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Digital Camera World

The world's favorite photography magazine

Issue 302 February 2026

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Welcome



Happy New Year! For any readers who received a new camera during the festive break, we have everything you need to get up and running. Our cover feature **(p54)** is a seven-day challenge that covers all the basics of digital photography. Another 10 creative projects await you in Photo Active **(p20)** and our Camera Clinic **(p72)** will make you reassess everything you know about lens apertures. Go behind the scenes of a music photoshoot in our interview **(p116)**, and enjoy the best wildlife photos of the year **(p46)**. Kit tests this month include the Leica M EV1 **(p106)** and a new travel superzoom from Sigma **(p112)**. Enjoy the issue.



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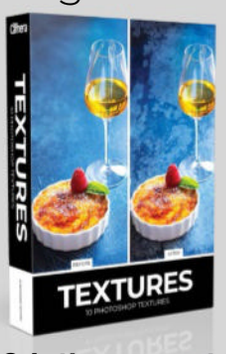
Niall Hampton, editor
niall.hampton@futurenet.com

This issue's bonus gifts **Find out more on pages 6 and 92**



Nine all-new photo tips cards

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



18 Actions, presets and overlays

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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© Wim van den Heever / WPOTY Awards 2025

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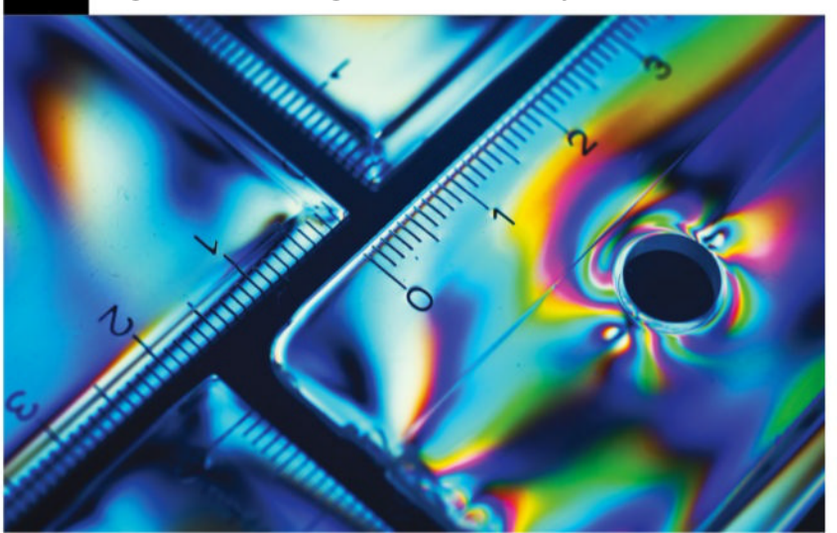
Will Cheung

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This month's contributors



Andy Earl

Andy Earl
Music and portrait photographer

In a career spanning four decades, Andy has helped create visual identities for some of the biggest rock and pop acts. He chats to us about his new show, on **page 116**



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**



Natalia Zmyslowska
Photographer

Drawing on topics she writes about in her photography blog, our new columnist begins by explaining what draws her to photograph in-between spaces. **Page 100**



Andrew James
Photographer

The man who used to helm *Photo Answers* draws on his experience to offer a crash course for January – master your new camera in just seven days. Get started on **page 54**



Karolina Konsur

Karolina Konsur
Landscape photographer

Karolina specialises in seascapes and long exposure photography and has attracted an international audience. She talks us through one of her latest pictures, on **page 80**



Dan Mold
Photographer & writer

The deputy editor of our former sister title, *Photo Plus*, and also an image editing expert, Dan joins us as a new contributor to our Digital Darkroom section. **Page 82**

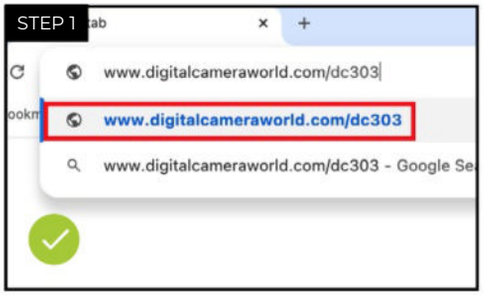
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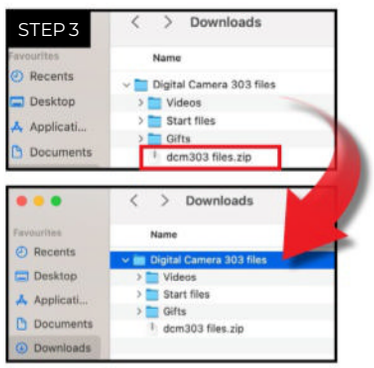
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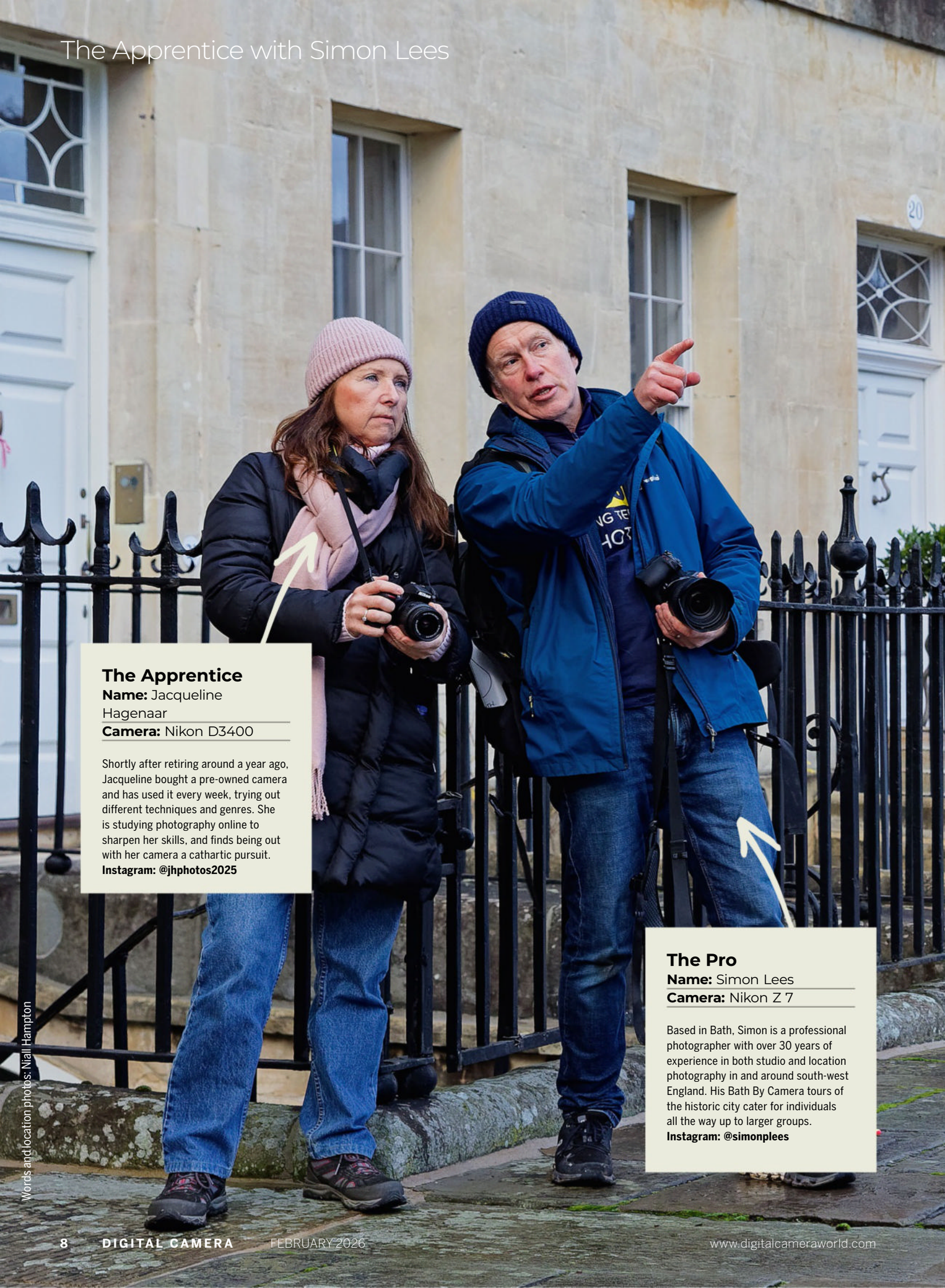
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The Apprentice

Name: Jacqueline Hagenaar

Camera: Nikon D3400

Shortly after retiring around a year ago, Jacqueline bought a pre-owned camera and has used it every week, trying out different techniques and genres. She is studying photography online to sharpen her skills, and finds being out with her camera a cathartic pursuit.

Instagram: @jhphotos2025

The Pro

Name: Simon Lees

Camera: Nikon Z 7

Based in Bath, Simon is a professional photographer with over 30 years of experience in both studio and location photography in and around south-west England. His Bath By Camera tours of the historic city cater for individuals all the way up to larger groups.

Instagram: @simonplees

Words and location photos: Niall Hampton



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APPRENTICE

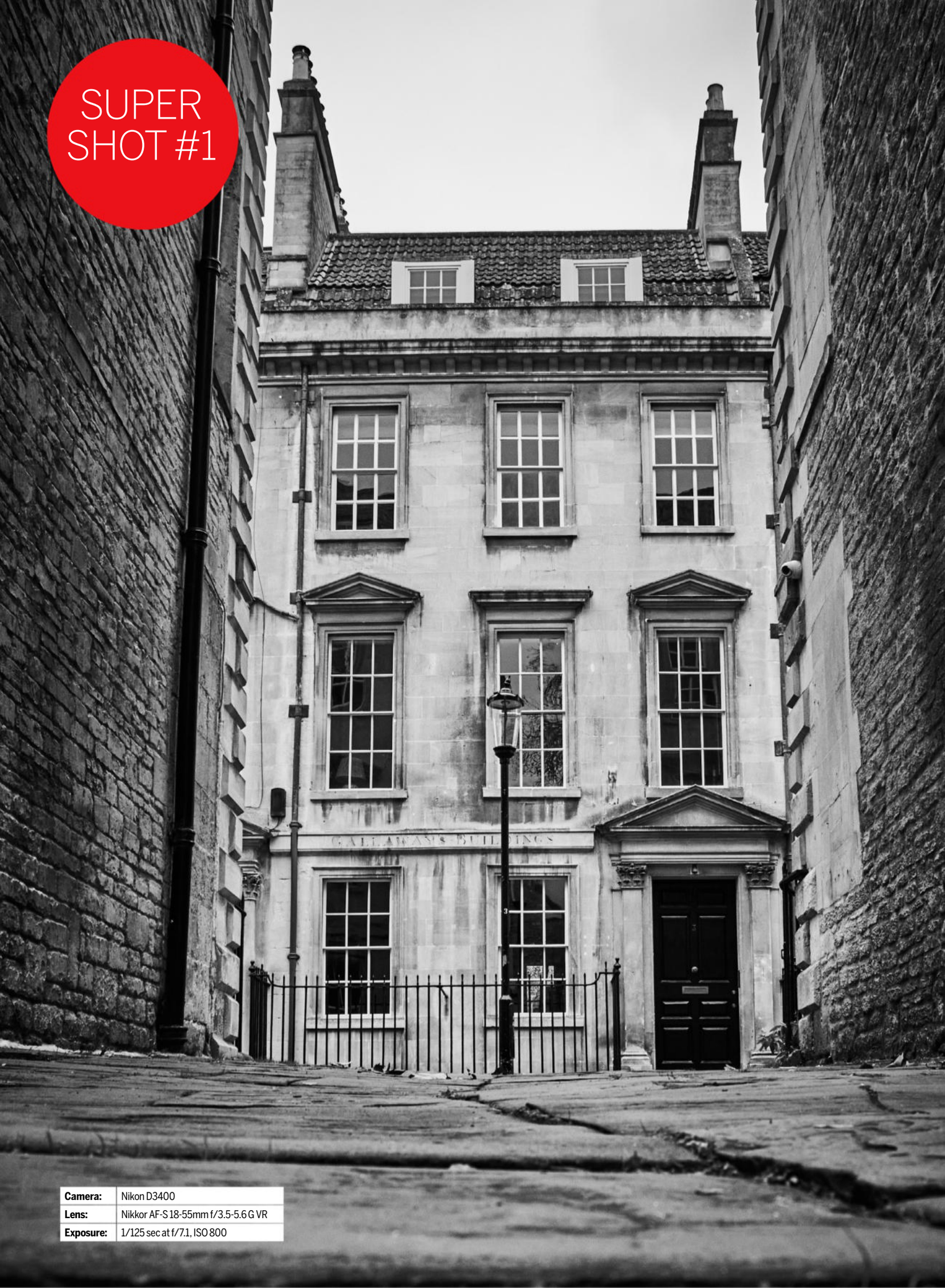
In the footsteps of Jane Austen

This month's apprentice spent the day wandering the streets of historic Bath with pro **Simon Lees**

Welcome 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 that gets seen by a wider audience. This month, we're in Bath, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in England's south west. Founded by the Romans in the first century AD, Bath developed into a fashionable spa city in the 18th century and is famous around the globe for its elegant architecture. A notable resident of its Georgian streets was the novelist Jane Austen, who was published anonymously at the time, and whose 250th anniversary was celebrated in Bath in 2025.

The Georgian centre of the city is therefore a fabulous subject for architectural photography, and that's the theme of this Apprentice feature, under the expert guidance of local photographer →

SUPER SHOT #1



Camera:	Nikon D3400
Lens:	Nikkor AF-S 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6 G VR
Exposure:	1/125 sec at f/7.1, ISO 800

NORTH PARADE BUILDINGS

THE APPRENTICE: "Photographing from the ground up emphasises the leading lines. And the paving in the foreground added texture."

THE PRO: "What transforms this shot is the change of angle and shooting lower while maintaining the framing of the buildings."



Simon shares his technique for shooting the houses in North Parade Buildings from low down, which Jacqueline did successfully (opposite).

Expert insight
See in mono

Picture Styles (or Picture Controls, as Nikon calls them) apply a range of parameters including sharpness, contrast, saturation and colour tone to jpeg photos. Typical presets across various camera brands include Standard, Portrait, Landscape, Neutral and Monochrome, which can be customised by the user. Select Monochrome and the colour information of the capture will be discarded and can't be retrieved, so bear this in mind. But using Monochrome allows you to preview a given scene in black and white, in the viewfinder or Live View display of a mirrorless camera or via Live View when using a DSLR.



Simon Lees. Simon runs photo walks of the city, for both camera and smartphone users, and has offered to take Jacqueline Hagenaar, a fellow Nikon shooter who is keen to develop her architectural photography skills, on a bespoke *Digital Camera* version of his popular two-hour tour.

Rendezvousing on a chilly late November afternoon near the imposing Bath Abbey, the site of which has been a place of worship since Anglo-Saxon times, we say our hellos. Our duo has cameras; there's soon going to be some action, but as for lighting… it's heavily overcast with showers forecast. While we can work around the crowds who have descended on the city just before its popular Christmas market opens, we can't do the same for the weather, so Jacqueline and Simon will just have to make the best of it.

So let's find out more about this month's Apprentice. Jacqueline shoots on a Nikon D3400 DSLR and loves the therapeutic benefits of photography. She's working her way through various genres to see what she enjoys most, but with only limited experience of architecture so far, she is keen to go on a photo walk around Bath with Simon. With a 24.2MP APS-C sensor, Jacqueline's D3400 is a light and compact entry-level DSLR and she's using it with its 18-55mm kit lens, which gives her a 27-82.5mm focal range in full-frame terms. Although covered by her zoom, she has brought 35mm and 50mm primes with her as a backup if she needs them.

A scenic route

So which route has Simon chosen for today? We're going to start at Bath Abbey and finish at The Circus, visiting some of the best sights along the way, including North Parade Buildings, Parade Gardens, Royal Victoria Park and the Royal Crescent, with the aim of arriving at The Circus just before sundown.

A few steps takes us to the Bath Aqua Glass shop on the northern side of Bath Abbey, and Simon makes a suggestion to help →

Pro tip
Framing grids

The electronic level display (Virtual Horizon) is handy for checking that captures aren't wonky. Jacqueline's Nikon D3400 doesn't offer a Virtual Horizon, but a framing grid is available when using Live View. Whether shooting in portrait or landscape orientation, its 4x4 grid will help keep things straight.



"'Think about the composition constantly,' Simon says. 'How will I get the viewer's eyes to move through the image?'"

Pro tip **Light levels**

Shooting under overcast skies, the light was flat. While Jacqueline's image (opposite) is a good one, you can see the difference brighter lighting makes in one of Simon's previous captures (right). There's more contrast throughout the photo, and especially so on the upper half of the house in the rear of the frame. Both these images work, but if a higher-contrast photo is more to your taste, return in better light and shoot it again – these buildings aren't going anywhere.

Simon Lees



Architecture photos 101

You won't go wrong if you follow these hints, tips and insights



1 Have a plan

Simon can pack plenty of photo locations into a two-hour walk, but even if you're out shooting at a more relaxed pace, having a list of shots to capture is useful – especially when shooting in the reduced daylight hours of winter.



2 Shoot handheld

Our two-hour photo tour would have made tripod use impractical, so Simon recommended that Jacqueline shoot handheld. Her Nikon D3400 has no in-body stabilisation, but her kit lens does have VR (Vibration Reduction).



3 Keep it simple

A model apprentice, Jacqueline brought three lenses with her. As well as offering VR, her 18-55mm kit lens also covers the focal range of her 35mm and 50mm primes, so Simon recommended keeping it simple with one do-it-all optic.

GAY STREET

THE APPRENTICE: "Simon's idea of mirroring an image by squaring the camera's side up against a reflective element was really clever."

THE PRO: "The use of symmetry here gives a familiar location a different feel. Revisiting the same location will change it, depending on light."



Our pro's kit
Nikon Z 7

Launched in 2018, the Nikon Z 7 was the brand's first pro-level full-frame mirrorless camera and packs a lot into a relatively slender body. There's a high-resolution 45.7MP sensor, phase-detection autofocus and five stops of in-body image stabilisation. Simon's favoured optics are a Nikkor Z 14-24mm f/2.8 S – an ideal focal range for capturing wide-angle architecture shots – a Nikkor AF-S 70-200mm f/2.8 VR, used via a Nikon FTZ adapter, and a Sigma 24-70mm F2.8 DG OS HSM Art. **www.nikon.co.uk**



Camera:	Nikon D3400
Lens:	Nikkor AF-S 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6 G VR
Exposure:	1/500 sec at f/5.6, ISO 3200

Jacqueline get her eye in. There are metal struts on either side of the shop's door, which are strung with festive baubles.

Simon recommends using these as a framing device for creating a distinctive view of the Abbey's tower. The resulting shot shows a good contrast between the angular lines of the building and the spherical baubles. But small adjustments to Jacqueline's standing position make noticeable differences to her images.

"To illustrate, Simon pulls out his phone and composes the shot with its camera"

"Think about the composition constantly," he says. "How will I get the viewer's eyes to move through the image? Think about the rule of thirds, and how changing your position a little can make a big difference." Jacqueline applies this advice and is impressed with the results.

We take a few steps over to the front of the Abbey. As we're interrupting tourists taking selfies against its ornately carved wooden doors, we don't linger here for very long before moving to our next location. North Parade Buildings is a short row of facing Georgian terraces, and the view Simon has in mind is from the alleyway leading onto it from Abbey Green. His suggested approach is to shoot from ground level using the higgledy-piggledy paving and some creeping ivy for foreground interest and as a framing device.

To demonstrate the picture he's seeing, Simon pulls out his smartphone and

SUPER SHOT #2

composes a shot with its camera. While it's certainly not the best camera he has brought with him today, a camera phone is a great way of demonstrating what potential shots could look like on a screen bigger than a digital camera's typical 3-inch LCD. Having pointed out what could work well in the frame, Jacqueline replicates the composition on her DSLR. Having an archive of previous shots of the same location in your hand is useful, too; Simon's camera roll shows how the scene looks in sunnier conditions, so Jacqueline can plan a return visit in the future.

