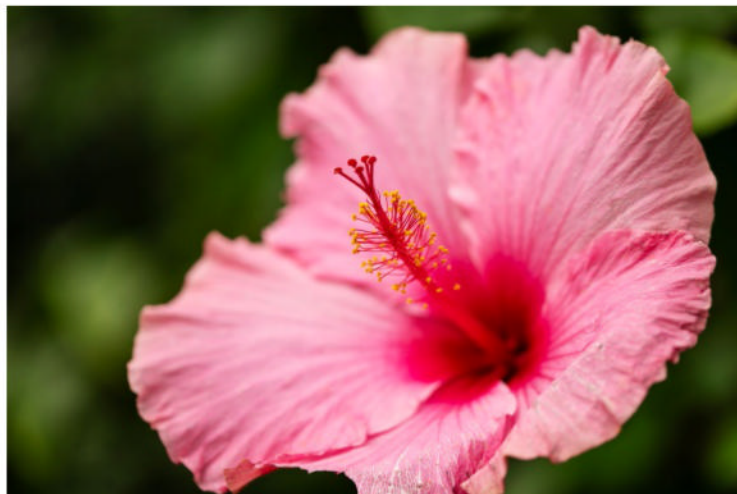
Five ways to shoot in a tropical hot house



1

It's a jungle in there

Capture the atmosphere of the rainforest by finding a dense patch of plants and trees, ideally with some water. A 24mm focal length was used here, with an aperture of f/5.6, focusing 1.5m into the scene to get as much depth of field as possible.



2

Make it macro

If you move away from the steamy areas, you can safely swap from a zoom to a macro lens for flowers. Using a wide aperture of f/3.3 here meant there was little depth of field, so focusing on the stamen was critical. A single focus point is more accurate than a group of them.



3

Pathways and structures

Use pathways to lead the eye through the scene. Don't forget to include the structure in some shots, as many botanical houses have interesting architecture. This Mediterranean zone shows strange-looking desert plants that you won't encounter in the wild.





4

Visit another continent

Some hot houses will showcase the typical environment where the plants come from. This was a stall showing the type of crops that would be harvested in verdant West Africa. To keep the shutter speed high in the shaded area, ISO 320 was dialled in.



5

Show me the flowers

An alternative to getting close in with a macro lens is to show a variety of flowers and plants grouped together. Try to compose the shot with different types of plants in each third of the image. A 24mm focal length was used here, but you could go wider.



Pack a zoom in your camera bag

Don't take only prime lenses, because you will need flexibility and a tropical hot house isn't the place you want to be swapping glass. A standard zoom like this Nikon Z 24-70mm f/2.8 will give you a wide-enough angle, plus some telephoto reach for getting different types of shots.



6 | ACTION

Bag a boarder

Here's how you can capture the high-speed thrills of snowboarding

W

hether it's a competition or a parade of Monster-fuelled adrenaline junkies hurtling down the snowy slopes, snowboarding

offers more photographic opportunities than traditional skiing. The first decision to make before getting out your thermals is what lenses to take. The answer will depend on how close you can get. It's reasonable to assume that you'll be able to get closer to casual boarders than those in a pro event, so consider 400mm a good bet for the former and 600mm for the latter.

Two key types of shots you should look for are of a boarder crashing through the snow, or in mid-air while performing a jump. Bear in mind that a tracking focus system using eye detection will be less effective if the subject is wearing goggles. Instead, if your camera has a lock-on focus feature, get the boarder in view and tap on them to lock the focus. It should then follow the boarder as you track them down the slope. Otherwise, turn continuous focusing on and try to keep up with their movements.

Hit the slopes

Here you want to freeze the action, so ensure the shutter speed is over 1/1,000 sec. Because of the white snow in the shot, it's also worth dialling in +0.7EV exposure compensation to avoid underexposure.



Getty

Performing jumps

The key here is to be on the side of the boarder and capture their face pointing towards the camera or go underneath the jump area, if possible. Use continuous shooting as they jump to get a series of shots of the boarder in the air, so you can select the best one.



Getty

Take a sequence

Another, more creative idea is to use the continuous or burst mode to capture a series of images, then combine the boarder from each one onto the main image. You'll need to select manual mode for consistent exposures and a tripod for stability.



Getty / Franz Faltermaier



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TIP CARDS

Take them on location

This project features in this month's photo tips cards. For a handy guide to capturing photos like this, take your tips cards out with you.

7 | WILDLIFE

Capture a winter owl

Don't let snowy conditions put you off. Here's how to capture these magnificent birds

Just because the icy grip of winter has arrived, it doesn't mean that the nation's 10th favourite bird (that's the owl, according to an unscientific poll by the RSPB) heads for warmer climes. Far from it, the owl is ideally suited to winter weather, including snow, thanks to its downy feathers trapping heat close to the body. Barn owls are the exception to this, as they originally evolved in warmer countries, so they have poor insulation and need extra energy from food during the cold weather. However, all owls have superb hearing, thanks to their asymmetrical ears, and can locate prey scurrying about under the snow.



Which lens do you need?

Opt for a 400mm lens if possible, but preferably even longer, to avoid having to crop into the image too much. The photo on the facing page was shot with a Canon EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS USM lens.

Five steps to capturing owls, even in the snow

1

Get into place

Be aware of the owl's hunting and resting areas, so you can get into position. Once you are in the location, stay still and keep your movements to a minimum. Owls have superb hearing, so you don't want to distract them or scare them away. Make sure you are wrapped up well and have a flask of hot tea or coffee.

2

Set the shutter

Use a fast shutter speed to freeze any movement, even if most of your shots are taken when the owl has landed, like here. Set it to 1/1,000 sec and the aperture to f/6.3 in Manual mode. To allow for variations in light levels, set the ISO to Auto.

3

Focusing modes

While animal tracking with eye detection is the standard focusing mode if you have it, consider having other modes configured to customisable buttons. For example, using a wide, thin focus target box for the owl in flight and a single focus point for when it is stationary on a post.

4

Let it snow

If there is snow falling heavily, it may interfere with the camera's focus tracking, in which case, you might be better served by using manual focusing and concentrating on places where the owl comes to rest, like this wooden fence pole. In falling snow, you will certainly need to use a lens hood.

5

Shoot in a burst

For action shots with the owl flying, or swooping down to attack prey, it's worth having the camera set to a fast burst mode. If yours supports it, have two memory cards and set them up so that if one is busy writing images, it switches to the other so you don't miss a shot.

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This sharp capture of a Great Horned owl, taken with an image-stabilising telephoto lens, has created a lovely depth of field effect in the background.



This photo was taken during a visit to a small, picturesque town in the French Riviera.

8 | ARCHITECTURE

Arches of light

John Raftery shows how you can maximise architectural reflections

The illusion that reflection photography creates has always captivated me. When shooting architectural photography, I always look for scenes that can potentially create reflections.

When I visualise the scene in front of me, I'm combining structure with symmetry and using this repetition of shapes and textures to help create this illusion. I love to travel, and on one such expedition, I visited the charming coastal village of Villefranche-sur-Mer in the French Riviera. This picture-perfect town with its pastel-coloured, narrow, winding alleyways is a photographer's dream. As I meandered through its hidden streets one morning, I came across this scene.

The architecture with its complementary Mediterranean hues, chalky paint and old window shutters was the perfect subject. The courtyard I walked into had just been washed, giving the surface a pristine, polished look. I prefer to shoot urban street architecture early in the morning because not only do you have soft, diffused light, but you have fewer people around, leaving you to concentrate on your settings and composition.

Instagram: @mj_photography73



John's tips on shooting great architectural photos

1

Research it

Before you step outside, mastering the logistics of your shoot is an art in itself. The time of day and season you choose will influence the mood and atmosphere of your final image. Research the location thoroughly and aim to anticipate access points and lighting conditions.

2

Composition ideas

Experimenting with techniques like framing, symmetry, leading lines and changing the angle at which you are shooting will change your perspective on the composition of your image and deepen the viewer's connection. Good composition turns simple scenes into visual stories.

3

Depth and focus

Decide what needs to be the sharpest part of the image. Here, it's the front pillars and their reflections in the water. Focusing on the pillars will ensure they are sharp, and using an aperture of around f/8 or f/11 will ensure there's enough depth of field for the reflections as well.



John Raftery

4

Subjects and variations

Finding a strong subject is crucial. Vary your shooting angle to increase the drama. Emphasise symmetry to help create balance. Get close to maximise the reflection. Explore different surfaces, such as water, glass or polished materials, for the visually classic reflection image.

5

The essential gear

The kit I use for shooting architecture includes a Canon EOS 90D with a Canon 10-22mm or a Canon EOS R6 Mk II with a 16-35mm. When shooting reflections, I use a circular polariser or ND filters. If I use my lightweight but sturdy ball head tripod, then I will also use a remote control trigger.



9 | ACTION

Back seat driver

Shoot urban light trails with a unique perspective – from inside a moving car

For this action-based creative project, you're going to need some help – unless you happen to have a reliable self-

driving car you would trust on the road. So you're going to need someone to drive while you take the photo. A big back window that you can get close to will also help, as the further away you are from it, the harder it is. A circular polariser will also help keep the interior reflections down to a minimum.

The next thing is to find somewhere you can drive along in a fairly straight line that has plenty of neon on either side of the road. Heading for Blackpool during the illuminations season would be a good shout here. And finally, if you have a friend with a fancy vintage car who can drive behind you, then that will add to the scene.

Five steps to getting creative with your car trail captures

1

How far do you go?

Assuming you're in a 30mph zone and are doing exactly that, you'll cover 44 feet (13.42m) in just one second, which will be enough to create light trails throughout the immediate vicinity. So you don't need a very long section of neon lights alongside the road to create this effect.

2

Setting it up

Set the camera up on a mini-tripod at the back of the car if you can. It doesn't matter if it moves a bit, but you don't want it moving too much. Turn AF off and manually focus about 4m (12ft) behind your car. Use a wide-angle zoom that excludes the car interior.



This Sigma 17-50mm offers an ideal wide-angle and short telephoto range for this kind of project. You need to capture the scene without the interior of the car.

JG Photography / Alamy Stock Photo





Combine a long exposure with cars and neon lights.

3

Set to Manual mode

Switch to Manual mode and dial in a time of 1 sec and an aperture of f/5.6 to f/8. That should give plenty of depth of field for the car behind. Set the ISO to Auto, so that if there's not enough light, it will adjust the sensitivity. Use Zone metering and don't worry about blown highlights.



4

Get into position

Either get your vintage car-owning friend to drive at a constant distance behind you, or just try this with traffic behind where you are all driving at the same speed. As you reach the neon-infused scene, fire the shutter. Even though the car behind is moving, enough detail should register so it's recognisable at the end of the exposure.

5

Other options

If you want the car behind to look more fuzzy or the light trails longer, set the shutter speed to two seconds. Consider turning lens VR and camera IBIS off to emphasise the light trails jumping about like a heartbeat monitor, rather than just streaming smoothly behind.



Street challenge

Send us your best shots of unposed life on the street

Welcome to our monthly reader photo challenge, where the winning image will feature in the magazine, and you can claim bragging rights. For January, the theme is 'Street'. There are two criteria for this. Firstly, the photo has to feature people somewhere in the frame, and secondly, they can't be posing for the camera. If they notice you capturing their

reaction, that's fine, but no posed shots and no portraits. We want to see life on the streets, in shops and cafés. Over to you!

Enter via email or Facebook

Email digitalcamera@futurenet.com with 'Street' as the subject. Please attach your entry (sending a hi-res version, rather than links) and include a brief description of the image. Alternatively, look for the

'Street' post on our Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/digitalcameraworld and upload your entry into the feed under the post. Enter the challenge by 1 January 2026. Remember that it's only one image per reader, please.

The winner will be announced in issue 304 (March 2026) of *Digital Camera*, which goes on sale on Friday 30 January.



1st place

Mike McMahon

The winner of the 'Cityscapes' challenge is... Mike McMahon

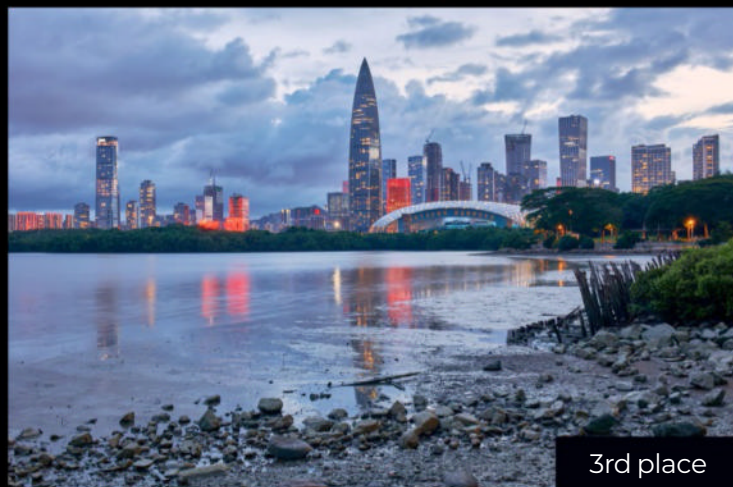
In *Digital Camera* 300 (November), we challenged you to submit an image that best encompassed the theme of 'Cityscapes', and you responded with a range of superb entries. The winner was Mike McMahon for this shot of Deansgate, Manchester, perfectly capturing an urban night. Mike said, "I had a shot like this planned for a while and the scene presented itself when I wasn't expecting it. A quick rush to set up my composition and I managed to walk away with a shot to cherish."

Honourable mentions go to runner-up, Josh Overton, who came second with his image of hectic Tokyo streets (right), and Geoff Taylor for his shot of a science park in the Nanshan district of Shenzhen, China (below).



Josh Overton

2nd place



Geoff Taylor

3rd place

Email your entry to: digitalcamera@futurenet.com or enter at: www.facebook.com/digitalcameraworld



Benedict Brain
www.benedictbrain.com

Camera: Fujifilm GFX100 RF
 35mm (28mm equivalent)
Exposure: 1 sec at f/9, ISO 250,
 Godox V1 flashgun

The tree stump in Kensington Meadows, Bath, a location that was once a Georgian pleasure garden.

While researching for my MA on a slightly related subject, I discovered that Kensington Meadows was once a Georgian pleasure garden. This is not obvious when you stand there today. The area is plain, a little worn in parts and bordered by post-war housing. Yet knowing its former life adds another layer to this otherwise ordinary view. These shifts in context are often what make a scene worth photographing. They remind you that landscape is never just what you see in front of you.

I photographed the stump at twilight. The fading light helps simplify a scene and reduces distractions. It also suited the subject, which was still raw from being felled. Working at this time of day also allowed me to use flash effectively. I wanted it to lift the texture of the bark and bring the stump forward from the dark background. The flash also revealed the rain as thin bright streaks across the frame. This is something I have always liked about using flash in poor weather. The camera picks up details that the eye barely registers.

Hungarian photographer László Moholy-Nagy viewed the camera as a 'mechanical eye', and learning to anticipate how it interprets a scene is an important skill. With rain and flash, you start to understand that the camera sees in a more literal and often more revealing way than we do. Once you recognise that, you can deliberately use it, rather than treating it as a surprise.

The stump stands on the edge of the River Avon, which has well-documented problems with pollution and water quality. The cut tree and the state of the river are both reminders of how strained the relationship between people and nature can be in everyday spaces. Yet even here, there are some positive signs. I've seen a kingfisher and a beaver and heard reports of otters downstream recently. These small sightings suggest the landscape is not entirely lost. They offer a practical kind of hope. ●

The art of seeing

Benedict Brain explores a felled tree, a polluted river and the value of looking closer to home

A

tree near my home was cut down recently, and what remains is a heavy, uneven stump that is hard to ignore. It has become a small landmark on my walking loop around

Kensington Meadows in Bath. After months of travelling on the high seas, photographing exotic environments, I found myself returning to this stump with a camera. It felt like a good way to reconnect with the place where I live.

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Hotshots

The winners of 'Power', the 14th season of the
Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum
International Photography Award (HIPA)

i

WINNER: Grand Prize 'Etna's Paroxysm' Gianluca Gianferrari (Italy)

Above Sicily's Mount Etna, glowing lapilli erupt against a snowy backdrop, creating a striking contrast. The fiery bursts of rock fragments settle on fresh snow, forming a kaleidoscope of colours under the night sky. It is a testament to the unpredictable beauty of nature, where destructive power meets serenity in a fleeting embrace that is eternally captured by the lens of the camera.





i

WINNER: General (Colour) 'Jungle Keeper' Karine Aigner (USA)

In Yasuni National Park, Ecuador, a male jaguar prowls through a clay lick in the lush Amazon depths, its muddy paws leaving imprints on the mossy bank. In the humid gloom, the jaguar's spotted coat gleams against the rugged rocks and shallow, rippling water. Even from over 100 feet away, its piercing gaze commands awe, as it makes a rare appearance before quietly slipping back into the dense forest.

WINNER, Appreciation Award:

Rick Smolan (USA)

The photographer, influential speaker and author was honoured for his distinguished career, and for raising global awareness of important humanitarian issues.

i



Rick Smolan / Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum International Photography Awards 2025





© Karine Aigner / Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum International Photography Awards 2025



i

WINNER: Sports 'Victory and Defeat' Vladimir Tadic (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

In a boxing ring, a referee grips the wrists of two teenage girls, with one about to be declared the winner. As the referee raises the victor's arm, she bursts into a moment of pure euphoria, her face lit with joy and triumph in the realisation that months of training, sacrifice and determination have led to this achievement. Beside her, the defeated opponent is overwhelmed by disappointment. Her body language speaks volumes; a mix of exhaustion, heartbreak and the sting of coming so close. Yet in that contrast between joy and sorrow lies the essence of competitive sport.

WINNER: General (Black and White) 'Exploding Swell' Ted Grambeau (Australia)

On a Pacific reef, a massive swell surges, its waves crashing with unrelenting force. Spray erupts upward, curling in wild arcs before collapsing into the churning sea. Through this magnificent wave, the ocean's raw power is vividly displayed; a dream for surfers and a captivating subject for photographers.



© Ted Grambeau / Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum International Photography Awards 2025

i





i

**WINNER, HIPA
Photographer of
the Year Award:
Salim Al-Hajri (Oman)**

Al-Hajri's work was recognised for connecting ancient traditions with narratives of the present, embodying the Middle East's rich identity through vibrant and emotionally moving images.



© Ali Jadallah / Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum International Photography Awards 2025

i

WINNER: Portfolio (Story-telling) 'Burden of Survival' Ali Jadallah (Palestinian Territory)

For two years, the Gaza Strip has been engulfed by relentless destruction and death, with its people bearing the heavy burden of survival. Yet during the sacred month of Ramadan, they choose life, coming together to break their fast amidst the rubble. They hold on to a dream of a final photograph, one captured after the war, when homes are rebuilt and loved ones are reunited once again.

i

**WINNER: Power
'Rise of the Phoenix'
Hashem Dardowra
(Syrian Arab Republic)**

Amidst the wreckage of an airstrike, 14-year-old Khaled emerges as officials from the Syrian Civil Defence (White Helmets) free him from the rubble. Rescue teams use power drills, hand winches and acoustic probes to pinpoint the boy's position and reduce the chance of secondary collapse, as warplanes circle above. Despite noticeable head wounds and a bloodstained bandage, Khaled manages a faint smile that signals he is responsive and defiant.



© Hashem Dardowra / Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum International Photography Awards 2025



i

WINNER: Drone (Video) 'Blood of the Earth' Karim Iliya (USA)

This short film captures a volcanic eruption in Iceland in 2021. Over the course of the eruption, Karim filmed as much footage as he could with his DJI Mavic 2 Pro and Mavic 3 Pro camera drones. His subsequent film aims to show the beautiful side of volcanoes, which are often thought of as destructive, violent and terrifying.



i

WINNER, Content Creator Award: Mark Smith (USA)

This award was bestowed on one of the world's leading bird photographers, film-makers and researchers of bird life, whose work has been viewed over two billion times.

© Mark Smith / Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum International Photography Awards 2025



HAMDAN BIN MOHAMMED BIN RASHID AL MAKTOUM INTERNATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY AWARD

About the competition

Now in its fourteenth season, the Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum International Photography Award (HIPA) rewards excellence in still photographs and moving images and has a prize pot of US\$1,000,000, with the winner of the grand prize taking home US\$200,000. Free to enter, the theme of the 15th season is 'Family' and will open for entries in 2026. **Find out more at: www.hipa.ae**

26

PHOTO PROJECTS FOR 2026!

Wendy Evans

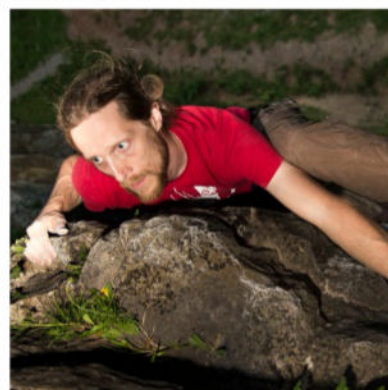
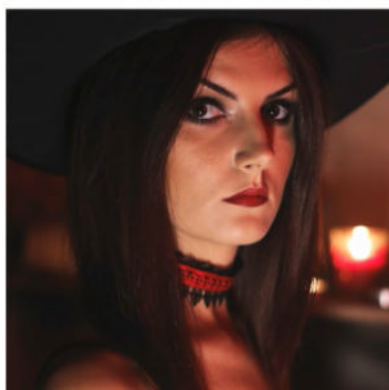
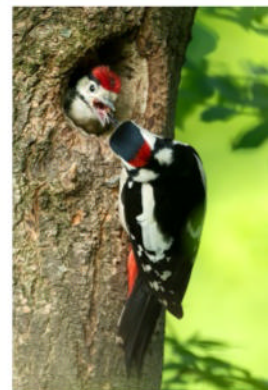
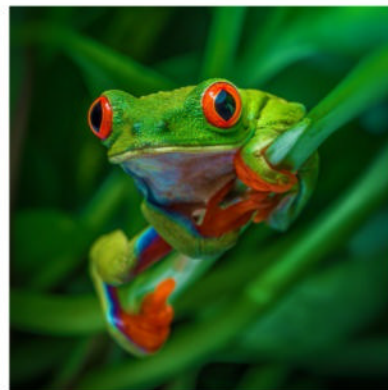
serves up a platter
of projects for you
to tackle over the
next 12 months

January can be the dullerest month of the year. With the festive season in the rear-view mirror, there are only months of cold, wet weather ahead until spring arrives. However, don't despair because not only do we have a selection of photo project ideas for the year ahead, we've also got some ideas to rouse you from your winter torpor, when the weather is friends only to polar bears and ducks.

So discover how to create stop-motion animation, bag some new gear at bargain prices, tackle heavy industry, get moody with prison life and take hope from the cheery optimism of the red-breasted robin.

Before you know it, spring will soon be here again, bringing with it plants, animals and insects galore to shoot. Think of the misty sunrises, solitary trees in green fields and burgeoning pond life with frogs and toads.

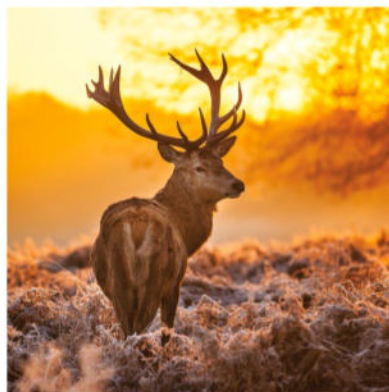
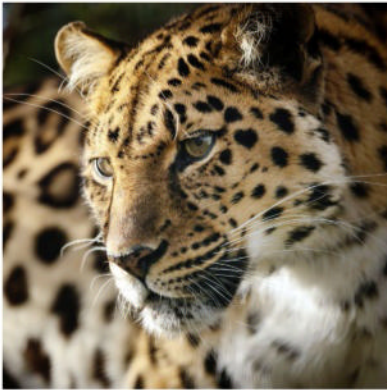
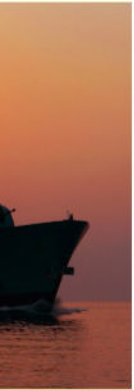
Come summer, there will be rows of sunflowers as far as the eye can see, big cats on the prowl, seashells on the seashore, vintage festivals and the staccato tapping of woodpeckers to be heard. Finally, autumn offers everything from conkers to deer, waterfalls, still-life projects and even a gothic weekend.





SEND US YOUR IMAGES!

Want to feature in our gallery? Please email a high-resolution image (at least 10MB) marked 'Reader Images' and including a title and brief description to: digitalcamera@futurenet.com or share it on Instagram with the tag: [#digitalcameramag](https://www.instagram.com/digitalcameramag)



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WINTER

Wrap up warm for cold weather projects

01

STOP-MOTION ANIMATION

A Nick Park animation is now obligatory viewing over the Christmas period, so if it's raining outside, why not turn your hand to the art of stop-motion animation? You need to assemble your props – ideally, ones that can be made to move and stand up on their own, create the set and position your lights. Then plan it all out, including the time needed for dialogue.

TOP TIPS

- For frame rates (this is how many images you take per second of action), 15fps is smooth, 10fps is noticeably uneven and 5fps is crude.
- Take a test shot, then go to manual to set the aperture and shutter speed to avoid lighting variations.
- Take another shot, then calculate how far the elements can move in x frames/sec. Load the images into a video editor and render as a video.



Alamy / Aardman/Dreamworks Productions

02

HEAVY INDUSTRY

Shoot at dusk when the artificial lights of the industrial complex will contrast with the blue sky and clouds. Unless you have written permission to fly a drone, you will be shooting from the ground.

TOP TIPS

- Stay on public land. Bring a tripod for longer exposures, which will make any steam start to blur. Aim for a shutter speed of around 4-8 secs for this.
- If there's a water source, position it in the foreground. Use a reflector to cut out what's under the surface, making the reflections from the site more defined.
- Unless you are right outside, you'll probably need a short telephoto rather than a super-wide-angle lens. Dial in f/8 for the aperture and focus on the reflections.



Getty / Josef Kubes

03

UPGRADE AND REFRESH YOUR PHOTO GEAR

New year means new challenges and, consequently, new gear. Well, that's our excuse for picking up a new lens or camera anyway. Whether it's your Christmas wish list or the New Year sales, winter is the perfect time to add to your gear or go for that dream upgrade. There are discounts to be had on brand new cameras but if you're happy with an older mirrorless or DSLR, there's a great deal of excellent kit available from trusted outlets like MPB, plus leading retailers like Wex and Park Cameras. As people trade up to newer cameras and lenses, it's a chance to pick up products that previously might have been out of your price range. With pre-owned kit being carefully assessed upon trade-in, you'll get peace of mind as well as far more affordable prices.

Start 2026 with some new kit, and increase your buying power by shopping pre-owned.





Getty

04

ROBINS

The small, red-breasted robin is one of the most popular birds in the UK, but getting a close-up shot can be tricky. They are quite small, with a wingspan of only 20-22cm, and while they appear all year round, they are best known for brightening up the dreary winter period. They eat worms, seeds, fruits and insects, so it's possible to set up a feeder in your garden to lure them in. You will need a reasonably long lens, of around 300-400mm, so open the aperture up as far as it will go to get your fastest shutter speed and help blur any distracting background.

TOP TIP

- Robins can be territorial and they are vocal about it, so try to capture them in song while they are stationary, like this shot here.



Getty

05

GHOSTS IN THE CITY

Capture the bustle of the city by using a long exposure to blur any people in your frame while keeping the buildings' details in focus. You'll need a tripod to prevent camera shake and, if it's daylight, there will be too much light to get the shutter speed of one or two seconds (consider 0.5 sec a minimum) required. So set an aperture of f/16-f/22 and look to reduce the ISO rating as low as it will go. If the shutter speed is still too fast, you will need to deploy a neutral density (ND) filter. They are rated by how many stops of light they reduce the exposure by.

TOP TIP

- Aim to pre-focus on the hyperfocal point for maximum depth of field. Remember, it's the city that you want to be in focus.

06

PRISON LIFE

Abandoned or disused prisons make for great subjects, especially for black and white or minimalist colours. A few old prisons are now tourist attractions, though if you visit one, it will be harder to get a shot without people in. Concentrate on the brutal architecture, the forms and shapes, and the play of light and dark. If you also want to place some props in the cells, we're not going to judge you. Light levels will be low, so ramp up the ISO as necessary.



Getty



SPRING

Behold nature, as she wakes from her winter slumber!

07

THE LONE TREE

The challenge here is to find one tree on its own and make that the star of the composition. That could be in a scene of rolling hills or, as in this image, by the side of the road. The tree here suggests somewhere to stop along the way, whereas in an otherwise empty landscape, it might have a different impact and meaning.