Moving onto North Parade Buildings, Simon shows Jacqueline another technique he likes: framing up with railings in the foreground and shooting through them to create a different view. He demonstrates another variation of this after we walk over to the nearby Parade Gardens by asking →



Using a reflective surface as a mirror gave this familiar scene at Gay Street a different look.

Expert insight
The art of looking

Bath is blessed with many fabulous photo locations, but the challenge is capturing photos that will stand out from all those taken before. In his photo tours, Simon encourages participants to see differently and avoid just photographing a pleasing scene. Incorporate elements in the frame to tell a story, use framing devices to create a novel take on a well-photographed subject, experiment with compositional conventions and shifting shooting positions... you could even try including objects in the foreground to hide some visually unappealing items of street furniture (pictured, right).



Simon Lees



Jacqueline lines up her shot of a period costume character. Catch them off guard is Simon's advice.

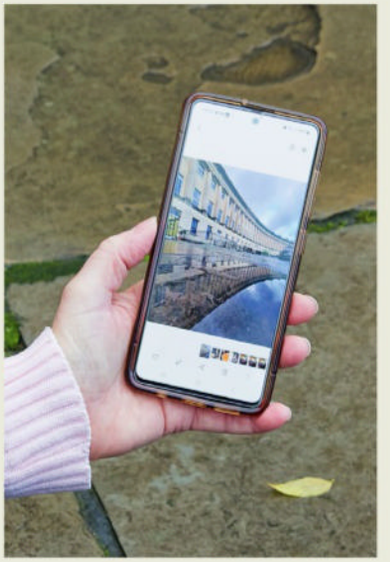
JANE AUSTEN CENTRE

THE APPRENTICE: "It was fun to take such a close-up of the character standing at the door. In black and white, it looks like the real thing."

THE PRO: "Occasionally, when shooting people, capturing them off-guard will allow you to catch their personality, creating a more natural feel."

Pro tip
Use your phone

Simon is a great advocate of visualising potential shots on a camera phone before reaching for your camera. You can switch aspect ratios and change grid line displays, viewing the options on a bigger screen than the LCD on the rear of a camera. Plus, you can also trawl previous shots for inspiration or see how to approach something differently.



Jacqueline to include statuary in shots of The Empire Hotel. Again, it's the contrast between the straight lines of the building and the softer contours of the statue that elevates a record shot into something more intriguing.

And another creative photography enabler is waiting for us a few steps away: a pool of water, with the hotel reflected in it. We don't have the blue skies that would really complete this as a colour photograph, but Simon says it'll make a great black and white one.

"Our final stop is The Circus, one of many visual feasts in the city of Jane Austen"

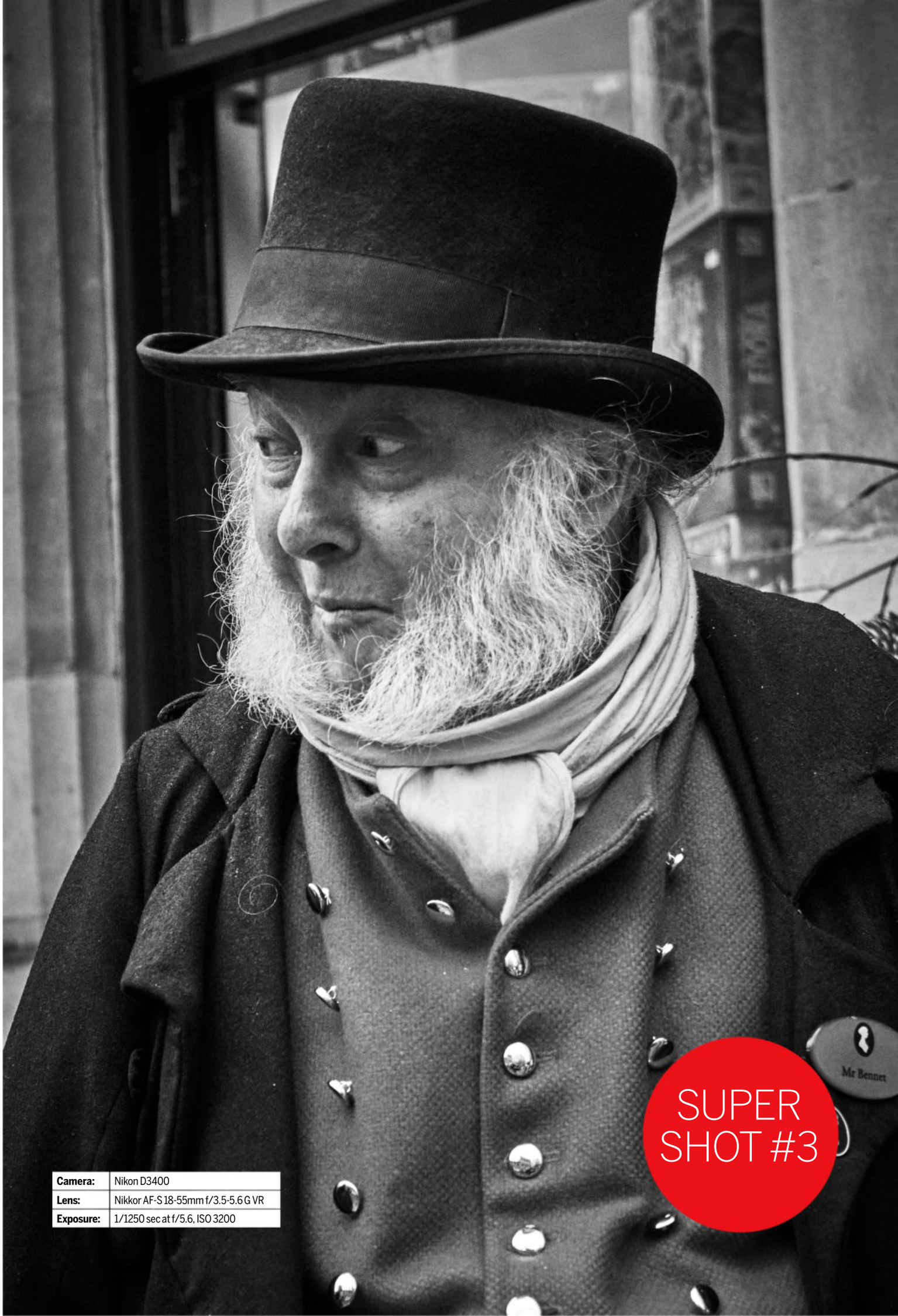
The clock is ticking, so we set off for our next location. Simon wants to try a ground-level shot up the High Street towards St Michael's Church, but there are too many people milling around. Walking up to the church (which is used as a café on weekdays) and entering its porch, Simon points out some sculptures of miniature people. One of the sculptures, near the inner door, is a group of people that can be used to foreground a view of the buildings outside. Focus on the sculpture with a wide aperture and the background blur makes it look like the figures are walking along the street – it's another good example of having different layers in a photo. After pausing on Green Street to capture a street scene from a low perspective in the quieter period after lunchtime, we decide it's time to warm up with some well-deserved hot drinks. So how's everything going, I ask Jacqueline?

"I am really enjoying myself and am always open to learning," she replies. "For me, it's getting used to how the exposure triangle works and managing how today's light is affecting my camera. It works well in bright light, but is struggling in today's conditions."

Flipping through Jacqueline's photos so far, Simon likes what he's seeing. "On these tours, I always emphasise the importance of composition," he says. "I usually recommend including more than you need in the frame and leaving space for cropping in afterwards."

A five-minute challenge

Fortified after coffee and cake, we resume the tour route, setting off for the Jane Austen Centre on Gay Street. The novelist lived in Bath from 1801 to 1807 and its annual festival to honour her is a bountiful opportunity for photos, as 'Janeites' gather in the city in →



SUPER SHOT #3

Camera:	Nikon D3400
Lens:	Nikkor AF-S 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6 G VR
Exposure:	1/1250 sec at f/5.6, ISO 3200

Technique assessment

Starting settings for capturing the wonders of architecture



1 Aperture Priority

With depth of field playing an important part in today's shoot, Simon recommended that Jacqueline use Aperture Priority, so she would be able to adjust aperture values quickly via the command dial on the rear of the body.



2 White balance

The lighting conditions were unlikely to change during the shoot, so Jacqueline set the Cloudy preset rather than Auto White Balance. When capturing raw files, though, the white balance can be adjusted afterwards during editing.



3 Shoot raw files

A raw file is the data captured by the sensor, free of any in-camera processing that would be applied to jpegs. To have more flexibility when editing, enable raw file capture – for a brief overview of raw editing, see p63.



Camera:	Nikon D3400
Lens:	Nikkor AF-S 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6 G VR
Exposure:	1/1250 sec at f/11, ISO 1600

period dress. And someone is sporting early 19th-century garb today – one of the Jane Austen characters who guide visitors around the centre. Simon says hello to him before setting Jacqueline a challenge: three different compositions of this location in five minutes.

"I want you to think about reflections, think about foreground interest, and think about the light," he says, showing some previous photos as examples. "You could go right in close to the Jane Austen character, but I think it will work best if he's looking away."

"How will Jacqueline do justice to Royal Crescent? Simon has some ideas"

ROYAL CRESCENT

THE APPRENTICE: "I couldn't get wide enough to capture the entire crescent, but framing through the pine branches gives it a softer, romantic view."

THE PRO: "When shooting an expansive scene, using a framing device eliminates some of the dead space and draws the eye to the subject."

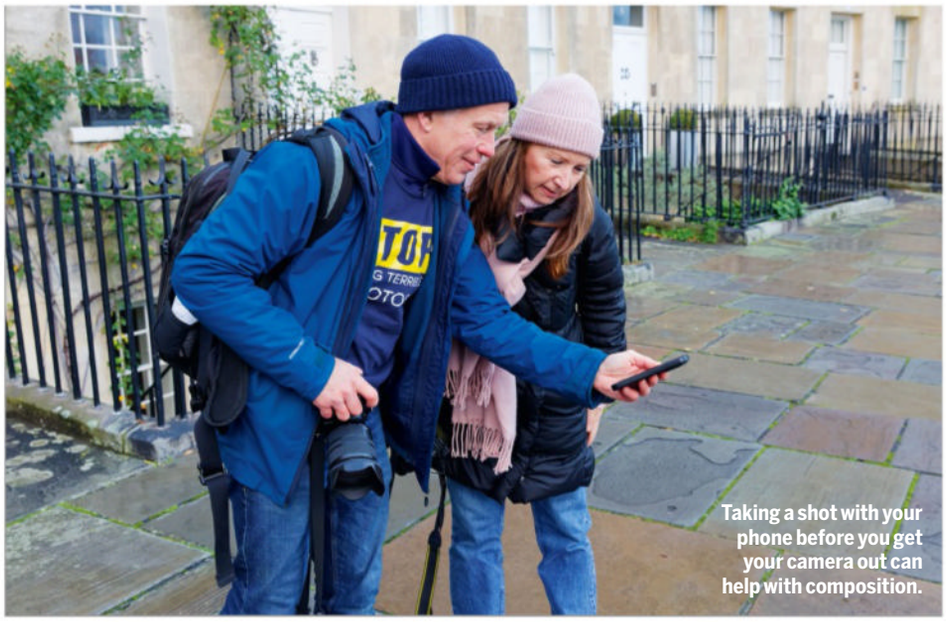
Jacqueline captures a great shot using the brass nameplate of an adjacent business (see page 12), and the warmer reflection due to the brass heightens the effect. Another frame places the Jane Austen character to the left of the Jane Austen statue, so Jacqueline is clearly deploying her new learnings well.

Royal Victoria Park is a short walk from here, then we continue up a path to the magnificent Royal Crescent. Completed around 1775, it's a sweeping terrace of 30 houses. So how will Jacqueline do it justice? Simon has some ideas. Jacqueline →

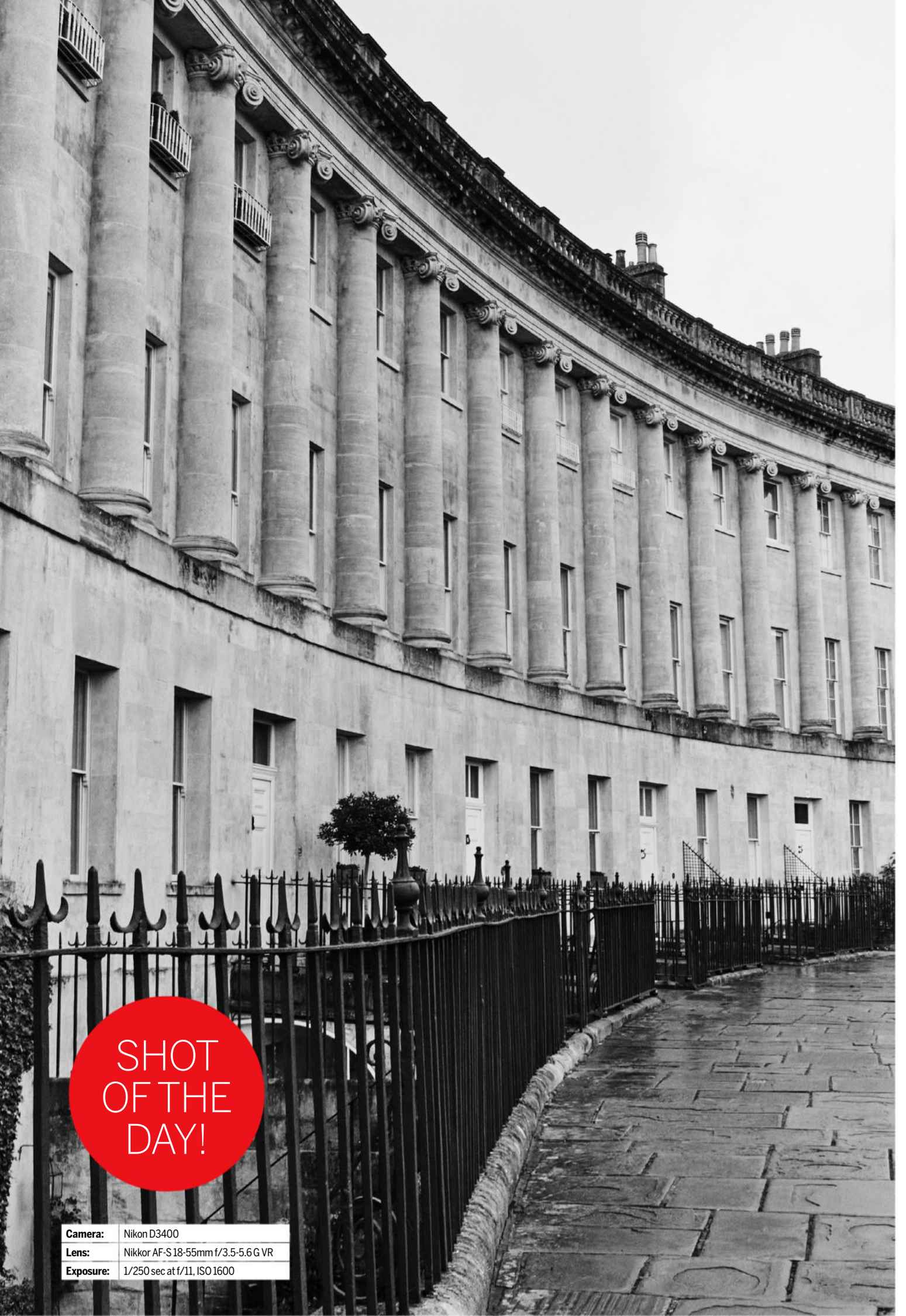
SUPER SHOT #4



Simon's tips for a fresh angle on the famous Royal Crescent included using the reflections in puddles.



Taking a shot with your phone before you get your camera out can help with composition.



SHOT OF THE DAY!

Camera:	Nikon D3400
Lens:	Nikkor AF-S 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6 G VR
Exposure:	1/250 sec at f/11, ISO 1600

Expert insight
Reflected glory

Photographers can get two views of Bath's stunning architecture for the price of one after some rain showers; being situated in England, these are fairly regular. On the day of our shoot, there was no wind, so the pools of reflected water that Jacqueline and Simon encountered were pretty still. That made a faithful reflection easy to capture – movement in the water will transform the reflection into an abstract. Go wide to fit it all in, select a narrow aperture for front-to-back sharpness and increase the ISO to get a fast enough shutter speed to avoid camera shake.



Simon Lees

ROYAL CRESCENT

THE APPRENTICE: "There are so many choices of leading lines and geometric combinations, and black and white brings it all out superbly."

THE PRO: "The iconic architecture is graphically strong but considering the flat light on the day, there is a strong composition in this shot."

tries a wide shot from a bench at the bottom of the lawns to the front of the crescent, framing it with foliage at the edges, before we walk up to the crescent. There are various options for coming up with novel views of this much-photographed scene, says Simon: playing with the various ways that the iron railings can be used in the composition; contrasting the elegant sweep of the railings with the curving roofs of the crescent; and shooting reflections of the crescent in puddles and car windows.

Jacqueline attempts several approaches, but as we're starting to lose the light, we walk briskly to The Circus, our final location. It's another incredible structure, just one of many visual feasts awaiting photographers in the city immortalised by Jane Austen. ●



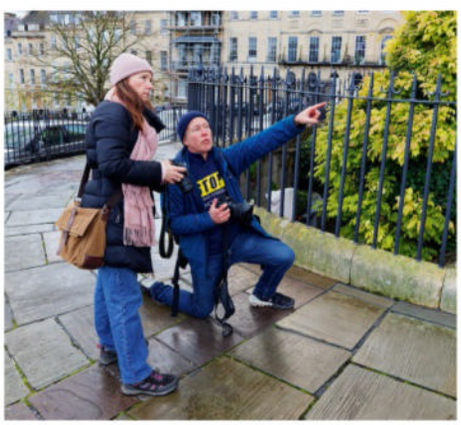
Apprentice verdict

"Architecture can be difficult to photograph, due to all the choices you have, so learning the finer techniques from a pro was a great experience."



Pro verdict

"From the start, Jaqueline was very keen to listen and open to trying things. Her attention to small details and her ability to see creatively were superb."



Our pro Simon offers Jacqueline advice on how to compose her shot of Royal Crescent. Given the flat light, they opted to shoot in black and white.

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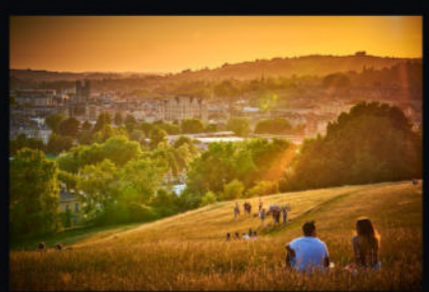
Email us at:
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Pro portfolio
Simon Lees



Pulteney Bridge at night

"As part of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations in 2012, Bath's iconic Pulteney Bridge was illuminated. This shot was taken on a stunning summer's evening and is one of my favourite photographs of Bath."



Golden Hour

"Captured on a beautiful evening in summer 2020, I entered this in the *Sunday Times* Travel section's Big Shot photography competition, and it won. I actually managed to track down the couple, which was picked up by the local and national BBC News."