Exactly what's in the shot, whether it's horizontal lines and blocks of colour, or in portrait orientation with lead-through lines, determines what kind of lens you want. A wide open landscape shot is likely to need a 24-28mm focal length, whereas a tighter portrait orientation might need up to 100mm to frame effectively.

TOP TIPS

- You will need lots of depth of field, so consider what your lens gives you and where you need to focus. With a 28mm lens at f/8, focus just over 3m into the scene.
- Use the setting sun behind the tree to really highlight it. You'll need a closer composition and the tree branches to be higher than the background scenery.
- Consider the composition. Make it symmetrical with the tree in the middle, or go for the wide view and place it on the left or right vertical third.

08

FROGS AND TOADS

As spring arrives, so do plants and wildlife, including frogs and toads, as they come out of hibernation and head for a mating pool. What's the difference between a frog and a toad, you ask? Here in the UK, frogs have smooth skin that looks like they've been in the bath. They have longer legs because they prefer to jump when moving around. Toads are short and squat with shorter legs, and they crawl, rather than jump. They have drier-looking, warty skin – the difference in skin texture is because frogs have special glands that keep their skin moist, and they can stay underwater for much longer. For that reason, frogs tend to stay nearer water, whereas toads can tolerate drier conditions.

TOP TIPS

- Get down to frog level with your 100mm macro lens. Some species are nocturnal, so don't shine a torch at them, as they'll close their eyes.
- The question of flash divides opinion, but if you do use it at night, try a ring flash at a low power setting. Always focus on the eyes.
- You'll need to shoot at f/8, and probably f/11-f/16 to get enough of the amphibian in sharp focus.

A longer macro lens will enable you to shoot from further away, reducing the chance of disturbing the frog.



Gatly

09

WARSHIPS

Either capture a modern warship at sea, coming into or out of harbour, or visit a museum ship to see what it has to offer. For the active ship, you will need to use a longer lens and aim to frame it so that the ship is moving into the photo, unless there's something notable behind, such as the setting sun in the photo on the right.

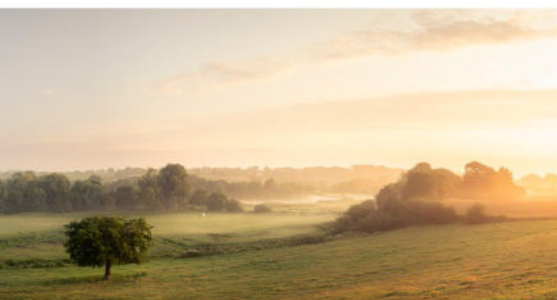
When tackling museum ships, it's harder to get a clean shot of the exterior, as it will usually be tied up in a dock. Try to get on the other side if possible. The water will often be less disturbed, so there's the chance of getting more coherent reflections, especially if you're trying a long exposure shot with a tripod.

TOP TIPS

- If the ship is on a river, a 200mm lens should be enough to capture it, otherwise, a 400-800mm may be needed.
- Get on the deck of the museum ship, stand at the bow and use a wide-angle lens to shoot back down the length.
- Clamber inside and shoot the living conditions and machinery, with an 18mm focal length and f/5.6 aperture.



Crown Copyright



Alamy

10

MISTY SUNRISES

The advent of cold nights and warm sunshine often results in misty mornings. Study the weather forecast and if that combination is incoming, then get up early and head for your favourite landscape location. Check beforehand where the sun will rise, so you know what will be in shadow. Use a graduated ND filter to control the bright sky and consider using bracketing for your shots by ± 2 EV, as there could still be quite a range of tones.



Future UK / Kristina Dolgilevica

11

ARCHERY

Whether it's part of a classical re-enactment, in which case you will get interesting costumes, or as part of a sports event, archery is one of the more unusual sports to photograph. The key shot is the archer drawing back the bow, so ensure you get that shot, then try to catch the arrow as it is being loosed. Go with a wide aperture and fast shutter speed for both these shots. Also, as above, look for more dynamic angles, rather than just a side shot.



Future UK / Simon Buck

12

GET THE GOAT

Everyone will be looking for lambs to photograph in spring, so forget that cliché and find somewhere that has kids (as in the young offspring of goats, not human children). As well as the young, you may also find territorial disputes and goat mating rituals, like vocalisation, snorting and, of course, head-butting. Use a 200-400mm focal length, open up the aperture to get a fast shutter speed, and switch on animal focus tracking or continuous focusing.



Getty Images / iStockphoto

13

REFLECTIONS

The crisp mornings of spring are perfect for shooting reflections, assuming that you are experiencing calm weather at this time of year, of course. There are various ways and places where you can shoot them, but the key ingredient for all of them is that the reflection should be in focus. For that reason, once you have the composition set up to show the reflection, manually move your focus point to the nearest part of the reflection in the water and focus there.

1 HEAD FOR THE HARBOUR

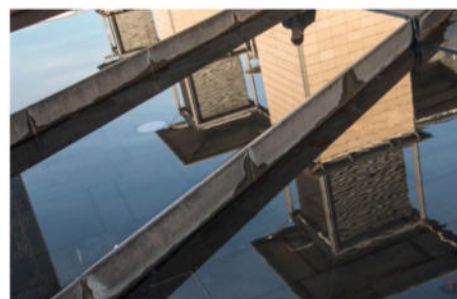
On a day with little wind, the water in a harbour or dock can be almost mirror-smooth, making it a great location to shoot reflections. Time it so that the sun is shining on the buildings and ships.



Future

2 ABSTRACT REFLECTIONS

Wherever you find pools of water, there is usually the opportunity to create an abstract reflection image by excluding what surrounds the water and focusing on the reflection instead.



Future

3 GLASS WALLS IN THE CITY

Any medium-sized city will be full of shops and glass-fronted buildings. Create interesting street life studies by shooting into the reflections in the window. Use a circular polariser to maximise the effect.



Getty

SUMMER

The warm weather is here, so let's get shooting!

14

WOODPECKERS

Take a break from shooting kingfishers and hawks in favour of the three species of British woodpecker. These are the green woodpecker, which at 31-33cm, is the largest of the three, and has brightly coloured feathers that make it look like an oversized parrot. It doesn't drum much, unlike the great spotted woodpecker, which is 22-23cm in size and can reach 40 hits per second. Finally, there's the smallest – at 15cm – the lesser spotted woodpecker.

TOP TIPS

- Focus on the bird's eye or use eye-tracking focus if your camera has it, to ensure the key area is sharp.
- Look for trees with some distance behind so there are no distractions. With a wide aperture, these look better.
- You will need a fast shutter speed of over 1/1,000 sec, so use Manual mode and set the ISO to Auto.

15

BIG CATS

You could travel to Africa or India in search of big cats, or stay at home and head for a wildlife park to shoot them in the open. Places like Longleat Safari Park in Wiltshire not only allow you to shoot from your car but also offer VIP experiences in a ranger-driven Jeep, allowing you to get closer for better compositions. Book a tour and bring your longest lens with you.

TOP TIPS

- Aim to have the face of the animal looking into the frame and focus on the eyes. Use focus tracking for moving animals.
- Beware of sunlight on white fur, as you may lose the highlights. In these conditions, use -0.3EV exposure compensation.
- For fast cats, including leopards and cheetahs, use a fast shutter speed of over 1/1,000 sec and continuous shooting mode.



Future



Future / TI Media

16

SEASHELLS

Whether you collect them from the seaside or you spot some seashells on the seashore, they make for an interesting macro shot. Try a 105mm or 150mm lens. Shooting on a hazy or overcast day will give softer light without any harsh shadows. Position the camera directly above, parallel to the seashells and use an f/5.6 or f/8 aperture for the best combination of depth of field and sharpness. The closer you are, the less depth of field there will be, and so the narrower the aperture required.



17

VOLLEYBALL

Not indoor volleyball – it's summer, so we're shooting beach volleyball, of course. There are all kinds of shots to look for, from telephoto close-ups of the action to getting down at the net and shooting upwards with a wide-angle lens. You can also stand back and show the entire beach court or focus on the person serving the ball.

TOP TIPS

- For a creative shot at the net, use an 18mm wide-angle lens, set the aperture to f/5.6 and pre-focus on the bottom of the net.
- Use a 200mm lens to get a close-up shot of the person serving. Use a wide aperture and don't forget a lens hood to reduce glare.
- Stand well back and use a 24-28mm focal length to feature all the players. Focus on the front edge of the court with f/8.



Future / TI Media



Future

18

PICNIC LIFE

Nothing says summer more than a picnic on a sunny day. Create a still-life setting by bringing a cloth to put everything on, cups and plates and a selection of summer food. Arrange them with the key elements featured prominently and put jugs and bottles at the back. Focus on the key element, with something like a 75-100mm focal length to restrict the field of view without getting too close in. An aperture of f/8 at a distance of 2m will give you around 33cm depth of field – enough to get everything in the shot.

19

SUNFLOWERS

You can't beat a field of sunflowers for that summer vibe. Either be creative and

zoom in on one sunflower with a wide aperture, or go wide-angle and select the hyperfocal distance for maximum depth of field.

Use a wide-angle lens and fill the viewfinder with yellow flowers.



Future

20

VINTAGE FESTIVALS

It's a fact that everything was better in the past, which is why vintage festivals are so popular every summer. Even if this is rose-tinted nostalgia, there's no denying that the clothes, cars and music were fabulous.



Future / Wendy Evans



Wendy Evans



Getty



Future

BAG A BAND

1 Whether it's solo singers or big bands that require a landscape orientation, there are plenty of musical entertainers to shoot. Open up the aperture as wide as possible and tweak the ISO, if inside, to keep the shutter speed up and avoid blur.

PERIOD FASHION

2 Beautiful people in gorgeous clothes demand the attention of your portrait lens. Deploy a 50mm or 75mm prime lens and set the aperture to f/1.4-f/2. Focus on the eyes and get close for a headshot or stand back for a full-length shot.

CLASSIC RACE CARS

3 At places such as Goodwood, there are vintage cars racing around the circuit. Get a panning shot by pre-focusing, then switching to manual. Aim for a shutter speed of 1/15 sec, shoot as the car goes past and pan with it during the exposure.

AUTUMN

The season of spectacular colour

21

MAGICAL WATERFALLS

Waterfalls are incredible places to photograph all year round, but when autumn arrives, you get the added bonus of spectacular colour in the trees and piles of fallen leaves for the close-up shot of smaller, woodland waterfalls. Unless you specifically want to freeze the motion of the water with a fast shutter speed, you will need to bring a tripod for that classic long-exposure shot of creamy, blurred water.



Getty

THE BIG LANDSCAPE

1 It may be that there are no trees in the area you are shooting, but don't let that deter you. If you find a small waterfall from a stream, such as here, look to use it as a big foreground. This largely eliminates the mid-ground, leaving just the background that needs to stand out. Use a wide lens (18mm) and f/5.6-f/8 for maximum sharpness and depth.



Getty

WOODLAND STREAMS

2 A scattering of red- and gold-coloured leaves adds a layer of interest to what would otherwise be a modest woodland waterfall. Once you're under the trees, it's easier to achieve the four- to eight-second long exposure you need to blur the water.

CLASSIC WATERFALLS

3 If you discover a waterfall with an impressive drop, switch to portrait orientation to capture it. You'll need a wide-angle lens to get the full height, which means you'll get more depth of field. For maximum sharpness in the surrounding rock at the most important point, focus on the final drop of the waterfall itself. If required, use a low ISO and ND filters rather than stopping down beyond f/11.



Getty

22

GOTHIC WEEKEND

Whether you're heading for Whitby or have a local gothic-related event, it means there's plenty of opportunity for spooky or alternative portraits. If the events are in the evening or inside, it will mean low light levels and higher ISO levels, though IBIS will help here.

TOP TIPS

- Pay attention to light sources inside and avoid having bright candles behind the subject.
- Ensure that the subject is turning into the light source so their face is well-lit on one side.
- Lighting the subject from below eye level will give a film noir effect of danger and uneasiness, which can work well here.



Getty



23

ROCK CLIMBING

Unless you are shooting from ground level with a 600mm lens, photographing rock climbing usually means getting involved. The best way of doing this is to navigate about where the subject is climbing and shoot downwards, emphasising their grip and the drop below. Experiment with wide open and narrow apertures for different depth of field effects. Some continuous lighting should be OK if the climber agrees to it, but don't use a flashgun.

24

SPOOKY STILL-LIFE

Here's a still-life or macro project for you, depending on how close in you want to get. You can use something like a 35-50mm focal length to capture a wider scene or get in closer with a 105mm macro. Aim to have a specific object as the centrepiece and arrange everything else around it. Be careful with lighting setups so they don't cause specular highlights in the background or ugly shadows in the foreground.

25

CONKERS

You can either shoot this as a macro project with the conkers and their shells, or as a still life, with a wider scene and a backdrop of rustic colours and wooden textures. For the macro shot, arrange the conkers going up through the photo and focus on the largest, key conker, about one-third of the way in. Place the shells so the empty side is facing away from the camera, as they will appear too bright in the background. Use an aperture of f/8 for a reasonable depth of field or f/2.8 for a more creative effect with less depth.



26

STAGS AT DAWN

Deer and stags offer a majestic wildlife subject, and never more so than in autumn, during the mating or 'rutting' season. Look for stags with heather in their antlers and the distinctive braying activity.

TOP TIPS

- You'll need a long lens, so a tripod or monopod will take the strain of holding a 180-600mm telephoto lens for hours on end. Unless you have an expensive sports lens, the aperture at the 600mm end will be f/5.6-f/6.3.
- Scout the location so you know where the deer and stags will be and where the sun rises and sets. A spectacular sunset can backlight the animals, but otherwise, have the light behind you.
- Use Centre-weighted or Spot metering off the coat of the stag for an accurate meter reading. Consider boosting the ISO if the shutter speed falls below 1/800 sec, especially with such a long lens.



Reader gallery

Digital Camera readers show how they've been getting creative, submitting images across a range of genres





'Derwentwater' by Cal Brown

"This shot was taken from Crow Park in Keswick, on the shore of Derwentwater. The wind started to pick up and rain was beginning to fall, so as my camera equipment wasn't weather-sealed, I had to make a quick decision about what I wanted to capture. Derwent Island is always a great subject, especially with Cat Bells and other fells in the background." Taken with a Nikon D5600 and Sigma 17-50mm lens, using an ND1000 filter for the long exposure.
Instagram: @cal_brown_photography

Digital Camera says:

Using a long exposure of 25 seconds has created a moody atmosphere by contrasting the blurred clouds and smooth water with the still landscape.

2 'Blue Mosque' by Lucy Wilson

"This image was taken at the Blue Mosque in Istanbul, where I was aiming to capture a personal, intimate moment of prayer during my visit. I used Adobe Lightroom to achieve the final look." Taken with a Sony A7C and 70-200mm lens.
Instagram: @lucylegram

Digital Camera says:

This image has with an almost perfect mixture of light and shade.



3 'Bridge of Shapes' by Bernard Wallace

"This is an image I made of an interesting bridge of shapes and shadows in Ras Al-Khaimah, United Arab Emirates. I had to wait a while for the man to walk into a position that gave me an interesting composition – I wanted his head clear of intrusion from the overhead structure and his stride to be clear of the shadows on the walkway."

Instagram: @bernard.wallace.169

Digital Camera says:

This is a striking piece of modern architecture that's brought to life with the sunshine and shadows. The figure is the icing on the cake.



4 'Jellyfish' by Ross McLaren

"In this shot, I was trying to show off another side to the jellyfish – they are incredible animals, but lots of people dislike them. The biggest issue with underwater photography in Scotland is backscatter. With so many particles in the water, when the strobes [underwater flashes] fire, they often bounce straight back, giving an almost snowy effect."

IG: @r.s.mclarenphotography

Digital Camera says:

This is a fantastic underwater shot. You've overcome the technical difficulties to create an otherworldly image.







5 'Tarbert Island' by John Cuthbert ARPS

"On the banks of Loch Lomond, opposite Tarbert Island, I paused to take in a warm autumn day. Along the shoreline, I noticed a large wooden tree, partly submerged in the loch. I experimented with shutter speeds and the use of a polariser, ND and ND graduated filters to capture the atmosphere. It reflects not only the tranquillity of the moment, but also my interpretation."

Instagram: @jcstudios12345

Digital Camera says:

This is a great scene, with the branch and rocks providing the foreground interest that leads to the rest of the loch in the background.

6

**'That Tree' by
Nathan Timblin**

"I had seen a few images of this tree in Babbacombe, Devon, and as I live locally, I wanted to take my own version. I was really drawn to the lone tree sitting at an elevated position at the water's edge. The steps winding around it lead towards the viewer, inviting them to step into the image." Taken with a Fujifilm X-T5 and 10-24mm lens.
Instagram: @nathantimblin

Digital Camera says:

This may be a popular spot, but you've captured a superb composition. The light means all the elements work well together.





7 'Queen's Bridge' by Mark Cully

"A shot of the Queen's Bridge in Belfast at night." Taken with a Nikon Z 6II and Nikkor 28-75mm f/2.8 lens. Settings: 2.5 secs at f/10, ISO 450. Instagram: @mtcphotos62

Digital Camera says:

Good composition and a great capture of the reflections in the water. It might be worth returning here and trying the same shot at dusk, so there's some blue in the sky as well.



8 'Fog on the Humber' by Mark Thompson

"The weather forecast for this autumn day predicted foggy conditions in East Yorkshire. So I chose to set up my DJI Mini 2 drone and as I began to fly above the fog, I noticed the top half of the Humber Bridge was visible. It was such an amazing sight, I spent a lot of time trying to get a great composition, and even used up all three of my batteries during the flight." Instagram: @markthompsonphotography

Digital Camera says:

It's a fascinating shot of the clear skies above the fog layer, and shows just how tall those parts of the Humber Bridge actually are. Well captured!

SEND US YOUR IMAGES!

Want to feature in our gallery or on our instagram feed?

Please email a high-res image (at least 10MB) marked 'Reader Images' and including a title and brief description, plus your social media handle, to:

digitalcamera@futurenet.com

or share it on Instagram with the tag:

#digitalcameramag

CAMERA CLINIC

Master the art of modern photography

This month: Get creative with ISO

Part one of a mini-series on getting the most from the exposure trinity

It isn't often that your fellow photographers make for a good shot. Exposed at ISO 25,600.



Will Cheung



Will Cheung

An imaging journalist and freelance photographer based in London, Cheung has a wealth of experience over several decades.
www.williamcheung.co.uk

■ A paid-up member of the exposure trinity, the ISO you use has a profound impact on your photographs. Aperture, shutter speed and ISO are inexorably linked, and you can't adjust one without altering one (or both) of the others to maintain a correct exposure. The skill of taking pictures is in using the trinity to create great shots. ISO has a direct impact on the technical quality of the result, but the effect is not as pictorially evident as it is when adjusting the aperture or trying a different shutter speed. That makes ISO a special member of the trinity.

Every imaging device has a base ISO, the speed that gives the lowest levels of noise and the best dynamic range. Usually, in a camera's specs, this is the lowest native speed quoted in the ISO range, typically ISO 100 or 200. If you have the lighting and fast aperture glass, the base ISO is the speed to use if you want the ultimate quality from your

camera but, of course, there are many variables to consider. In early digital capture, it was better to stick to the base ISO and not venture too far up the scale if you wanted top quality pictures because noise kicked in and images could be marred by weak blacks, detail loss and colourful streaks.

Over the years, that has changed and better sensors, innovative sensor designs, superior image processors and circuitry have all played a part. With modern cameras, you can shoot at ISO 1600 and higher and still get excellent results with minimal noise. Add a dose of denoising in editing and ISO 3200 and 6400 can give incredible results.

The current situation is that ISO is a powerful, versatile tool that can be used to help you set the aperture or shutter speed you need to deliver the results you have in your head. That is a good thing and it's also what this Camera Clinic is all about.

Get the knowledge

Your camera's ISO range is more than just a number

The camera's default range of ISO speeds is recommended for general shooting, but many models offer one or two extended speeds beyond the native range. The lower speeds come in useful for shooting long exposures and image quality remains excellent. At the other extreme, the higher speeds can be brought into play when the lighting conditions are poor or when you need fast shutter speeds.

However, image quality at the high expansion speeds leaves much to be desired. If a super-fast ISO is required, you might be better off shooting raw format at a high native ISO and underexposing by one or two stops to simulate a faster ISO and correct the file in editing. The result may not stand up to critical scrutiny, but it's better than using an expanded speed.

Camera kit considerations

What your camera wears is important so make sure it's appropriately dressed



THE NEED FOR SPEED

As a keen photographer, you might own a zoom lens or two, but have you considered adding a fast aperture prime? Generally, the faster the lens, the greater the cost, and while owning a f/1.2 or f/1.4 would be nice, the high price can be off-putting. However, there are plenty of attractively priced third-party, fast-aperture manual focus lenses around. Or choose a f/1.8 or f/2 standard lens where you'll get performance at a low price.

GET A GOOD GRIP

An aluminium L-bracket can enhance handling and give a more stable experience when shooting handheld. These grips are usually Arca-Swiss compatible, so they will slip onto most ball heads and are secured onto the handgrip by an Allen bolt. Universal grips are available, but the best option is to buy one specifically designed for your camera so access to the battery compartment, card slots, the HDMI and audio ports is unhindered.



ADDING YOUR OWN LIGHT

When you adjust ISO, it is to suit the ambient light, but there is the opportunity to supplement what's available by adding your own illumination, either LED lighting or flash. Depending on the situation, your lighting could become the main light source or just act as a filler. An on-camera flashgun – or speedlight – is a convenient, easy-to-use and reasonably powerful light source for people and macro photography, so is worth adding to your kit.

Essential kit for sharp-shooting

Hand-held shooting is fine most of the time, but it all changes with long lenses and poor light



HAVE A BALL

A good head is as important as the tripod, so don't skimp. Gimbal heads are specialist units for long lenses, while pan and tilt heads suit video use. For general use, the option is between a ball head and a three-way head. Ball heads lock into position, but many have a friction control that allows fine or fast adjustment. Invest in a quality ball head with a load rating that suits your heaviest camera/lens pairing.

THREE-LEGGED FRIENDS

If you want to explore your camera's slower ISO settings, and perhaps shoot extreme long exposures, you will need a solid tripod. It's worth investing in a quality one that will give you service for many years. Tripods come in all sorts of sizes and have either aluminium alloy or carbon fibre legs. Carbon legs have a weight-saving advantage but at a greater cost, although the price differential is not as great as it once was.



ONE LEG IS BETTER THAN NONE

Tripods can slow you down, so one possible alternative is a good monopod fitted with an Arca-Swiss compatible ballhead or a SpeediGimbal, which is fast in use. Quick to adjust, light and not too expensive, a monopod can provide invaluable support, especially with telephoto lenses. Buy one that extends at least to your head height so it suits when you're shooting high-up or aerial subjects.

Examples when high ISO speeds make life easier

With the awesome ability of fast ISO there's every reason to shoot 24/7



GOING UNDERGROUND

London's Jubilee Line extension runs from Green Park to Stratford with 11 stations designed by different architects. I spent a couple of weekends visiting the stations and taking photographs, including this one at Westminster. Tripods aren't permitted, so I knew I would need a high ISO. To make more of the architecture, I thought an ultra-wide lens would suit. I grabbed a fisheye lens with uncorrected rectilinear distortion. It's fun to use because straight lines away from the centre of the frame come out curved. I knew using the appropriate lens profile in editing would correct this, so essentially, it becomes an extreme wide-angle lens.

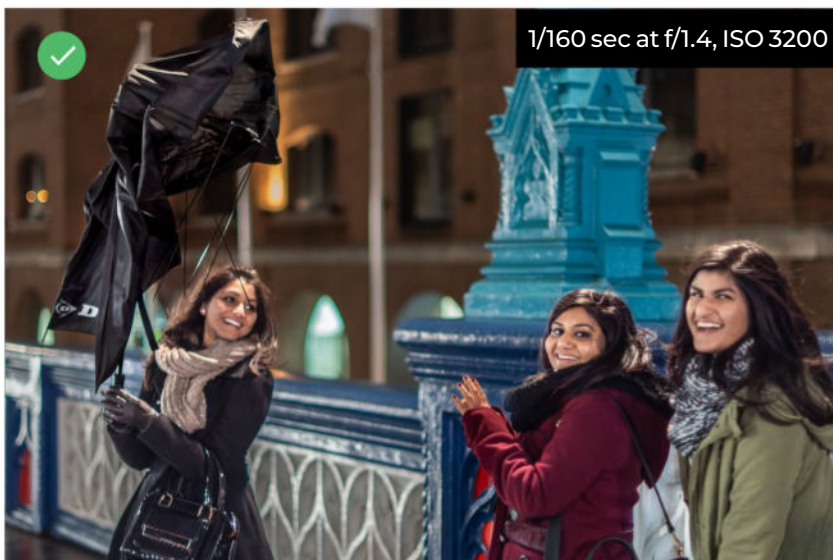


Will Cheung



STORMY, STORMY NIGHT

It was a rainy, windy evening and I had gone out with a camera and a fast-aperture 50mm lens to capture a few pictures. I spotted these girls snapping themselves with their inside-out umbrella and asked if I could take their picture. The camera was already set to ISO 3200 for the street lighting and with the f/1.4 lens wide open, there was limited depth of field, so I aimed the focus point at the girl in the centre. Keeping it simple with just one lens is a great way of working. There's no zooming to think about and reframing is done by moving closer to or further away from the subject. The fast aperture helped too, of course.

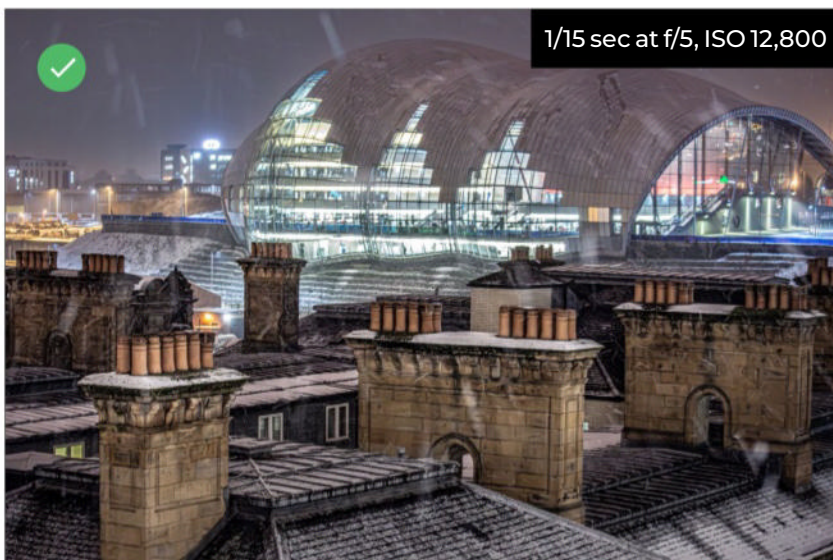


Will Cheung



SNOW ON THE TYNE

Impromptu photo opportunities, regardless of the conditions, are one of the joys of modern imaging. This view from the Tyne Bridge in Newcastle, with The Sage sitting on a foreground of rooftops, is much photographed, but the snow made it especially worth getting the camera out. My camera was fitted with a 70-300mm zoom, which isn't ideal, but in the conditions, I wasn't able to swap optics. Set to 70mm and resting on the bridge parapet, I grabbed a handheld shot at a high ISO, using a shutter of 1/15 sec to blur the snow. Back home, I regretted not making more of an effort and taking a few more shots, but that's hindsight for you.



Will Cheung



Mastering ISO is a core skill to learn

Knowing which speed suits the situation will improve your shots

Aperture and shutter speed are often considered the senior members of the exposure trinity, but just because you can delegate the Auto ISO feature and leave it to the camera, don't underrate ISO. Of course, Auto ISO is a powerful and practical feature that deserves to be used, although you should set your own limits

rather than rely on the default settings. However, understanding ISO's potential and when you should take control will benefit your photography. As always, learning a new skill takes practice and time, and you will probably make the odd mistake, but learning from making errors is a great way to learn.

Nine scenarios where ISO control takes priority



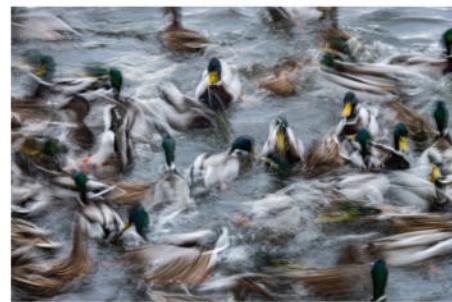
TALES FROM THE WOODS

Shooting on a dull day is a challenge and even more so when tackling an active subject with a telezoom. However, modern cameras have impressive high ISO performance – this shot was taken at ISO 12,800 and is shown here without any denoising.



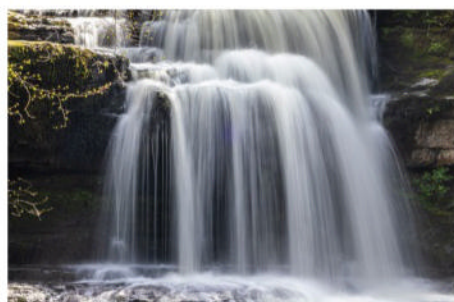
ON THE MOVE

A rocking train is tricky, so push up the ISO to allow a fast enough shutter speed for a sharp result. In this case, ISO 6400 allowed an exposure of 1/800 sec at f/2.8. Interior lighting can result in a colour cast, so shoot in raw format and adjust in editing.



CREATIVE BLUR

For moving subjects, try setting a low ISO to allow a slow shutter to blur the scene. Here, an exposure of 1/4 sec at f/16 was enough to blur the birds without them becoming featureless streaks. On this dull day, even ISO 1000 produced a lovely effect.



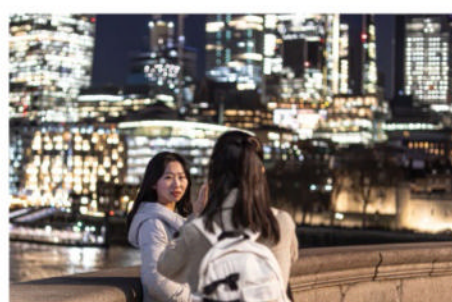
GOING WITH THE FLOW

Shooting flowing water with a slow shutter is a powerful technique. The speed depends on the effect you want and the velocity of the water. Fast water blurs nicely even with a quick shutter speed, but try varying it from 1/30 sec to a few seconds.



MIX SHARP ACTION AND BLUR

With action, the assumption is to use a fast shutter and high ISO to freeze movement, but it is dictated by the subject and the desired effect. Here, using a fast shutter speed of 1/1000 sec gave a static result and blur in the bike spokes would have been better.



URBAN LIFE

For street shooting, good high ISO performance means you can use a fast shutter in poor lighting. Autofocus can be uncertain and a larger focusing zone can be more reliable than spot focus but try your camera's options and see which works best.



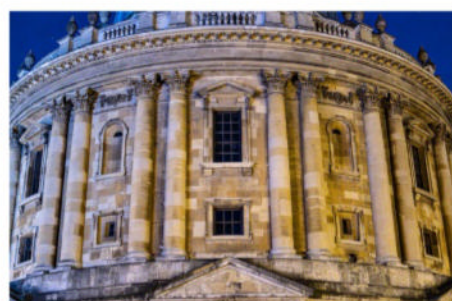
DEER ME!

Light levels after dawn are still low, so a high ISO is needed for sharp shots, particularly with a long lens. For this shot, a 400-800mm telezoom at 800mm was used and while image stabilising technology helps, a monopod gave extra stability.



BIRDS ON THE WING

Many cameras have electronic shutters with ultra-fast speeds, but older models with electronic shutters may suffer from rolling curtain distortion. For this parakeet, 1/32,000 sec was used and, even on a bright day, ISO 4000 was needed.



NIGHT MOVES

The freedom to shoot dim scenes at high ISO speeds without a tripod is liberating. Oxford's Bodleian Library isn't well lit, so ISO 25,000 was needed to give an exposure of 1/25 sec at f/1.4. Considering the high ISO, the image quality is good.

Pros and cons

How to use ISO to help achieve your best shots

Control ISO and aperture, shutter speed will follow

ISO is the new kid on the block when it comes to creative control of your images. With film photography, the only control you had over ISO was deciding which speed film to load. Short of swapping films around, that was pretty much it.

However, with digital photography, ISO is a full member of the exposure trinity, so you can change ISO for every picture you take, if you feel that way inclined. Balancing three settings might not appeal, but you can task the camera to do the work for you with Auto ISO, or you can assess the light and dial in changes manually. The choice is yours.

✓ Take control

Many cameras have a dedicated ISO button or dial, but many don't, and it's worth dedicating a function button so you can call up the ISO menu and adjust speeds while the camera is up to the eye.

✓ Stay sharp, avoid blur

Image quality suffers as you ascend the ISO scale and, while using a super-fast speed is not ideal, having a sharp, grainy photo is infinitely preferable to a blurred, cleaner picture.

✓ Shoot speed for mood

Using fast ISOs to make sure you get sharp shots is a good thing, but there is also the pictorial side of this powerful member of the exposure trinity to consider. Using a super-fast ISO for a grainy,

gritty look can add mood to your shots, especially if you are shooting monochrome.

✓ Editing power

Denoising photos in editing can benefit high-ISO photos hugely so it's worth investing in a software or plug-in that has a denoise option. You don't have to denoise every photo because that takes time and eats up storage space, depending on the software. Low-ISO shots can also benefit from denoising to really bring out fine detail.

✗ Be aware of shake

A low ISO gives the best quality and the ability to cope with a wide dynamic range, but it also comes with the risk of unsharp photos if you're shooting handheld. To avoid this, take care with your shutter speeds, especially when you're using a telephoto lens, or use a tripod for extra stability.

✗ Clean it up

If you're shooting in jpeg format at fast ISOs, use High ISO noise reduction. It doesn't slow down your shooting and the benefits can be significant. The high setting is often best avoided because fine details can have an oddly smooth look.

✗ Upgrade your camera

Older digital cameras are more prone to noise, even at modest ISOs, so consider upgrading to a more recent model. If you don't have the budget, there's often great value in buying second-hand.

In the shadows
Grain is most evident in the shadows and dark areas.

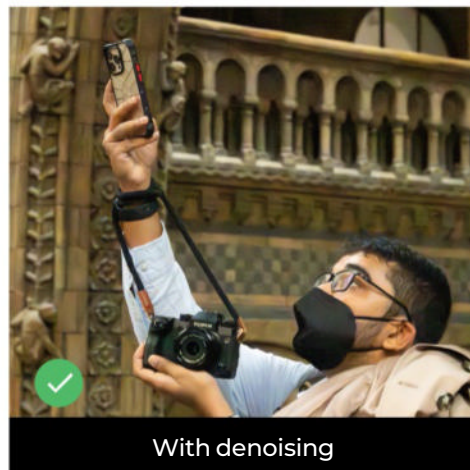
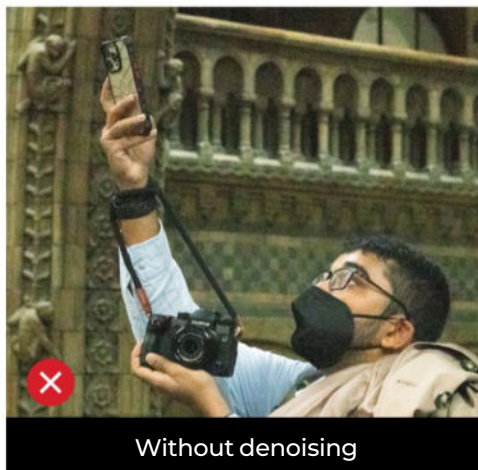
Software skills Eliminate noise at home

Obvious noise or grain in your images can be banished in software at the editing stage

The ability to denoise images in software has been available for several years, but the latest denoising features, plug-ins and dedicated software utilise AI and are amazing. Manual denoising is also an option and many photographers prefer this.

One thing to watch with AI denoising is that it can be too aggressive and introduce artifacts, add haloes or over-sharpen fine detail and the result looks false and overdone.

Denoising images can result in large files. The original denoising function in Adobe Lightroom Classic produced a separate DNG file, which consumed a lot of memory. The feature has now evolved and the data of the denoised file is saved into the catalogue, so its size increases.



Overexpose slightly
Letting in more light by overexposing keeps noise down.



Fast and grainy
High ISOs give grainy images if you are after that look.

Will Cheung

Camera know-how Auto ISO

The clever feature that's worth its weight in gold for getting your images just right

By default, the camera's Auto ISO feature is usually set to work for the whole native ISO range. It depends on what you shoot and your threshold when it comes to image quality, but setting a lower upper limit is advised. For most situations, setting a range of ISO 400 to 3200 is advised. With the higher settings on most cameras capable of producing critically good pictures, any grain will only be noticeable on big images. Many cameras have the extra parameter of setting a minimum shutter speed before ISO adjusts. When the lighting drops, the camera will set slower and slower shutter speeds for the right exposure until it reaches your chosen limit, then the camera starts pushing up the ISO.

ISO speed settings	
ISO speed	400
ISO speed range	L-H
Auto range	400-3200
Min. shutter spd.	1/250

Min. shutter spd.				
Manual(1/250)				
Auto				
Manual				
1/8000	1/4000	1/2000	1/1000	1/500
1/250	1/125	1/60	1/30	1/15
1/8	1/4	0"5	1"	

By default, the camera's Auto ISO feature works for the whole native ISO range, but try to avoid setting the upper limit too high.

Shoot photos like a pro

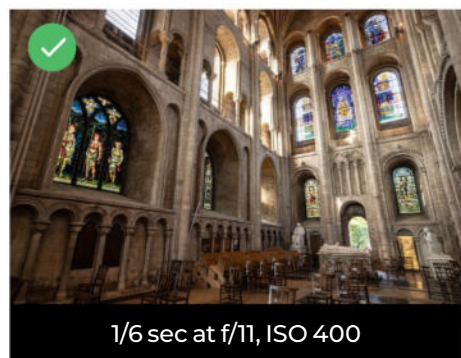
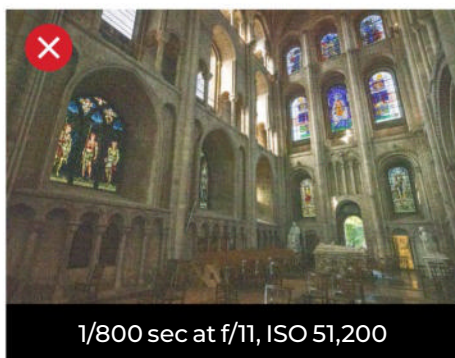
Learn to appreciate the light and what it's doing

We can't do without light, but it's easy to walk around completely oblivious to the effect it has on everyday objects and scenes. Most people do just that; however, you can improve your photography skills simply by paying attention to what's going on and its impact on the scene in front of you, which includes its intensity, direction and colour.

To enhance your appreciation of light, play a game with yourself as you're walking around. Calculate what aperture, shutter speed and ISO are needed for a scene and check how right you are with the help of the camera's meter or by just taking a photo. It's a simple and powerful way of training your brain and, ultimately, this will benefit your photographs, too.

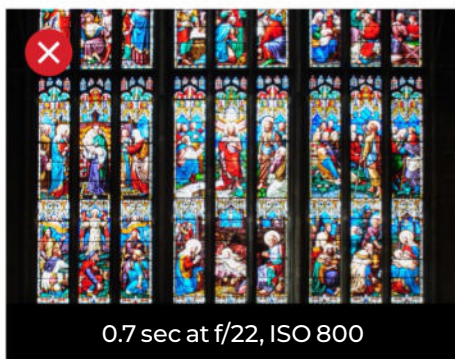
Don't speed

Most cameras have extra settings beyond the native ISO range, but at the fast end, the image quality may be poor. If using a tripod is not permitted, you may be tempted to use high ISO speeds, but you'd be better off using a slower speed and taking care with the shot, perhaps by resting against a wall or column to steady the camera and making sure the image stabiliser is switched on.



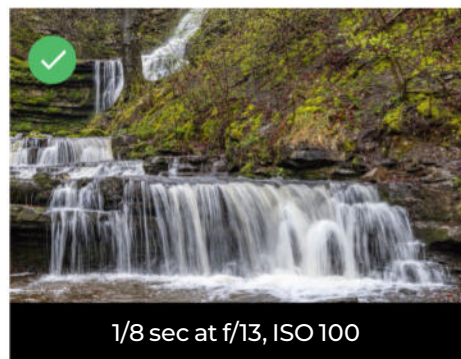
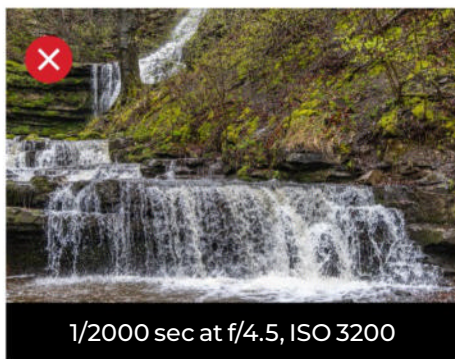
Slow down and get creative

The straight exposure of the stained glass window came out well in this shot. Shooting a zoomburst at 0.7 sec is possible, but it's a bit of a rush. Stopping down the lens and selecting a lower ISO enabled a two-second exposure. This gave more time to zoom the lens and also meant that zooming didn't start immediately, allowing time for the coloured glass and window frame to register.



Which speed?

When it comes to flowing water, shutter speed selection is important, but the best speed depends on the water's velocity. If you like your water sharp and crisp, a fast shutter is needed, but if you prefer a soft look, then slow shutter speeds are your friends. Setting a wide or smaller aperture will obviously help with shutter speed choice, but so too will varying ISO, which can be the better option because the depth of field stays constant.



Camera skills Noise control

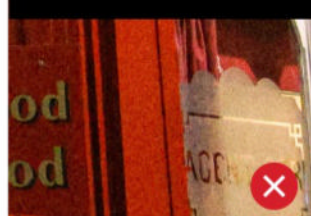
Set up the camera for better quality photos at high ISOs

Many digital cameras have high ISO noise reduction, a software algorithm that is applied to jpegs as they are saved in-camera. It's a useful feature with various strengths usually available and the process is quick, so that it doesn't compromise shooting speeds. Some cameras feature a multi-shot option where several frames are taken and the results are merged

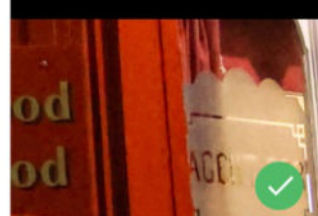
in-camera. However, this mode only works on static scenes captured with a tripod-mounted camera.

With jpegs being the final file where there's little editing room, you need to avoid aggressive noise reduction, which can give an overly smooth, slightly false appearance, so it's best to use the low or normal setting. In-camera NR does not usually affect raw files.

Without ISO reduction



With ISO reduction



ABOVE: Compare the detail with and without ISO reduction, taken from the inset image.





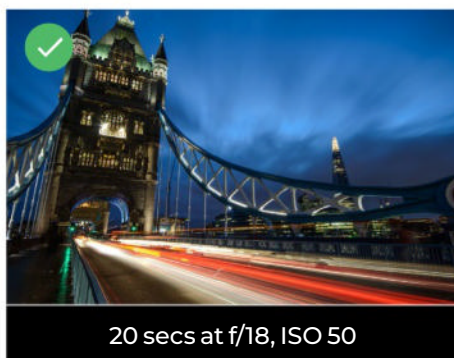
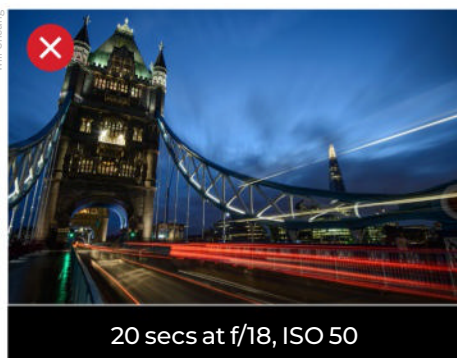
Will Cheung



Read the light

Street photography at night is a great way to enjoy your camera's high ISO skills, but it's worth learning to recognise situations when the camera's exposure system might be fooled. The strong light in this scene fooled the camera into underexposure, but dialling in +1 compensation helped give a little more shadow detail. The technique is something of a balancing act, as you don't want to overexpose the highlights and make them unrecoverable in processing.

Will Cheung



Tackling traffic trails

Night shooting might have you exploring the camera's higher ISO settings for street and handheld shooting, but it's also a great time to get the tripod out and explore the slower speeds with light trails. The camera settings for both shots were the same, and the only difference was timing. With light trails, you make your own luck, so watch the traffic flow and time the shutter release when there is a good flow of cars, avoiding large trucks.

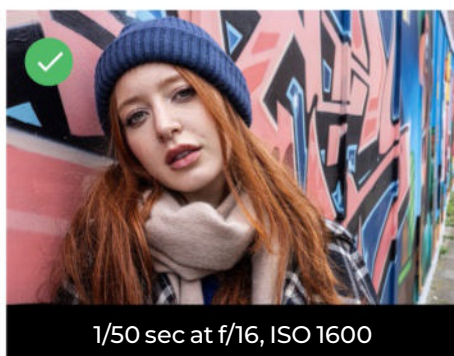
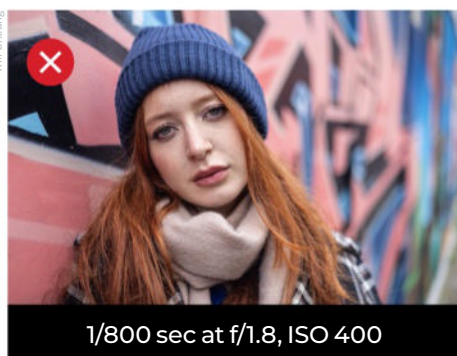
Will Cheung



On stage

Photographing a concert is a challenge with low light levels, constantly changing colours and subject movement, but controlling your ISO will help you get the best out of the situation. Using Auto ISO can be an advantage here, so set a range of between ISO 3200 and 12,800. Or just be prepared to adjust the ISO setting as the lighting changes, setting a faster speed when there's less light around. Having ISO set to a function button will make this easier.

Will Cheung



People poser

Juggling with the exposure trinity can give your portraits different looks, in particular how the background appears. Shooting at a wide aperture throws the background out of focus, and in this example, shooting at f/1.8 allowed a medium ISO speed and a fast shutter. Bringing the background into sharper focus required a small f/stop, but for this, the ISO speed had to be increased to allow a fast enough shutter to avoid camera shake.

Pro tip Spot-on metering

Work the exposure settings for perfect files

Scenes with an extremely bright subject against a darker background are often best underexposed by one or two stops. That's because the dark background fools the camera into thinking the scene needs more exposure, and the result is an overexposed subject. Adjusting exposure can be quickly done by using the compensation dial when you're shooting in auto-exposure mode. This will make the overall scene dark, but don't worry because that will be resolved when the exposure of the shot is corrected in raw processing later on. By underexposing the scene, what you have done is to ensure that the subject retains detail in the highlights, so that you can recover them in post-processing. Exposing according to the camera meter means that there is a risk of the highlights blowing out, meaning they can't be recovered, producing a total loss of detail.

With -1 stop compensation



Corrected in RAW processing





Shot of the month

Wildlife photographer **Thomas Vijayan** spent hours lying on the ice before capturing this shot

A tender moment in the Antarctic ice: an emperor penguin chick nestled between its parents, shot with a Canon EOS R3 and a super-telephoto zoom.

Thomas Vijayan
Wildlife photographer

Title: 'Emperor Penguin Family'

Camera: Canon EOS R3

Lens: Canon RF 100-500mm F4.5-7.1L IS USM

Settings: 1/16,000 sec at f/7.1, ISO 125

The 30th annual Nature's Best International Awards drew entries from photographers around the globe, celebrating the beauty and diversity of the natural world across 11 categories, writes *Kim Bunermann*. Both professionals and amateurs are recognised, showcasing talent while raising awareness of environmental and wildlife conservation.

This year's overall winner is a passionate wildlife photographer from Ontario, Canada. Thomas Vijayan has been awarded the Grand Prize for his 'Emperor Penguin Family' image – a chick nestled within the embrace of its devoted parents amidst the icy Antarctic expanse. Captured

in Antarctica, Thomas shot the image handheld with a Canon EOS R3, a high-end full-frame mirrorless built for speed and precision, which is ideal for use in extreme environments. Before taking the shot, he spent hours lying flat on the ice, allowing the penguins to grow comfortable with his presence.

"Gradually, I began to photograph them from various angles, capturing their intimate interactions," Thomas explains. "This particular image holds a special place in my heart as it portrays the profound familial affection shared among these remarkable birds.

"Emperor penguins in Antarctica epitomise extraordinary familial bonds. Within the icy expanse, these majestic creatures orchestrate a delicate symphony of cooperation and nurturing to safeguard their chicks

against the unforgiving polar conditions. Both parents actively engage in the intricate dance of parenthood, alternating between egg incubation and foraging expeditions in the icy depths.

"Within their synchronised embrace, the chicks find solace in the wilderness, nestled in the warmth of their devoted parents. This display of familial unity speaks volumes about their resilience and fortitude in one of the harshest environments on Earth." ●

'Emperor Penguin Family' and other winning images will be featured in the Winter Special 2025 30th Anniversary Edition of Nature's Best Photography magazine. To view more winners, visit the Nature's Best Photography magazine website: www.naturesbestphotography.org

Digital Darkroom

Transform your photos with our easy, effective guides



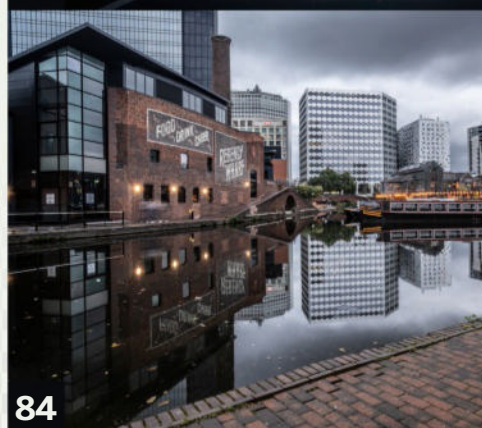
PLUS! 130 BONUS
ACTIONS & PRESETS
Page 92



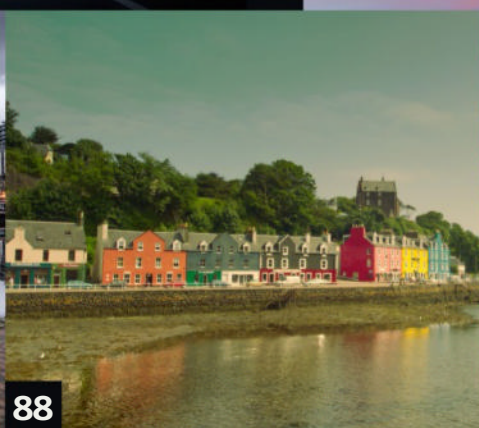
82



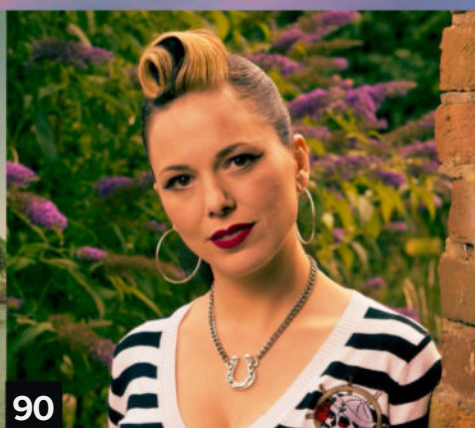
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PAGE 82
Photoshop/Lightroom
With Google's new AI Nano Banana, image editing is child's play

PAGE 84
Lightroom
Edit your cityscape shots to give them a gritty, urban look

PAGE 86
Photoshop
Bring out the best in colour in your sunrises and sunsets

PAGE 88
Affinity Photo 2
Give your images a Wes Anderson vibe with Affinity Photo

PAGE 90
Photoshop
Use gradient maps to discover new ways to colour tone your images

MEET YOUR TRAINERS Edit like a pro with their expert insights



James Abbott
Specialising in landscapes and portraits, James Abbott is an advanced Photoshop user and has created hundreds of tutorials.



James Paterson
With over a decade as a writer and photographer, James Paterson knows which Photoshop and Lightroom tools and techniques matter most.



Sean McCormack
A photographer and writer based in Galway, Ireland, Sean McCormack is the author of books including *The Indispensable Guide to Lightroom CC*.



Wendy Evans LRPS
The author of over a dozen books on the subjects of photography, CGI and Photoshop, Wendy Evans has used Photoshop since version 3.0.



Make like a banana

With Nano Banana, image editing is child's play, so is it the end for Photoshop tutorials? **James Paterson** asks a seven-year-old...

Over 15 years of writing about Photoshop, I've always aimed to cover the tools and techniques that can speed up your photo editing, so you can spend less time looking at a computer screen and more time with your camera. With that in mind, I say with pleasure, this could be my last ever Photoshop tutorial. Photo editing has changed and many older tools and techniques have been superseded by AI. Editing is now as simple as ABC, and that is a good thing for all of us.

Why now? Two words: Nano Banana. This is the unofficial name for Google's AI image-editing model, aka Gemini. It's now available as a generative option in Photoshop, and it blows away Adobe's own Firefly AI. Not only are the results far superior, but it excels at preserving the core elements of your original image, which is something that we photographers prize. It's so easy to use that even a child could do it.

So, after taking a few shots of this seven-year-old rock star, I asked him to dictate to Photoshop what he wanted. When photo editing becomes child's play, there's little left to learn. So this might not just be my last Photoshop tutorial; it could well be yours, too.

Download your files

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Download your files and video tutorial from the folder titled 'Photoshop_Nano Banana'.



10
profiles for
Photoshop



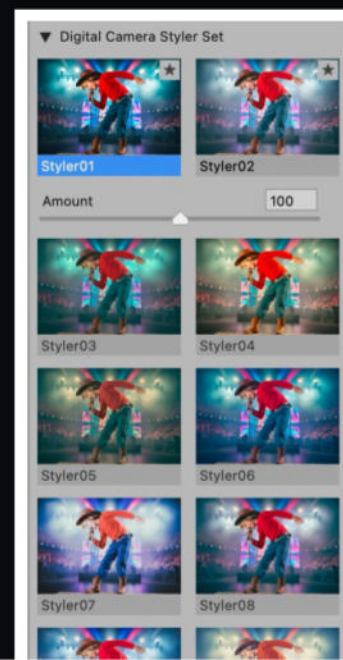
4-minute
video
tutorial



Project
files and
instructions

Use your free profiles

Whether you're styling up your own lovingly crafted photos or polishing AI-generated slop, profiles can be useful one-click colour treatments. We've supplied 10 free profiles amongst the project files. To install them, open Camera Raw, click the three-dot flyout menu in the Profile Browser and choose Import Profiles and Presets, then navigate to the file. Once installed, you'll see the 'Style Set' appear in the list of profile sets, ready to be applied to any image. The Profiles will also sync with Lightroom the next time you open it.



1

Shoot an image

AI can only do so much, so a strong photo is essential as a starting point, with a clear idea of how the finished image might look. We shot this in our back garden at night, with one flash to the left fitted with a silver umbrella, and another flash positioned behind to the right and fired bare. This gives stage-like side and backlighting. When adding your AI prompts, make it clear that you want the key parts of the original image, such as the face, the pose and the lighting, to remain the same.