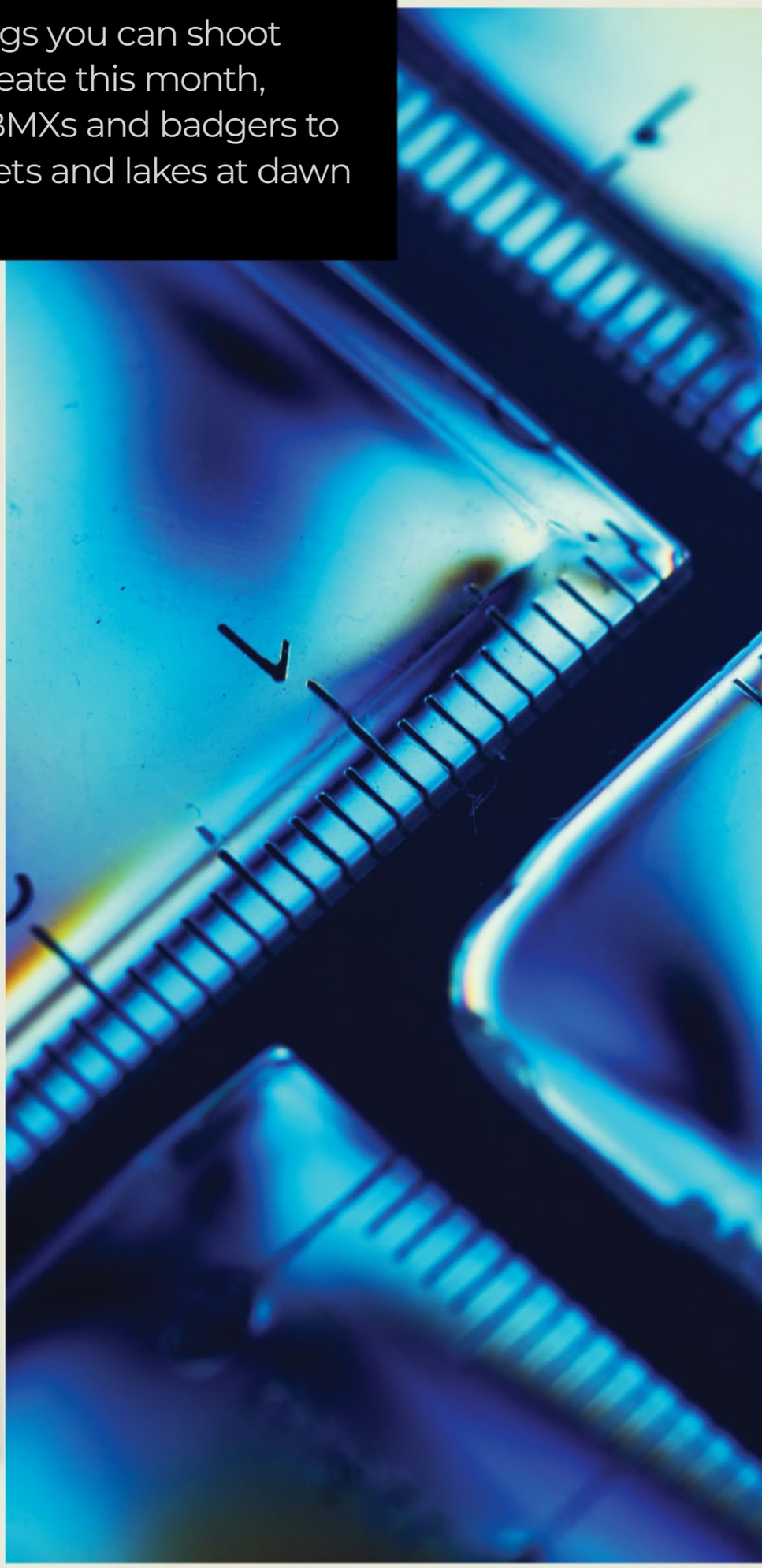


Bath By Camera tours

Simon's camera and smartphone walking tours around historic Bath run for two hours and start from Bath Abbey (BA1 1LT). He caters for individuals (£30 per person) to groups of up to 10 (£180). **www.simonleesphoto.co.uk**

Photo Active

10 things you can shoot and create this month, from BMXs and badgers to train sets and lakes at dawn



1 | CREATIVE

Go crazy with colour

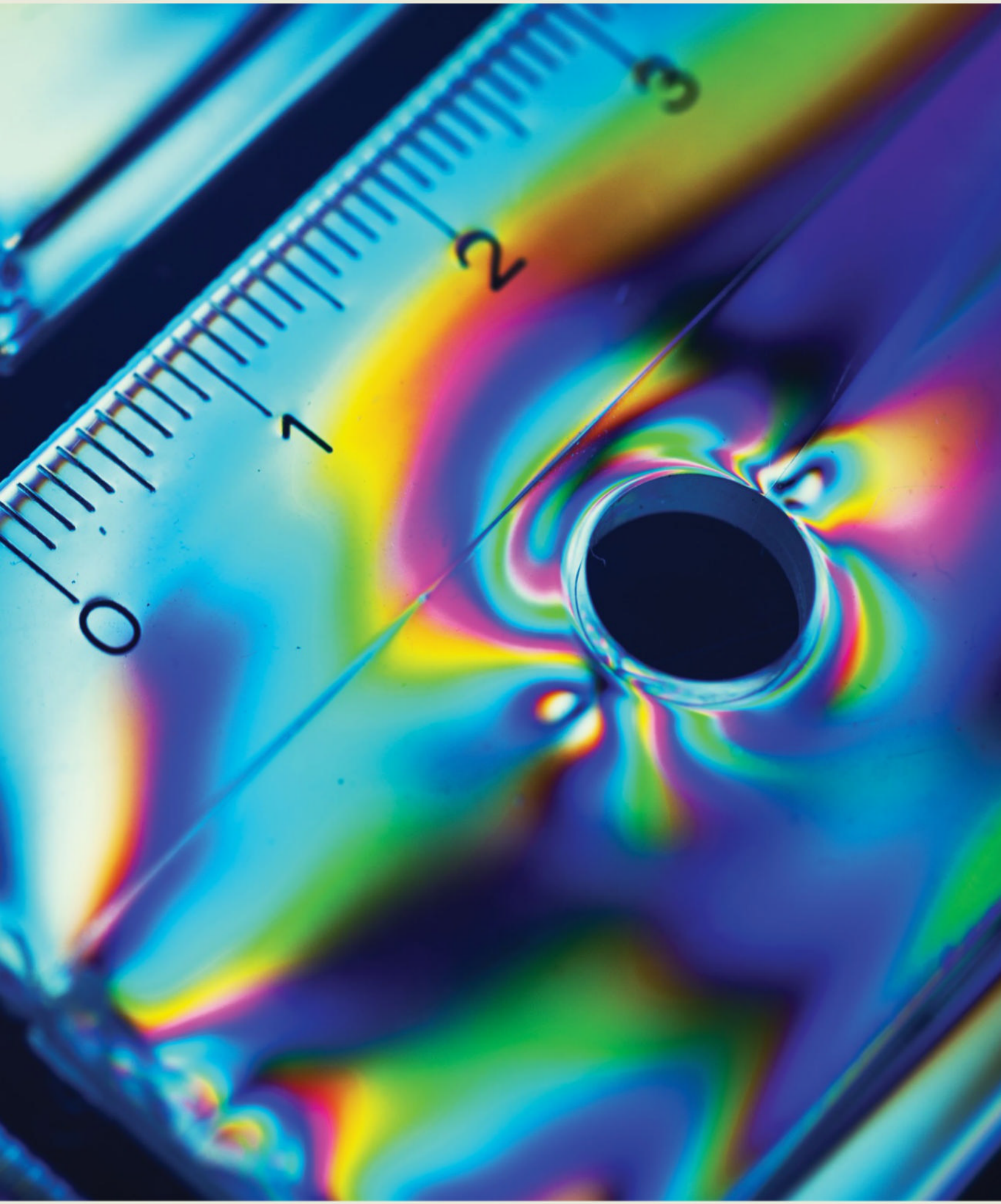
Capture the quirky hues of cross-polarised light, with **Benedict Brain**

Believe it or not, the extraordinary colours on show in this vibrant image aren't the result of the overzealous use of Photoshop filters – they're actually caused by an optical effect called cross-polarisation. So how does the result come about? When certain objects are placed between two polarising filters – one on your camera's lens and one covering the light source – the light will behave in an unusual way, revealing wild and wonderful colours that wouldn't normally be visible to the human eye.

While the science behind the effect is complicated, it's actually an easy technique to get to grips with. Even better, you don't need lots of expensive kit or accessories. So, let's get started.



Right: Using a polariser, some plastic items and an artificial light source, you can block out white light and reveal psychedelic patterns and colours.


0
1
2
3

Three steps to capturing cross-polarised light





1 Prepare the filters

First, get two polarising filters. You'll need a circular one to attach to your lens, and a second to go over the light source. The latter doesn't need to be circular – a sheet of polarising film is fine. We're using an A3 sheet of Lee 239 film (available from www.leefilters.com) on top of a lightbox.

2 Dig out your plastic

Objects made of plastic work best for this technique, especially those that are injection-moulded, as the cross-polarisation effect reveals stress points in their multicoloured glory. Cutlery, cups, glass and stationery, such as these rulers and set squares, are cheap, readily available and make perfect subjects.



3 Rotate for effect

When you're ready to begin, place the objects on the lightbox and rotate the circular polariser on your camera's lens until you get the desired effect. As you rotate the filter, the intensity of the effect changes – at some points, the white light from the lightbox will become black.

Top tip: Adjust the filter

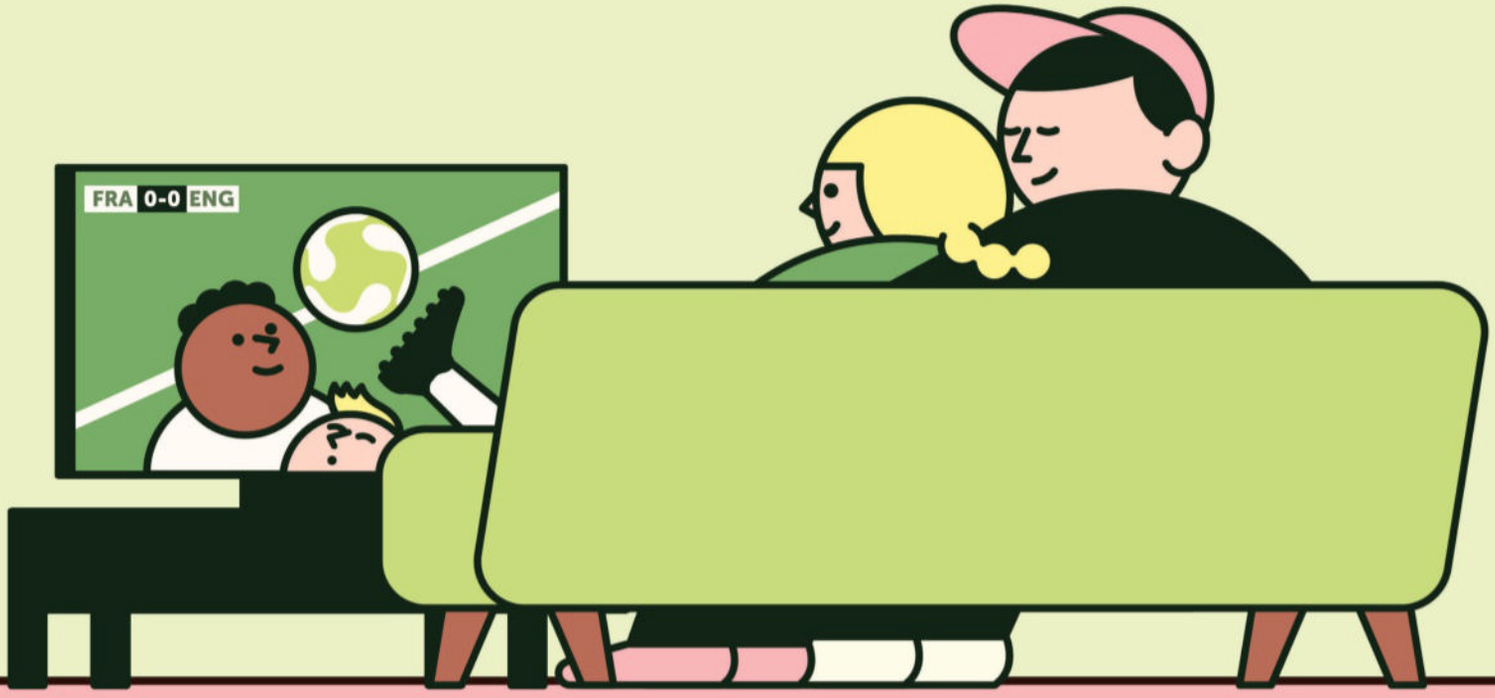
Experiment with the filter's position, as a small change in its rotation and angle can vary the intensity of the effect enormously.



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BMX bikes are a spectacle worth shooting. Find an event and position yourself near a jump so you can freeze riders against the sky.

Getty

2 | ACTION

Bag some BMX action

Create a dramatic sporting image by shooting against the setting sun

Whether you view BMX as a genuine off-road sport that showcases athleticism, skill and downright bravery, or simply as people messing about on bikes, there's no doubt it can make for a spectacle worth photographing. Here's your challenge, though: see if you can photograph the riders against a setting sun and bonus points if you can capture two at once. The first task is to find some BMX riders at an event and then position yourself facing where the sun will be setting. In addition, you want to be somewhere near one of the jumps so that you can freeze them against the sky, so you need to be level or below the jump point.

A focal length of 28-50mm will give you enough space to include other riders, but not so much that they are insignificant in the composition. A lot depends on how close you are. Focus tracking or continuous focusing will be handy, and you will definitely need a fast burst mode to capture a series of images on the jumps.



Create the silhouette

If you use Matrix, Evaluative or Multi-Pattern metering (they're all the same), then the camera will expose for the general scene, which is the setting sun, rather than the riders. That means they will be rendered as a silhouette. If you want some detail in them as well, you will need to use flash.



Composition and speed

Use a fast shutter speed (over 1/1,000 sec) to freeze the action. As you're not looking for detail, you can use a wide-open aperture to help with this. It can be tricky trying to get a good composition in such high-speed circumstances, but here, both riders are on the verticals, with key points at the top left and bottom right.



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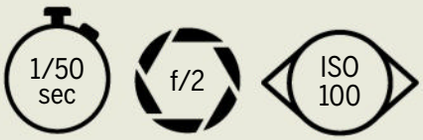
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3 | PORTRAITS

Add colour to your portraits

Wendy Evans explains how to make use of the latest in LED lighting technology

There was a time when, if you wanted some colour in your portrait shots, you had to add a clunky gel to the front of a flash unit. What was it going to look like? How were the colours going to interact? You wouldn't really know until you started shooting, then checked the results.

Thankfully, the rise of affordable, flexible and increasingly more powerful LED lighting is making it easier than ever to get creative with colour in your portraits. The lights used here are from Neewer and offer incredible value for money.



For this image, we set up two LED lights, one 45° right at 100 per cent, the other 45° left at 50 per cent, but slightly lower.

Wendy Evans

Colour combinations

You don't have to be quite so dramatic. Instead, use combinations of white with other colours for more subtle effects. For example, this cowgirl photo has one light set to blue and the other white, suggesting indoors with an open window. Another option was to use a combination of warm colours with a rustic outfit.





Setting it up



LED lights mean you can meter directly off the subjects; you don't need a light meter or have to face any potential sync problems. It's important that you set the camera WB to 5600K or Daylight; otherwise, it will try to remove the colours. This was shot at 1/50 sec, f/2, at ISO 100 with a 75mm lens.

The light on the right was set to a nice blue, the one to the left was red, giving a dramatic combination of colours and making this image ideal for a cutout and a neon-soaked city background.

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Wendy Evans

4 | CAMERA SKILLS

How to convey movement

Bring a static scene alive by creating blurred figures, with **Wendy Evans**

A major city centre railway station is often a busy place, with people bustling back and forth, but if you just shoot a standard photo, everyone will be frozen in place. Choose a longer exposure, though, and all moving objects will be blurred, conveying a sense of movement.

Of course, the solution is to find a spot that shows the station and the architecture you want and then find a stable place for your camera. A tripod is likely to draw the ire of station staff and get in the way of everyone else, so scout out your location and look for some railings, a post, a bin or anywhere with a flat surface. Compose the scene and look for your focus point, then set the ISO as low as possible. For this shot, it was ISO 100, though other cameras offer ISO 80 or even ISO 50.

Stop the aperture down in Aperture Priority mode until you get a shutter speed of around half a second (it may display as 1/2 sec or 0.5 sec). This is long enough to blur any moving people, but with the camera on a stable surface, the background will still be sharp. Hold the camera down, press the shutter, or use the self-timer delay – or you can use a cable release or smartphone app.



Land of confusion

If people are moving too close to the camera, the image produced will be confusing as you can't see the background clearly enough.



Where is everyone?

On the other hand, if people are too far away, then you don't notice the effect at all. Instead, aim for moving people in the middle ground.



Wendy Evans



Kalum Carter

The Fujifilm X Half: the ritual and romance of film

How an innovative compact camera made digital photography feel like film again, by **Kalum Carter**

Fujifilm has always had a gift for blending the tactile joy of film with the convenience of digital. From its signature film simulations to the satisfying mechanics of its designs, few brands understand nostalgia quite like Fujifilm. With the new X Half, that philosophy reaches its purest form. A compact digital camera that captures the ritual and romance of film photography, without the cost or waiting game.

As someone who loves shooting film, I was immediately drawn to the X Half. Half-frame cameras have always fascinated me because they slow you down, make you think about sequencing and invite playful storytelling through paired images. The X Half recreates that charm in digital form, complete with a winding lever and a dedicated half-frame mode that forms spontaneous diptychs: two frames side by side, a small narrative in every pair. Weighing just 240g, it's light enough to take everywhere. I found myself shooting on walks, in cafés, and during family days out; moments I might have otherwise overlooked. The new Film Camera Mode even limits you to 36 or 72 shots, locking you into the same rhythm as a roll of film.







With film simulations like ACROS and Classic Chrome, the images feel rich, cinematic and timeless. Add in light-leak and halation effects, and you have a camera that encourages creativity at every turn.

The X Half isn't built to replace your main kit; it's built to rekindle your love of making pictures. **www.fujifilm.com**



Shoot over the river as the lights come on in the buildings and bridges, capturing the last of the colour in the sky. Focus on the nearest discernible feature, not the water.

Wendy Evans



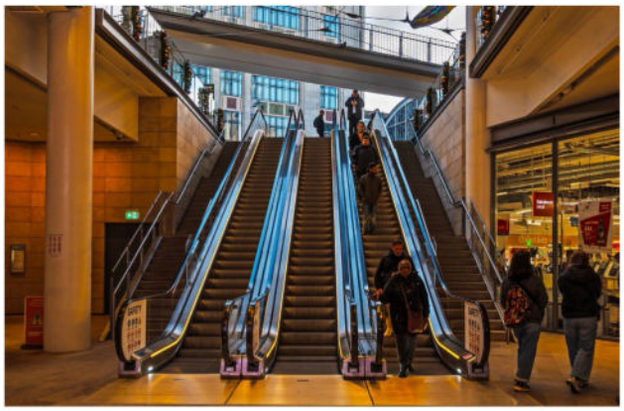
5 | URBAN

Shooting the city at night

Not with a silenced 9mm, but with a wide-angle lens and **Wendy Evans**

When the cold hand of winter is resting on the shoulder of your favourite landscape, and you don't feel like going to shoot outside until spring, don't despair! Instead, head for the city – the bigger, the better. If it has a river (most big cities do), then that's where to begin. The first thing to think about is whether to take a tripod. Yes, they're useful for your photography, but they also get in the way of busy commuters and crowds of tourists, attract casual criminals and draw the attention of jobsworth security guards looking to wield some power. So the challenge is to leave the tripod at home, fit just one flexible lens with a wide-angle and a little telephoto reach to your camera and go on a guerrilla photography mission to see what you can capture. Arrive at sunset, giving yourself enough time to get to the waterfront for dusk. Then let your adventure begin... →

Five things to shoot on a night out in the city



1 Going up and down

The city centre will have lots of shopping centres and transport hubs with escalators going up and down. Before the light disappears from the sky, find one and stand at the bottom. Aim for a central composition and focus a third of the way up. You may need to meter off the sky and refocus to keep the detail. Settings: 1/60 sec at f/4, ISO 125.



2 Bring out the neon

As the sun disappears and darkness falls, seek out the neon signs of the night-time economy with crowds as foreground interest. A wide-angle lens gives you plenty of depth of field, so you may only need f/5 for sharpness through the scene. Focus around 5m into the scene if you have a DX sensor, or 4m for full-frame. Settings: 1/15 sec at f/5, ISO 640.

3 Architecture and shops

Some shops may still be open late, so combine arches and columns with shops and people. At this point, the challenge is to keep the shutter speed up for handheld shots, but also to be able to shoot quickly in crowds, where the opportunities may appear only fleetingly. Set an ISO for dark conditions, but don't worry if it gets a little brighter. Settings: 1/250 sec at f/4, ISO 1250.





Gear check

All the images in this project were taken on a Nikon Z fc – light and unobtrusive, it's an ideal camera for urban shooting – and a Nikkor Z DX 16-50mm f/3.5-6.3 VR (24-75mm full-frame equivalent) kit lens.