2

Say what you want

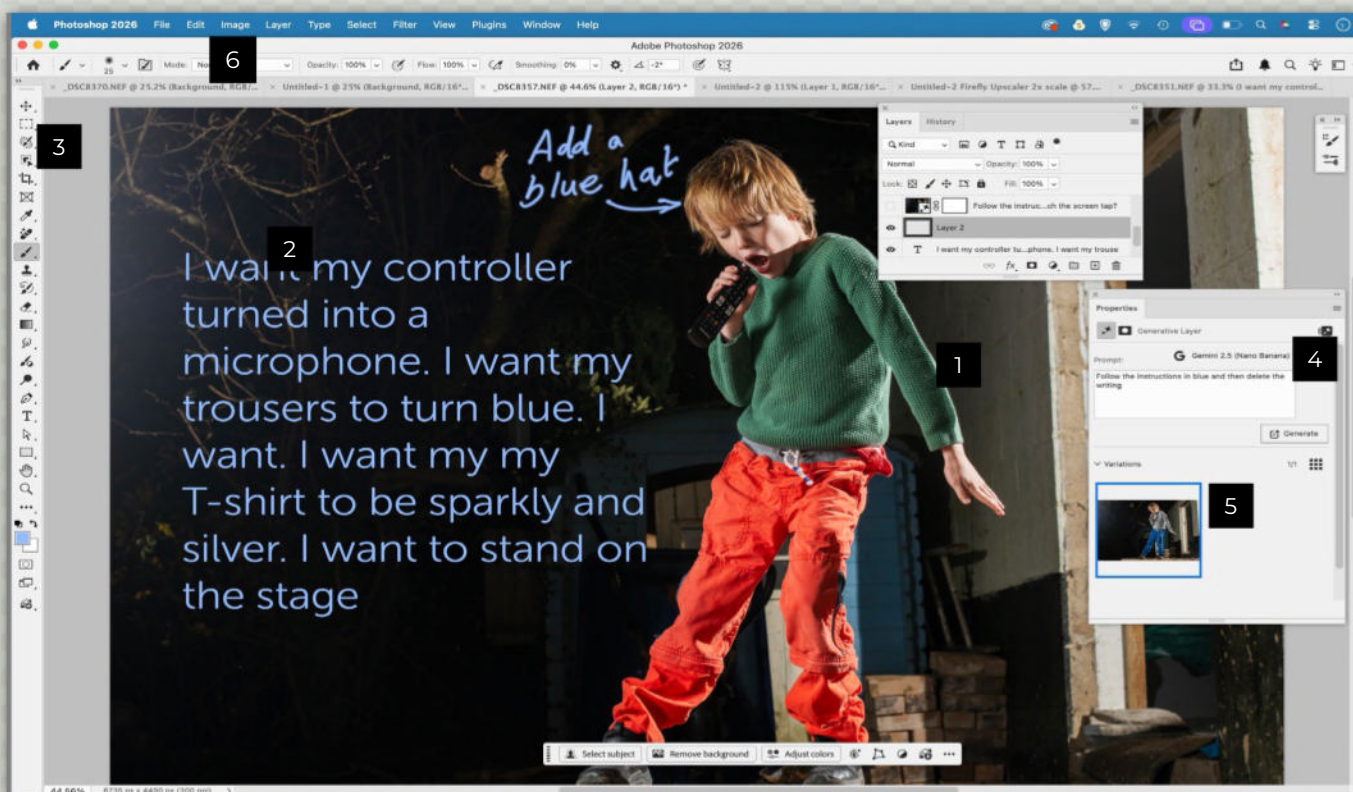
Begin by saying what you want to do to the image.

You don't even need to type it out. Here, we used the Type tool (drag out a box) and hit the dictate key (Fn+F5 on Mac, Windows key +H on Windows). Then our seven-year-old subject simply described what he wanted to do to the image, and the dictator transcribed that into the Photoshop type box. If you have a stylus, you could also write notes, instructions and arrows by hand with the brush tool.

3

Make a selection

Once we've dictated or scrawled a few notes on the image, we're almost ready to fill. But first, we need to make a selection. Either hit Cmd/Ctrl+A to select the entire frame, or use a selection tool to target certain areas (this leaves unselected areas untouched). The Selection Brush is useful as it lets you paint a selection, just like a brush. You could also toggle on Quick Mask (Q) and paint to make a selection with the brush tool. For further fills, make sure you always make a selection first.



4

Choose Nano Banana

After writing your instructions and making a selection, go to Generative Fill. Either hit the Generate button in the Contextual Toolbar, or go to Fill > Generative Fill, where we can choose our generative model. By default, it's set to Firefly (Fi), but click to change it to Gemini (Nano Banana), Google's AI image-editing model. Once done, type something like 'follow the instructions in blue' and hit the Generate button.

5

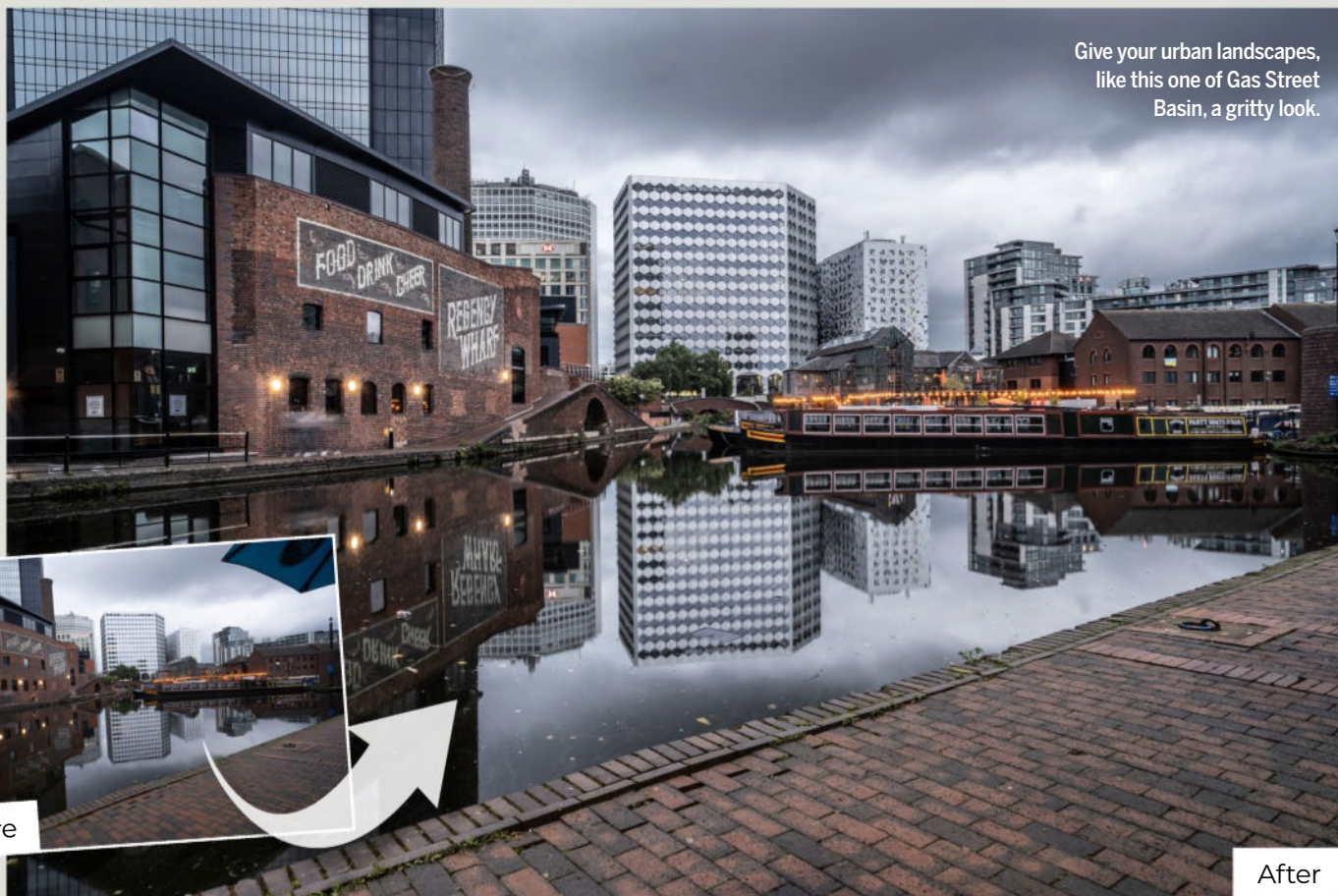
Fine-tune the results

After generating new content, there are several options in the Properties panel. If you're not satisfied with the results, hit Generate again, tweak the prompt or adjust the notes on the image and redo the fill to change things. It can be useful to add elements one at a time and build up your generative fills on different layers. To do so, make a new selection each time and a new fill, and it will appear on its own layer.

6

Try Generative Upscale

The biggest drawback of Nano Banana is its maximum resolution of 1024px. Zoom in and you'll see the quality of the photo is reduced, including the elements of your original image. For finer detail, try using Generative Upscale. You might need to reduce the image size first, as it still has the same resolution as your original. Here, we resized to 2500px wide, then went to Image > Generative Upscale to double this to 5000px.



Give your urban landscapes, like this one of Gas Street Basin, a gritty look.

Before

After

Gritty urban edits

Sean McCormack explains how to boost your cityscape shots with Lightroom tools

I don't know about you, but I love doing urban landscapes just as much as I love being out in nature and the countryside. The latter traditionally tries to act like man has had no hand in the scene, but being in a city is all about the human influence, from gritty back alleys to city palaces. It could be a row of quaint cottages in a suburb or towering office blocks, or even the juxtaposition of both.

All of that is present in this scene, taken at Birmingham's Gas Street Basin. I love visiting here whenever The Photography & Video Show is on at the NEC and capturing the area as it turns from day to night, with blue revealing its magic. This scene was taken earlier in the day, though, so would benefit from a muted, more gritty look.

However, along with the change in appearance, there are some other issues to fix. While running and gunning with the tripod, the frame isn't quite level, and the verticals look weird. Normally, Lightroom Classic's Upright feature can fix this, but it didn't work for this photo, most likely due to the variety of angles in the scene. Fear not, though; there is another way to fix it quickly.

Download your files

www.digitalcameraworld.com/dc302
Download your files and video tutorial from the folder titled 'Lightroom_Urban edits'



Two
presets for
Lightroom



11-minute
video
tutorial



Project
files and
instructions

Use B&W profiles

Urban scenes can look great in black and white, so give this a try. For a quick look, press V, or go to the Profile Browser in Basic. Click B&W to filter the options and then choose whichever thumbnail jumps out at you.

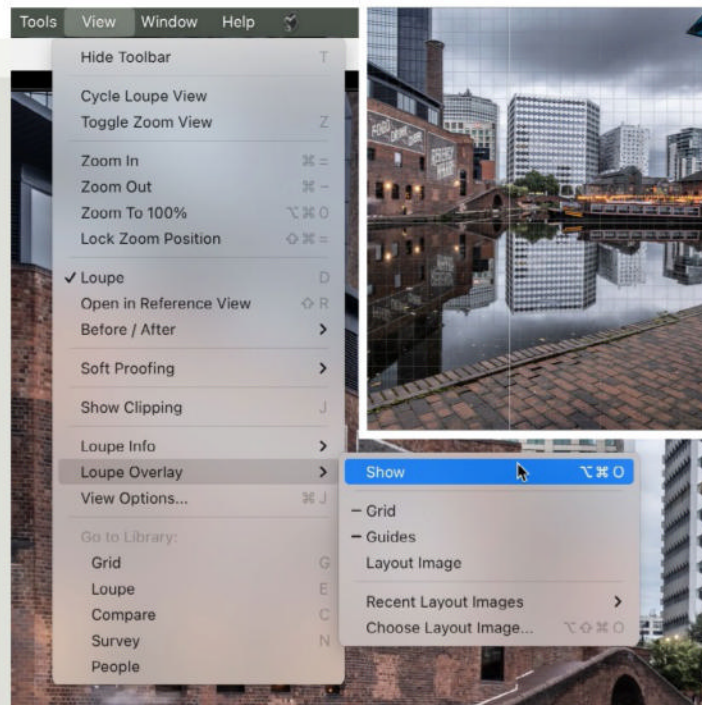




1

Getting the look

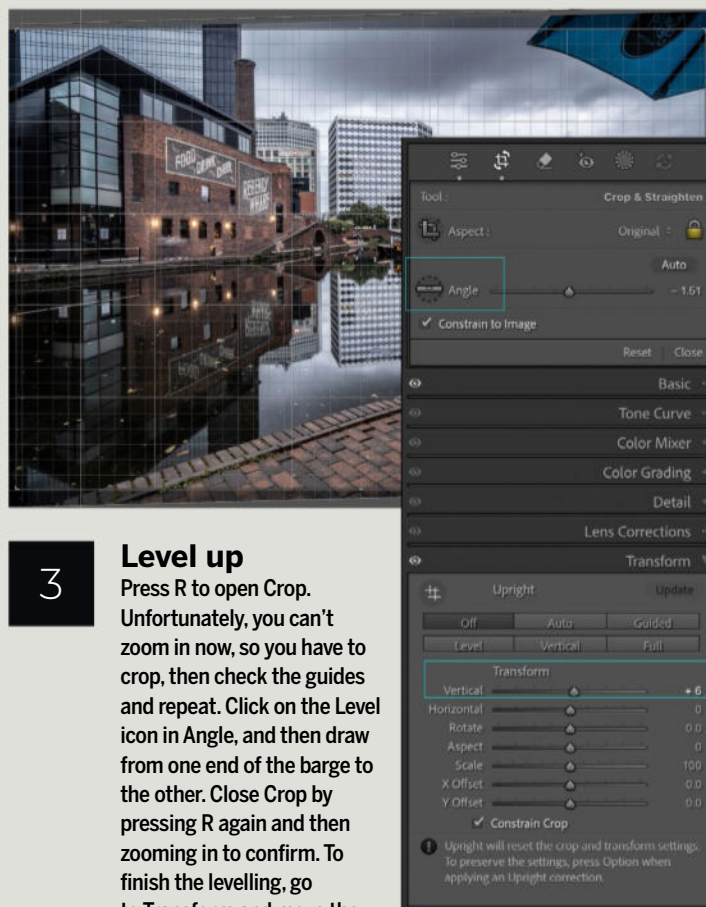
In the Basic Panel, go to the Presence section. You're going to begin with the Clarity slider. Clarity, which was called Punch in development, controls microcontrast. Unlike the Contrast slider, it reduces saturation, which gives a great effect on this photo. Don't hold back, go all the way to 100! Pull the Highlights back to -60, and then increase Shadows to 30 to smooth the tonality.



2

Grids and Guides

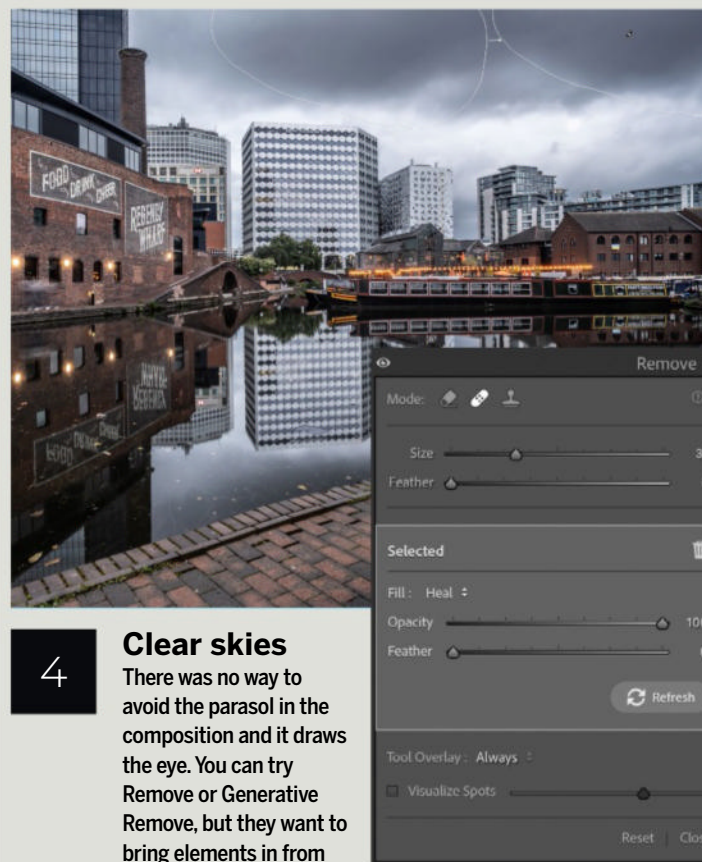
There are so many angles contained within the frame that Lightroom's automatic level option has no idea where to start. We know that the boat should be level on the water, so that's a great start. To get some help, go to the View Menu and head down to Loupe Overlay. Click Show, with Grid and Guides on. Hold Control or Command to move the guides to the barge, lining up with the water at the front of the barge and one of the buildings.



3

Level up

Press R to open Crop. Unfortunately, you can't zoom in now, so you have to crop, then check the guides and repeat. Click on the Level icon in Angle, and then draw from one end of the barge to the other. Close Crop by pressing R again and then zooming in to confirm. To finish the levelling, go to Transform and move the Vertical slider to the right. Use the grid and guides to make sure the buildings and reflections are in a vertical line.



4

Clear skies

There was no way to avoid the parasol in the composition and it draws the eye. You can try Remove or Generative Remove, but they want to bring elements in from the photo rather than just the sky. Instead, use the Heal tool to paint out the parasol and then move the source point to get a better result. You may have to nudge the destination too (your original paint position).



Before

Make your Golden Hour shots pop

Give your sunrise and sunset shots a stylish blast of effects in Photoshop to enhance those colourful skies, says **James Abbott**

It doesn't matter how colourful a sunrise or sunset was when you captured it; there are still plenty of editing techniques that can be used to enhance your Golden Hour shots further. Most of the techniques we cover here will adjust and enhance the colours, although there is a simple blur technique that can be used to enhance the mood of landscape shots. These techniques are simple and, as always, they will help give you a deeper understanding of some of Photoshop's functionality.

These techniques can be used individually, in any combination or even all four together, which will produce a fully processed result. Of course, you can always adjust the Opacity of the different Layers to control the strength of each effect, allowing you to arrive at a more customised result. No two photos are the same, so taking a manual approach to applying techniques makes sense.

Download your files

www.digitalcameraworld.com/dc302
Download your files and video tutorial from the folder titled 'Photoshop_Colourful Skies'



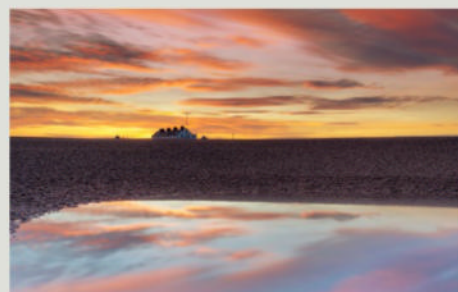
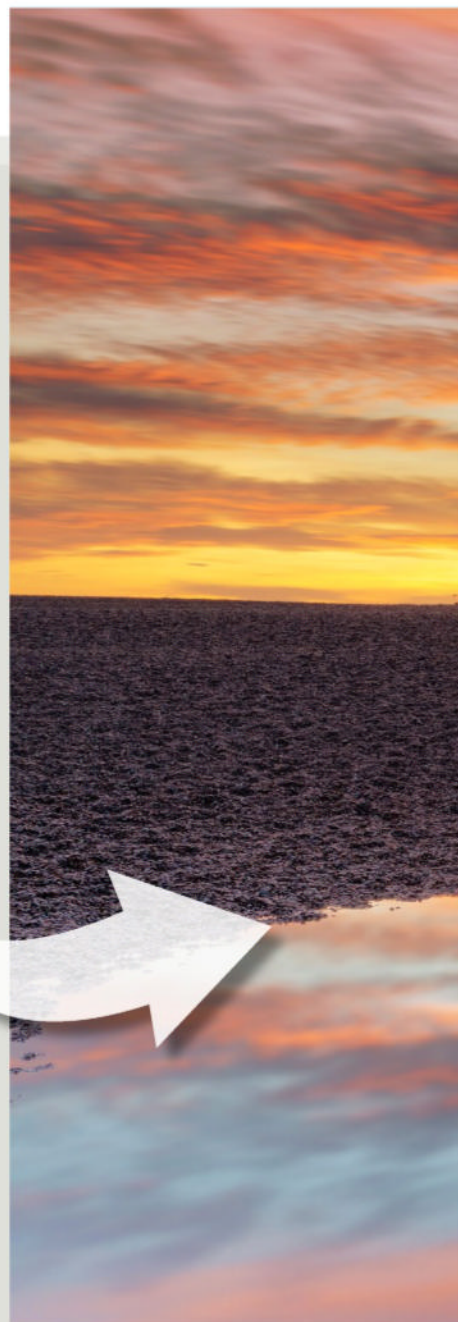
Four
Actions for
Photoshop



6-minute
video
tutorial



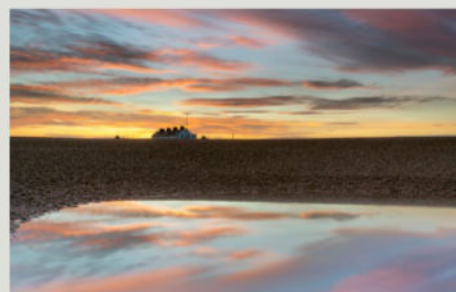
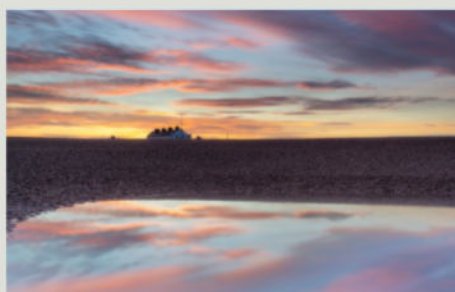
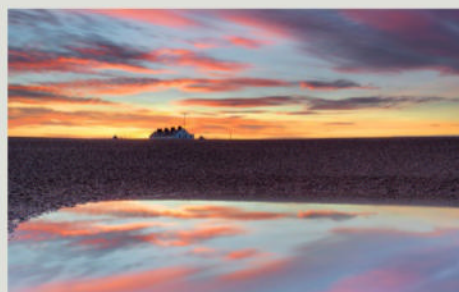
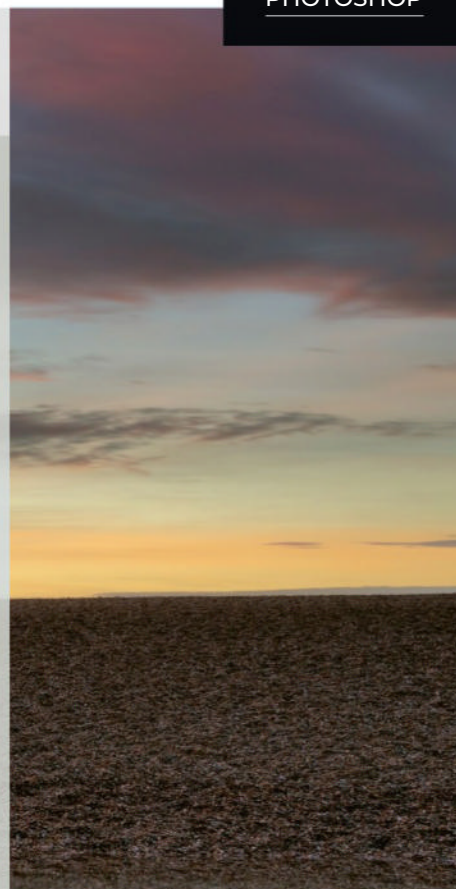
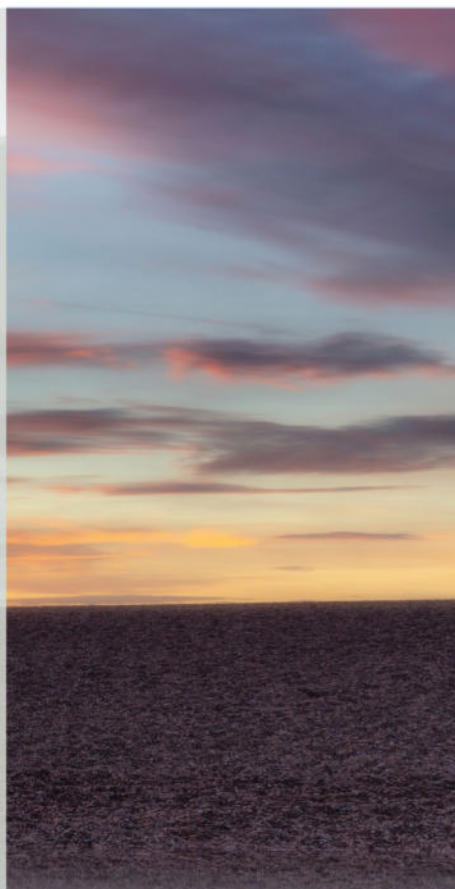
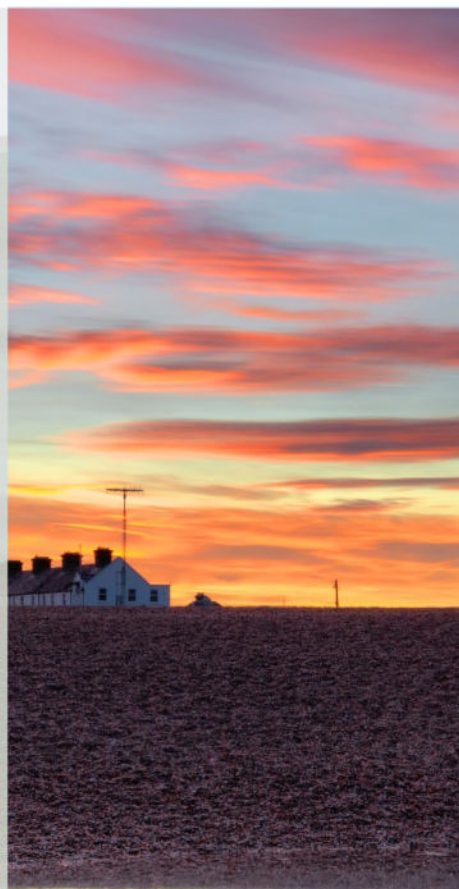
Project
files and
instructions



1

Enhance colours

Left-click on the Foreground Color and set the Color Picker to bright orange or pink, depending on the sky colour. Click on the Create new fill or adjustment layer icon at the bottom of the Layers panel and select Gradient. Stick with the default Linear, but set the Angle to -90° and hit OK. Set the Blending Mode to Overlay, click on the Layer Mask of the Adjustment Layer, then go to Image > Apply Image and click OK. Run Apply Image either once or twice and adjust Opacity.



2

Increase sky saturation

Create a Hue/Saturation Adjustment Layer and when the dialog opens, click on the Red channel. Increase saturation to +20 and click on the Yellow channel and set Saturation to +30. Finally, click on Magenta and set Saturation to +10. Increasing saturation in this targeted way produces a more refined result, where only specific channels are targeted rather than simply increasing saturation globally. Typically, this doesn't look realistic when using Hue/Saturation.

3

Simple Orton Effect

Click on the Background Layer and press Ctrl/Cmd+J to make a copy, which will now be active. Now, go to Filter > Blur > Gaussian Blur and when the dialog opens, set Radius to 25 Pixels and click on OK. To finish, set the Opacity of the Layer to between 20 and 40. This will produce a basic Orton Effect with a painterly, ethereal look. There are more refined approaches, but the overall result suits landscape shots taken during Golden Hour and can be used with the other effects.

4

Shadow warm up

Shadows are typically cold with a hint of cyan, so we can warm up shadows and darker tones to match sunrise and sunset colours more effectively. Despite the focus on shadows, this makes the image look warmer overall. Create a Color Balance Adjustment Layer and when the dialog opens, set Tone to Shadows to target the colour adjustments we'll make predominantly to the shadows and darker tones. Now, drag the Red slider to 2 and the Yellow slider to -20.

Use colour grading techniques in Affinity to give your images the look of a Wes Anderson film.



Before



After

Wendy Evans

Colour like Wes

Wendy Evans explains how to use Affinity to give your images a Wes Anderson vibe

Last month (issue 301, page 36), we adapted an extract from the book *Shoot Like Wes* that revealed some of film-maker Wes Anderson's stylistic devices. This month, we'll show you how to create a Wes Anderson colour scheme and save it as a lookup table (LUT).

Firstly, Wes uses different colour palettes, so you can't do everything in one, all-encompassing routine. In this tutorial, we're looking at the colours in the *Asteroid City* film from 2023, but you can use the same processes to create either macros or LUTs for other colour palettes. That's the second point; saving the process as a macro gives more overall control, which you might need because all images start with different colour values; however, a lookup table is a quick and easy option.

Download your files

www.digitalcameraworld.com/dc302
Download your LUTs and project files from the folder titled 'Affinity_Colour like Wes'.