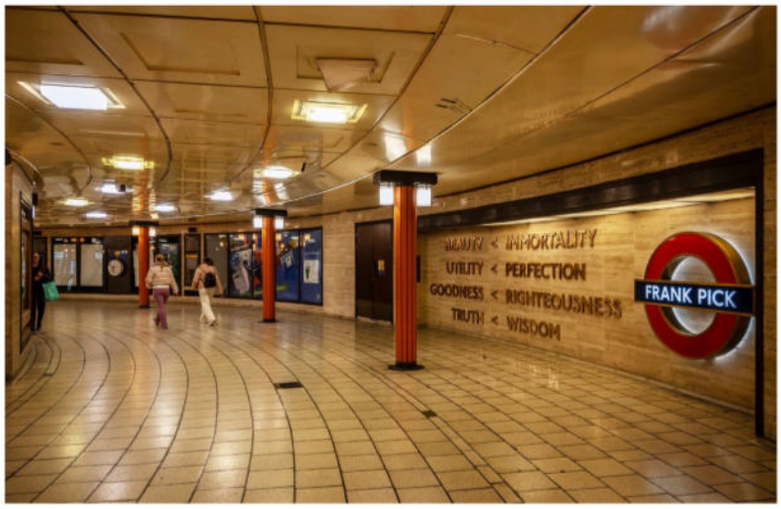


Photos: Wendy Evans

4 Light trails on the street

Light trails without a tripod? What madness is this, I hear you ask? Sure, this is a tricky challenge, but hey, that's what we're here for. You need to find a flat surface for the camera, which is easier with a flip-out LCD screen. You want maximum depth and sharpness to everything that's not moving, so set f/11, then dial the ISO down until the shutter speed is around 2 sec. Hold the camera down and fire away. Settings: 2 secs at f/11, ISO 250.





5 Down in the Tube station at midnight

There's lots more to shoot in the city, from shops to decorations, buskers to moving crowds, but as you navigate around, don't forget the opportunities offered by the city transport system. Here, I was in a Tube station with a fantastic piece of architecture as the lines sweep away from the signage on the wall. Include people for scale. I focused about 3-4m into the scene. Settings: 1/60 sec at f/4.5, ISO 640.

If it's cloudy and dull, or raining, forget the countryside and visit the big city instead. Here you'll find plenty of subjects to get your photography fix.



An aperture of f/3 gives sufficient depth of field, as the train is parallel to the camera. Here, we were able to keep the shutter speed up to 1/40 sec.

Wendy Evans

6 | MACRO

Photograph a model train

All aboard with **Wendy Evans** as she explains how to photograph rolling stock

Whether your passion is constructing a miniature world and running trains round it to a schedule that mimics that of your favourite historic steam railway or, like me, you just think it would be an interesting subject for macro photography, I'm not here to judge. However, I am here to set you a challenge of either building your own train-based scene, visiting your uncle to see the train set in his loft or, more realistically, heading for your nearest model railway exhibition.

There are two ways to shoot this: portrait orientation or landscape orientation. Each has its merits and pitfalls. The key issue in both is depth of field, unless it's your own set, in which case you'll have the time and space to clamber in with a tripod and use focus stacking. Assuming that's not the case, let's start with landscape orientation, which is best used to shoot trains that are running from one side to the other. If you focus on the main train, all of that will be in focus. Subjects in the foreground and in the background will be going out of focus, but in a pleasing fashion. What this type of shot might lack is dynamism and leading lines.

The alternative is to shoot portrait orientation for trains that are running north-south, which benefits from being much more dynamic, has the tracks as leading and exiting lines, but has a tiny area of sharpness. Of course, you could stop down, but if you're inside an exhibition hall, this may cause shutter speed issues.

Use composition guides for balance

Here, we used the rule of thirds to compose our image. The front of the train in focus is on a key point, with the train itself on the bottom third horizontal. Ensure that you leave enough room to show where the train is heading. The key point above is located on the 'smoke' coming out of the chimney.



When portrait orientation works

This image benefits from a strong diagonal leading right through the photo and the point of focus being the front of the train. It's also located on the bottom right key compositional point. The downside is that, when using f/3.2, almost everything else will be out of focus.



Wendy Evans

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7 | LANDSCAPES

Shoot a reflective vista

Ben Dale reveals his blueprint for a successful lakeside shot in the early dawn light

When you're in the Lake District National Park, there are plenty of subjects to shoot. Mountains, woods, weather patterns and, of course, the mirror-like lakes. Though they are often elusive, I found my opportunity at Lake Derwentwater, near Keswick.

Calm lakes offer a chance to capture balance, symmetry and depth in a single frame. Finding a reflection can elevate your photo by doubling the amount of visual elements and enhancing the mood through light and colour. When shooting these scenes, pay close attention to the quality of light. Early morning, as with this shot, or late evening often yield the clearest reflections.

Don't rush to attach the wide-angle and cram everything you can into the frame – avoid the temptation to go as wide as possible and include everything, because that's when things get messy. Be selective, think of perspective and include contrasting elements to really take your reflective vista up a notch.

Instagram: @bendale.photography

Ben's equipment

I took this shot with my Canon EOS R6 Mark II and Canon EF 16-35mm f/4 L IS lens, along with a Canon EF-EOS R mount adapter. To ensure a sharp photo with no movement at this shutter speed, I used my Benro Tortoise 35C tripod.



Five steps to capture magical reflections

1 Include a focal point

Don't just find a reflective scene, grab your camera and shoot without giving it much thought. Try to include a strong subject, such as a lone tree, a bridge or, in this case, a boathouse. This anchors the reflection and prevents the image from feeling abstract. It also helps add a story to your composition.

2 Look for contrast

Find contrasts in the light and shadows, warm and cool tones, but it could also be texture. While it may sound counterintuitive, finding something to break up the reflection, such as half-submerged rocks, floating leaves or a jetty, can be a great addition that brings a different texture to the stillness of the water.



3 Balance your image

Imagine your photo is on a weighing scale; which way would it tilt? Is the composition left- or right-heavy? We cannot balance our compositions all of the time, nor should we, but some symmetry can make a more pleasing image. Even adding just one element on the light side can restore the balance.

4 Don't reach for the tripod

Without a doubt, you should use a tripod, but don't tie yourself to it. Many potential compositions can be missed because you don't move. Try handheld first, step right, then left, go high and go low. Work freely and find different compositions. Then, when you're happy, lock it down.

5 Play with perspective

Use a wide-angle lens to transform a simple reflection into an imaginative composition. Consider the previous tip and crouch low to align the reflection perfectly with the horizon. Or, using a foreground element, get closer to enlarge it or tilt your camera to distort it until it helps to lead the viewer's eye.



In this image of Derwentwater, light and reflection converge in quiet harmony, where colour and stillness perform a symphony beyond sound.

Ben Dale

8 | WILDLIFE

Capture a badger

Clive Ingram explains how you can photograph one of the UK's most elusive species

There are an increasing number of hides across the UK that offer incredible opportunities for wildlife photographers to get close to some of our most elusive native species. I visited one such hide run by Hide and Squeak in Lichfield, West Midlands, which is located near an established badger set. Here, adult badgers have recently reared seven cubs, three of which were rare erythristic badgers, with ginger colouring rather than the traditional black, due to the male adult having been leucistic, with a lack of pigmentation.

The hide provides continuous lighting, as badgers are mainly nocturnal animals, and a natural-looking backdrop, with a pool providing a source of water. For the photographer, this acts as a natural mirror, allowing us to capture some stunning reflection shots. Such hides provide a valuable way of helping protect the UK's fragile wildlife habitats, and at all times, the welfare of the animal is paramount.

Instagram: @ingymon





Clive's tips on shooting these elusive and mainly nocturnal creatures

1 Prepare for the cold

Be prepared for the weather. Not all hides are heated and as the hide will usually be open to the elements, temperatures will drop markedly after sunset. You are unlikely to get good shots if you are cold and uncomfortable, so layer up and take a flask with plenty of hot drink.

2 Be patient

Patience is key, so be prepared for long periods with no action. Your target species may take many hours to emerge. When your subject does eventually arrive, it is important to let it settle. It is likely to be wary at first, so any sudden camera movements may spook it.

3 Vary your shots

It is tempting to fill the frame with the animal or bird you're shooting. However, look for wider shots giving the context of the habitat in which the species lives. Try to get photos of the animal or bird interacting with its siblings and parents. Be mindful of background distractions.

Clive Ingram captured these rare erythristic badgers at a watering hole near the hide in Lichfield, West Midlands.



Clive Ingram

Clive's equipment

These badger images were taken on my Nikon Z 9, coupled with a Nikon Z 180-600mm f/5.6-6.3 lens. The camera was set up for wide area autofocus with animal eye tracking (although I also tried bird eye tracking) and a burst rate of 10 frames per second.

4 Lighting options

Lighting for nocturnal species is important, and there are two main types – continuous and flash. Check with the hide about their lighting setup. Generally, the lighting will be provided by the person running the hide, but ask them to brief you on typical lighting and camera settings.

5 Camera settings

For badgers under continuous lighting, a shutter speed of 1/200 to 1/250 sec was sufficient (ISO 3200-4,000). For the aperture, start with the widest setting of your lens (here, f/6.3). Ask the hide owner for advice regarding the lighting, but don't be afraid to experiment with your settings, too.

9 | LANDSCAPES

Magic up a winter waterfall

Ignore the cold and make the most of the snow and ice to shoot dramatic scenes

While we can't all head off to Iceland, where this image (right) was taken, there are plenty of waterfalls in the UK, and at some point, there will be snow or ice, often both at the same time. Rather than turning up the heating and waiting for spring, pack your thermals, grab your tripod and camera and head for the hills. In the same way a scattering of leaves adds to a waterfall scene in autumn, ice and snow add visual interest in winter. The advantage of winter waterfalls is that there's a lot more water than in the summer, making them far more dramatic.





Getty / iStockphoto

10 FABULOUS WINTER WATERFALLS IN THE UK

1 Mealtfalls, Isle of Skye, Scotland
2 Falls of Glomach, Ross-shire, Scotland
3 Scale Force, Lake District
4 Cauldron Snout, County Durham
5 Hardraw Force, North Yorkshire
6 Aysgarth Falls, North Yorkshire
7 Aber Falls, Gwynedd, Wales
8 Pistyll Rhaeadr, Powys, Wales
9 Speke's Mill Mouth, Devon
10 Lydford Gorge, Devon

Five steps for capturing icy waterfalls

1 Composition and orientation

The first decision is whether to opt for portrait or landscape orientation. For this image, there is plenty going on in the middle and towards the back of the image, so a 35mm focal length was used to keep it all close enough. For a portrait orientation, you could go wider and create a big foreground.

2 Shutter speed

A fast shutter speed will freeze the movement of the water, but the better option is to slow it down to blur the flowing water. An exposure of 4-8 seconds will turn the water into a creamy flow, but a shorter one, such as the 0.4 sec here, blurs the water but leaves a sense of motion that the longer exposure doesn't.



Iceland's Bruarfoss waterfall makes the ideal winter image. But if that's out of reach, there are lots of waterfalls in the UK.

3 Focal length and aperture

You want as much sharp detail as possible, but where you focus is also tied to the focal length and the aperture being used. A short focal length will have lots of depth of field; the 35mm used here, slightly less so. However, the f/22 aperture, used to help extend the shutter speed, adds to the depth.

4 Foreground detail

If you have some interesting features in the foreground, that's where you will need to focus to get plenty of sharpness and detail. You should be focusing a couple of metres into the scene, aiming for the hyperfocal point. If the initial foreground is simply water, you don't need that to be as sharp, so focus a little further back instead.

5 Metering for the win

With all this water, snow and ice, Matrix or Evaluative metering will be underexposed, so if that's your default mode, dial in +1 or +2 EV exposure compensation. For those with a live histogram that's metering constantly, you can use Manual mode and simply adjust the settings to make the data on the histogram move to the middle.

Photo Active



Liam Willis

B&W challenge



Future

Send us your best shots of scenes in monochrome only

Welcome to our monthly reader photo challenge, where the winning image will feature in the magazine, giving you the chance to claim bragging rights. For our February issue, the theme is 'Black and White'. The only criterion for this is that there's no colour at all – no sepia tones, no single shades of blue – just black and white with grey in the middle. The subject you shoot is your decision: it could be urban, street, portraits, architecture, landscapes, still-life or macro. Over to you!

Enter via email or Facebook

Email **digitalcamera@futurenet.com** with 'Black and White' as the subject. Please attach your entry (a hi-res file, rather than a link) and include a brief description of the image. Or look for the 'Black and White' post on our Facebook page at: **www.facebook.com/digitalcameraworld** and upload your entry into the feed under the post. Enter the challenge by 29 January 2026, and remember that we can only accept one image per reader.

The winner will be announced in issue 305 (April 2026) of *Digital Camera*, which goes on sale on Friday 27 February.

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

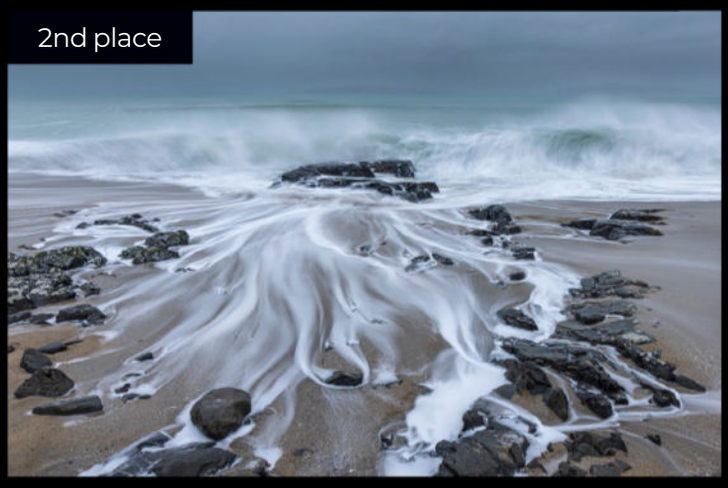
The winner of the 'Long Exposures' challenge is... Liam Willis

In *Digital Camera* issue 301 (December), we challenged you to submit a photo that best encompassed the theme of 'Long Exposures' and you responded with a range of superb entries.

The eventual winner was Liam Willis for his excellent image, labelled 'Hastings Old Town at Sunset' (see opposite page), which was taken with an 86-second exposure at rush hour. "Getting the traffic at dusk was important," says Liam, "so I had to wait for the clocks to go back and for the weather to be right with clear skies." We loved the combination of car trails, the sunset in the background, and even Hastings Pier thrown in for good measure.

Well done to our runner-up, Mark Vella, for his coastal capture with intricate water patterns, and to Alec Gillies for his shot of Holybush Spout on the Ingleton waterfall trail. An honourable mention goes to Davyd Samuels for a fantastic photo, but unfortunately, it was just too similar to last month's winner.

2nd place



Mark Vella

3rd place



Alec Gillies

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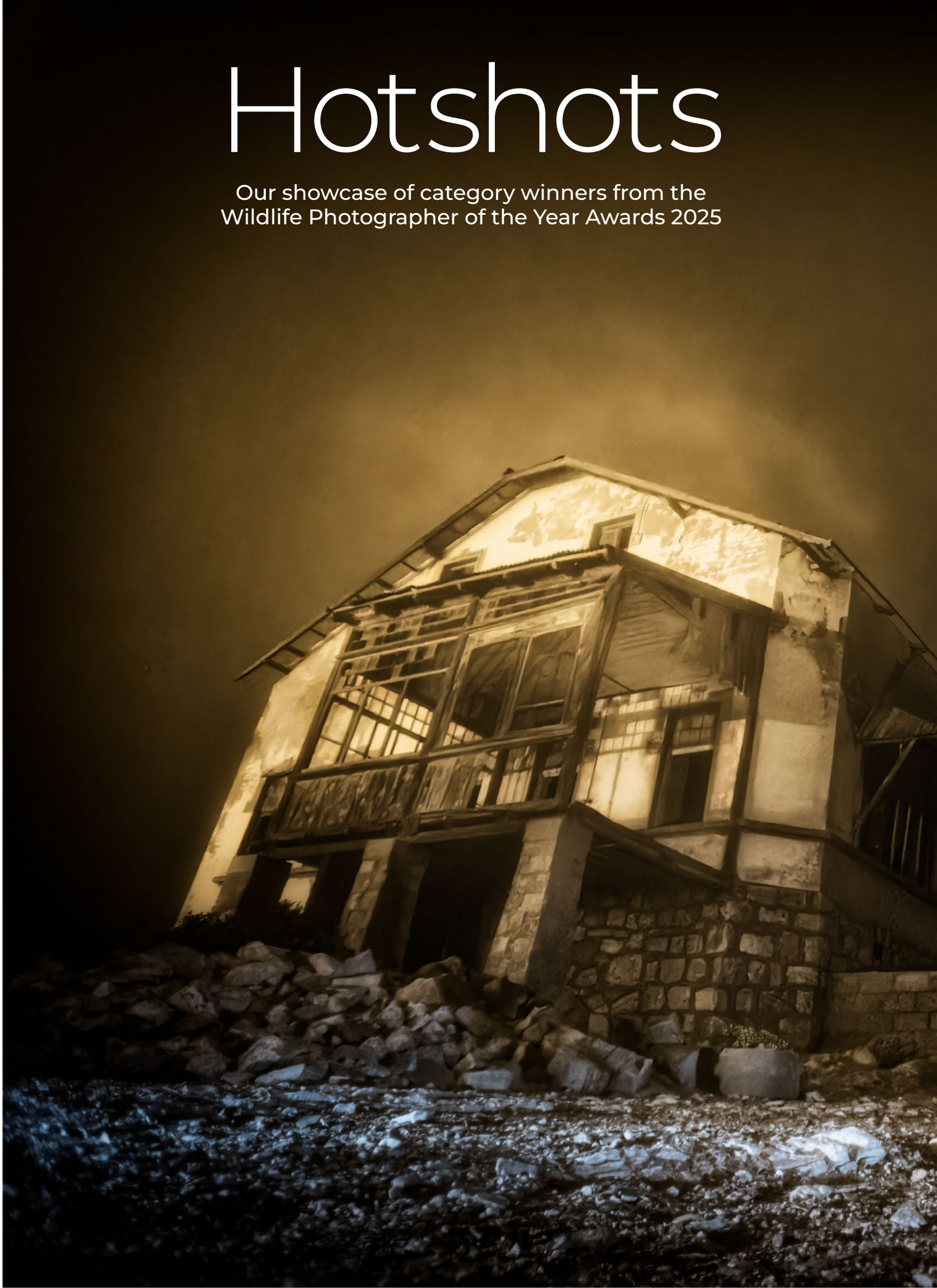




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Hotshots

Our showcase of category winners from the Wildlife Photographer of the Year Awards 2025





OVERALL WINNER & WINNER: Urban Wildlife
'Ghost Town Visitor' Wim van den Heever (South Africa)
Wim van den Heever photographed this haunting scene of a brown hyena among the skeletal remains of a long-abandoned diamond mining town. With sea fog rolling in from the Atlantic Ocean, Wim chose this spot for his camera trap after noticing hyena tracks nearby. "It took me 10 years to finally get this one single image of a brown hyena, in the most perfect frame imaginable," he said.

The rarest hyena species in the world, brown hyenas are nocturnal and mostly solitary. They are known to pass through Kolmanskop on their way to hunt Cape fur seal pups or scavenge for carrion washed ashore along the Namib Desert coast.

Location: Kolmanskop, near Lüderitz, Namibia
Technical details: Nikon D810 and a 17-35mm f2.8 lens at 17mm; 15 secs at f/2.8; ISO 3200; 2x Nikon SB-800 Speedlight flashes; Camtraptions motion sensor

© Wim van den Heever / WPOTY Awards 2025



© Simone Baumeister / WPOTY Awards 2025

WINNER: Natural Artistry 'Caught in the Headlights' Simone Baumeister (Germany)
This image, taken by Simone Baumeister from Germany, shows an orb weaver spider on its web on a pedestrian bridge, silhouetted by lights from the cars below. To achieve this kaleidoscopic effect, Simone reversed one of the six glass elements in an analogue lens, distorting the image at the edges while leaving the centre sharply focused. She then cropped the picture to move the spider slightly off-centre.

In urban environments, orb weaver spiders often spin their webs near artificial lights that attract insects at night. The web acts as an extension of their sense organ, gathering sound and transmitting vibrations, including those of any prey caught in the web, to their legs.