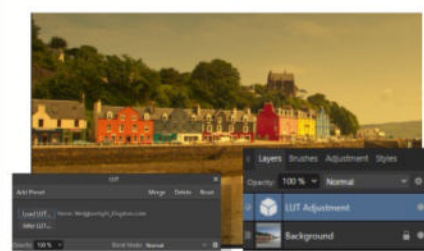
Three LUTs for Affinity Photo 2



No video tutorial this month

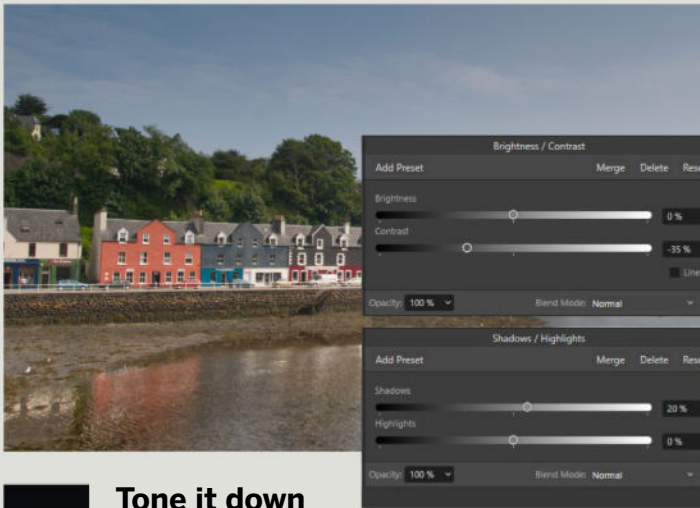


Project files to follow along



More Wes Anderson

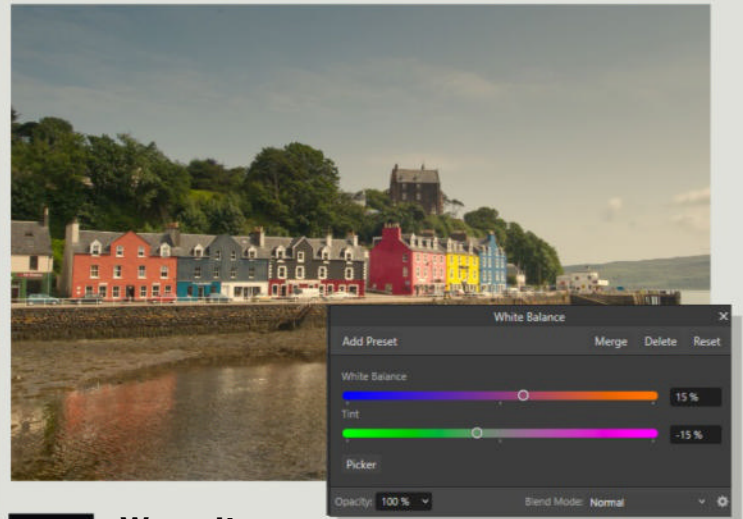
So that's the rough steps to create an *Asteroid City* vibe, but what about other Wes Anderson films? Well, firstly, there's a LUT created from this tutorial that you can download and see how it works with your images. As a bonus, I've created another two, one for *Moonrise Kingdom*, which includes some film grain, and another for *The Grand Budapest Hotel*. All three of these LUTs work with both Affinity Photo and Photoshop.



1

Tone it down

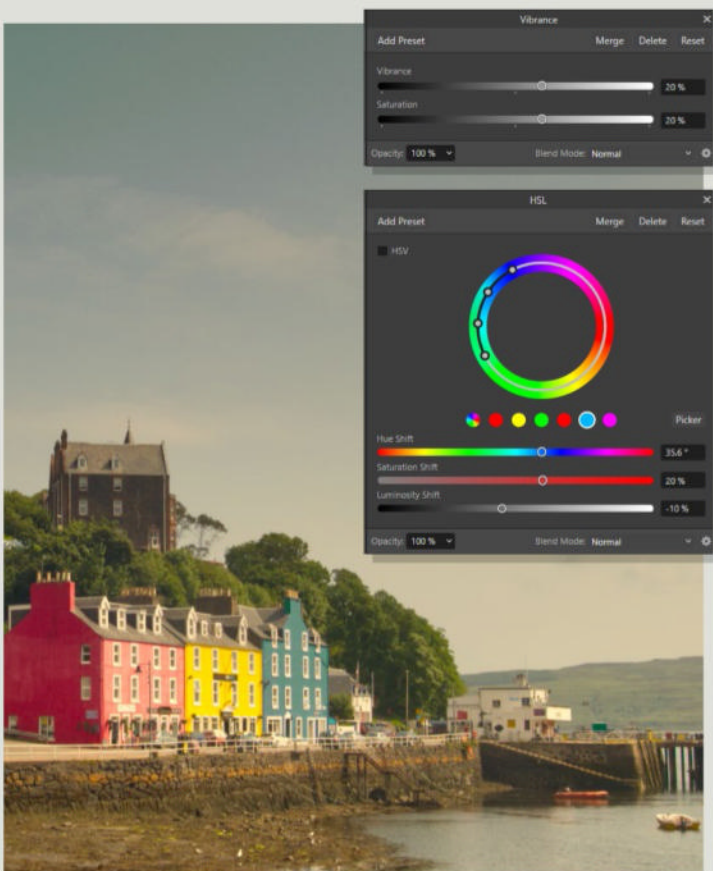
As usual, start in the Photo Persona, and in the Layers palette, click on the Adjustments icon and select Brightness and Contrast. The contrast in this film is quite flat, so reduce this to around -35 per cent. If the image you are editing is flat to start with, you may need a smaller adjustment. If the shadows are too dark, add a Shadows/Highlights adjustment layer and increase by 20 per cent.



2

Warm it up

Asteroid City has a warm tone to it, so now add an Adjustment layer for White Balance. Move the White Balance slider to the right by 15 per cent – if your image is fairly warm anyway, adjust it accordingly. Also, the film has a green undertone, so in the same adjustment, slide the Tint control to the left by -15 per cent.



3

Increase the colours

We need strong colours, so add a Vibrance Adjustment layer. Increase that by 20 per cent and the Saturation by 20 per cent. For the sky, add an HSL Adjustment layer and click on either the cyan or blue channel. Use the Picker to be more precise. Then shift the Hue to +35, Saturation +20 per cent and Luminosity -10 per cent.



4

More green please

The final step is to add more green to the mid-tones. So add a Curves Adjustment layer, select the Green channel and move the middle up – if the sky is too green, add a layer mask to restrict the effect. Export these adjustments as a single LUT by going to File > Export LUT and setting a resolution of 65 x 65 x 65.



Before



After

Get to grips with Gradient Maps

Discover new ways of colour toning your images in Photoshop, with **Wendy Evans**

Download your files

www.digitalcameraworld.com/dc302
Download your files and video tutorial from the folder titled 'Photoshop_Gradient Maps'



10 custom gradients in a GRD file



No video tutorial this month



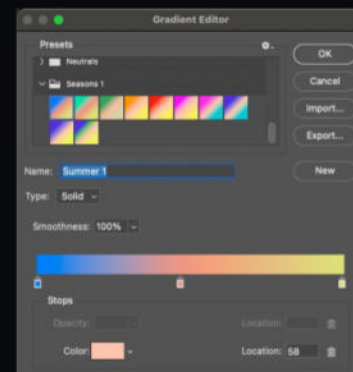
Project files and instructions

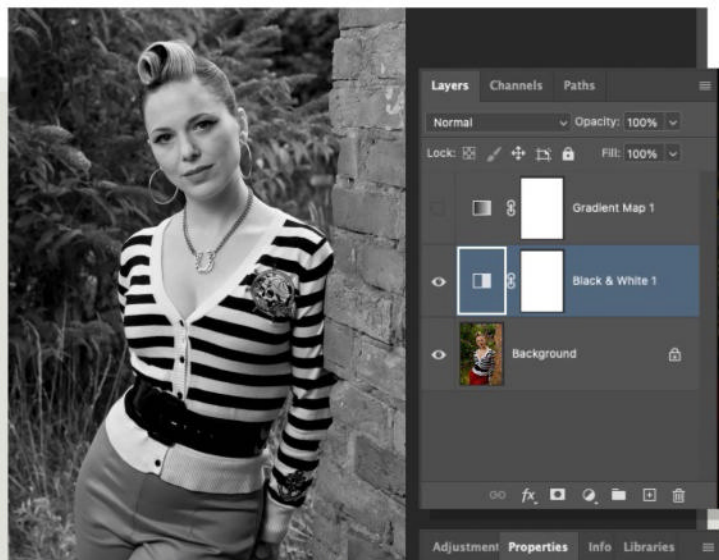
W

hat's the difference between Gradients and Gradient Maps, you ask? A Gradient is simply a layer with a progression from one colour to another. If you use a blend mode with it, then it can be incorporated into your image, but there's no subtlety here; it's exactly as the overlaid gradient progresses through the scene. On the other hand, while a Gradient Map is also a progression from one colour to another, it is mapped by tonal values from dark to light. With a Gradient Map, you can add specific colours to the shadows, midtones and highlights, wherever they appear in the image.

Custom gradients

To go with this tutorial, we're giving away 10 custom gradients. Simply go into the Gradient Editor by clicking on the gradient in a Gradient Map layer, click on Import, then navigate to where the .GRD file is. Load it and you'll now have a new folder called Seasons, which contains 10 gradients that you can experiment with.

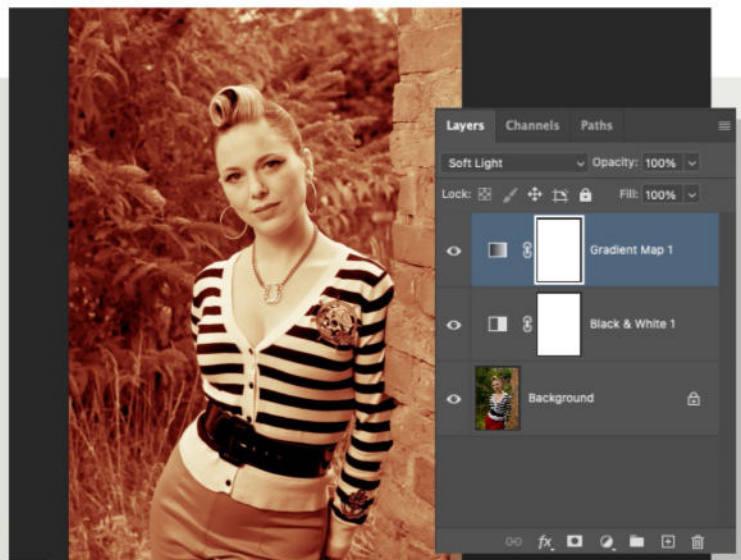




1

Toning mono images

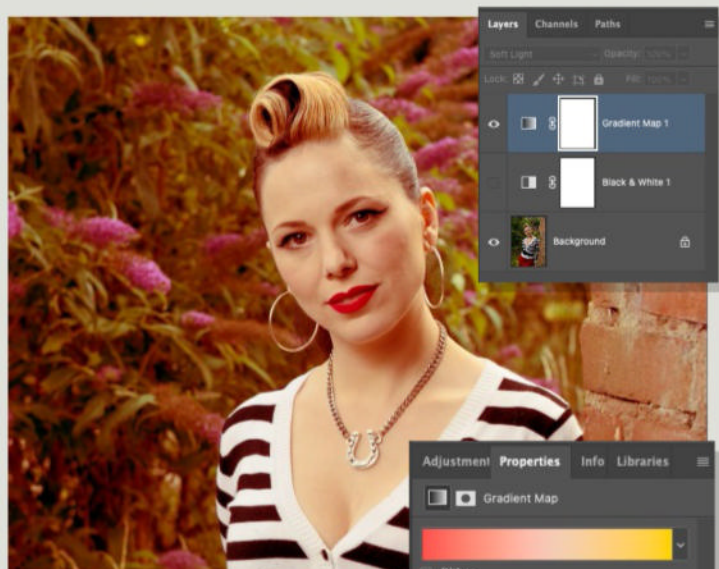
Load your image, then go to the Layers palette, add a Black and White adjustment layer. Set the Preset to Maximum White for this image – other images may require different treatments, but this one creates good skin tones and decent contrast with the background. Add a Gradient Map adjustment layer.



2

Add the gradient

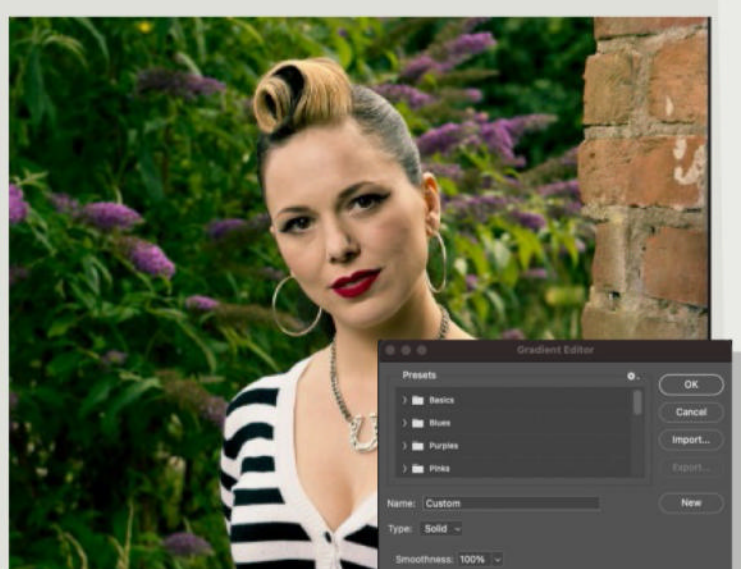
In the Properties tab for the Gradient Map, click on the down arrow next to the gradient. This reveals all the available presets; scroll down to Oranges and select No.10. Click on the down arrow again to fold this away. Then put a tick in the Reverse box to map the oranges to the shadows and the yellow to the highlights. Set the layer blend mode to Soft Light.



3

Give me some colour

We have seen how to colour tone black and white images, but it's more fun to add tones to colour images. So now delete (or make inactive) the Black and White layer. Let's edit that map now, so simply click on the gradient itself to bring up the Editor palette. Click just underneath the gradient to add a colour stop point for midtones.



4

Editing colours

To edit any of the colours, select the stop point under the gradient, click on the Color box below, then select a new colour. The carats to either side of the stop point are the mid-points to the colour of the next stop point. Light skin tones will be towards the highlights, darker ones to the middle or the shadows end.

THIS MONTH'S SOFTWARE EXTRAS

29 ways to spice up your photos

Give your shots a new look with our Actions, presets, profiles and LUTs

There's something for everyone this month with a collection of Photoshop Actions, presets for Lightroom, profiles for ACR/Lightroom, Gradient Maps for Photoshop and lookup tables for Affinity Photo (they also work with Photoshop). Give your urban images a moody look, spice up those sunsets, give a seasonal tone to your colours,

get funky with a set of 10 ACR/Lightroom colour presets or go full Wes Anderson. Regarding the latter, this month's tutorial explains the process behind creating a colour palette that resembles the film *Asteroid City* and then saving it as a LUT. There are also two other LUTs that simulate the colour palettes of *Moonrise Kingdom* and *The Grand Budapest Hotel*.

How to use your software extras

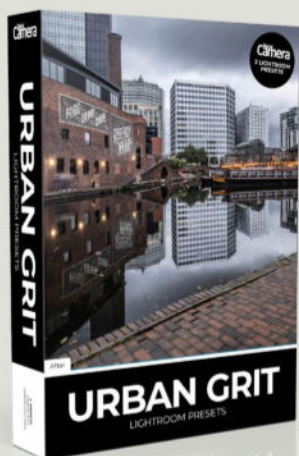
Once you have downloaded the 'dcm302-files.zip' file to your computer, extract it and put the folders where you can easily access them. These folders contain the software, project files and a PDF with installation instructions.



10 COLOUR PROFILES

Software: Adobe Camera Raw/Lightroom

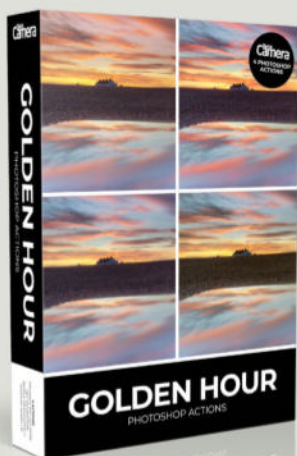
Give your images a fresh set of paint with this collection of 10 colour profiles for Adobe Camera Raw and Lightroom. Once installed, simply select the Styler Set profile with one click and a fresh style will be applied to your image.



TWO URBAN GRIT PRESETS

Software: Lightroom

Want to give your urban and city shots a striking look? Here are two presets for Lightroom, one for colour, one for black and white, that will give your images a harder, moodier look. You can change the effectiveness with a slider to modify how much this affects your original image.



FOUR GOLDEN HOUR ACTIONS

Software: Photoshop (Version 25.5 or higher)

Make the colours in your sunset and sunrise photos pop with this selection of Photoshop Actions. The four effects enhance the colours, increase sky saturation, create a simple Orton effect and warm up the shadows. Run each one on a duplicate layer.



10 GRADIENT MAPS

Software: Photoshop (Version 25.5 or higher)

Gradient Maps differ from gradients in that they are much more powerful. Here, we have 10 Gradient Maps for Photoshop that give your images colour stylings from certain seasons. You can also try different layer blend modes with them for various effects.



THREE WES COLOUR LUTs

Software: Photoshop/Affinity Photo 2

If you like the visual styling of Wes Anderson films, then we have a treat for you this month with an Affinity Photo tutorial about giving your images a similar colour styling. To go with it, here are three LUTs that give the same kind of look as three of his well-known films.

Download all five packs from: www.digitalcameraworld.com/dc302



PLUS: BONUS PACK WITH 130 SOFTWARE EXTRAS INSIDE!

Welcome to your Bonus Pack of software extras, created by Dan Mold. First of all, there are 30 presets for Lightroom. Add these and then use them with just one click from the Presets menu. You can instantly give your images a range of different looks.

Also in this pack are 100 Photoshop Actions. Add them to the Actions palette and they will appear under the heading Digital Camera Magazine – Free Photoshop Actions. There are lots to try out here with plenty of variations on most entries. For example, there are 25 resizing options, making it easy to quickly upscale for print or downscale for web use. There are vintage and film emulations, some clever sharpening routines and ways of increasing the saturation in your images. There are some creative effects, like the Orton effect, pencil sketch, HDR, pop art and artistic Actions.

If it's photo tweaking you want, there are ones for softening skin, rescuing highlights, boosting shadows, blurring the background and adding white or black vignettes. And don't forget to check out the range of split toning Actions for a stylish finish, too.

Ask Matthew...



Matthew Richards

Matthew Richards is a photographer and journalist who has spent years using all manner of photo gear.

Agonising over astrophotography shots? Traumatished by your next tripod choice? Send your technique and camera questions to **digitalcamera@futurenet.com**

The sky's the limit

Q I've been trying astrophotography, but I'm struggling to get the stars sharp with accurate manual focusing, using my Nikon Z 6II and Z 20mm f/2.8 S. Do you have any tips?

Lene Herman Tidgen

A After selecting manual focus, try repeatedly pressing the '+' magnifying button on the back of your camera, near the bottom right. This will give you maximum enlargement when previewing the image on the rear screen or in the viewfinder, so you can adjust the manual focus ring and set the focus distance accurately. If you're having trouble focusing on the stars themselves, try focusing on the most distant part of the landscape you can see, then swivel the camera to compose the shot.

The other thing that can degrade the sharpness of stars is if you use a really long exposure, so the stars appear to move across the sky while the shutter is open. However, that will give you streaks or 'star trails' rather than the defocused look that you're experiencing.

As Lene discovered in her Danish aurora shot, you can't simply twist the focus ring all the way to 'infinity' and expect the stars to be sharp.



Lene Herman Tidgen



Using the maximum magnification when previewing the shot can help you with accurate manual focusing, getting results such as this image over the Isle of Wight by Chad Powell.

Getty / Chad Powell



I gave the Z 180-600mm a perfect five-star rating when reviewing it in issue 275. It's a superb lens with great handling, image quality and all-round performance.



Getty

For the birds

Q I've upgraded from a Nikon Z 6 to a Z 8 and would like to buy a telephoto prime lens, especially for bird and wildlife photography. Which one would you recommend?

Necati Demiral

A The Nikon Z 400mm f/4.5 VR S is a fabulous lens that isn't too outrageously priced in the scheme of things, at around £3,079 (\$3,046). However, it's likely to be a bit lacking in reach for bird photography, so you might also need a teleconverter. I'd actually go for the Nikon Z 180-600mm f/5.6-6.3 VR zoom lens for bird and wildlife photography, at a more affordable £1,799 (\$1,997). You'll get greater telephoto reach, plus the versatility of zooming, which can be useful if you're shooting from a hide with a fixed position.

Versatile video tripod

Q Like many people, I guess, I'm increasingly shooting video as well as stills with my mirrorless camera. Can you suggest a tripod that works well for both scenarios?

Tony Davies

A It's a hassle lugging two tripods around, or least, a set of legs and two different heads for stills and video. Solving the problem, the new Manfrotto One Hybrid Tripod is available as a complete kit with a 500X Fluid Head, in both aluminium, priced £519 (\$680) and carbon fibre, at £669 (\$880). I've tested the aluminium version and found it rock-solid and incredibly versatile. It works flawlessly for video capture, and the unique design of the fluid head enables a full range of tilt, swivel and three-way pan movement for stills.



This versatile tripod has levelling and counterbalance systems, a 90° pivot facility for the centre column, and a removable lower section for ground-level shooting.

Second-hand superstar

This diminutive but impeccably designed and finished lens has a huge fanbase

Q I've bought a used Fujifilm X-T2 body, which you recommended a few months ago, but it came without a lens. What's a good pre-owned standard zoom for it?

Fiona Hutton



This lens has letters, including R (Ring – aperture control), LM (Linear Motor autofocus) and OIS (Optical Image Stabiliser).

A **Matthew recommends...**
Fujifilm XF18-55mm f/2.8-4 R LM OIS

I'm going to defer to reviews editor Gareth Bevan and recommend what he proclaimed as his 'favourite kit lens of any camera system' before it was superseded last year.

Released (year): 2012

Price new: £719/\$799

'Excellent' £290/\$365

'Good' £270/\$345

Kit zoom lenses often get a bad press, with a reputation for being built down to a price. They're most often bundled with camera bodies rather than being sold in their own right, with value for money being top of the agenda. This Fujifilm lens bucks the trend. It's often celebrated as being the best-ever kit zoom, with credentials and performance to match.

Highlights include a fast and virtually silent linear stepping motor autofocus system, a high-end optical path that includes an ED (Extra-low Dispersion) element and three aspherical elements and Fujifilm's acclaimed Super EBC coating to minimise ghosting and flare. Handling exotica includes an aperture control ring and optical image stabilisation.

1 Aperture ring

The aperture ring is at the rear end of the lens and comes with an Auto switch for camera-driven aperture control.

2 Zoom range

The 18-55mm spread gives an effective zoom range of 27-84mm in full-frame terms, thanks to the 1.5x crop factor of the APS-C sensor size.

3 Optical stabilisation

Based on an advanced gyro sensor and Fujifilm's own algorithms, the optical image stabiliser delivers four-stop effectiveness.

Elements/groups: 14/10

Aperture diaphragm: 7 blades

OIS: 4-stop

Min focus distance: 0.3m (W), 0.4m (T)

Max magnification: 0.15x

Filter size: 58mm

Dimensions (W x D): 70 x 65mm

Weight: 310g

In Focus

The latest photography news from around the globe

1 GREAT SPECS FOR STILLS...

Latest version of popular hybrid packs a 32.5MP full-frame sensor and can shoot bursts up to 40fps.



2 ... AND FOR FILMING VIDEO

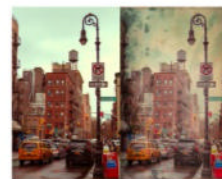
Content creators will benefit from the addition of a tally light on the front, and 7K open gate video.



3 CANON RF 45MM F1.2 STM
This new prime is available for an extremely competitive price for a lens with such a fast aperture.

Focal point

Rounding up what's new and exciting



Nik Collection's Analog Efex plugin updated
Version 8.2 of this popular plug-in suite gets 30 paper surface textures to add extra character to photos. Each paper effect is tweakable, via different blend modes. Find out more by visiting: www.dxo.com



Leica leather goods collection on sale now
All created from black cowhide and crafted in Europe, these will make an ideal gift. Choose between film roll holders, Apple AirTag cases, vertical and horizontal wallets and desk trays. leica-camera.com; from £130/\$150-£275/\$320

Canon launches EOS R6 III

... and an eye-catching new lens. Popular hybrid mirrorless gets upgrades including a higher-resolution sensor, autofocus improvements and a CFexpress B card slot

Could this be the best hybrid camera on the market? Overwhelmingly positive reaction across the photography media so far suggests it could be a contender. The **EOS R6 Mark III** succeeds the previous version, which launched in 2022, and features a 32.5MP full-frame sensor – a step up from 24.2MP. Other headline features of the new camera include a 40fps max burst rate (with the electronic shutter), pre-continuous shooting and the addition of a CFexpress Type B card slot, alongside an SD one. And while the video specs are respectable – 7K 60p internal raw capability plus

7K open gate (the ability to capture video across the entire sensor area), the R6 Mark III is a stills-first camera. Also launched last month was the **RF 45mm F1.2 STM**, a lightning-fast prime at a decidedly competitive sub-£500/\$500 price point. With a nine-blade aperture and Super Spectra coating, plus a dedicated control ring, this new prime is low in weight, at 346g, and has a 67mm filter thread size. Both the EOS R6 Mark III and the RF 45mm are available to order now. www.canon.co.uk; £2,799/\$2,799 (EOS R6 Mk III, body only). £480/\$469 (RF 45mm F1.2)



Affinity goes free and has a new name
Formerly known as Affinity Photo, this popular alternative to Adobe applications has been relaunched by new owners Canva. Find out more by reading our review of the updated software on page 116. www.affinity.com; free



Fujifilm X-T30 III

Update to popular APS-C mirrorless retains sensor from its predecessor, but gets a more powerful image processor

Available in black, silver or charcoal, the X-T30 III has the same design and build as the previous model, apart from the introduction of a dedicated Film Simulation dial on the top plate. This allows users to access six of Fujifilm's most popular film sims, although the full set of 20 can be accessed through the camera's menu system. The X-T30 III retains

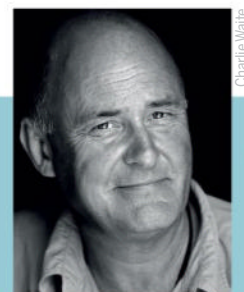
the 26.1MP back side illuminated X-Trans CMOS 4 sensor from the X-T30 II, but this is now paired with the more powerful X-Processor 5, which unlocks the latest in Fujifilm's autofocus tech. Video specs have been improved, with 6.2K/30P 10-bit internal recording in 3:2 open gate and improved digital image stabilisation for video. www.fujifilm.eu; from **£829/\$999 (body only)**



New backpacks from Shimoda

Side Series bags are designed for performance while offering significant weight reductions

These new lightweight camera backpacks need to be used with the brand's Top Loader inserts (bundle options are available). At just 1.1kg, the **Side Lite** is Shimoda's lightest-ever bag and is designed primarily for sports or expedition photographers. Featuring discreet styling, **Side Street** is targeted at practitioners of urban photography and is available in 22L and 28L sizes. Completing the line-up is **Side Country**, which is built for extreme hikes and climbs and comes in 28L and 32L sizes. Side Country and Side Lite packs are available with Shimoda's Women's Straps for optimal comfort. uk.shimodadesigns.com; from **£209/\$240 (Side Lite)**



Charlie Waite

TICKETS ON SALE NOW!
NEC BIRMINGHAM
14-17 MARCH
2026

The Photography & Video Show

Charlie Waite will be a speaker at the event – buy your tickets today!

The annual celebration of the still and moving image returns to the NEC Birmingham on 14 March. Organisers Future Publishing, the parent company of *Digital Camera*, has released some details about the speaker line-up. Landscapes legend Charlie Waite is the biggest name confirmed so far, and more names will follow soon. With so much to see and do over its four days, the Photography & Video Show is a one-stop shop for enjoying all things imaging under one roof. www.photographyshow.com; **£18.95 (standard day ticket) £15.95 (concessions).**



Leica M EV1

This new gateway to the brand's range of M-series cameras features an electronic viewfinder

Introduced as a response to customer requests, says Leica, the M EV1 breaks with tradition in that there's no optical rangefinder; in its place, you'll find a 5.76m-dot OLED electronic viewfinder in the top-left corner of the rear of the camera. Other M-series features are retained: focusing is fully manual, the M EV1 has the same 60MP full-frame sensor found in the Leica M11 family, there's 64GB of internal storage and Content Credentials (a system to retain the photographer's copyright, as a guardrail against AI) are saved to image files at the point of capture. Leica is keen to stress that it isn't abandoning rangefinder viewfinders; instead, the M EV1 has been developed to serve as a new option to attract buyers. leica-camera.com; **£6,840/\$8,995 (body only)**

2025's best photo books

Our pick of the best titles about photography published this year – each one will make an ideal festive season gift for lovers of the medium...