Location: Ibbenbüren, North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany
Technical details: Canon EOS R5 and Carl Zeiss Jena Pancolar 50mm f1.8 lens and 16mm extension tube; 1/250 sec at f/2.8 (-1.33 EV); ISO 1250

WINNER: Behaviour, Birds
'Synchronised Fishing'
Qingrong Yang (China)
With perfect timing, Qingrong Yang captured a ladyfish snatching its prey from under this little egret's beak. Qingrong was at Yundang Lake, where little egrets patrol the surface, ready to pounce on fish leaping to escape underwater predators. Once a natural marine harbour, the lake was sealed off from the sea in the 1970s. Isolated from tides, it became stagnant and has been reconnected via a gate system.

Location: Yundang Lake, Fujian Province, China
Technical details: Nikon Z 9 and 400mm f/2.8 lens; 1/2,500 sec at f/5, ISO 110



© Qingrong Yang / WPOTY Awards 2025



© Jamie Smart / WPOTY Awards 2025

WINNER: 10 Years and Under 'The Weaver's Lair' Jamie Smart (United Kingdom)
Jamie Smart spotted an orb weaver spider inside its retreat on a cold September morning, noticing the dew-laden web before realising its maker was sitting inside the nest. Manually focusing her camera, she kept the spider perfectly lit and symmetrically framed. The web is constructed from a scaffold of radial threads, overlaid with a spiral of sticky silk to hold ensnared insects. A signal thread transmits vibrations to the spider's hiding place, triggering it to emerge and collect its prey.

Location: Mid-Wales, UK
Technical details: Nikon Z 9 and 105mm f/2.8; 1/200 sec at f/10, ISO 80; Nikon SB-910 Speedlight; Cygnustech diffuser





WINNER: Behaviour, Amphibians and Reptiles
'Frolicking Frogs' Quentin Martinez (France)
Quentin Martinez discovered these lesser tree frogs gathered together for a breeding event. In persistent rain, Quentin followed a flooded path to a temporary pool in a forest clearing in French Guiana. He framed this scene with a wide-angle lens and used a diffused flash so that he didn't disturb the frogs, but also to highlight their metallic sheen.

To attract mates, lesser tree frogs produce short, shrill calls. Huge numbers of frogs gather for the spectacular breeding event, which is triggered by heavy rains and lasts for just a few hours.

Location: Kaw Mountain, French Guiana
Technical details: Canon EOS 7D Mark II and 17-40mm f/4 lens at 24mm; 1/200 sec at f/16, ISO 500; 4x Meike MK320 flashes; softbox

© Quentin Martinez / Wildlife POTY Awards 2025



© Lubin Godin / Wildlife POTY Awards 2025

WINNER: 11-14 Years 'Alpine Dawn' Lubin Godin (France)
During an early morning ascent, Lubin Godin spotted the silhouette of this Alpine ibex resting above the mist-shrouded mountains. As the sun broke over the crags, he retraced his steps to capture this ethereal moment before the fog thickened and the light faded. Native to Europe, the species was hunted close to extinction in the early 1800s. Thanks to conservation efforts, ibex now roam large areas of the Alps. However, the rapidly changing climate is causing fluctuations in the availability of food during the breeding season, which may hinder their survival.

Location: Col de la Colombière, Haute-Savoie, France
Technical details: Canon EOS R7 and 100-400mm F4.5-5.6 lens at 140mm with 1.4x teleconverter; 1/640 sec at f/8; ISO 100

WINNER: Plants and Fungi 'Deadly Allure' Chien Lee (Malaysia)
In this image, Chien Lee used a UV torch to reveal the fluorescent world of an insect-attracting pitcher plant. Insects can see ultraviolet (UV) light, but humans can't, so Chien used a long exposure and a UV torch. Waiting until after sunset, he had a five-minute window before the ambient light disappeared. Some carnivorous pitcher plants reflect UV light as a 'display', using colour, scent and nectar to lure their prey into the pools of digestive juices at the bottom of their leaves.

Location: Kuching, Sarawak, Borneo, Malaysia
Technical details: Nikon Z 9 and Laowa 15mm f/4 macro lens; 30 secs at f/16; ISO 100; Convoy C8 ultraviolet torch



© Chien Lee / Wildlife POTY Awards 2025

WINNER: Animals in their environment
'Like an Eel out of Water'
Shane Gross (Canada)
Shane Gross witnessed a peppered moray eel in its element, hunting for carrion at low tide. It took Shane several attempts over a few weeks to document this rarely photographed behaviour.

At first, the eels proved elusive, but once Shane realised they were scavenging for dead fish, he waited. His patience was rewarded when these three eels appeared. Peppered moray eels are well adapted to the intertidal zone. They can hunt both above and below the water's surface using their keen senses of smell and sight, sometimes staying out of the water for more than 30 seconds.

Location: D'Arros Island, Amirante, Seychelles
Technical details: Nikon Z 6 and 24-70mm lens at 24mm; 1/250 sec at f/5.6, ISO 2500; Godox AD400 Pro flash with 24-inch diffuser; light stand



© Shane Gross/ Wildlife POTY Awards 2025



© Fernando Faciole / Wildlife POTY Awards 2025

WINNER: Impact Award & HIGHLY COMMENDED: Photojournalism
'Orphan of the road' Fernando Faciole (Brazil)
Fernando Faciole watched as an orphaned giant anteater pup followed its caregiver after an evening feed at a rehabilitation centre. The image highlights the consequences of road collisions, a major cause of the decline in giant anteater numbers in Brazil. This pup's mother was killed by a vehicle, and it is hoped it will be released back into the wild after being encouraged to develop survival skills by its caregiver. Alongside rehabilitation centres, the Anteaters and Highways project of the Wild Animal Conservation Institute is developing strategies to reduce anteater deaths on Brazil's roads. These include erecting fences and building underground tunnels to allow the anteaters to cross safely.

Location: Centro de Triagem de Animais Silvestres (CETAS), Belo Horizonte, Brazil
Technical details: Nikon D850 and 24-70mm f/2.8 lens at 28mm; 0.8 sec at f/22, ISO 31; Nikon Speedlight flash with Godox Greika CT-16 transmitter/receiver.

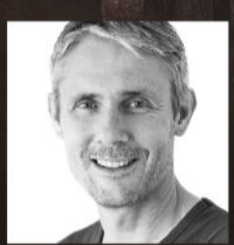
WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR

About the competition

Wildlife Photographer of the Year is developed and produced by the Natural History Museum in London. The winners of the 61st competition were selected from a record-breaking 60,636 entries originating from 113 different countries and territories. You can view the winning images at the Wildlife Photographer of the Year exhibition at the Natural History Museum in South Kensington, London, until 12 July.
To find out more, visit:
www.nhm.ac.uk

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Andrew James
Photographer & writer

Andrew James is a travel and wildlife photographer, based in England, UK. He first discovered his love of photography while training to be a print journalist, and later became the editor-in-chief of *Practical Photography* magazine and a regular *Digital Camera* contributor.

He started Foto-Buzz, an online photography learning community, and has taken people on photo trips around the world, including to Africa, Cuba, the Arctic, Antarctica, Iceland and France, among other locations.
www.andrewjamesphotos.co.uk

So you got your first 'proper' camera for Christmas, and you're excited about the creativity it can unlock, but also daunted by the number of things you need to learn to use it properly. All those confusing buttons, dials and endless menu screens aren't settling your first-camera nerves. It's normal to feel overwhelmed, so in this feature, we'll guide you through the basic skills you need. This is a seven-day crash course in 'seeing' photographically and, because you'll learn more by actually taking photos, not memorising facts from a book or a magazine article, each day we are setting a new practical challenge to help you capture motion, frame a scene and more. By the end, you'll be able to master light, tell a story in a single frame and shoot images that are better than snapshots. Charge your batteries and format a memory card – your creative journey starts here.

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Andrew James



WHY THIS SHOT WORKS

This image uses several aspects you will learn about in this crash course, such as becoming able to see the shot, using aperture and ISO for sharpness, adjusting the white balance to change the mood and editing a raw file.

1 Learn how to see a subject

Mastering basic composition will help you create a style



Andrrew James

Every photographer starts in the same place, confused by aperture, ISO and shutter speed. The trick is to take it one step at a time. Once you understand how light works and how these three main settings interact with each other, the rest will become second nature. It's almost like learning to drive. At first, we're confused by the sheer weight of things we have to do just to move the car forward, but a few months later, we're driving across the country without a care in the world.

To start your learning, you don't need to worry yourself about these technical issues. Instead, we're going to work on the creative aspects of composing every shot you take. So, just for this session, you can put your camera into a fully automatic mode, where it takes care of exposure for you.

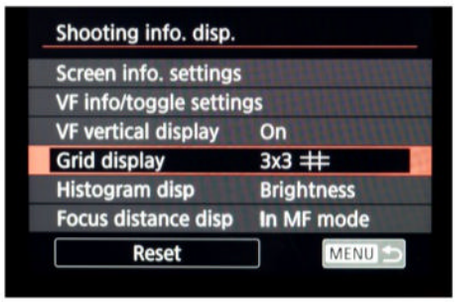


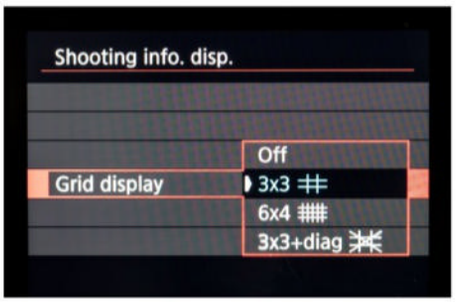
Switch your camera's main control wheel to its Automatic mode (right), usually marked with an A or a camera symbol within a green square. This mode requires zero exposure knowledge from you because it will choose aperture, shutter speed and ISO (the camera's sensitivity to light) on your behalf, based on the available light in the scene.

How to... Switch on a grid

Using a grid display will help to train your eye

Many cameras allow you to turn on a grid display that is visible when you look through the viewfinder or via the LCD screen at your subject. Having this activated helps you compose stronger, more balanced photos. You may have several grid options, but the most useful divides your frame into thirds, making it easier to position subjects off-centre for more dynamic images. The grid lines can also help you keep horizons level or align vertical subjects. The visible grid will assist you in seeing the structure within the scene, so you can make the composition more visually satisfying. You'll need to refer to your camera's menu for Grid Display, but using the Canon EOS R6 as an example, you can locate it by going to the Shooting info display and scrolling down to Grid display.







1 Find the Grid
Locate your Grid Display options in your menu. For example, in the Settings menu for a Canon EOS R6 camera, it is found under the Shooting info display.

2 Three by three
Go into Grid Display and select the grid dimensions that you want. Although any grid is useful when composing, the 3x3 option is often the most helpful.

3 View the Grid
Now the Grid will be visible via the LCD screen and through the electronic viewfinder. However, this is not the case with all camera models.



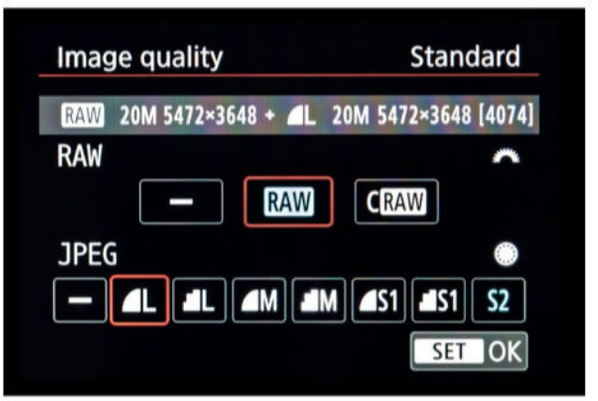
To begin this course, work on the creative aspects of composing your shots. Switch your camera into Automatic mode, which will choose aperture, shutter speed and ISO based on the available light in your scene.

Should I capture... jpeg or raw?

Choose which file format your camera shoots in

DSLR and mirrorless cameras let you choose between a few different file formats. The one you probably know about is jpeg, the most universal digital file format. Your camera will have a few jpeg options, so choose the one with the best quality, for example, Fine.

However, using a raw file is better for your photography in the long run, because it is an unprocessed file that allows you more options to edit your photos creatively. The raw file format can only be read by specialist software, so for the start of this course, stick with the simpler option of a jpeg.



Your camera has a range of options for jpeg format, so choose the one with the best quality. Shooting in raw format offers more control, but requires specialist software.

Your day 1 challenge

Enjoy a session with your new camera, thinking only about composition

With the camera on Auto and a grid visible (preferably a 3x3 grid) in your display, take a walk with your camera. Look for a variety of scenes that interest you and try to compose images that appear balanced and effective. Remember, in Auto, the camera will sort exposure and focusing for you, so you can slow down and think about the design of every shot you take. Simply considering what your focal point is within the frame and, just as importantly, what you leave out, will make a big difference. You'll find it useful to ask yourself these three questions before pressing the shutter.

1 **Is it clear what my subject is?**
If not, simplify the frame by moving closer or further away and by adjusting your shooting angle until the main subject stands out more.

2 **Is there a natural balance to the objects in the frame?**
Use the grid to help find a composition that guides the eye naturally toward your main point of focus and make sure nothing distracting creeps in at the edges.

3 **How does the light affect my scene?**
Look at how the light is falling on the subject. Remember, front light flattens, side light adds texture, and backlight creates drama. Again, move position if needed, because small positional changes can make a big impact.

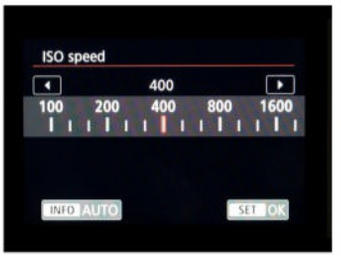


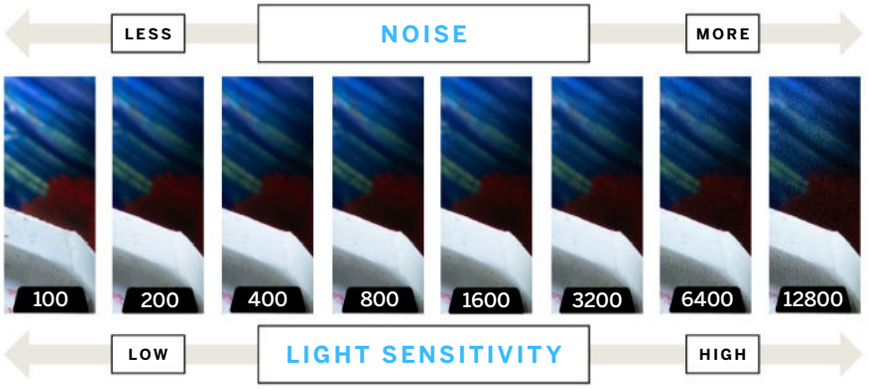
Use your tips cards
This 7-day challenge features in this month's bonus tips cards. Tick off the challenges as you do them during the week.

2 Understanding ISO and aperture

Get to grips with the basics of how these settings work

ISO controls your camera's sensitivity to light. A low ISO (100 to 400) gives cleaner images and is used in bright conditions. In low light, a higher ISO (800+) helps achieve a faster shutter speed but can add digital 'noise'. Measured in f-stops, aperture is the opening in your lens that controls light and depth of field. Wide apertures (f/2.8) gather light, but reduce sharpness. Narrower ones (f/16) keep everything sharp, but reduce shutter speeds.







1 ISO 100 (Fine grain)
Use this... in bright light or when the camera is on a tripod for longer shutter speeds without affecting sharpness.



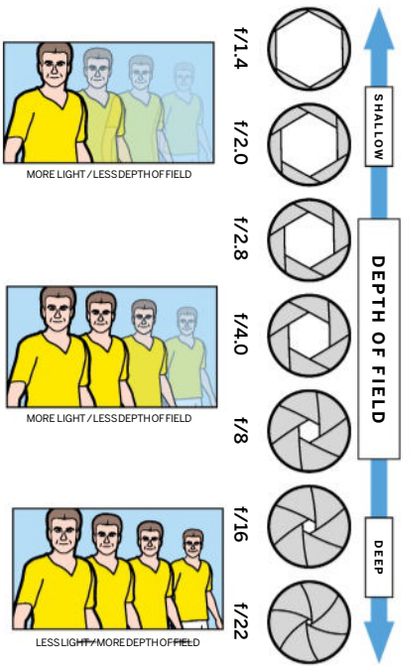
2 ISO 800 (Medium grain)
Use this... when you're handholding the camera and need a faster shutter speed to avoid camera shake or motion blur.



3 ISO 1600 (Coarse grain)
Use this... or even higher in dull light if you can't use a tripod or you need to avoid motion blur in an active subject.

Your day 2 challenge

Shooting in Aperture Priority (A or Av)
Photograph your subject using an aperture of f/4, then try the same shot with f/8 and f/16. Look at how background sharpness changes with each aperture setting.





f/2.8 **Perfect for...** arty portraits where the eyes are pin sharp, but the rest of the face and background falls to a creative blur.



f/8 **Perfect for...** any subject where you want decent sharpness through the image, but also plenty of light without increasing ISO.



f/32 **Perfect for...** wide-angle landscapes where you want to get everything sharp from the foreground to the background.

Images: Andrrew James

3 Mastering shutter speed

The length of your exposure is creatively important

Shutter speed controls how long your camera's sensor is exposed to light. Fast speeds, such as 1/1,000 sec, freeze action in bright light, while slower speeds, such as 1/30 sec, can capture motion blur or help in low light. Typically, shutter speeds below 1/60 sec require a tripod to prevent camera shake from ruining your shots.

Your day 3 challenge

Slow the flow

Capture moving water with a silky effect by using slow shutter speeds, such as 0.25-2 secs, using a tripod to keep the camera steady. Ideal subjects include waterfalls, streams, fountains or even an outside tap! Experiment with different speeds to control how smooth the water looks and use a self-timer to begin.

Which speed to choose

Suggested settings for capturing popular photographic subjects



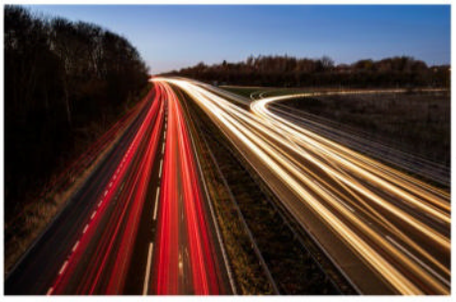
1/60 second

Use this for... handheld general photography, static street scenes and buildings. This is the minimum shutter speed you will need to avoid camera shake when not using a tripod.



1/1,000 sec

Use this for... freezing fast action, such as sports and wildlife in motion. At this speed and above, you can freeze the movement completely to produce sharp, crisp images.



4 secs+

Use this for... long exposures when capturing light trails (above) or smooth water effects. Also, for creating intentional motion blur on moving objects such as clouds or crowds.

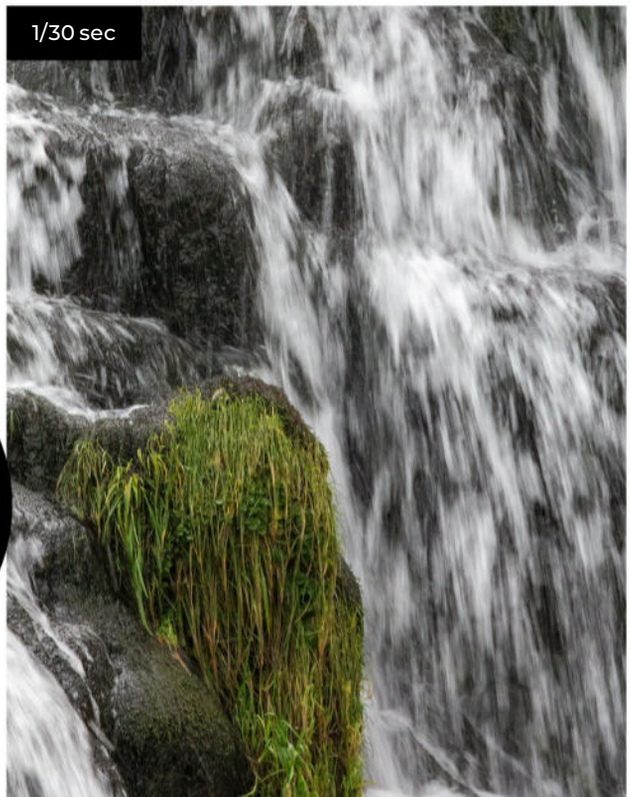
Images: Andrrew James

Get creative...

There is a lot more to shutter speed, so make your images flow

Long exposure waterfalls

Using a slow shutter speed on a moving subject, such as this waterfall, creates blurred motion. To avoid camera shake, use a tripod and a neutral density (ND) filter to reduce the light on the sensor. Shoot in Shutter Priority mode (S/Tv).





TOP TIP

Keep shutter speed higher than focal length

When shooting handheld, keep the shutter speed faster than your focal length. For example, with a 70mm focal length, use a minimum of 1/100 sec.

4 Focal lengths

Understanding the range of your lens

The focal length of your lens affects your image's perspective. Wide angles (24mm) capture expansive scenes and exaggerate depth, making them perfect for landscapes. Telephoto lenses (70mm+) compress distance and isolate subjects. Changing focal length alters how viewers experience your photographs. If your camera came with a kit lens, this could typically be 18-55mm or 24-70mm.

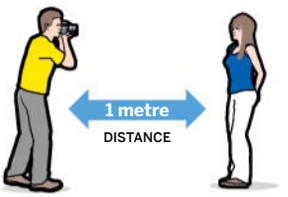
Your day 4 challenge

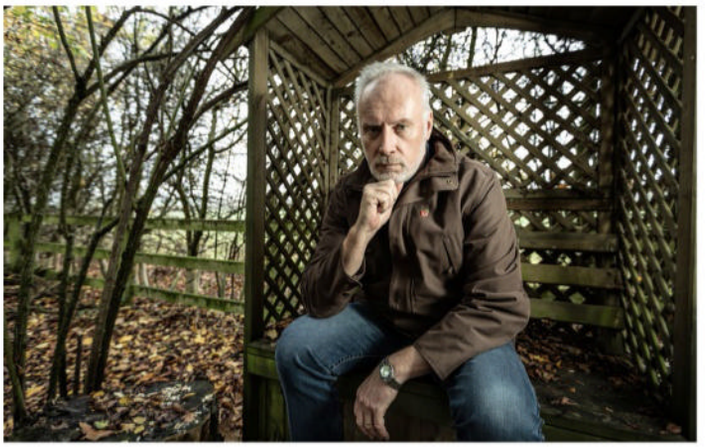
Same subject at different ends of your zoom

Photograph a rural landscape or an urban scene at each end of a zoom lens. For example, at 18mm and 55mm on a typical kit lens. Shoot from the same position and explore how the two focal length extremes affect your framing.

WIDE-ANGLE

Shorter focal lengths fit more in the frame

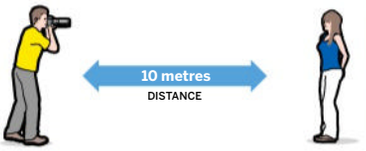




Wide-angle lenses capture bigger scenes and exaggerate perspective by making near objects seem larger and further-away objects seem smaller than they appear to the eye. They are most useful for landscapes and architecture, but can also be used for genres including portraits, where you can get closer to create dramatic, environmental images.

TELEPHOTO

Longer lenses get you closer to distant subjects



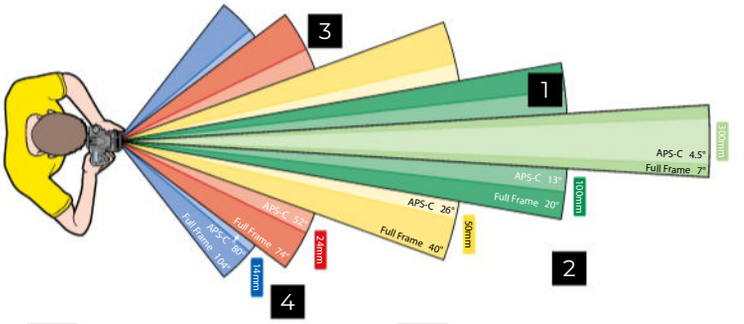


Andrrew James

Telephoto lenses compress perspective by making distant objects appear closer. This flattens depth and isolates the subject from distracting backgrounds. The compression effect stacks layers together, making mountains appear closer or city buildings seem tightly packed, which adds drama to your compositions. Telephoto lenses are ideal for wildlife, sports and portraits, creating excellent background diffusion.

What is... angle of view?

The angle of view you use influences how much of the scene your lens can capture. It is determined by the focal length you are using and the camera's sensor size. It will shape how you compose a photo and by varying it through focal length choice, you can use it to emphasise or minimise background elements, create intimacy or grandeur and, ultimately, guide the viewer's attention.



1 Crop factor

Sensor sizes aren't all the same. A smaller sensor (eg APS-C) reduces the field of view compared to full-frame, effectively magnifying the frame.

2 Viewpoints

Crop factor doesn't change the actual focal length, but a 50mm lens on APS-C (1.5x crop) appears equivalent to 75mm on a full-frame.

3 Full-frame sensor

A full frame is a sensor that matches 35mm film size (36 x 24mm). It is the standard reference point for camera sensor sizes and focal length.

4 Depth of field differences

To match the depth of field on a full-frame and APS-C sensor at the same angle of view, you would have to use a larger aperture on the APS-C camera.





Candlelight experiment
Experiment with the white balance to create different moods. For example, Daylight WB on candles produces a warm, moody shot, while a Custom WB with an adjusted temperature of 2450K can produce a neutral appearance. Neither setting is wrong; it's simply a creative choice depending on your intent.

Your day 5 challenge

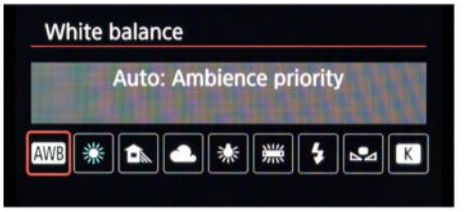
Shoot a scene with different white balance settings: Try using Daylight, Tungsten and Auto, then compare the images to see which you prefer. Shoot raw and you can adjust the WB in editing afterwards.

5 Working with white balance

Change the WB settings of your image for creative effect

White balance (WB) is a setting that corrects the colour temperature of different light sources, ensuring whites appear neutral rather than influenced by a colour cast. While your brain automatically adjusts to see white as white under any lighting, your camera records the actual colour, unless you tell it otherwise.

Every light source has a colour temperature, measured in Kelvin. Warm candlelight with an orange glow is about 1,800K, while tungsten bulbs with a yellow-orange cast are 3,400K. Daylight at noon is around 5,500K and appears neutral white, while cooler overcast skies can be 6,500K and shade is 8,000K. There are creative reasons why you may want to warm up or cool down tones, but often, you'll simply want to neutralise unwanted



colour casts, whether shooting under midday sun or particularly indoor lighting.

Your camera's Auto White Balance setting is good at compensating for different light temperatures. However, it can sometimes kill the mood you want, so if you're going to use it, consider whether an automatic correction serves your creative purposes. Here, you can see how different white balance settings have affected the colours created by a setting sun photographed through a rainy window.

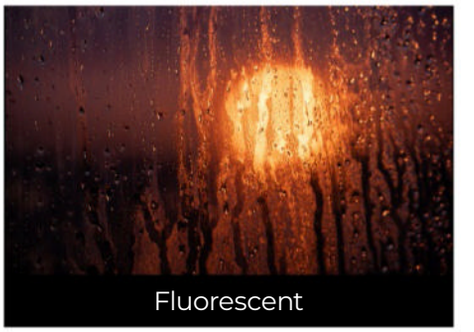
PRO TIP COLOUR TEMPERATURE CHART

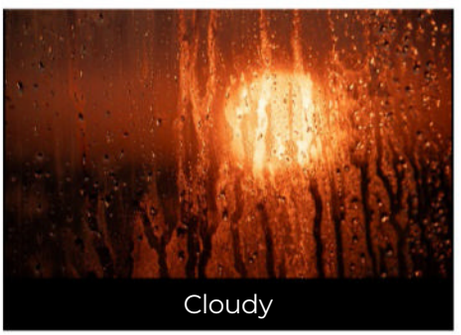
The colour temperatures (in degrees Kelvin) of various light sources.

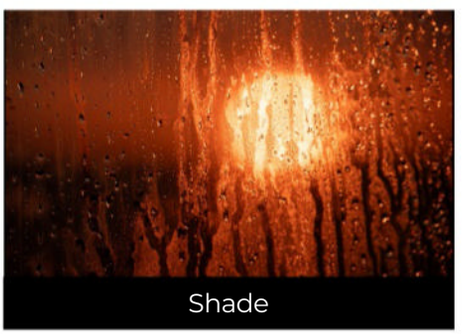
1,800–2,000K	Candle flame
2,500K	Torch bulb
2,800K	Domestic tungsten bulb
3,000K	Sunrise/sunset
3,400K	Tungsten light
3,500K	Early am/late pm
5,200–5,500K	Midday/direct sunlight
5,500K	Electronic flash
6,000–6,500K	Cloudy sky
7,000–8,000K	Shade


Auto White Balance


Daylight


Fluorescent


Cloudy


Shade


Tungsten

Andrrew James

6 Working with light

Learn how the quality of light affects your images

Light is a photographer's most important tool so we need to consider its quality in our shots. Soft light wraps gently around subjects, creating subtle shadows, while hard light produces greater contrast and defined edges. Think about the light direction, too. Front lighting flattens, side lighting reveals texture and dimension, while backlighting creates dramatic silhouettes or interesting rim light around your subject. All light is different, and with practice, you'll discover how to use its various forms.

Your day 6 challenge

Try different light sources

Using a desk lamp as your light source, photograph a simple object such as a grapefruit or an ornament in a dark room. Move the lamp to four positions: front, side, back and above your subject, then compare how each direction creates different shadows, texture and mood.





Andrew James

1 Strong backlighting

Strong lighting behind your subject can often create silhouettes or rim lighting effects. Without exposure compensation, your subject will be underexposed and look too dark. Use positive compensation (+1 to +2 stops) to correctly expose your subject.

What is... Exposure compensation?

Exposure compensation overrides your camera's metered exposure by making the image either brighter or darker. When using Aperture Priority or Shutter Priority modes, this can be a useful tool for fine-tuning the exposure, because your camera's meter aims for middle grey. The camera is easily fooled into exposing incorrectly, but exposure compensation corrects this.



Normal
(No exposure compensation)



+2.0
Exposure compensation



Andrew James

2 Low sunlight

Low sunlight from the front or side of your subject creates warm, flattering light with soft shadows or dramatic texture. Front lighting is easier to manage and needs minimal exposure compensation, while side lighting may require some adjustments to balance the difference between the highlights and shadows.



3 Overcast lighting

Overcast top light provides soft, diffused illumination with minimal shadows. It's perfect for even exposures and generally requires little or no exposure compensation. This kind of light can be good for some portraits, macro and floral photography because it reveals detail evenly. On the other hand, it can lack drama.

TOP TIP

Raw processing software

Software for processing raw files ranges from free options, such as Gimp, and manufacturer-specific tools like NX Studio to paid ones, including Adobe Lightroom (below), DxO PhotoLab and Capture One.



Before



After

7 Processing a raw image

Get to grips with raw and transform your photos

By using software to process a raw file, you have complete creative control over your images. Unlike jpegs, raw files – the camera's native digital file – capture all data, allowing extensive adjustments to exposure, white balance and colour without loss of quality. This allows you to realise your artistic vision and recover detail that could be lost with exposure mistakes.

Your day 7 challenge

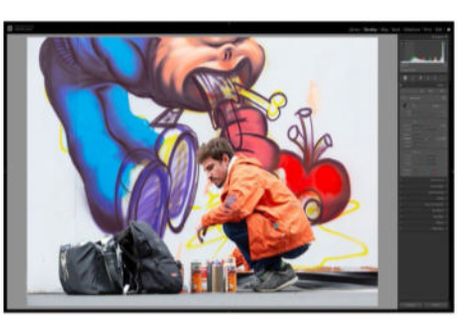
Process a raw image

Take a raw file and create two shots. Process it as a warm-toned scene, then create a second version as a cooler photo and explore how this transforms the mood of your image.



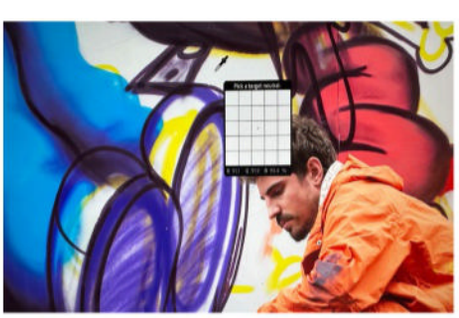
1 Fine-tune composition

We'll start by selecting the Crop Tool and recomposing the shot. With this image, we're going to rotate it slightly so that it is level and also lose some of the negative space on the right of the frame.



2 Adjust exposure

Now move the Exposure slider to -30 to recover a bit of that detail lost on the light background boards. Lift Shadows by +20 to improve detail in the darker areas.



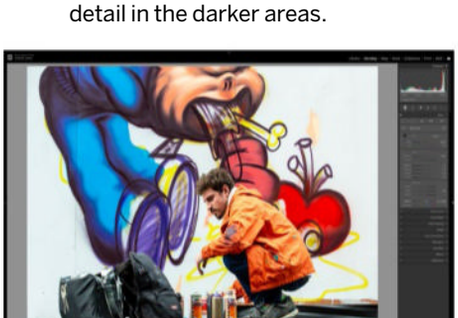
3 Check the white balance

Next, we'll assess the colour temperature with the White Balance selector tool. Click on a neutral area of the frame – white, black or grey – to see if any correction is required.



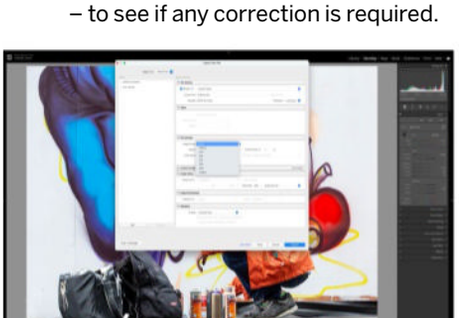
4 Add clarity and contrast

We can darken the midtones by pushing the Clarity slider to +20. Also, double-check both the Whites and Blacks sliders to make sure that the image has good contrast.



5 Improve the colour

Avoid the Saturation slider as it will affect all the colours, but we can use the Vibrance slider instead. Moving this to +20 will help the blue colours in the graffiti on the wall really pop.



6 Output the file

Hit Export and, in the dialog box, choose a folder to export it to. Name your file in Custom Text, select jpeg from the Image File Format at 100 Quality and output your final photo.

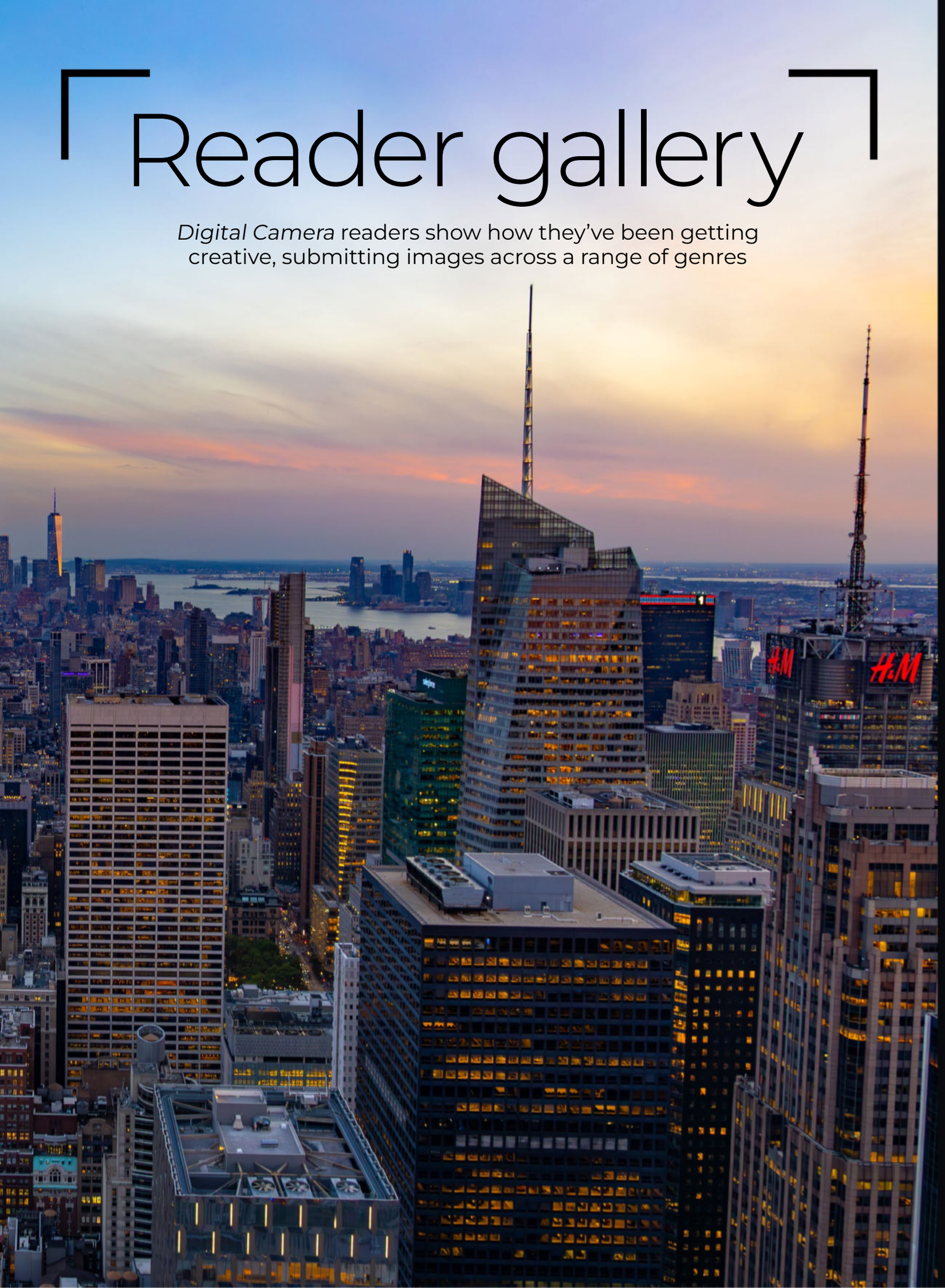


1 **'Manhattan' by Gerard Deehan**
"This was taken from the top of the Rockefeller Center in Manhattan on a recent visit to New York. The sun had just set but it made for a great shot of the Big Apple. The city was starting to sparkle, contrasting will with the evening sky." Taken on a Canon EOS R6 Mark II and RF 24-105mm lens.
Instagram: @ged73

Digital Camera says:
Great work to get such a sharp shot in those conditions. The timing, at dusk with all the city lights coming on, was perfect.

Reader gallery

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





2 **'A Faranji at the horizon' by Francesco Otranto**
"My desire to photograph culturally distant faces brought me to the Omo Valley in Ethiopia, where people seem born to be in front of a camera. Their gazes, which are present, steady, proud and full of both awareness and a curiosity about the world, appear to transcend the lens." **Instagram:** @frankie_phr

Digital Camera says: The subject's eyes make this a startling portrait. Not only are the focus and exposure perfect, but the image also invites many questions, from the bars at the front to the football he's holding.



3 **'Old Harbour' by Jonas Lindell**

"This is an old harbour in the Finnish archipelago featuring fishing boats and old wooden sheds. It is well-known in this region, since it is part of a UNESCO World Heritage site." Taken with a Nikon Z 8 and 24mm lens. Settings: 1/20 sec at f/14, ISO 500. **Instagram:** @jonas.lindell

Digital Camera says: The evening light you have captured in this photo is really pleasing and your wide-angle lens shows the sweep of the harbour beautifully.



4 **'Donna Nook seals' by David Nutt**

"This is one of a selection of photographs I took on a recent visit to Donna Nook in Lincolnshire. Every year, hundreds of seals arrive here for the mating season. In the week I visited, over 900 pups were born, which made for quite a sight." Taken on a Canon EOS R7 with an RF 100-400mm lens. **Instagram:** @davidnutt1953

Digital Camera says:
This was our pick of the bunch from the series of images you sent. It's a dramatic capture using an ideal shutter speed to capture the seal.