10 Years of Remembering Wildlife

£59.50/\$75

www.rememberingwildlife.com

THE
PERFECT
GIFT FOR...
Wildlife
fans

Leading conservation initiative Remembering Wildlife recently published its tenth book. Part paean to pangolins and part retrospective of previous titles, the biggest volume in the series so far is packed with images from some of the world's leading wildlife photographers, plus 20 lucky readers of *Digital Camera*, who entered our Remembering Wildlife competition.

VERDICT A must-buy for wildlife photography fans – proceeds go to vital conservation efforts worldwide.



Kim Paffen / Remembering Wildlife



Marcus Westberg / Remembering Wildlife



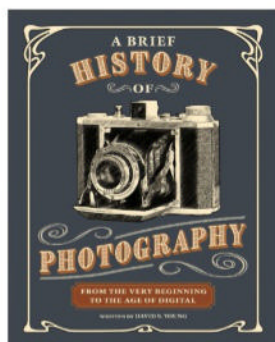
Light, Space & Time

£38/\$45

rockynook.com

David duChemin is one of the world's leading photographers and educators, and his most recent book (full title: *Light, Space & Time: Essays on Camera Craft and Creativity*) is a series of workouts for the photographer's mind. This, argues the author, is more important than a camera. It's a treatise on keeping the mind optimised for being creative.

VERDICT Any photographer in need of a creative boost will find this book a wise buy.



A Brief History of Photography

£25/\$30

rockynook.com

The title of this book needs no further elaboration, but this isn't some dry assemblage of facts in date order. Instead, David S Young has penned an entertaining read, and his sprinkling of trivia and fun facts will keep you turning the pages. However well you think you know the history and evolution of photography, there's plenty to discover in this engaging book.

VERDICT All the major, and minor, historical events make this a must for photo buffs.



Walk the Earth

£45/\$60

www.prestel.com

Subtitled *Photographs of Africa's Last Great Elephants*, this is photographer Federico Veronesi's visual homage to the species. Elephants are Federico's favourite animal, and the viewer can see his love for them in the book's 113 fine-art photographs, which were captured in locations in southern and eastern Africa. And it's so immersive – you really are walking with giants as you turn the pages.

VERDICT With books like *Walk the Earth*, 2025 has been a great year for this genre.



THE
PERFECT
GIFT FOR...
Astro
fans

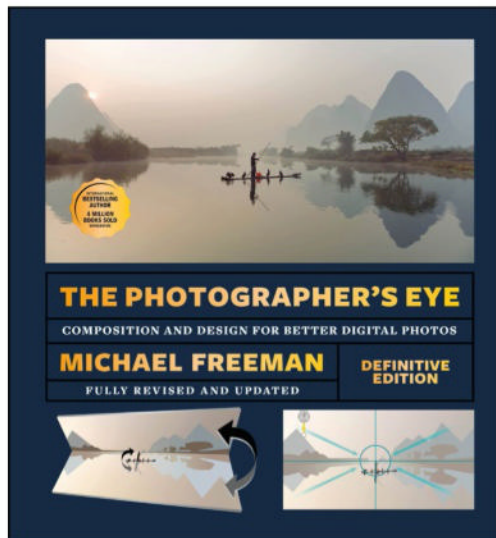
52 Assignments Night Photography

£12.99/\$17.95

www.ammonitepress.com

Landscape astrophotographer Josh Dury shares his expert tips and insights on how to shoot the night sky. Compact enough to fit in your camera bag, the book is structured into a year's worth of weekly assignments, so you can track your progress as you take your photography to new frontiers.

VERDICT Inspirational, clear and concise, this is the only astro photo guide you need.



The Photographer's Eye Definitive Edition

£25/\$35

www.ilexinstant.com

Revised and updated for 2025, this is one of the seminal books on photographic composition. Author Michael Freeman takes a deep dive into the fundamentals of how to design successful photographs, with new sections dedicated to covering some recent technical developments, including the emergence of computational photography.

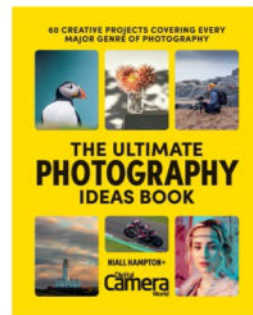
VERDICT If you have a good eye for a composition, but want to develop it further, this 194-page masterclass will be essential.

The Ultimate Photography Ideas Book

Looking to get some inspiration for projects to shoot in the coming months? Top up our 26 projects for 2026 (page 52) with this compendium of some of the best projects to appear in *Digital Camera* between 2018 and 2024.

£25/\$35

www.ilexinstant.com

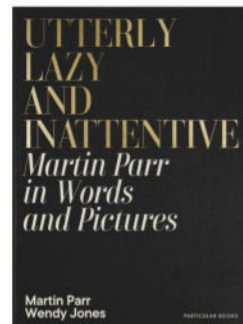


Utterly Lazy And Inattentive

Martin Parr looks back over his life and works – the book's title is taken from one of his school reports as a teenager – through more than 150 of his photographs, with accompanying commentary on them captured by his friend Wendy Jones. Whether you're a fan of Martin Parr's photography or not, there's a lot to enjoy in this book, and his observations on being an observer will be an inspiration for anyone who enjoys taking photographs.

£35/\$50

www.penguin.co.uk

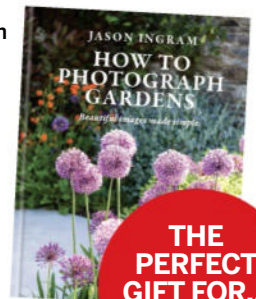


How to Photograph Gardens

Anyone wondering how to do just that will find plenty to learn in this book by Jason Ingram. One of the UK's leading exponents of the craft, he takes the reader on a tour of some of his favourite gardens in the UK and abroad, illustrating his advice and insights with a selection of editorial and client photography. Pitched at all skill levels, this book's aim is 'beautiful images made simple'.

£26/\$33

www.ilex.press



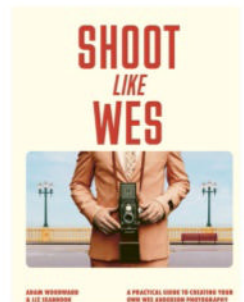
THE PERFECT GIFT FOR...
Flora fans

Shoot Like Wes

Ever wondered how to capture the look of celebrated American film director Wes Anderson? Then this book by Adam Woodward and Liz Seabrook is for you – learn what's behind some of Anderson's signature visual devices and how you can apply them to your photography.

£16.99/\$22

www.quarto.com/white-lion-publishing



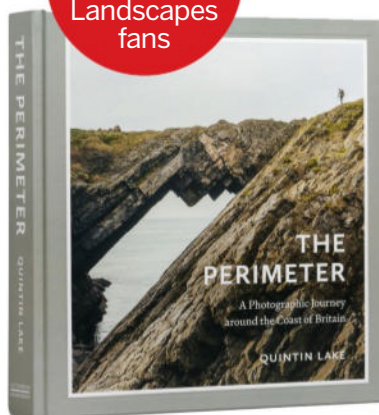
The Perimeter

£35/\$50

www.penguin.co.uk

Quintin Lake walked the coast of the UK mainland with his camera between 2016 and 2020, and *Digital Camera* readers followed his progress through his monthly column, *The Perimeter*. Now Quintin's epic walk is available in book form, the reader can follow him as he travels. Described by the author as a 'road movie in a book', *The Perimeter* is an epic showcase of photographic skill – and powers of endurance.

VERDICT Having studied architecture, Quintin Lake knows how to frame a landscape, so if you want to learn about composition from a master, then this is the journey to take.



THE PERFECT GIFT FOR...
Landscapes fans

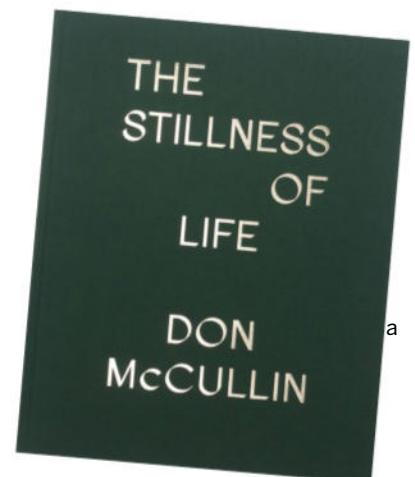
The Stillness of Life

£80/\$100

gostbooks.com

The majority of the still-life photographs and landscapes in this new book by Sir Don McCullin are previously unpublished. Produced to coincide with the esteemed photographer's 90th birthday, *The Stillness of Life* offers a fresh perspective on a photographer whose body of work has spanned seven decades.

VERDICT Best known for his war and conflict photographs, Sir Don's other career has been making black and white photos in and around his home in Somerset, and this is a definitive collection of them.





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NIKKOR AF-P DX 18-55MM F/3.5-5.6G VR

The latest and sharpest of Nikon's retractable F-mount standard zooms.

£48/\$73 mpb.com

UNDER £100 MID-RANGE GIFTS FOR THE PHOTO AFICIONADO



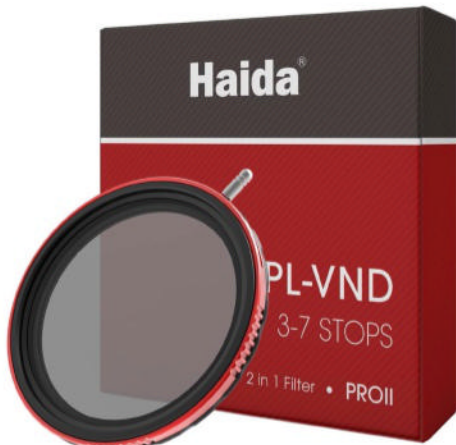
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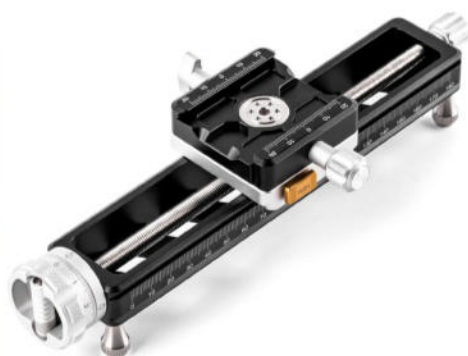
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This full-frame DSLR became an instant legend and still remains a force to be reckoned with.
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Jon Devo

"More cameras is great, but we also want more community events."



Jon Devo
[instagram.com/gadgetsjon](https://www.instagram.com/gadgetsjon)

Jon is a professional photographer, videographer and technology journalist.

to US presidents playing in bands and being arrested. While some may find that kind of thing entertaining, it raises obvious concerns around truth and authenticity. But it also lays down a challenge for us, as creatives, to be aggressively human in our endeavours. The joy of what we do doesn't just come from the results; it comes from the process. Often, the pain of creation and the discomfort of learning new techniques or stepping outside of our comfort zone is where the real pleasure in photography and filmmaking lies.

What we've seen from the past year is that, despite the negative trends, more people are choosing to pick up cameras and move into the world of content creation. So that's something to be celebrated. How do I think brands will (or should) respond to this shift? We will see more cameras; that feels inevitable. But I also want to see more brands bringing the worlds of photography and content creation to life with experiences, investing more in events that bring people together.

In the UK, Fujifilm had massive success with its week-long inaugural Fujikina London event and we also saw Lumix have similar success with a series of global Lumix Live events, one of which I was fortunate enough to host in London. The Photography and Video Show also expanded to London for the first time; the overwhelming response from people I saw at each event was a craving for types of activities like these.

People want more opportunities to come together around their passion for photography and filmmaking, without having to have thousands of followers or needing to spend hundreds of pounds on expensive conferences that feel exclusive and elite. They want accessible touchpoints where they can see new gear, capture great content and both learn from and be inspired by relatable speakers.

So my hope for 2026 is that brands are getting the message and continue investing in real-world experiences for us all to enjoy. ●

Scanning ahead...

From bumper camera sales to unwelcome AI slop, **Jon Devo** considers the trends of 2025

Last year was a bumper one for camera sales, with well over 100 per cent year-on-year growth. It was actually the best sales year for camera retailers since 2019, with over six million units sold – and that's not even including the used camera market.

Interestingly, the positive upward trend in the industry is not confined to sales of new point-and-shoot digital cameras that we've been seeing for a few years now. People are buying new interchangeable lens cameras too; the messaging that targets those trying to

step up from a smartphone or pocket camera seems to be working. Also, the ubiquitous nature of 'content' seeping into every possible area of life, as well as work, is encouraging for an industry that relies on people wanting to invest in better tools for capturing and creating (predominantly) video content.

So where does that leave us for the start of 2026? Can the trend continue? It's clear that content isn't going anywhere, but the second half of 2025 also saw a sharp rise in an unwelcome proliferation of 'AI slop' beginning to clog our feeds, from videos of cats caught on Ring cameras wielding weapons and musical instruments,

"I want to see more brands bringing the worlds of photography and content creation to life with shared experiences"

KitZone

New gear, buying tips and the world's toughest tests



106

Fujifilm X-E5 _ New compact could be the best X-E line camera to date



110

Lumix S1 II E _ Full-frame mirrorless trades speed for image quality



114

Laowa 200mm f/2 AF FF _ Fast telephoto with a lightweight build



116

Affinity _ Software's new owner launches a new version of the program, and it's free



Fujifilm cameras are a byword for style, but there's serious functionality to go with their pleasing forms, and a recently launched compact doesn't break that convention. 2021's X-E4 is popular as a pre-owned buy, and with the resurgence of compact cameras, Fujifilm has focused on the X-E line again. The fifth iteration of this rangefinder-style mirrorless fixes some of its forebear's issues while receiving some meaningful upgrades, like putting film simulations within easy reach. Turn the page to see how the X-E5 performs.

Another launch of note recently was a lower-spec version of the Lumix S1 II, although this might be slightly unfair to Panasonic. For those who don't need burst rates of 70fps (that's most of us), then the S1 IIE is positioning itself as a smarter buy. Read our verdict on it from page 110.

Also on test this month is a fast telephoto from Laowa, plus we greet the beginning of a new era for the software formerly known as Affinity Photo. Relunched by its new owner, it has a unique (non-) selling point in that it's free. See our verdict on the new Affinity from page 116. **Niall Hampton**



250-page gear Buyer's Guide
Find out more on page 6

The awards bestowed by the Digital Camera lab...



Given to the top product in a group test



For products that receive five stars overall



Given to products that offer superb value for money

Ratings explained

★★★★★ Best in class
★★★★☆ Excellent
★★★☆☆ Good
★★☆☆☆ So-so
★☆☆☆☆ Poor

All products reviewed in KitZone are tested independently by photographers with years of experience, using lab and real-world testing

Mirrorless Fujifilm X-E5



1
The X-E5 is easy to hold with the new XF 23mm F2.8, but isn't designed for larger lenses.

2
The new model weighs 445g, versus 364g for its predecessor, but is still pocketable.

3
This new lever adds five controls, with short and long tilts to the side and a button in the middle.

Fujifilm X-E5

£1,299/\$1,699 (body only)

This could be the best camera yet in the brand's X-E line

www.fujifilm.eu

Specifications

Sensor: 40.2MP APS-C, X-Trans CMOS 5 HR
Lens mount: Fujifilm X
Processor: X-Processor 5
Image size: 6,240 x 4,160px
ISO range: 160-12,800, exp to 80-51,200
Stabilisation: Up to 7.0 stops
Max burst: 8fps (mechanical), 20fps (electronic)
Viewfinder: EVF, 2.36m dot OLED
LCD: 3in, 1.62m dot, 2-way tilt touchscreen
Video: 6.2K30P, 4K60P, 1080/240P, 4:2:2 10-bit F-Log2
Storage: 1x UHS-II SD card slot
Connectivity: Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, USB-C, HDMI Micro Type D
Battery: NP-W126S (390 shots)
Dimensions (W x H x D): 121 x 73 x 33mm
Weight: 364g (with battery and SD card)



hen Fujifilm unveiled the X-E1 in 2012, it distilled the then-new X-Pro concept into a trim, rangefinder-style body that cost and weighed far less than the flagship X-Pro1, yet kept the same dial-driven shooting experience. The X-E2 and X-E3 continued to shave more millimetres and buttons, but the X-E4 pushed minimalism to the limit, and its slim, grip-less body became both a selling point and a sore spot for street and travel shooters.

That polarising design, combined with pandemic-era supply woes, saw the X-E4 vanish from retailers after a short stint on store shelves. However, demand for the X-E line was still there, though, with pre-owned prices soaring, so it was only a matter of time before Fujifilm revisited the concept.

After a four-year pause, the X-E5's arrival revives a series whose understated charm has consistently earned a devoted, if niche, following. But has Fujifilm finally found the perfect balance of a pocket-friendly form with the grip and control that X-E fans crave?

Build and handling

Styling-wise, available in black or silver, the X-E5 isn't a huge departure from the previous X-E line – although, thankfully, the new model ditches some of the worst of the X-E4 design choices. Picking up the camera, the hugely improved design is obvious. The X-E4 felt a little cheap and hollow, but the X-E5 is up there with the X-T5 and X-T50 in that it feels more premium and solid. This is reflected by the weight gain of the X-E5, with the new model weighing a still pocketable 445g versus 364g in the previous generation.

The focus on a more premium experience also stretches to the included rope strap, which is a decent addition, although it lacks the option to adjust the length. As someone who never uses the flat-branded straps that come with cameras and ends up buying similar third-party options, it is welcome to just get a strap I want to use in the box – and I hope Fujifilm adds this to all its cameras from now on.

With the return of a grip, the ergonomics of the camera are also thankfully improved. The X-E5 has

Fujifilm X-E5 Mirrorless



4

The EVF isn't the best around, but it is solid enough and easy to compose with.

5

The screen is good quality and pretty bright for viewing outdoors in sunny conditions.

6

The X-E5 has a moulded grip on the front and rear, set into the shape of the body.

7

The X-E5 gets Fujifilm's film simulation dial, which is hidden under the top plate.

8

The camera keeps its flat rangefinder top plate, with both ISO and exposure dials.

9

Like its X-E4 predecessor, this camera's ergonomics are unbalanced by larger lenses.

a moulded grip on the front and rear of the camera with the grip set into the shape of the body, like the X100VI, rather than the X-E3's attachment-style grip. It's not substantial, but it is effective enough for fingers at the front and a thumb to grip on the rear. It's easy and comfortable to hold with the XF 23mm F2.8, and it would be adequate with most of Fujifilm's primes. It is a bit more challenging to hold onto the camera with the XF 16-55mm F2.8, but I'm not sure whether this is the camera for larger lenses anyway.

The redesigned body extends to the addition of a couple of new features. The X-E5 is one of the latest cameras to get Fujifilm's film simulation dial, but instead of losing a dial like the X-T50, as many of us feared it would, the X-E5 has an ingenious way to hide the dial under the top plate of the camera. Like a version of the XPro/X100's ISO/shutter

speed dial, it allows the camera to keep its flat rangefinder-style top, but via a little window, you can cycle through several of Fuji's top film simulations. I'm not the biggest fan of the film simulation dial, but this is the best implementation yet and one I can get on board with.

The film simulation dial (and Fujifilm cameras) now also properly embraces film recipes. There are three new slots on the film simulation dial that can be programmed with a brand new menu for all the parameters of a film recipe. While you could always flick easily between these by assigning one of the buttons to custom profiles, having recipes on the film simulation dial is perhaps the quickest way to access them (albeit only your favourite three). It also enables you to move the film simulation settings and camera settings away from each other, so you can change settings for autofocus, →



The X-E5's rear screen tilts 180° and flips up over the camera, making selfies and vlogging possible. The X-E5 is available in black or silver finishes.



Gareth Bevan

The film simulation dial features a small window on the top of the camera, which allows you to cycle through several of Fujifilm's top film simulations.



Gareth Bevan

Even if you aren't the biggest fan of Fujifilm's film simulations, the X-E5 has the best implementation of them yet – it may convince you to get on board.

Mirrorless Fujifilm X-E5



Gareth Bevan

With the same sensor and processor as the Fujifilm X-T5, the X-E5 delivers the same great image quality, dynamic range and well-controlled image noise.

microphones and so on, and it will change for all recipes, rather than having to change each custom setup individually.

The X-E5 also adds the front lever as found on the X100 or X-Pro cameras. This adds five new controls, with short and long tilts to either side, and a button in the middle. Like pretty much every button on the X-E5, these are all customisable. By default, these are set up to control two features taken from the

recent GFX100 RF. First up – a new menu for easier access to aspect ratios with several of the most common aspect ratios to choose from. However, this will only affect jpegs, so if you shoot in both jpeg and raw, you will also have the option of an uncropped raw file if you decide you don't like the aspect ratio.

There are also new options for changing the appearance of digital zoom. While on previous cameras, using digital zoom

cropped the preview image into each zoom level, there are two new choices of either a black box reflecting the framing of each zoom level, or the area outside this frame being greyed out. This should help with trying to capture fast-moving subjects entering the frame, as you can see them coming in from the side and prepare to hit the shutter button that split second earlier.

The screen and EVF are the same size and resolution as the X-T50. Both are good; the EVF isn't the largest or highest quality around, but it is easy to compose with and solid for the price and size of the camera. The screen is good quality and pretty bright for viewing outdoors. It did a great job in sunny conditions, except for in the harshest direct light. Similar to the X100VI, the screen is only tilting, but it does tilt 180° and flip up over the camera, making selfies and vlogging possible. It's a really useful feature, although this still probably wouldn't be my first choice for a vlogging camera.

Performance

When it comes to image quality, the X-E5 has been updated to Fujifilm's tried and tested 40MP X-Trans V sensor and X-Processor 5, which offer both a big resolution and autofocus improvement over the previous

Rival cameras



Fujifilm X-T50
£1,299/\$1,399

Technically impressive and every bit as good as Fujifilm's flagship X-H2 or X-T5 cameras. But if you can spend \$300 more, the X-T5 might be a better buy.

Reviewed: Issue 284



Lumix S9
£1,499/\$1,499

Lacks a viewfinder and is optimised for modern content creation – its compact size, incredible video features and full-frame sensor set the S9 apart at its price.

Reviewed: Issue 300



OM System OM-3
£1,699/\$1,999

With smarts aplenty, the OM-3 inspires you to shoot. Whether it's the one for you depends on your thoughts about the perceived limitations of Micro Four Thirds sensors.

Reviewed: Issue 297



Fujifilm X-E5 **Mirrorless**



Gareth Bevan

Significant resolution and autofocus improvements have been implemented over the preceding X-E4.

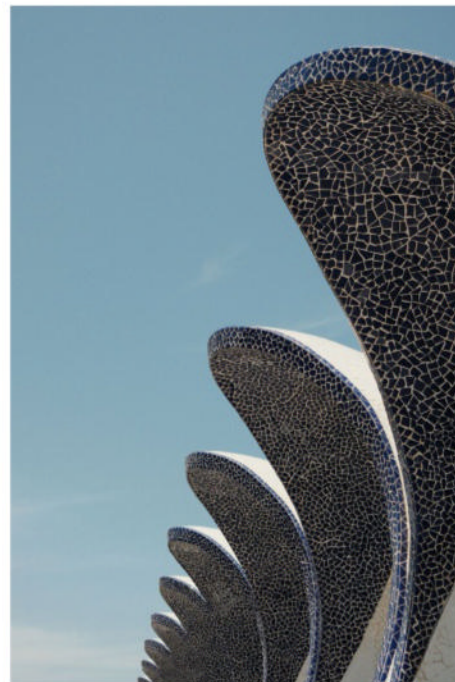


Gareth Bevan

The X-E5 and XF 23mm performed well in mixed lighting conditions, when used on a walkabout in Valencia.

model. As this is the same sensor and processor as first used in the X-T5 released five years ago, and subsequently deployed in several models since, there is not much new to report – it has the same great image quality, the dynamic range is good and noise is well controlled. The X-E5 also sports the colour science and the same film simulations that have won over many fans.

While this is not a full review of the lens, it is likely that most people are going to buy the X-E5 bundled with the new XF 23mm F2.8; paired with it, images are sharp. The only slightly disappointing aspect is that the f/2.8 aperture of the lens can't quite match the f/2 on the X100VI, which doesn't quite make this combination a perfect alternative

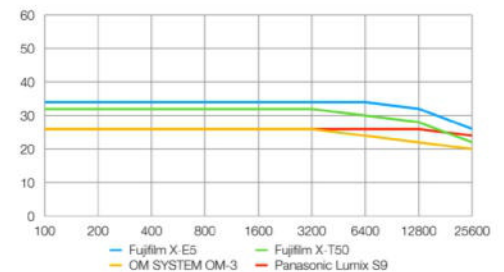


to the X100VI for those who might want to stick another lens on from time to time.

The photos in this review were all shot in Valencia, Spain, over the course of a few days. All images were shot with the Fujifilm X-E5 and XF 23mm F2.8 R WR lens in mixed lighting, using a couple of film simulations and custom film recipes. **Gareth Bevan**

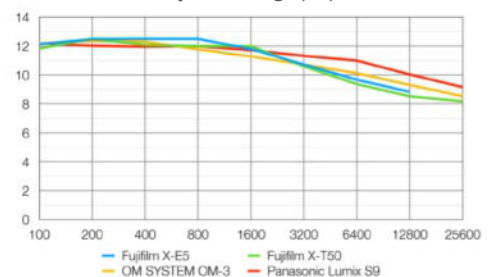
“Has Fujifilm found a perfect balance of pocket-friendly form, grip and control?”

Resolution



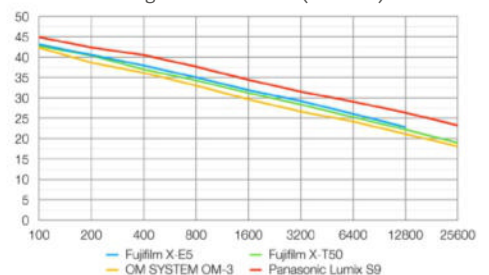
The 40MP X-E5 resolves more detail than the Lumix S9 and OM-System OM-3. Processing and firmware improvements explain why the X-E5 performs better than the X-T50, despite having the same sensor.

Dynamic range (EV)



The X-E5 captures excellent dynamic range at low sensitivities. However, the limitations of its APS-C sensor become apparent as you push past ISO 1600, where the full-frame Panasonic wins out.

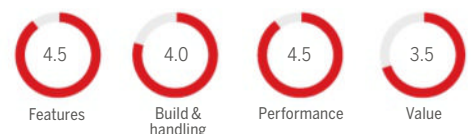
Signal to noise ratio (decibels)



The Lumix S9's full-frame sensor has better light sensitivity, making each pixel less susceptible to noise. Considering its relatively small APS-C sensor, the X-E5 does well to come in second, though.

Digital Camera verdict

4.5 ★★★★★ Outstanding



The Fujifilm X-E5 is almost the camera I hoped it would be. This small pocketable rangefinder-style design blends the best of the X-E line and the Fujifilm X100VI. The build feels more premium than the previous model and the return of the grip makes the X-E5 more ergonomic with small lenses. There are a few welcome design additions, including the new film simulation dial and front lever. It's not perfect, though – the X-E5 misses out on a flash and big lenses throw the camera's ergonomics off. It's also more expensive than the similar X-T50 and X100VI.

Mirrorless Lumix S1 IIE



1
The S1 IIE features a 24.2MP full-frame BSI (back side illuminated) CMOS sensor.

2
The main mode dials all feature locking buttons to avoid accidental nudging.

3
The original Lumix S1 was chunky and hefty, but the S1 IIE is much slimmer and lighter.

Lumix S1 IIE

£2,399/\$2,498 (body only)

Everything you get from the S1 II, apart from the top speeds

www.panasonic.com

Specifications

Sensor: 24.2MP full-frame BSI CMOS

Lens mount: L-Mount

Image processor: Venus Engine

ISO range: 100-51,200 (expandable 50 – 204,800)

Autofocus: 779-pt Phase Hybrid with subject detection (people, eyes, animals, vehicles)

Stabilisation: 5-axis, up to 8-stops

Max image size: 6,000 x 4,000px

Max burst: 30 fps (ES), 10 fps (MS), 1s pre-burst

High-Res mode: 96MP JPEG/RAW

Video: 6K 30p 3:2 open gate, 5.9K 30p 17:9 / 4:3, DCI/UHD 4K 30p, 1080 120p; 10-bit 4:2:2 internal, ProRes RAW/Blackmagic RAW via HDMI

Viewfinder: 5.76m-dot OLED, 0.78x, 60/120Hz

LCD: 3.0in 1.84m-dot articulating touchscreen

Memory card: 1x CFexpress Type-B / 1x UHS-II SD

Connectivity: Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, USB-C, HDMI, microphone and headphone jacks

Battery/ shots per charge: DMW-BLJ31, 380 / 340 shots (LCD / EVF, SD, CIPA)

Dimensions (W x H x D): 134 x 102 x 92mm

Weight: 795g (with battery and memory card)

Jump in your time machine and nip back to late 2018. It seemed the whole world was going full-frame mirrorless,

with the original Canon EOS R, Nikon Z 6 and Nikon Z 7 following a precedent that the Sony A7 had set about five years earlier. Panasonic followed suit in February 2019, with the launch of the original 24.2MP Lumix S1 and 47MP Lumix S1R. The former was superseded in May 2025 by two new models, the Lumix S1 II and the Lumix S1 IIE, which we're reviewing here.