5 ‘Fanal Forest’ by Danny Wilson

“I wanted to make an image that could be interpreted in different ways. In this shot of Fanal Forest, Madeira, I see someone being asked to dance. Others see a witch casting a spell, but there are many interpretations in between.” Taken with a Nikon Z 8 and Z 14-24mm f/2.8 lens. Settings: 1/50 sec at f/9, ISO 64. **Instagram:** @_dannywilson_

Digital Camera says:

The spooky atmosphere makes this look like something from *Lord of the Rings*. The low ISO maximises quality and the aperture produces plenty of depth of field.



Reader gallery



6 ‘Keswick’ by Andrew Sturdy

“This shot of the boats at Keswick in the Lake District was taken with a Canon R6 Mark II and RF 15-35mm lens.” Settings: 1/50 sec at f/8, ISO 100.
Instagram: @andrewsturdyphotography

Digital Camera says:
An excellent composition. The entire frame is filled with interesting details that lead the eye from the boats in the foreground to the hills at the back.



7 ‘Staircase of the Stream’ by Luis Alfaro

“I took this image while living in Bogota, Colombia. Cascading gently over a series of angled rock ledges, the waterfall descends like a fluid staircase carved by time. The tiers in the geology break the flow into elegant steps, each one a pause in the stream’s descent.”
Instagram: @alpharho.photo

Digital Camera says:
The water is captured perfectly, though a graduated ND filter would have helped with the overexposed patch of sky.

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**



8 **'Double Shard' by Paul Adams**
"The location is on a walkway between Tower Bridge and The Shard in London. The building to the right was all glass, giving me a chance to capture The Shard and its reflection. The walkway was busy, so it was hard to avoid capturing too many people so it didn't distract from the subject." Taken with a Fujifilm X-H2 at 16mm: 1/125 sec at f/1.6, ISO 160.
Instagram: @pauladams1964

Digital Camera says:
It's a great concept for a shot and the light is ideal. The 16mm lens offers lots of depth of field, despite the wide aperture losing foreground sharpness.

CAMERA CLINIC

Master the art of modern photography

This month: Creative use of apertures

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



As part of the exposure trinity, aperture defines the look of your image. Paying attention to the f/stop will give your photos an immediate improvement.

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**

Take control of the aperture and your pictures will improve immediately – it's as simple as that. All you need is a broad understanding of what's going on when you make an exposure. Most cameras have four exposure modes, collectively known as PASM. Many will also have green square, fully auto or subject-led modes, but to further your image-taking skills, PASM is where you want to be. Being flexible is always the best approach, so try not to be too prescriptive in your exposure mode choice, unless you shoot only one subject always in the same way.

As a broad overview: for moving subjects, use Shutter Priority AE (S); Manual (M) is for studio shooting or when you want total control; and Program (P) is for point-and-shoot simplicity. It might seem a bold statement, but for the majority of keen photographers in most situations, the best mode is Aperture Priority AE (A). Remember that, as part of the exposure trinity, aperture does not work in isolation, but in partnership with the shutter speed and ISO. Aperture Priority is good for action photography if you keep an eye on the shutter speed.

In this Camera Clinic, our focus is on how the aperture affects the look of your photographs, in particular, the depth of field, which is the zone of sharp focus within an image. Shoot at a wide f/stop, such as f/2 or f/2.8, and this zone is relatively narrow; conversely, set a small f/stop, such as f/16, and this zone of sharpness is much broader.

However, depth of field is more complex than that. Shoot a distant landscape and you'll have plenty of depth of field, but use the same lens and f/stop on a close-up of a flower, and it becomes much shallower, meaning you will need to take care with focus. Now that we have some background, let's dig deeper into the wonderful world of f/stops.

Get the knowledge

Apertures, f/stops and prices

A fast lens has a wide maximum aperture for its focal length. For example, a 24mm f/1.4 lens is fast, while the same lens at f/2.8 is considered slow. But that aperture on a 300mm lens is fast, and f/5.6 would be deemed slow.

Lens speed, or its maximum aperture, is governed by cost, practicality and physics. So, while a super-fast 50mm lens would be f/1.0, to get that rating on a 300mm lens would mean a huge lens with a massive front element, which is neither practical nor affordable.

Fast aperture lenses are often expensive, and you can pay a great deal to gain half an f/stop. But fast lenses give more options for shutter speed and ISO selection, and there's also the chance to use the selective focus technique for lovely people shots.

A matter of lens choice

Give your creativity a shot in the arm and expand your lens range



THINK ABOUT SPEED

You probably own a zoom lens or two, and if you haven't thought of shooting with a fast prime lens, now's the time. Yes, it is true that wide maximum lenses can be expensive, but there are plenty of more affordable lenses to consider. Every camera system has a nicely priced 50mm (or equivalent) lens with an aperture of f/1.8 or f/2, and such lenses tend to be compact as well as highly capable performers.

TRY THE FAST LANE

Acquire a taste for fast apertures and the look they give, and you'll be keen to expand your lens armoury. Fast lenses are available at many focal lengths and from camera-makers as well as third-party manufacturers, so there is plenty of choice. If street photography is your thing, a 24mm f/1.4 or 35mm f/1.4 could be ideal, while for portrait shooters, an 85mm f/1.4 or even a 135mm f/1.8 could be your dream lens.





GET ADAPTED

If you own a mirrorless system, buying a fast aperture legacy lens is a budget-busting option, and all you need is an appropriate lens adapter. All manner of adapters are available, often at good prices, although this depends on the lens mount and the features on offer. Manual focus and Manual or Aperture Priority AE exposure are normal, and you have to set the camera to work without a lens attached, even though one is.

Break the mould

Go for something different without breaking the bank



SUPER-WIDE LENS

Ultra-wides, pancake lenses and powerful macro lenses are available at reasonable prices for most camera mounts. Check out what's available from Chinese brands such as Laowa, TTArtisan and Meike. The Viltrox 14mm f/4 ultrawide, shown here, is compact and lightweight, has autofocus, gives a decent optical performance, comes in several different lens mounts and costs £152 ($160).

JUST FOR FUN

Take away all the worry of f/stops and focusing, and try something different with a body cap lens, such as this Funleader 18mm f/8. This is a full-frame lens and has a fixed focus from 80cm to infinity. It is available in various lens mounts, including Sony E and Nikon Z, and costs £46 ($59). You can expect average image quality and significant vignetting, but it's compact and easy to use. It isn't for serious photography but the 'toy' look makes a nice change.





GET A SHIFT ON

Tilt-shift lenses are specialist optics favoured by architectural and product photographers. They are generally expensive and there isn't a huge choice, but things are changing, with tilt (no shift) lenses, such as the TTArtisan Tilt 50mm f/1.4, available for around £250 ($183). With its f/1.4 maximum aperture and tilt mechanism, you can control depth of field for eye-catching blur effects, including miniature landscapes.

Perfect examples of making the most of apertures

F/stop selection can have a profound impact on your pictures, so it pays to choose wisely



KEEPING IT SHARP

Ultra-wide lenses come in useful when you're shooting in cramped conditions and want to shoot the subject together with an extensive depth of field. This image was taken inside St Catherine's Lighthouse on the Isle of Wight. I used an ultra-wide 14-24mm zoom to get in the beautiful, original light and lens system (it has since been replaced by an LED system and is now on display at the Classic Boat Museum in Cowes). On the day, the light levels were good, which meant I could use a small f/16 f/stop with ample front-to-back sharpness together with a fast shutter speed without having to push up the ISO.

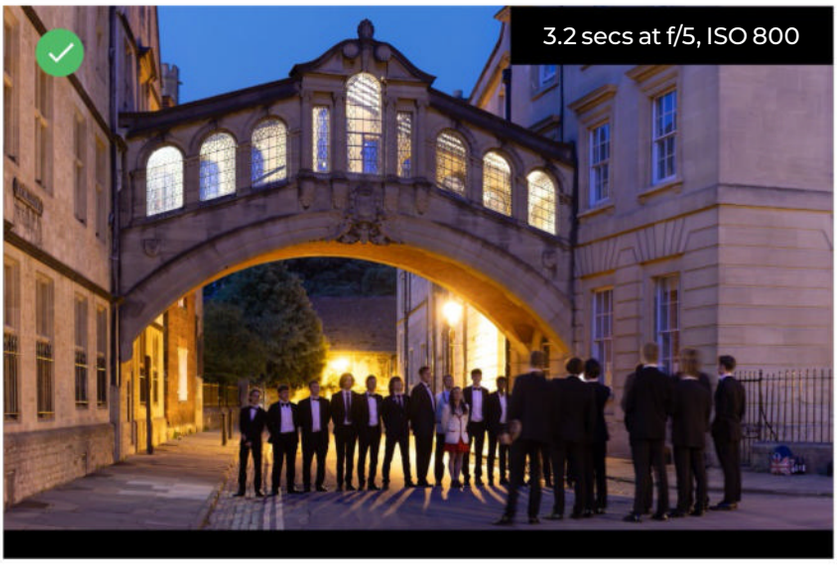


Will Cheung



PATIENCE PAYS OFF

Oxford's Bridge of Sighs is one of the city's most photographed sights. When I visited in late spring, it was well into the evening, but the twilight sky still had colour and the bridge's interior lights were on, too, which was a bonus. The main headache was that the area was busy. I set up the camera on a tripod and waited, hoping for a people-free scene, but just as it was getting quieter, a rowing club turned up for a photoshoot. My frustration only lasted a few moments, as I realised it made the scene more interesting and shot several frames with my superzoom at its widest aperture.



Will Cheung



A WELL-EARNED CUPPA

It's liberating to be able to shoot high-quality handheld photos at night with a fast prime lens and the excellent high ISO performance of digital cameras. Should you wish, you can wander the streets without a tripod and capture scenes lit with nothing more than the reflected light of a street lamp. This scene at London's Smithfield Market was lit by several lamps, so a fast shutter speed was possible using a 50mm f/1.4 standard lens. I often use Auto ISO, but in this case, I had manually set a high ISO and the resulting raw was processed using DxO PureRAW, a powerful noise reduction application, to keep grain at bay.



Will Cheung

Aperture choice is a powerful photo tool

The adjustable 'hole' in your lens is just waiting to be exploited

The adjustable diaphragm in your camera lens controls the amount of light passing to the sensor to deliver the right exposure. That's its job in the process, but it has a huge creative role to play and it's up to you to make the most of it.

Choose a small f/stop when you want more of the scene in focus and a wide one for the selective focus technique, where the subject stands out from the foreground. There's more to aperture choice than that, though, and it depends on the situation, the lens and your personal taste. Practice and experience will help you get more from aperture selection, but here are nine ideas to get you thinking.

Nine scenarios where aperture choice is crucial



FAIR ENOUGH

Enjoy the excitement and colour of fairgrounds with small f/stops and long shutter speeds. With fast rides, you can get attractive blur with exposures of one or two seconds. For smooth lines of coloured light, fix your camera to a sturdy tripod.



THE EYES HAVE IT

Portraits can benefit from a wide aperture. The limited depth of field forces the viewer to look at the sitter, but focus must be spot-on. Subject and eye-detect AF should make it easy, but AF systems can be wayward, so it's worth checking the preview.



USE SMALL F/STOPS

Ensure an extensive depth of field by using small f/stops. This photo was taken on a Micro Four Thirds camera with the lens at f/8 (f/16 full-frame), so there's plenty front-to-back sharpness. I used a tripod to ensure stability for the 0.8 sec exposure.



TRY DIFFERENT F/STOPS

Give your shots a narrative by using the right f/stop. Aperture is a careful balance – a wide f/stop may blur the backdrop too much, while a small one risks the subject and background merging. Shoot at different f/stops to see which one works best.



THINK ABOUT WHERE TO FOCUS

When framing up a scene, think about where to focus. As a guide, roughly one-third of the available depth of field is in front of the point where you focus and two-thirds behind. If you want lots of front-to-back sharpness, focus slightly in front.



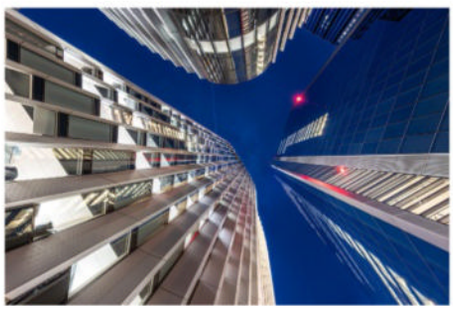
SLOW IT DOWN

Aperture is a pillar of the exposure trinity, so setting a smaller f/stop means less light reaches the sensor. To maintain a correct exposure, the shutter must be open for longer. Use this when you need a longer shutter speed to blur flowing water.



PARALLEL LINES

If you're shooting a close-up of an insect and want a wide aperture to blur the background, position the camera so that the plane of the sensor is parallel with the subject. It's a tricky skill to master and is even more challenging with live subjects.



THE WIDER THE BETTER

A wide-angle lens with a small aperture gives enough depth of field to record everything sharp from a metre or so to infinity. The shorter the focal length, the greater the depth of field. This is useful for architecture, landscapes, street and still-life.



LOOK FOR SHAPES AND ABSTRACTS

Patterns can be found all over the place, so use a telephoto to pick these out. Long lenses also compress perspective, and you can use this to create interesting images out of ordinary scenes, such as this viaduct's supporting piers.

Pros and cons
All about f/numbers and more...
Choosing the right f/stop to suit the situation

Which f/stop you decide to use depends on the situation. Poor light, action subjects and telephoto lenses mean the fastest-possible aperture is needed to allow a shutter speed fast enough for sharp shots. As far as aperture is concerned, your options are limited. There is much greater leeway when tackling a well-lit scene with a standard zoom, and here, you can choose the aperture to produce the look you want.

Zoning in
Using the whole frame or a wide focusing zone does not guarantee that the camera will focus where you want it to, even with subject or eye detection switched on. Selecting a small AF point and placing it over the scene's focal point will help ensure you get consistently great results.

Best all-round performance
Optimum sharpness and the best detail rendition across the whole image frame, including deep into the corners, comes when the lens is stopped down two or three f/stops from its maximum value. In many lenses, even stopping down just one f/stop from the maximum aperture can elicit a significantly better performance.

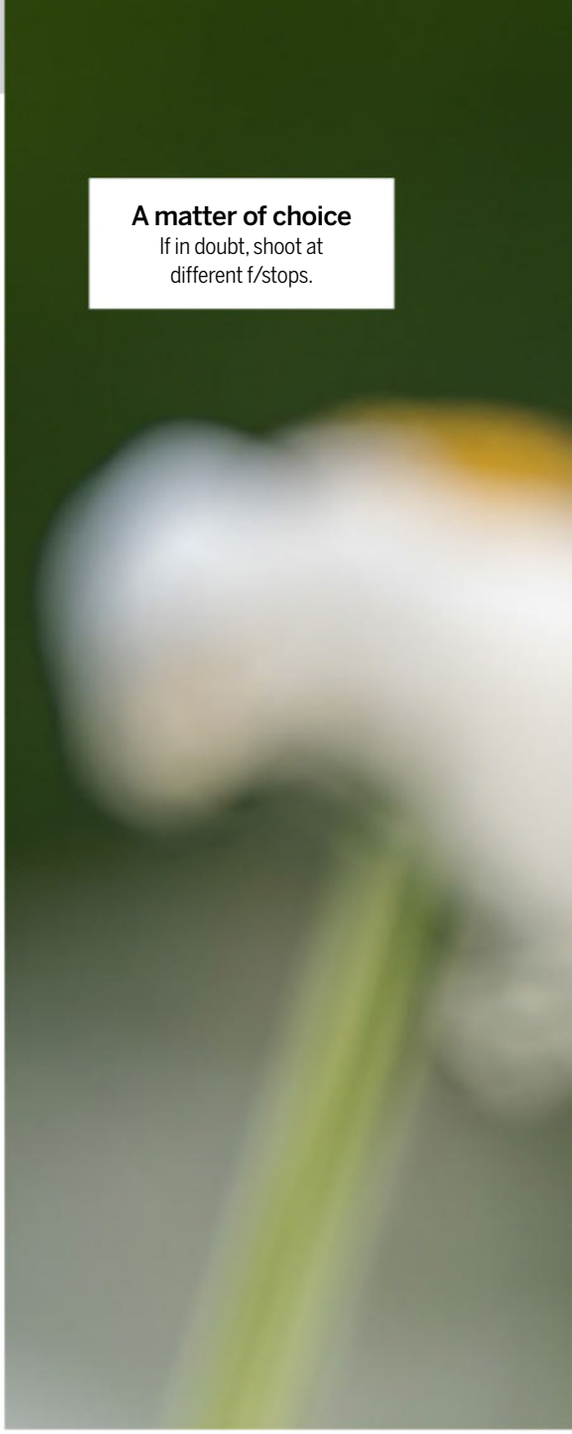
Double-check focus
Shooting at wide apertures, the depth of field is at a minimum, so make sure focusing is spot on. The camera might have a zoom magnifier for checking critical focus, so allocate this feature to a function button (unless it has its own dedicated button); that way, you can call it into action quickly. For people shots, make sure the eyes are sharp.

Background answers
In portraits, position the sitter so there is a good separation from the background. This ensures the background blurs nicely, even if you're shooting with a modest maximum aperture zoom lens.

Avoid soft images
Softer images at a lens's smallest aperture are common. Stop a lens down to its smallest value and shots can suffer from diffraction where light waves passing through the iris can strike the edges of the diaphragm blades and interfere with each other. Generally, avoid using f/22 and f/32.

Filter choice
Fitting protection filters to lenses to look after the front element is a good thing. But as in life, you get what you pay for, and while buying cheap filters is kinder on the pocket, the results in terms of less-sharp images might have you regretting your choice.

Temper your expectations
If you buy a fast aperture lens, don't expect outstanding quality at its widest setting. Sharpness might be disappointing and images may suffer from colour fringing and darker corners. That may change for the better if you stop the lens down one f/stop.



A matter of choice
If in doubt, shoot at different f/stops.

Lens know-how The diaphragm
The size of the aperture is determined by a series of blades

Specific f/stop values are controlled by a set of extremely thin blades that are often gently curved, too. These blades close down at the instant of exposure to create a 'hole' or aperture that allows the appropriate amount of light for the selected f/stop to reach the sensor or film. Look down the front of the lens during an exposure of several seconds and you will be able to see the lens iris in action for yourself; just make sure the lens is not set to its widest aperture.

The number of diaphragm blades in lenses varies, but nine is a common number. That is just enough to prescribe a smooth, round iris, but some top-end lenses may have even more, while less expensive models may have fewer.



Wide open: f/1.4



Nearly fully closed: f/16



Lens tech More about depth of field

Aperture, focal length and subject distance influence the zone of sharpness

It's commonly understood that wide-angle lenses give more depth of field than telephotos. That is correct in practical terms because of the way we use different lenses, but strictly speaking, it's not accurate.

Move in close and shoot a face-filling portrait with a 24mm lens at f/5.6. Next, fit a 300mm lens and retreat until the subject is the same size in the viewfinder and take a shot, also at f/5.6. Check the results and you will see that the amount of depth of field is broadly the same.

Manual focus lenses commonly had depth-of-field scales so you could see at a glance how much sharpness you would get at different apertures, and it was easy to maximise the zone of sharpness.



The depth of field (DoF) scale on a manual lens is a series of markings that indicates the range of distances that will be in focus for each given aperture setting.

Shoot photos like a pro

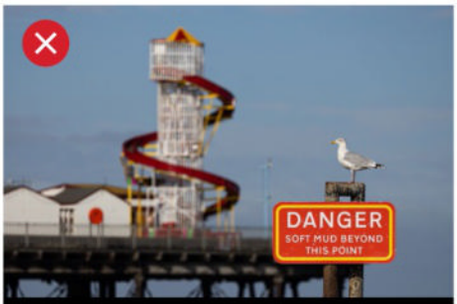
For the best look, choose the f/stop wisely

Choosing which aperture to use is not always an aesthetic decision, but just part of taking photographs and using the exposure trinity to turn in accurate exposures. In low light, with a fast-moving subject and a long lens, you have no option other than the widest aperture. Conversely, in strong sunlight, you may have no choice other than to shoot at f/16.

That said, experienced photographers will often find a method that allows the use of the aperture they want to give the best result. This could mean switching lenses, dialling in a faster or lower ISO, selecting the electronic shutter with a very high top speed or adding neutral density (ND) filters to the front of the lens, which allows them to use a wider aperture.