Both have a similar megapixel count of approximately 24MP, the crucial difference being that the S1 II has a partially stacked image sensor, whereas the S1 IIE doesn't. As featured in the Nikon Z 6III, the advantage of the S1 II's partially stacked sensor equates to fast readout speed, in Panasonic's case, with a stills burst rate of up to 70fps, and super-high frame rates for high-resolution video with minimal rolling shutter effect.

Even so, the S1 IIE is certainly no slouch, with a burst rate of up to 30fps

and 6K video on demand, with a significantly lower purchase price. To my mind, Panasonic has always been particularly focused on hybrid cameras for shooting both stills and video, and the S1 IIE certainly aims to be a top all-rounder that's one of the best hybrid cameras on the market.

Build and handling

Full-frame 'all-rounder' cameras with about 24MP under the hood hit the sweet spot, as far as I'm concerned. I enjoy the typically excellent dynamic range and signal-to-noise performance, while also appreciating impressive levels of fine detail without going massive on data sizes for image files.

The S1 IIE very much typifies all of these plus points, although, as I've alluded to, it features a 'slower' 24.2MP full-frame BSI (back side illuminated) CMOS sensor compared with the lightspeed 24.1MP full-frame partially-stacked BSI CMOS sensor of its sibling S1 II. There are a couple of knock-on differences due to the different type of sensor, and if you want to check the details, have a read of our full Panasonic

Lumix S1 IIE Mirrorless



4

There's a 3in 1.84 million-dot touchscreen with tilting and full vari-angle articulation.

5

The 0.78x OLED viewfinder has a 5.76m-dot display and fast 60/120Hz refresh rate.

6

All of the dials, switches and buttons have a high-quality look and response.

7

The control layout is mostly inherited from the original and has a pro-grade feel.

8

Dual memory card slots cater for both CFexpress Type B and SD/HC/XC UHS-II.

9

The DMW-BLJ31 Li-ion rechargeable battery is rated at 380/340 shots (LCD/EVF).

Lumix S1 II review (issue 298) or take a peek at the article on our website comparing the Lumix S1 II and S1 IIE (www.bit.ly/dcm302_lumix).

The original Lumix S1 was a decidedly chunky and hefty affair, but both of the Mark II cameras are much slimmer and more lightweight, more akin to the Lumix S5 IIX. The S1 II and S1 IIE have identical dimensions of 134 x 102 x 92mm, although the IIE is marginally lighter at 795g vs 800g, both including battery and memory cards.

Speaking of batteries, both cameras also take the same DMW-BLJ31 Li-ion rechargeable battery, although it has slightly more stamina in the IIE, rated at 380/340 shots (LCD/EVF) compared with 360/320 shots in the S1 II. And for memory, both cameras also have dual card slots, catering to CFexpress Type B and SD/HC/XC UHS-II. Use the CFexpress slot and you'll get slightly less battery life in both cameras.

I'm glad that the control layout of the camera is mostly inherited from the original models. As such, it has a pro-grade feel with direct access to all the important settings that you might need for creative shooting. I also like that the main mode dials have locking buttons to avoid accidental nudging. Moreover, all of the dials, switches and buttons have a high-quality look and feel. Build quality is further enhanced by a solid magnesium alloy shell with comprehensive weather seals and a freeze-resistant design.

The feature set is certainly expansive, with the camera catering equally well to stills and videography. Indeed, the video specifications run to a few pages on their own. Either way, for sharp-shooting, two of the features I depend on most are autofocus and image stabilisation. The IIE boasts impressive credentials on both counts.

Panasonic's 'Next-level' autofocus technology is based on a phase/contrast-detection hybrid system (and about time, too) with 779 phase-detection points. It also features the now common AI-based attractions for effectively recognising and tracking people, animals, cars, motorcycles, bikes, trains, planes and even 'urban sports'. The 5-axis image stabilisation system is also high-end, offering up to 8-stop performance at the centre of the frame and as much as 7-stop effectiveness at the periphery.

For autofocus and image stabilisation, the S1 IIE is identical to the pricier S1 II, and the same applies to the EVF (electronic viewfinder) and rear screen. That's more good news, as both are of high quality. Shooting and playback are made easy on the eye by the large, 0.78x OLED viewfinder, with its 5.76 million-dot display and fast 60/120Hz refresh rate. The same goes for the 3in 1.84 million-dot touchscreen at the rear of the camera, which boasts both tilting and full vari-angle articulation, to suit every need and preference.

Matthew Richards



The S1 IIE recognised the helicopter in this scene as an aircraft and autofocused on it in double-quick time.

Matthew Richards



For shots taken in low, indoor lighting, the S1 IIE retains fine detail and also manages to suppress image noise.

Matthew Richards



The physical ports on the S1 IIE include USB-C (10Gbps), HDMI, microphone and headphones.

Matthew Richards



Taken under fairly low, indoor lighting levels, this frame is the mid-point between ISO 200 and ISO 51,200.

Mirrorless Lumix S1 IIE

Matthew Richards



Naturally, the bottom line in terms of photo performance is always image quality – and, in this respect, the results from the S1 IIE are an absolute delight.

Well connected, the S1 IIE features 2.4GHz and 5GHz Wi-Fi, plus Bluetooth V5, and supports a wide range of apps and cloud-based services. Connectivity is further enhanced in V1.1 of the camera's firmware. As you might expect in this class of camera, physical ports include USB-C (10Gbps), HDMI, microphone and headphones. XLR and 4-channel microphones are

compatible via Panasonic's DMW-XLR2 adapter, which is sold separately.

Performance

Compared with the S1 II, the S1 IIE's main drawback in terms of stills performance is that it simply can't match the pricier camera's 70fps maximum burst rate. As it turns out, the quickest burst rate is less than half

as fast, at a comparatively pedestrian 30fps. But consider that the 24MP Nikon Z 6II can only muster 14fps, maybe it's not that pedestrian after all. And it's also about twice as fast as some of the quickest DSLRs in the business, including the Canon EOS-1D X Mark III (in viewfinder mode) and the Nikon D6 – cameras that have served some of the world's top sports and wildlife photographers well over the years.

Besides, in real-life usage, 30fps is more than fast enough for the vast majority of shooting scenarios. I'm impressed that the S1 IIE achieves this speed in electronic shutter mode while maintaining continuous autofocus and metering, along with a blackout-free viewfinder image. And like the S1 II, the buffer depth is sufficient for up to 200 raw quality shots or 300 jpegs in continuous shooting.

Autofocus and image stabilisation are also every bit as impressive in the S1 IIE, with autofocus speed and tracking abilities being streets ahead of the original S1 and stabilisation being pretty much as good as anything else out there at the moment. AF tracking isn't quite on a par with some of the most tenacious cameras in this respect, like the Canon EOS R5 Mark II or Sony A9 III, but it's still highly capable.

Rival cameras



Canon EOS R6 Mark II
£2,779/\$3,599

Packs huge firepower, with 24.2MP stills at 40fps and up to 6K video, plus updated AF detection.
Reviewed: Issue 264



Nikon Z 6III
£2,699/\$2,499

With subject recognition and tracking abilities, the autofocus system is superb, and the camera's image quality is stellar.
Reviewed: Issue 285



Sony A7 IV
£2,399/\$2,499

Too powerful and too expensive for an entry level camera. It's more like a mini-A1 but at less than half the price.
Reviewed: Issue 249





Dynamic range is excellent, with the S1 IIE retaining detail in dark shadows and bright highlights. It also preserves plenty of fine detail and texture, even at high ISO settings, and effectively stifles image noise.

Naturally, the bottom line in terms of photo performance is always image quality. In this respect, the S1 IIE is an absolute delight. Colour rendition is beautifully natural, with plenty of in-camera style options, and the same goes for dramatic and moody monochrome. Dynamic range is excellent, retaining detail in everything from extremely dark shadows to super-bright highlights. There's plenty of fine detail and texture preserved in images, which is maintained even at high ISO settings, along with an effective stifling of image noise. All in all, stills image quality is every bit as good as from the more upmarket S1 II.

The images that I took while reviewing the S1 IIE contain a sequence of shots taken under fairly low, indoor lighting levels. I started at ISO 200 and worked my way up to ISO 51,200. See the photo on page 111 for an example of how the camera trades retention of fine detail against suppression of image noise throughout the sensitivity range, when shooting in jpeg quality mode.

Video performance

Just as with stills, the impact in terms of reduced video performance compared with the S1 II is due to the image sensor. Without a partially stacked architecture and therefore a slower readout speed, the S1 IIE can't manage some of the exotic frame rates delivered by the S1 II. For example, while both cameras can shoot at 6K 30p (open gate) and 6K 60p (2:4:1), the S1 II can capture 5.9K at 60p and 4K at 120p. The S1 IIE drops to a maximum of 5.9K 30p and can only manage 120p at Full HD (1080p) rather than 4K.

Even so, I like the inclusion of open gate, which uses the 3:2 aspect ratio of the whole image sensor and makes it more efficient to

crop for horizontal or vertical orientation in post-production. Again, the video options for both internal and external recording are so comprehensive in both cameras that, if I were to list them all, you'd probably still be reading this review tomorrow.

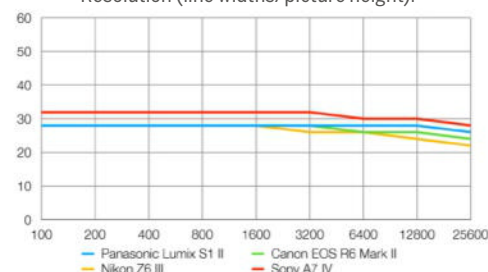
I found that in-body image stabilisation worked really well for handheld shooting of video as well as stills, so that's another positive attribute that's shared with the S1 II. The only real downside, fan-cooled resolutions and high-end frame rates aside, is that the slower data readout of the S1 IIE's more conventional sensor gives a greater risk of the dreaded 'rolling shutter', which is commonly referred to as the 'jello effect'.

This is a phenomenon caused by the length of time it takes for data to be outputted line by line from the image sensor. If you're shooting a fast-moving object, such as the blades of a propeller or a truck speeding from one side of the frame to the other, their shape will be deformed due to the change of position from the start of each frame to the end. Sure enough, the S1 IIE can't compete with the performance of the S1 II, but it's still pretty good. For more on how the S1 IIE performed in testing, view our sample video clip [www.bit.ly/dcm302_lumixvid], shot at Bristol docks in the UK.

Matthew Richards

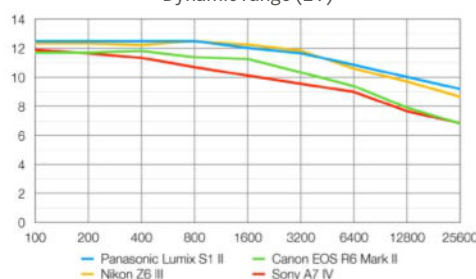
"The S1 IIE's stills image quality is every bit as good as from the more upmarket S1 II"

Resolution (line widths/picture height):



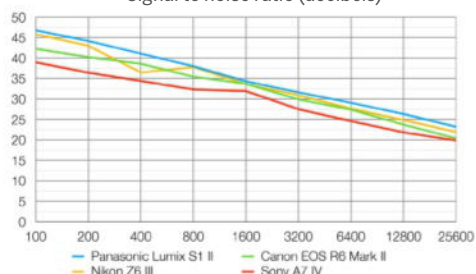
The three 24MP cameras resolve similar levels of fine detail at lower sensitivities. As ISOs increase, the S1 II's images are more detailed than those of the Canon and Nikon cameras, thanks to lower noise levels.

Dynamic range (EV)



The S1 II captures excellent dynamic range throughout our tested sensitivity range. It matches the previous class leader, the Nikon Z 6III, at lower sensitivities and even beats it at higher ISOs.

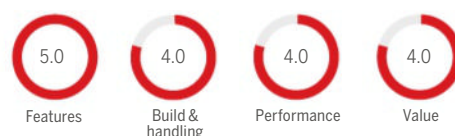
Signal to noise ratio (decibels)



As with dynamic range, the S1 II beats its rivals for low image noise levels. Throughout our tested sensitivity range, it consistently produces cleaner images than the competition.

Digital Camera verdict

4.5 ★★★★★ Outstanding



Nobody wants to spend money for nothing, or at least on something they don't need. The partially stacked image sensor of the Panasonic S1 II makes it a real speed demon, but to use an analogy, do you need a Ferrari when going to the supermarket? The 70fps burst rate of the S1 II is more than I'd ever need and the super-fast readout speeds only pay dividends for the highest-resolution video capture at the highest frame rates. Forced to choose, I'd take the S1 IIE for its excellent image quality and superb video and stills performance at a 20 per cent discount, any day.

Telephoto Laowa 200mm f/2 AF FF



This Laowa lens is sufficiently light for the long periods of handheld shooting that are often essential for sports and wildlife photography.

Laowa 200mm f/2 AF FF

£1,799/\$1,799

Powerful telephoto reach and fast aperture with a relatively lightweight build

venuslens.net

Venus Optics is a Chinese company founded in 2013 by a group of photographers and optical experts. I've always been impressed by its ability to dream up new types of lenses and reinvent old favourites. The Laowa 200mm f/2 AF FF takes its design cues from the Canon EF 200mm f/2L IS USM and Nikon AF-S 200mm f/2G ED VR II lenses launched in 2008 and 2010, respectively. It has been reimagined for the mirrorless era, although with Canon RF approval being hard to come by, it is available in Nikon Z and Sony E mount editions, plus a Canon EF version that can be used on DSLRs or mirrorless EOS cameras via an EF-EOS R mount adapter.

Build and handling

This lens is 'relatively' lightweight, at little more than half the weight of the Canon and Nikon equivalents, but it still looks and feels decidedly chunky, weighing 1,588g. The optical elements govern the girth of this lens, sucking in enough light to enable its f/2 aperture rating at 200mm. The lens has a diameter of 118mm and comes complete with a 105mm front filter thread – that element taking the lead role in an optical path that features 11 elements, arranged in nine groups. Of these, specialist glass includes two ED (Extra-low Dispersion) elements, one AD (Anomalous Dispersion) element and one UHR (Ultra High Refractive index) element. The aim is for enhanced sharpness and clarity with the minimum of aberrations.

Unusually, the lens is finished in a deep shade of blue rather than black, with a grey version also available. Behind the front element at the forward end of the barrel are four customisable function buttons, set at 90° intervals so that they fall neatly under the thumb in every shooting orientation. Behind this is the manual focus ring, which is

1
The lens has a diameter of 118mm and comes with a 105mm front filter thread.

2
At 1,588g, the Laowa is 'relatively' lightweight, but still looks and feels decidedly chunky.

3
The lens comes with a reversible hood that significantly extends its length when mounted.

tactile and silky smooth in operation. On the left side of the barrel, there's an AF/MF focus mode switch, along with an autofocus range limiter. The latter is a two-way switch, giving the option of locking out the short end of autofocus travel between 1.5m and 5m. You can throw the switch and swap from full autofocus to the longer 5m to infinity range.

The physical aperture ring is a control ring dedicated to aperture adjustment rather than being multi-functional, which has markings in one-third f/stop increments from f/2 to f/22. There's also an 'A' (Auto) position for camera-controlled aperture adjustment. You'll need this for the likes of Program and Shutter Priority shooting modes. There's no locking switch to lock it at the Auto setting. As such, care is needed not to accidentally nudge it from this setting.

The Laowa has a click/de-click switch on the right of the barrel. It's clearly marked, easy to use and enables stepless, silent aperture adjustments when shooting video. Not all versions of this lens are identical, and the Nikon Z and Sony E mount editions both feature a 43mm drop-in filter at the rear. It has pinch-action levers for swapping between filters, and a thumbwheel for adjusting rotation-specific filters like circular polarisers. Adopters of the Canon EF version might feel miffed at its absence, though.

The Laowa is no lightweight, and while it's fine for long periods of handheld shooting, I wouldn't want to mount it on a tripod or monopod via the attachment socket in my camera body. Thankfully, it has a decent tripod mounting ring, but if you'd rather use it without, you can remove the foot to leave a small square stub. The foot follows the recent trend of having an Arca-Swiss profile,



The main attraction of this Laowa lens is that it can cover the distance with its 200mm focal length, but also has a fast aperture that can isolate the main subject within a scene with a tight depth of field.

so you can mount it directly into a compatible tripod head without having to use an additional quick-release plate. The lens comes with a hood, which is quite large when mounted in its forward-facing orientation. At the back end is the metal mounting plate, which has a high-quality look and feel and features a weather-seal gasket and gold-plated electronic contacts.

Performance

This lens is sufficiently light for the long periods of handheld shooting that are often essential for sports and wildlife photography, and its controls, including customisable function buttons, click/de-click aperture ring and autofocus range limiter all boost performance for both stills and videography.

But the bottom line is image quality and the Laowa does well in all areas. Sharpness is excellent, even when shooting wide-open at f/2. There's plenty of clarity and contrast, even shooting under dull lighting conditions, and the quality of bokeh is convincing, with a natural-looking fall-off between focused and defocused areas, the latter looking smooth and dreamy, and with negligible longitudinal chromatic aberration or 'bokeh fringing'.

The main attraction is being able to cover the distance with its 200mm focal length, along with a fast aperture that can isolate the main subject within a scene, with a tight depth of field. Meanwhile, at medium to narrow apertures, the focal length delivers a compressed perspective, which can be useful in landscapes and for creative effect.

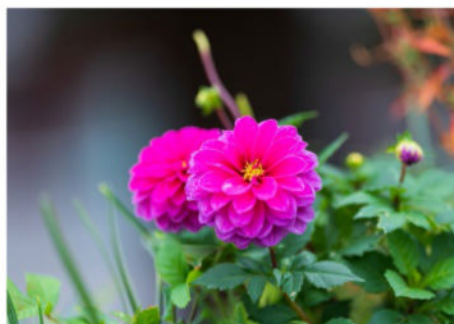
Autofocus isn't the quickest, but it tracks moving subjects in sports and wildlife scenarios and works well in subject-recognition modes with continuous autofocus. Face/eye focus tracking is a bonus for portraiture with this lens and it gives an excellent hit rate with consistent accuracy during testing.

Matthew Richards



Sharpness is excellent, even wide-open at f/2, with plenty of clarity and contrast, even in poor lighting.

Matthew Richards



The quality of bokeh is good, with a natural-looking fall-off between focused and defocused areas.

One omission is optical stabilisation, but to some extent, you're covered by IBIS (in-body image stabilisation) featured in all Nikon Z full-frame bodies and all but the first generation of Sony mirrorless full-frame cameras. You could argue that it's less of a necessity due to the relatively fast f/2 aperture enabling quick shutter speeds under low lighting conditions, without having to bump up your camera's ISO setting. However, you might wish to use narrower apertures to enable a larger depth of field, which can be tight in close-up to medium-distance shooting. **Matthew Richards**

Telephoto

Specifications

Mount options: Canon EF, Nikon Z, Sony E

Full-frame: Yes

Autofocus: Yes

Image stabilisation: No

Lens construction: 11 elements in 9 groups

Angle of view: 12°

Max aperture: f/2

Min aperture: f/22

Diaphragm blades: 9

Min focus distance: 0.15m

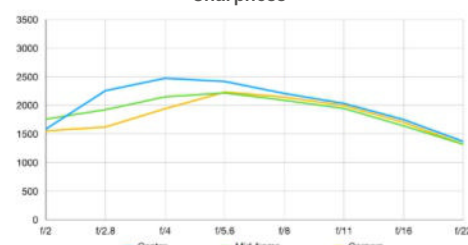
Max magnification ratio: 0.15x

Filter size: 105mm, 43mm rear Z/E

Dimensions (L x D): 177 x 118mm

Weight: 1,588g

Sharpness



Sharpness

In real-world testing, centre-sharpness was impressive at f/2 at typical telephoto shooting distances. From f/2.8 through to f/11, both lab-testing and real-world sharpness are superb across the entire frame and exceptional towards the edges and corners.

Fringing

0.92

There's a little colour fringing towards the edges and corners of the image frame, but it's within the scope of automatic in-camera correction for the Nikon Z and Sony E mount versions of the lens.

Distortion

0.65

There's the slightest touch of pincushion distortion, but it's much less than with many telephoto lenses and will go unnoticed in the vast majority of images, even with automatic in-camera correction disabled.

Digital Camera verdict

5.0 ★★★★★ A best-in-class product



The Laowa 200mm f/2 AF FF is a big, hefty and expensive lens, but a lot less heavy and expensive than the Canon and Nikon equivalent lenses for DSLRs. Ultimately, the lens is sufficiently compact and lightweight for long periods of handheld shooting, making it an excellent choice for sports, wildlife and event photography. Sharpness, clarity and contrast are impressive, and bokeh is beautiful. Overall, it's a superb lens with exotic handling characteristics, at a relatively affordable price.

Software Affinity

- 1 In regular editing, most of the work is carried out non-destructively with layers and masks.
- 2 Affinity passes raw files through a Develop process, with tools similar to Camera Raw.
- 3 Adjustment layers let you adjust curves, white balance, split toning and other effects.



- 4 Affinity has no AI masking tools, perspective corrections or noise reduction...
- 5 ...but there are lens corrections, colour adjustments and basic masking tools.
- 6 It's ideal for old-school photo editors, but you won't find inspiration or one-click presets here.

Rod Lawton

Affinity

Free (in-app purchases apply)

Affinity Photo, Designer and Publisher rolled into a single app

www.affinity.studio

System requirements

Windows

Processor: Intel, AMD or ARM64 processor (machine learning requires Windows x64 and ARM64 hardware running Windows 10 or 11)
Operating system: Windows 10 May 2020 Update (2004, 20H1, build 19041) or later
RAM: 8GB recommended
Graphics: DirectX 10-compatible graphics cards and above, hardware GPU acceleration requires Direct3D level 12.0-capable card
Disk space: 1GB, more during installation
Monitor: 1280 x 768 or higher resolution

macOS

Processor: Apple Silicon (M1 or newer)
Operating system: macOS Catalina 10.15 or later, machine learning requires Apple Silicon devices running macOS Ventura 13 or later
RAM: 8GB recommended
Graphics: (not quoted)
Disk space: 10GB, SS2, 8GB, more during installation
Monitor: 1280 x 768 or higher resolution



Affinity Photo is one of the leading Photoshop alternatives, doing almost everything that the Adobe program does at a fraction of the price and with no subscription. The program's developer Serif was bought out by graphics giant Canva, and Affinity Photo has been reborn as part of an all-in-one Affinity application, combining photo editing with vector drawing and page layout tools – like Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign all rolled into one.

Although Affinity Photo is one of the best photo-editing software apps, it's also a design tool for projects where photography is a component – and this is true of new owner Canva, too. So how come it is completely free, in perpetuity, with no strings? The catch is that you can download Affinity with a basic free Canva account, but to access Canva's more advanced AI tools, such as AI object masking, generative AI or

upscaling, you'll need a paid Canva subscription. But Affinity is powerful enough for most and it's free, with no watermarks or restrictions on time or features. All you need to do is sign up for a free Canva account, and then you can download the app. For more advanced generative AI features, you will need to subscribe to a paid Canva plan. That's the only limitation – though for photographers who don't use generative AI much, it's not a limitation at all.

Interface and usability

Affinity Photo had a logical but complex layout, thanks to its use of 'Personas' for different processes. In Affinity, these tasks – Develop, Tone Map, Liquify – have been absorbed into the Pixel > Filter menu. Along the top toolbar, you now have tabs for 'Vector', 'Pixel' (photo editing) and 'Layout' to reflect the software's three principal roles. They all share the same file format, so you can swap freely between them as you work.

Rod Lawton



There is a wide range of filters, most of which are applied as non-destructive 'live filter' layers. You can add lighting, clarity and depth of field effects, sharpening and blur filters, and more.

Rod Lawton



The Object Selection tool analyses the image, after which you can hover over any object to select it. This works so well, you begin to wonder whether you need Adobe-style AI subject selection at all.

Affinity works with both raw files and jpeg or tiff format, but unlike Lightroom, not seamlessly on both. Like Photoshop, it passes raw files through a Develop process, with similar tools to those in Adobe Camera Raw. There are no AI masking tools, perspective corrections or noise reduction, but there are lens corrections, tonal and colour adjustments and basic gradient and brush masking tools – not quite Adobe Camera Raw, but a decent substitute.

Affinity can also create 32-bit HDR merge files from bracketed exposures, and its Tone Map tools are rather good, offering realistic-looking results. It can also stitch panoramas, stack images for focus bracketing and even astro. In the regular editing mode, most of the work is carried out non-destructively with layers and masks. Like Photoshop, Affinity

offers a range of adjustment layers, so you can adjust curves, white balance, split toning and other effects. There is also a wide range of filters, most of which can be applied as non-destructive 'live filter' layers. You can add lighting, clarity and depth of field effects, sharpening and blur filters, and more.

For old-school photo editors, it could hardly be simpler. But if you're looking for one-click presets and inspiration, you won't find it here. Affinity is for creators who know what they want to do and how to do it. There are workarounds. You can save preset adjustments for re-use and also record macros for automating multi-step processes, but this feels a little like stepping back in time.

There are no image cataloguing tools, so you'll need another program to manage your photo library. But as many

such apps come with decent editing tools, it narrows the potential audience for Affinity's old-school editing approach. In short, if you want what Photoshop does without a subscription, Affinity is exactly what you need. But for organising tools and one-click creative presets, you are in the wrong place.

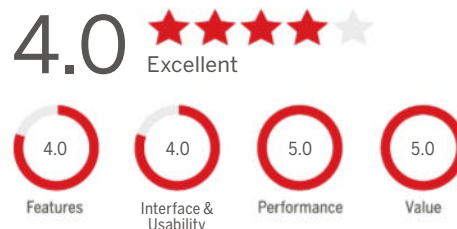
Performance

Affinity's raw processing is pretty good – but don't forget to check the Lens Corrections box in the Develop mode and the Detail Refinement box in the Details tab, otherwise your raw files will look pretty soft. Not only do you get a histogram, but also a Scope display, which gives you more information about the brightness distribution across your image.

Once you're in the regular pixel-editing mode, Affinity is fast. I'm impressed by the Tone Map tools, which can be used on merged HDR images, but also single images that need a little rebalancing of the shadows and highlights. Everything works exactly as it should – the focus stacking works well, as does the panorama stitching.

Finally, a special mention for the Object Selection tool, which uses on-device machine learning. It takes a few seconds to analyse the image, after which, you can hover the mouse over any object or area in the scene, and it will recognise and select it. The selections generally have no visible edge artifacts or haloes. It works so well that you wonder whether you need Adobe-style AI subject selection after all. **Rod Lawton**

Digital Camera verdict



Affinity is a brilliant Photoshop alternative, not least because it's free. While Photoshop now features a few AI gadgets that aren't available in Affinity, at least not without a Canva subscription, not everybody needs or wants these.

However, while Affinity does what it does brilliantly, the market has changed, as have the needs of photographers. There's no image cataloguing, no one-click presets, and little help or ideas for beginners. It's a photo editor that's also a design tool. It shares a lot of photo editing tools, but it's headed in a different direction than programs like Lightroom or DxO Nik Collection. Many photographers work on a single image at a time and know exactly what they want to do and don't need the distraction of showy presets and effects. Affinity is for them – it's just not for everyone.

“Affinity Photo is reborn as an all-in-one app, combining photo editing with vector drawing and page layout tools”

Mike Taylor

The award-winning photographer has just published a book about how to succeed in the medium. **Niall Hampton** finds out more

Mike Taylor



Mike Taylor Photographer

Based in Kent, England, Mike Taylor is a professional photographer specialising in commercial and editorial assignments, and shoots on a fixed-lens Leica Q (Typ 116).

His range of work is wide and includes portraits, landscapes and travel, plus a long-term documentary project covering the restoration of a landmark London pub.

Earlier this year, Mike won the Street Photography category in 2025's Cewe Photo Award, besting 49,000 other entries from photographers around the world.

Having previously worked as a journalist, photography is Mike's second career, so writing a book about how to succeed as a photographer seemed like a logical step.

Website: miketaylor.photography

Instagram: @miketaylor.photography

Having gained global recognition for his photo of France football fans cheering on their team in a televised World Cup match in a London pub, Mike Taylor has just become an author. Available as a Kindle e-book from Amazon, *Click! The \$10 Book That'll Make You A Better Photographer And Save You A Fortune* has a title that describes itself.

Over 120 pages, Mike celebrates photographs and photography and offers some hints, tips and insights that have turned out well for him. Before 2018, Mike enjoyed taking photographs, but felt that chasing the photo 'gear dragon' and acquiring new kit wasn't making him better as a photographer. So he went back to basics, drastically slimming down his setup and drawing up a philosophy that would change his approach to making pictures. Since then, he has enjoyed a successful career as a working professional and is the proud owner of a trophy from the world's largest photography competition.

So what's Mike's secret sauce? You'll have to buy the e-book to find out, but in the meantime, he gives us a few pointers...

You write about having an epiphany that changed your approach to the medium in 2018. What actually happened?

We were on holiday in Vietnam and I hadn't picked up a proper camera in a decade – ever since we were given iPhones at work. I took



a picture with it that made me realise that I'd probably just wasted 10 years of my creative life. It almost broke my heart. So I had a mini-midlife crisis before pulling myself together and getting back on the photography horse with a vengeance.

I threw myself back into it, but with the accrued wisdom and perspective of a few years, plus the fire in the belly of someone who'd just realised the awful mistake they had made. I started really looking at what I was doing with photography – and how and why I was doing it.



Having downsized from a more expansive setup to just a fixed-lens Leica Q (Typ 116), having a fixed-lens camera has been an opportunity rather than a restriction.

Why did you choose this particular model?

I'd bought a secondhand Leica M6 with a 35mm F1.4 lens back in the late 1980s and loved it. I much prefer the rangefinder way of shooting to the SLRs I'd grown up with – it just felt more natural and I'm happy getting up close to people and taking their picture. Anyway, I had to sell the camera to get married – we weren't flush and my girlfriend

joked that she was only doing this once – so if I really wanted to marry her, I would sell my camera and buy her a ring. Spoiler alert: we're still happily married. But after coming back from the crisis in Vietnam, a friend let me play with his Q and I was hooked. I would warn all photographers: do not ever handle a Leica Q unless you can afford one; it is addictive. It felt just like my old M6. Same feel, same balance and handling. But yes, it's one fixed 28mm F1.7 lens.

I also decided to only shoot in landscape and edit to 3x2 in Lightroom Classic.

Photography offers almost endless hardware and software possibilities these days – too many, in fact. As photographers, we suffer from choice paralysis, but these limitations helped me cut through this.

And how did making this change boost your creativity?

It made a huge difference. I had written three Post-it notes that basically said: 'No more easy shots, no back doors or excuses and only show your best work anywhere or to anyone'. For anybody wanting to —→



up their photography game, I'd start by telling them to write their own version of these three Post-it notes, instead of buying a new bit of kit. Or use mine if you think they'll work for you. Just writing them down felt like a massive step for me. I had no idea where I was going with it, but I wanted to find out.

Where did the idea for *Click!* come from?

I was a journalist for many years and have always made notes. Since getting back into photography in 2018, those notes on my phone all seemed to be about photography, things that had either really inspired or annoyed me. I thought I might try to pitch a piece to a magazine. Then, over the summer, I had some amazing eye surgery that sorted out a lifetime of really terrible vision. But it meant I couldn't do much more than sit still – no photography, editing, swimming, gym, gardening, shopping or anything. However, I could use my one good eye to tap away at my phone and so the writing started. It took about three solid

months to organise seven years of notes and lose the look and feel of a crazy, scrawled green-ink letter to a local newspaper.

How will *Click!* make you a better photographer and save you a fortune?

Most photographers would rather buy a new piece of kit than do any photo theory. I understand why, but my advice is just don't. Look at yourself, look at your practice and really look at your images.

What's photo theory? Anything that is about photography that is not shooting or editing. Too many photographers see it as 'homework' or maybe just 'boring'. It's never been easier now that we have the internet. But it can be anything related to improving your photography – magazines, books, exhibitions, videos, talks, podcasts, camera clubs. Anything. Tons of it is also completely free, and yet so many photographers don't do it at all. I was giving a talk to a camera club recently, and of the 30 people there, only 10 had ever heard of Martin Parr (sorry, Martin!).

You say that *Click!* isn't a technical manual. How would you define it, then?

I suppose *Click!* is a sort of guide to hacking your photography head – having an honest look at yourself and what you're doing, building a process that works for you and learning to properly critique your own images. Too many photographers take pictures they tweak in editing and never really look at ever again. What a waste!

Click! is available as an e-book on Kindle. If it is well received, would you consider publishing it in physical form?

I'd love to. The Kindle route was a quick and easy way to get it out there so people could buy it for less than the price of a couple of pints. It also means that any photographer can slip it easily into their bag and keep it with them. For me, that is the win. It takes about three hours to read through, but the plan is to have it with you in your bag at all times. Bits of it will come into focus over time as you progress. If the best camera in the world is the one you have with you, I figured the same must be true of camera books.

How did your photography journey progress to where we are now?

In 1980, as a trainee writer on my local paper, the photographers I worked with could see

"If my photography was a plate of ham and eggs, I was the chicken – involved, but not committed. *Click!* is about becoming the pig"

Mike Taylor



I was keen on photography. They took me under their wing, slipped me rolls of Ilford HP5 and taught me how to print. I had grown up with a Zenit E and starved myself to buy a Canon A1, which I used for many happy years. And then, eventually, I picked up the M6. I loved that camera, but I don't think I could go back to film now. I was never a bad photographer, but not nearly as good as I wanted to be. If my photography was a plate of ham and eggs, I was the chicken, not the pig. I was involved but not committed. *Click!* is all about becoming the pig.

And what are the highlights to date?

I have been incredibly fortunate. I come from a fairly poor south London background, but I had a great childhood and very loving, supportive parents. They had come from chaotic homes and so didn't want that for us. I was a terrible student, but I had a couple of great teachers and fell into a job at my local newspaper at 17.

Since then, I've been falling forward into creative things my entire life – TV news, Sky Movies, BAFTA and washing glasses in the bar we owned. Being in the right place at the right time helps, but having a 'can-do' or 'why not?' attitude certainly makes a difference. Also, as a teenager, I had a Saturday job in a supermarket's meat department for a year.



Mike Taylor

It was a hateful, bullying, oppressive circle of hell I realised I never wanted to be stuck in.

Is the lesson from this that you don't need expensive equipment to be able to take a good photograph?

Absolutely. I'm not saying don't buy any kit – just don't buy the stuff you don't —→

Opposite page: 'Alfred gaming', Acton.

Above (top): Tucson, Arizona, USA.

Above: Trafalgar Square, London.



Above: Watching people watching football in pubs, Chiswick, London.

Right: 'Olly bombing', France.

need, the stuff that you're shelling out for in the hope it will improve your photography. It won't. You already have what you need – that's you and all the pictures you've already taken. Get your head straight, your process worked out, add in all that fantastic free photo theory stuff and you'll be fine.

In the introduction to *Click!*, you say: "You'll [create meaningful images] by using your head, your heart and your eyes – not by following, liking or subscribing..." Like most people, you probably bemoan the day when photography became more about competing for visibility on social media than the act of creation itself. So how do we wrest back control of the medium we love?

I was an early adopter of all the social platforms, mainly because of work, and they've all gone the same way. They're terrible. The technology writer Cory Doctorow has a word for it – 'enshittification'. But we can't change or control them.



We never could. Sadly, there's no going back to the days when they just worked. So let's make the best of what we have right now and use them as tools that suit us in our photography. Because what we can control is how we become better photographers on our own terms. That's what's really at the beating heart of *Click!* ●

***Click! The \$10 Book That'll Make You A Better Photographer And Save You A Fortune* is available now as an e-book, via: www.amazon.co.uk/dp/BOFXSN1DCB**



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R5 body	£1999
R3 body	£2799
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ZF body	£799
R5 body	£699
RF 10-20 F4 L IS box	£1799
RF 14-35 F4 L IS USM box	£999
RF 15-35 F2.8 L IS USM box	£1499
RF 24-100 F4 L IS USM box	£1899
RF 24-105 F4 L IS	£999
RF 24-105 F4/7.3 IS STM	£329
RF 35 F1.8 IS macro	£399
RF 50 F1.2 L IS USM box	£1299
RF 70-200 F2.8 L IS USM box	£1699
RF 70-200 F4 L IS USM	£1299
RF 85 F2 macro box	£499
RF 100-500 F4.5/7.1 L IS USM	£1999
RF 600 F1.1	£599

CANON DSLR USED

1DX MKII body box	£1299
7D MKII body	£599
6D MKII body	£699
6D body box	£699
5Ds body	£999
5D MKIV body	£999
5D MKIII body box	£499
80D body box	£599
70D body	£249
8G-E21/20/16/14/13/11/9/8 ea	£WEB

CANON M MIRRORLESS USED

M50 MKII + 15-45 box	£449
EF-M 11-22 F4/5.6 IS STM	£249
EF-M 15-45 F3.5/6.3 IS STM	£279
EF-M 18-150 F3.5/6.3 IS STM	£349
EF-M 32 F1.4 STM box	£399
EF-M 55-200 F4.5/6.3 IS STM	£249
EF-M adapter	£89

Used Canon

200-400mm F4 IS USM L **300mm F2.8 IS USM LII** **400mm F4 DO IS USMII** **500mm F4 IS USM LII**

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FLASH/ACCESSORIES USED

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ST-E2 box	£69
MR14-EXII ringflash box	£399
MR14 ringflash	£249
270EX	£79
320EX	£79
430EXIII	£199
430EX II	£99
430EX	£69
550EX	£49
580EX	£149
580EXII	£179
600EX RTI	£199
600EX RTII box	£349
RS-600N remote	£20
RS-80N3 remote	£30
TC80-N3 remote	£79
Angle finder C	£79

CANON AF LENSES USED

8-15 F4 USM	£699
10-18 F4.5/5.6 IS STM EFS	£149
15 F2.8 fisheye	£299
15-85 F3.5/5.6 EFS	£199
16-35 F4 USM IS L box	£499
17-40 F4 L USM	£199
17-55 F2.8 IS USM box EFS	£349
18-135 F3.5/5.6 IS EFS nano	£299
18-200 F3.5/5.6 IS EFS	£249
24 F2.8 EFS	£149
24-70 F2.8 USM LII box	£999
24-105 F4 IS USM L	£499
35 F1.4 USM LII box	£899
45 F2.8 TSE box	£499
50 F1.4 USM box	£249
50 F1.8 STM	£129
60 F2.8 macro EFS	£349

Used Canon

5D MKIV body **5Ds body** **7D MKII body**

£999 **£999** **£599**

SIGMA CAF USED

4.5 F2.8 DC fisheye box	£399
10-20 F3.5 EX DC HSM	£229
12-24 F4 DG HSM box	£699
12-24 F4.5/5.6 II DG	£349
14-24 F2.8 Art DG HSM box	£799
18-300 F3.5/6.3 DC OS box	£299
35 F1.4 Art	£499
50 F1.4 Art	£499
100-400 F5.6/6.3 OS HSM	£599
105 F2.8 EX DG HSM OS	£299
150-600 F5.6/6.3 DG OS sport	£999
150-600 F5.6/6.3 DG OS contemp	£699
TC1401 1.4x extender	£149

TAMRON CAF USED

10-24 F3.5/5.6 DIII	£179
16-300 F3.5/6.3 II VC	£399
18-400 F3.5/6.3 DIII VC	£549
90 F2.8 Di	£199

Used Nikon

Z8 body **Z7 MKII body** **28-400mm F4/8 S VR**

£2599 **£1599** **£1099**

NIKON Z MIRRORLESS USED

Z8 body box	£2599
Z7 MKII body box	£1599
Z6 MKII body	£1199
Z50 MKII + 16-50 box	£799
14-30 F4 S	£799
20 F1.8 S box	£699
24 F1.8 S box	£699
24-70 F2.8 S box	£1299
24-70 F4 S	£399
24-200 F4/6.3 VR box	£699
28-400 F4/8 S VR	£1099
35 F1.8 S box	£599
50 F1.8 S	£449
70-200 F2.8 S box	£1499
85 F1.8 S	£599
180-600 F5.6/6.3 VR box	£1499
TC 1.4x tele converter	£499
FTZ adapter II box	£149
FTZ adapter	£149
MB-N11 grip (fit Z6/7)	£229
MB-N10 grip (fit Z6/7)	£129

NIKON DSLR USED

D5 body	£1599
D850 body box	£1399/1899
D810 body	£699
D780 body box	£1399
D7500 body box	£599
D500 body box	£999
D7500 body	£599
D7200 body box	£299
D7100 body box	£299
D5100 body box	£169
MBD-18 (D850) box	£299
MBD-16 (D750)	£99
MBD-15 (D7100/7200)	£99
MBD-12 (D800/810)	£99
MBD-11 (D7000)	£49

FLASH / ACCESSORIES USED

SB-R1C1	£399
SB-400	£99
SB-900 box	£149
SU-800 commander	£149
DR-6 or DR-5 angle finder each	£149
MC-36A rem.	£149
MC-30A rem.	£79

Used Nikon

300mm F2.8 AFS VR II **500mm F5.6 E PF VR AFS** **500mm F4 E FL ED VR**

£1999 **£1699** **£4499**

NIKON AF LENSES USED

10-20 F4.5/5.6 AF-P DX VR	£239
10-24 F3.5/4.5 AFS box	£199
12-24 F4 AFS DX	£199
14-24 F2.8 AFS	£599
16-35 F4 AFS VR box	£399
16-80 F2.8/4 VR DX	£499
16-85 F3.5/5.6 AFS VR	£199
18-35 F3.5/4.5 AFS	£299
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18-140 F3.5/5.6 AFS VR	£199
18-200 F3.5/5.6 VR DX MKII	£299
18-200 F3.5/5.6 VR DX	£149
18-300 F3.5/6.3 VR DX	£449
20 F1.8 AFS box	£499
24 F1.4 G AFS Mint box	£799
24 F2.8 AFD box	£249
24-70 F2.8 AFS VR box	£1199
24-70 F2.8 AFS VR	£599
24-120 F4 AFS VR	£499
28-300 F3.5/5.6 AFS VR box	£599
35 F1.8 AFS DX	£149

500mm F4 E FL ED VR

35 F1.8 AFS ED	£299
35 F2.8 AFD	£299
50 F1.4 AFS G box	£249
50 F1.8 AFS box	£349
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55-300 F4.5/5.6 AFS DX VR	£229
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500 F4 E FL ED VR	£4499
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TC14-EII box	£199
TC17-EII box	£99
TC20-EIII box	£199
TC20-EII	£99

Used Nikon

D850 body **D500 body** **D5 body**

£1399 **£999** **£1599**

SIGMA NAF USED

8 F3.5 DC	£399
10-20 F3.5 DC	£229
12-24 F4.5/5.6 II HSM	£349
18-300 F3.5/6.3 DC OS	£299
20 F1.4 DG HSM Art	£499
24-105 F4 DG OS	£499
35 F1.4 Art	£499
50 F1.4 Art	£499
70-200 F2.8 Sport box	£799
105 F2.8 EX DG HSM OS	£299
150-600 F5.6/6.3 DG OS sport	£999
150-600 F5.6/6.3 DG OS contemp	£699
180 F2.8 OS macro	£1299
TC-1401 1.4x extender	£149
TC-2001 2x extender	£199

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F + plain prism	£499
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28-85 F3.5/4.5 AIS	£249
35 F2 AIS	£349
35-105 F3.5/4.5 AIS	£199
50 F1.4 AIS	£299
55 F2.8 AIS micro	£1299
100-300 F5.6 AIS	£199
105 F1.8 AIS	£399
135 F2 AIS	£499
180 F2.8 AIS	£399
200 F4.5 AIS macro	£299
300 F4.5 ED AIS box	£399
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PB-5 bellows	£199
PB-4 bellows	£199

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Olympus Used

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Panasonic Used

G9 Body

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Sony Used

200-600mm F5.6/6.3

£1199

Canon FD Used

EOS 3 body

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Cambo Used

Master 6 5x4 Monorail

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FUJIFILM DIGITAL USED

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16 F1.4 WR box	£349
16-55 F2.8 XR	£499
16-80 F4 WR	£399
18-55 F2.8/4.0 XF	£299
23 F1.4 XF WR	£349
27 F2.8 XF	£349
35 F2 XF WR	£299
50-140 F2.8 WR box	£799
50-230 F4.5/5.7 MKII	£239
55-200 F3.5/4.8 R box	£399
56 F1.2 R	£399
62 F2.4 R	£399
70-300 F4.5/6.3 R	£599
1.4x XF conv	£249
X500 flash	£249
EF-42 flash	£99

OLYMPUS MICRO 4/3 USED

OM-1 MKII body	£1299
OM-1 body box	£899
E-M10 MKII body	£399
7-14 F2.8 Pro	£699
8-25 F4 Pro	£749
9-18 F4/5.6	£349
12-200 F3.5/6.3	£599
14-150 F4/5.6 ED MKII	£349
25 F1.8	£249
30 F3.5 macro box	£199
40-150 F2.8 Pro box	£899
40-150 F4 Pro box	£649
45 F1.2 Pro ED	£599
60 F2.8 macro	£349
75-300 F4.8/6.7 MSCII	£179
100-400 F5.6/6.3 IS box	£699
HLD-10 grip box	£299

PANASONIC MICRO 4/3 USED

G9 body box	£499
BG9 grip	£99
7-14 F4	£399
8-18 F2.8/4 box	£599
12-35 F2.8 II	£449
12-60 F2.8/4	£399
12-60 F3.5/5.6	£199
14 F2.5	£149
14-42 F3.5/5.6	£99
14-140 F3.5/5.6	£299
25 F1.4 box	£399
45 F2.8	£399
45-175 F4.5/5.6	£299
45-200 F4.5/6.3 box	£179
100-300 F4/5.6 MKII	£429

SONY FE MOUNT DIGITAL USED

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AE-1P body silver	£219
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X-700 body	£199
X-300 body	£99
OLYMPUS OM USED	£299
OM-1N body black box	£299
OM-1 body	£179
OM-2N body black	£299
OM-2N body silver	£299
OM-10 body	£99
Olympus bellows	£149

CANON 35MM USED

EOS 3 body	£499
A1 body box	£199
AE-1 body silver	£129
AE-1P body black box	£299
AE-1P body silver	£219
FD 200 F4 macro	£299
MINOLTA MD USED	£199
X-700 body	£199
X-300 body	£99
OLYMPUS OM USED	£299
OM-1N body black box	£299
OM-1 body	£179
OM-2N body black	£299
OM-2N body silver	£299
OM-10 body	£99
Olympus bellows	£149

LEICA USED

Voigtlander 50 F3.5 Heliar	£369
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Cambo Master 6 5x4 monorail	£499
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Readers' letters

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Christine Speck

Star letter: **If you go down to the woods**

After reading the 'A walk in the woods' project in Photo Active, issue 300 (November), and the included Arboretum tip card, I was inspired to get out and practise with my camera during my favourite month. I love the autumn colours and the stunning display at Thorp Perrow Arboretum at Bedale, North Yorkshire, certainly didn't disappoint. I tried the project's tips for macro, looking up, looking for leading paths and crouching down for some of my shots. I had an enjoyable afternoon practising with my Fujifilm X-T5 camera and Samsung S25 Ultra on a few different settings.

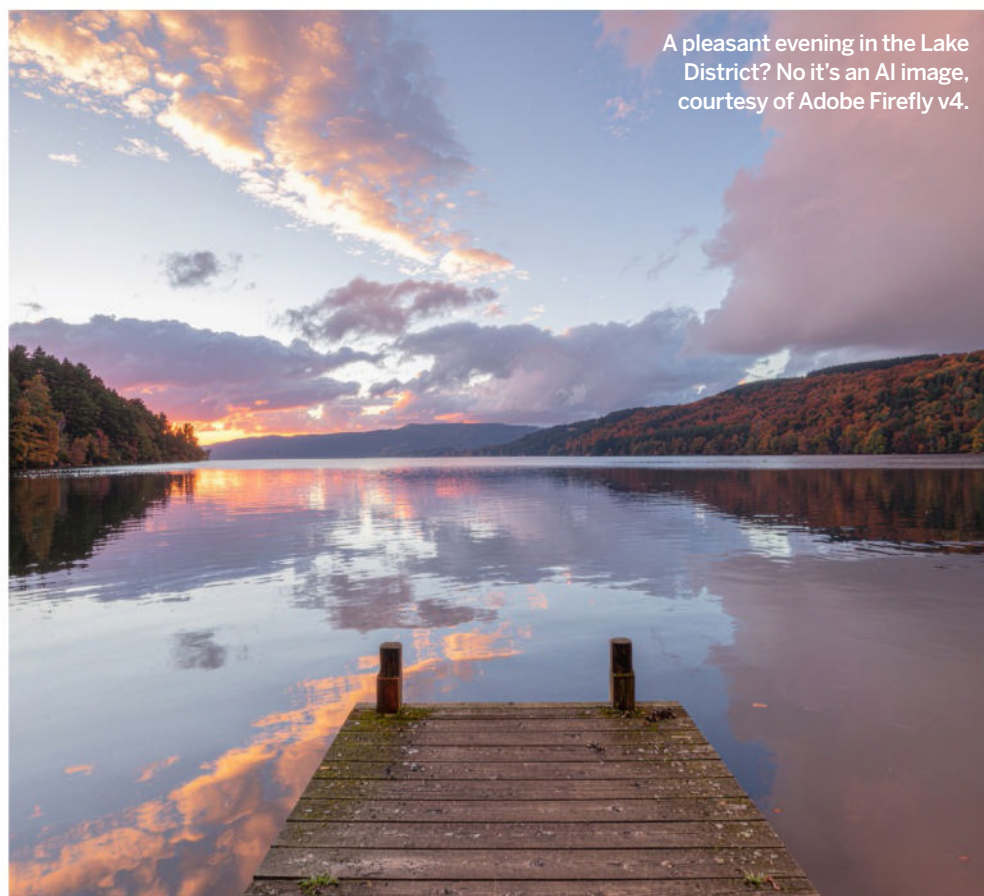
Christine Speck, by email

Digital Camera says: Well done for getting out and having a go! We've picked out the best three from the images you sent. The close-up, wide-angle shot of the red leaves is dramatic, but some of the nearest leaves are out of focus. The image with the red and orange leaves is probably the pick of the bunch because it has a good structure. And, given the sunlight in the background, it's well-exposed too.

Finally, there's the wide-angle shot of the group of trees... something we mentioned in the feature was to be aware of not going too wide, and this shot might have benefited from you standing further back and using a longer focal length instead. However, this is a great set of photos from your visit to the arboretum.



Christine Speck



A pleasant evening in the Lake District? No it's an AI image, courtesy of Adobe Firefly v4.

Generated with Adobe Firefly AI

What do you think of AI?

Regarding the debate about whether AI has a place in photography (*Letters*, issues 297, 299 and 301). My view is that, although I class myself as still learning digital photography, I fear that, if allowed, AI may ruin the craft. You see fake news and fake videos, and it's hard to know what is real at times. I am 'old school' and started with my dad's old box camera, then a Kodak Brownie 127, and I like to believe the saying that 'the camera never lies'. I'm learning to use Affinity Photo 2 (thanks to Wendy's tutorials in this magazine), but I only use it to remove an unsightly pylon or cables.

Rightly or wrongly, I want my photographs to be a true reflection of what I see and what the world is like at that time, not manipulated to be something they aren't. If allowed, I fear that AI will make all this manipulation far more widespread than it is now. So, for me, using AI with photography is an emphatic no.
Mal Piper, by email

Digital Camera says: People have been editing photos for 100 years, with or without AI. But recent advances mean the debate is now about where we draw the line with enhancements.

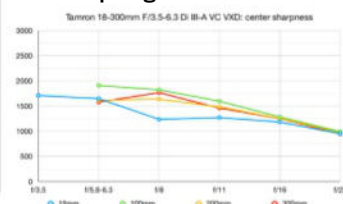
Straight from the camera

I would like to make a suggestion for a possible article. I don't use any editing software after I have taken my photos on my Nikon Z 6II, with or without filters. If I do edit, then it's only what can be done in-camera. I would like to see an article on various cameras to show what they can achieve with their built-in systems. In short, I'd like to know which cameras give the best photos straight out of the camera, using only what's available in camera.
Ian Jenkins, by email

Digital Camera says: It's an interesting idea, but unfortunately, not practical for an article. You'd need to have all the cameras with identical lenses in the same place at the same time for every test shot. Some cameras are better in low light, others are better for wildlife photography, thanks to focus tracking, so it would be impossible to get the same photo of the same subject to compare.

Correction: Tamron 18-300mm F3.5-6.3 Di III-A VC VXD

An oversight led to the incorrect centre-sharpness graph being included in our review (December issue, p113). The correct graph is below. Apologies for the error.



Go barefoot

I am writing in respect of a letter published in issue 300 (November) titled 'Watch Your Feet'. In Australia, it has been popular for many years to engage in what we call barefoot bowls. This initiative was established by several traditional lawn bowls clubs where the membership was dwindling. It attracts a younger cohort who typically stay there for the afternoon, buying drinks and food while enjoying an amateurish game of lawn bowls. I agree with your correspondent that the bowls themselves tend to be heavy; however, with a small amount of common sense, it isn't difficult to avoid crushing one's toes while playing! Next time you visit Australia, come along to a beautiful seaside lawn bowls club and try it for yourself.
Adam Payne, by email



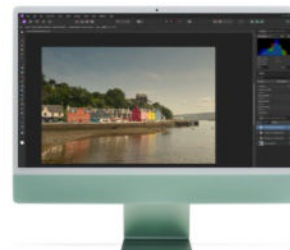
Digital Camera says: It's a great initiative that suits a more forgiving climate than the UK. In warmer places, such as Hawaii and Australia, barefoot bowls can be found at local clubs. There is even an annual Barefoot Bowling competition, which is held in Rockhampton, Australia.



with Chris George

What the f-stop?

How much do you really know about photography? Test yourself to the max every issue with our tricky trivia quiz!



Bettmann / Getty

1 Which actress is using this TLR camera?

- A Grace Kelly
- B Elizabeth Taylor
- C Audrey Hepburn
- D Liza Minnelli

2 Where are Voigtlander lenses currently made?

- A Germany
- B Japan
- C Austria
- D Switzerland

3 PTZ cameras are becoming more common in video production. What does the T stand for?

- A Tele
- B Thirds
- C To
- D Tilt

4 What is the name of Digital Camera World's new fortnightly podcast?

- A Bokeh Face
- B Exposure Therapy
- C Lens Cap Liftoff
- D Straight out of Camera

5 Canon has launched a budget-priced RF-mount 45mm prime lens. What is its maximum aperture?

- A f/1.2
- B f/1.4
- C f/1.8
- D f/2

6 What anniversary is the Ricoh GR series of cameras celebrating in 2026?

- A 20th
- B 25th
- C 30th
- D 40th

7 What big announcement did Affinity recently make about its editing app?

- A You will now need to pay a subscription
- B All edits will be aided by AI
- C It will now be free
- D It will now help you find your best shots

8 What company has launched a miniature camera called the Charmera?

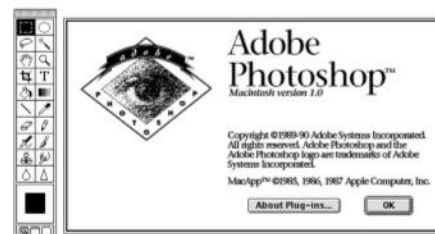
- A Canon
- B AgfaPhoto
- C Camp Snap
- D Kodak

9 Which symbol is used on a lens to indicate the filter size diameter?

- A Ø
- B ∞
- C ©
- D Ω

10 Photoshop was created by two brothers. What was their surname?

- A Knot
- B Knox
- C Knoll
- D Knorr



How did you do?

10 points You're a photo mastermind!
8-9 points Fantastic, you're a brainiac
6-7 points Really good score
4-5 points Respectable, but no cigar
2-3 points We'll keep your score secret
0-1 points Epic fail

ANSWERS 1B,2B,3D,4A,5A,6C,7C,8D,9A,10C

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