The challenge of longer lenses

Shooting with a telephoto lens, such as the 100-250mm used here, can mean getting full front-to-back sharpness a challenge, and even setting the lens's smallest f/stop might not be enough. However, using a combination of a small f/stop and focusing at around one-third of the way between the gull and the helter-skelter was enough to render the distant parts of the scene acceptably sharp.



1/8000 sec at f/5.6, ISO 400

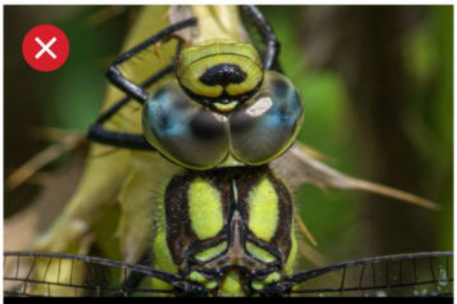


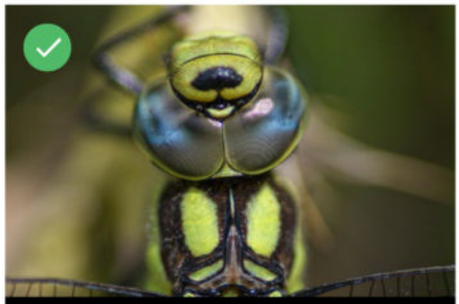
1/250 sec at f/22, ISO 400

Will Cheung

Go for blur

Shooting macro can be difficult because the depth of field is so shallow, and it gets even shallower the closer you move in. Setting a small aperture gives more depth of field, but you could do the opposite and go for an even wider aperture and create even more blur for a creative result. Just be careful with focus because there is no room for error with a close-up shot taken with a wide aperture.


1/45 sec at f/11, ISO 200


1/250 sec at f/2.8, ISO 200

Will Cheung

All the way from front to back

Scenics is one genre where extreme front-to-back sharpness is often desired, so everything within the frame is sharply focused. There are apps available to help determine the depth of field within a scene, but you can also take a shot and check it. In this case, f/22 was required for sharpness in the foreground all the way into the distance, even though using such a small aperture risked diffraction softening the result.


1/2000 sec at f/4, ISO 400

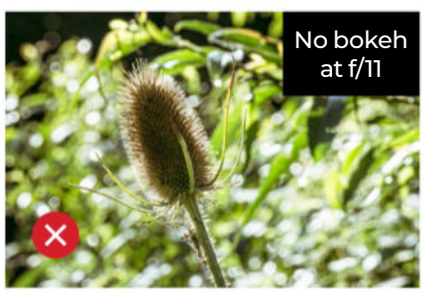

1/80 sec at f/22, ISO 400

Will Cheung

Lens skills Bokeh explained

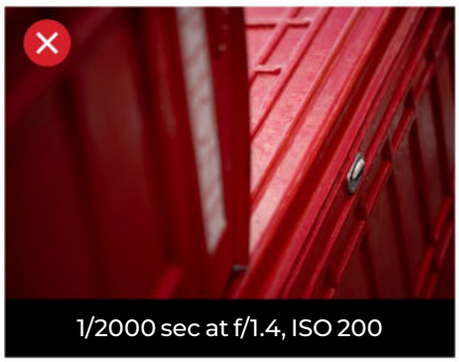
Enhance your subject with a blurred background effect

Bokeh is a Japanese word used when the aesthetic qualities of an out-of-focus blurred background are discussed. Bokeh quality depends on the lens design, focal length and the f/stop used, as well as variables such as the distance between the subject and background and the background itself. Generally, good bokeh is smooth, out-of-focus highlights that are round rather than hexagonal and free of 'onion rings' (fine rings within the bokeh circles). However, bokeh is subjective and what is considered good bokeh by one photographer might not appeal to another.

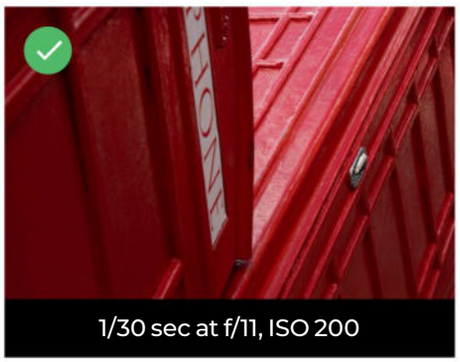

No bokeh at f/11


Good bokeh at f/4

Will Cheung



1/2000 sec at f/1.4, ISO 200

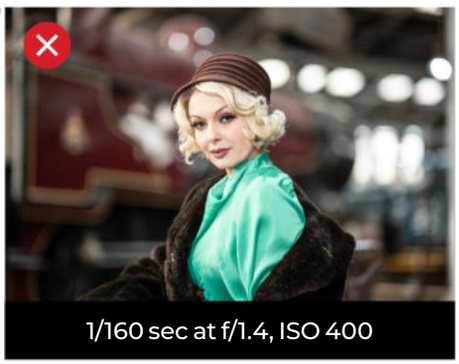


1/30 sec at f/11, ISO 200

Sharp up front

Choosing a smaller aperture increases the amount of depth of field. This zone of sharpness extends behind and in front of the focus point, which is useful to know. As a rough guide, the amount of depth of field extends by about one-third in front of the focus point and two-thirds behind. In this example, shooting wide open gave a decent shot, but closing down to f/11 brought the depth of field towards the camera, so the wording is much sharper as a result.

Will Cheung



1/160 sec at f/1.4, ISO 400



1/30 sec at f/5.6, ISO 1600

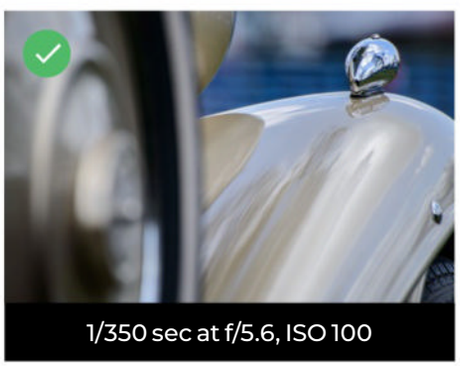
Portrait poser

How much background blur you prefer is a matter of taste, so you could argue that this portrait of model Daisy is successful at both f/1.4 and f/5.6 apertures. The f/1.4 shot has given a blurred background, so Daisy stands out with an almost 3D look. Stopping down to f/5.6 gives a less dramatic, but more recognisable backdrop, so it adds more context to the shot. Ultimately, it depends on what you're trying to achieve and your choice of aperture is key.

Will Cheung



1/180 sec at f/8, ISO 100

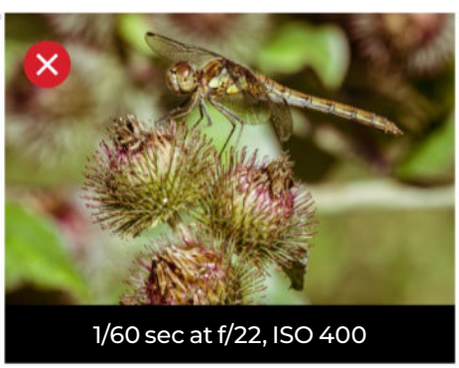


1/350 sec at f/5.6, ISO 100

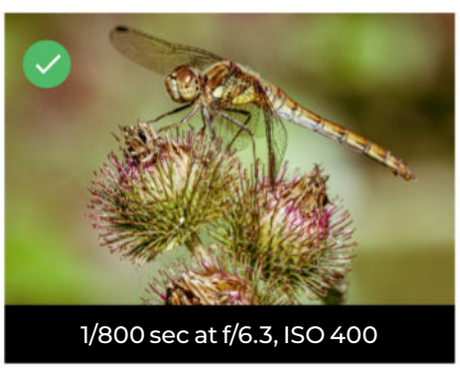
Focus wisely for the best effect

The choice of f/stop is always important, but so too is where you focus. In this close-up of a classic vintage car, two very different results have been created by focusing on different points. As with several of our examples here, there is no outright failure and both work well enough, so it's simply a matter of preference. Another option might have been to set a small f/stop and focus about one-third of the way into the scene, so that both extremes are sharp.

Will Cheung



1/60 sec at f/22, ISO 400



1/800 sec at f/6.3, ISO 400

Don't lose the subject

Shooting a macro subject can be a technical headache. The zone of sharpness becomes much shallower the closer you get to a subject, and you can offset this to a degree by choosing a smaller f/stop. Go too far, though, and the extra sharpness can mean that the subject merges with the background, which can result in a messy photo with the subject losing impact. Stop down by all means, but don't overdo it.

Pro tip Use only one f/stop

Train your eye to see how depth of field works

As an exercise to fine-tune your eye and see how depth of field behaves, next time you're photographing people, use only one focal length and one aperture. This can be wide open, f/5.6 or f/11. Much depends on the shoot, the light levels and the lens in question, but set Aperture Priority, Auto ISO and your chosen f/stop.

If you have a fast telephoto, try shooting wide open – we used an 85mm f/1.8 prime for this steampunk photo (right) – and honing your focusing technique and mixing blur and sharpness. Or you can use a 28mm wide-angle set to f/11 and this will give a large depth of field with everything from around 2m to infinity in sharp focus.





Karolina Konsur

Shot of the month

Karolina Konsur on pursuing a perfect visual balance in her image of Kirkjufell in Iceland



Karolina Konsur
Landscape photographer

Location: Kirkjufell, Snæfellsnes Peninsula, Iceland
Camera: Canon EOS R5
Lens: Canon EF 16-35 mm f/4L IS USM
Exposure: 30 secs at f/13, ISO 100
Instagram: @ karolinakonsur

"The contrast between the smooth, flowing water and the rugged texture of the rocks and mountain creates a perfect visual balance," says Karolina.

Karolina Konsur is a landscape photographer from Gdansk in Poland, and her photography has attracted followers from around the world. She recently posted this beautiful image of Kirkjufell mountain in Iceland on her Instagram feed, so we asked her how she went about capturing it.

"What I like most about this image is the magic of the blue hour just moments before sunrise, when the sky shimmers with first colours and the landscape changes with each passing minute as the light grows," she says.

"My goal was to capture the harmony between motion and stillness in nature. I wanted to show the gentle flow of the waterfalls, the movement of the clouds and the strength of the Kirkjufell mountain rising in the background, and using a long exposure was the key to achieving this effect. It allowed me to blur the motion of the sky and the water into a smooth texture, creating a sense of calm, contrasting with the mountain, which remained sharp and still."

Capturing a landscape at dawn presents its own technical challenges; light levels are low and conditions change rapidly. Thankfully, Karolina has plenty of experience with such conditions, and where there's a fine line between a good photo and a great one, she naturally came prepared.

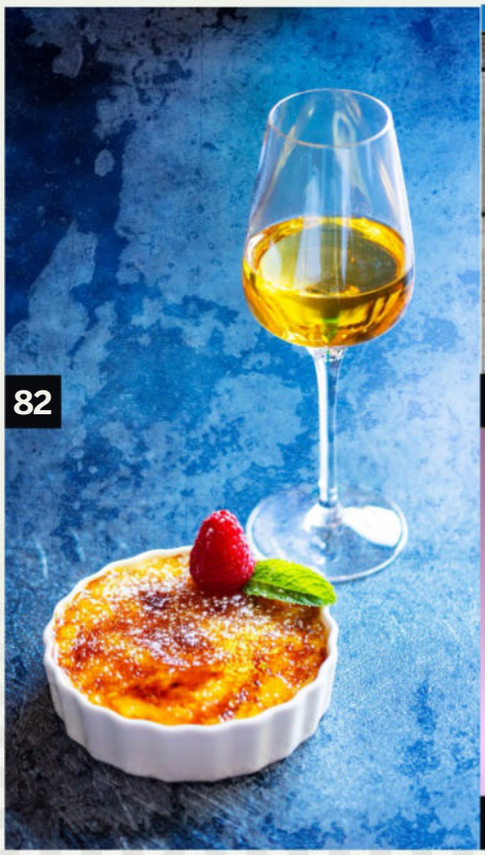
"The main technical challenge was managing the dynamic range and balancing the exposure time to capture the smooth flow of water without losing detail in the shadows or overexposing the brighter areas as the light intensified. To overcome this, I used neutral density and ND grad filters to control the exposure, and a sturdy tripod to avoid any blur," she says.

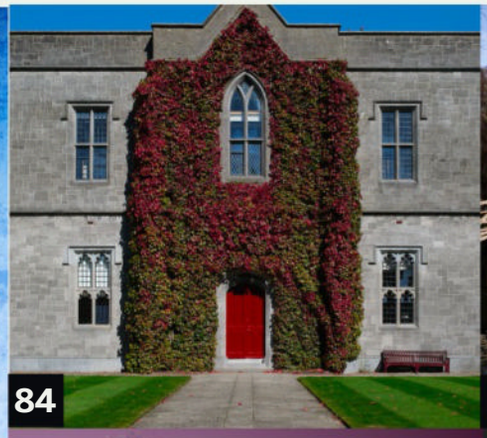
Digital Darkroom

Transform your photos with our easy, effective guides

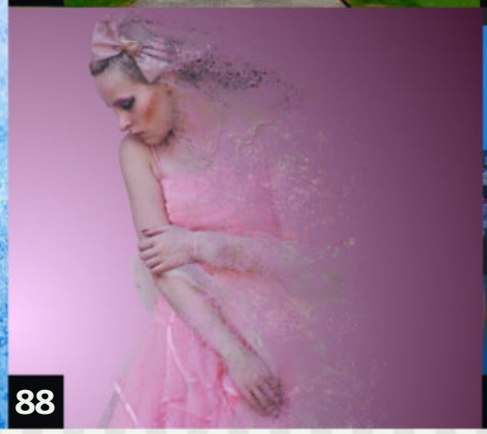


GET YOUR ACTIONS AND PRESETS
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Photoshop
Add punch and grit to your images using Photoshop layers

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Lightroom
Master colour control with Lightroom's HSL and Point Color tools

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Photoshop
Combine Photo Filters and Blending modes for powerful editing tools

PAGE 88
Affinity Photo 2
Create disintegrating portraits with the Mesh tool and Layer Masks

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ON1 Photo RAW MAX
Part one of our guide to this updated raw editing software

MEET YOUR TRAINERS Edit like a pro with their expert insights



Dan Mold
As the deputy editor of our former sister title *Photo Plus*, Dan Mold has over a decade of experience in writing Photoshop tutorials and guides.



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



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.


Before


After

Add texture to your images

Dan Mold explains how to give your photos extra punch and grit, using layers in Photoshop

In a world where we've become obsessed with megapixels, super-resolutions and pixel peeping, it can be a rather refreshing change to degrade our images a little instead, giving them a retro look using textures full of imperfections, grime and scratches.

As with all such effects, adding textures to your images has a time and a place, but when used in the right circumstances, they can add extra grit, punch and bite to photos that otherwise might fail to stand out. Because of their textured, gritty nature, these effects tend to work well with urban and architectural shots, although landscapes, wildlife and sports photos can also benefit.

Of course, you can produce your own textures at home with basic camera kit (see panel), but to get you started with the process of adding textures to your images, we've supplied a texture pack, which is available with this month's free downloads (see page 92). These textures work in both Photoshop and the more budget-friendly Photoshop Elements. So download your textures, load up an image, follow along by reading this tutorial and watching the video lesson with our free giveaways to see how it's done.

Download your files

www.digitalcameraworld.com/dc303

Download your files and video tutorial from the folder titled 'Photoshop_Add Texture'

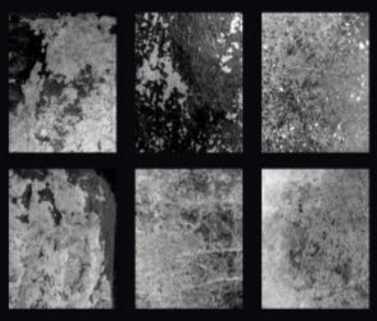
10 Photoshop textures

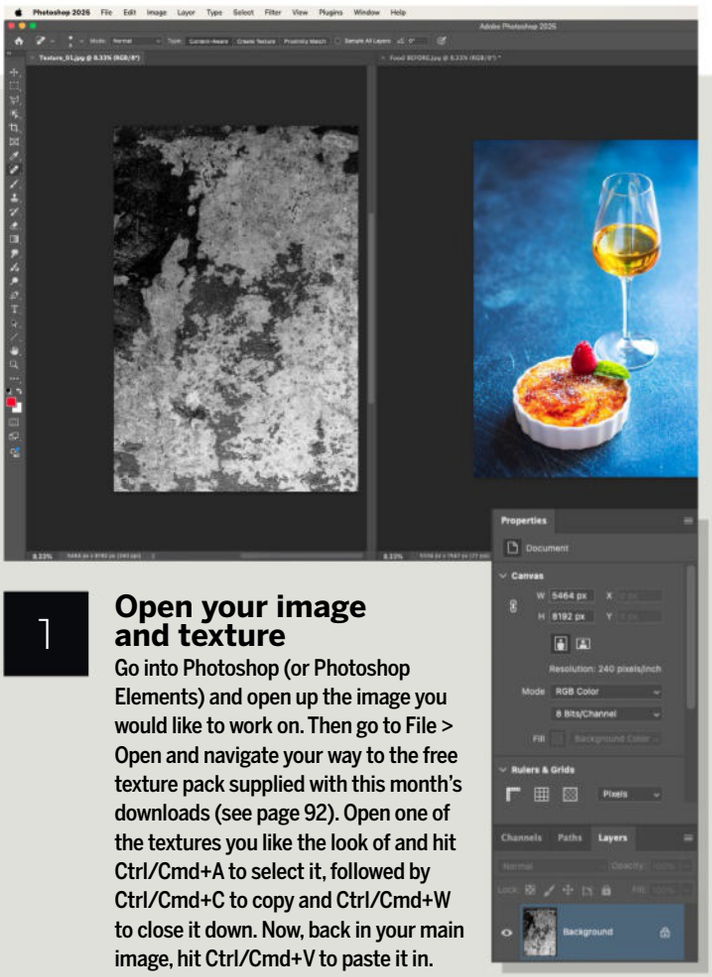
5-minute video tutorial

Project files and instructions

Make your own textures

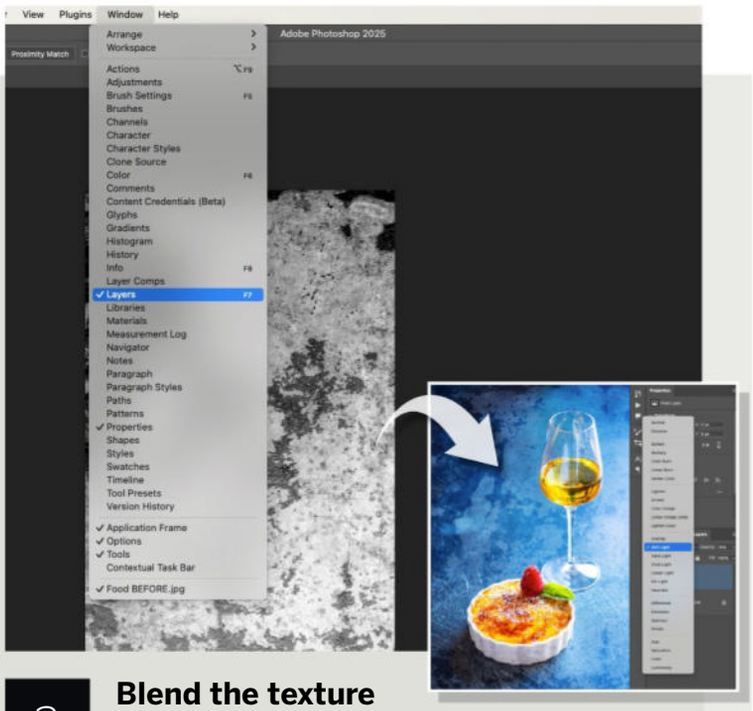
Although a macro lens will usually result in the best quality, you can still achieve decent results with a kit lens or even a camera phone that has a short focusing distance. Experiment with different lighting options that will interact with the textures and cause harsher or softer shadows. Convert your textures to mono in Photoshop by hitting Ctrl/Cmd+Shift+U so that the colours of the texture don't affect your image.





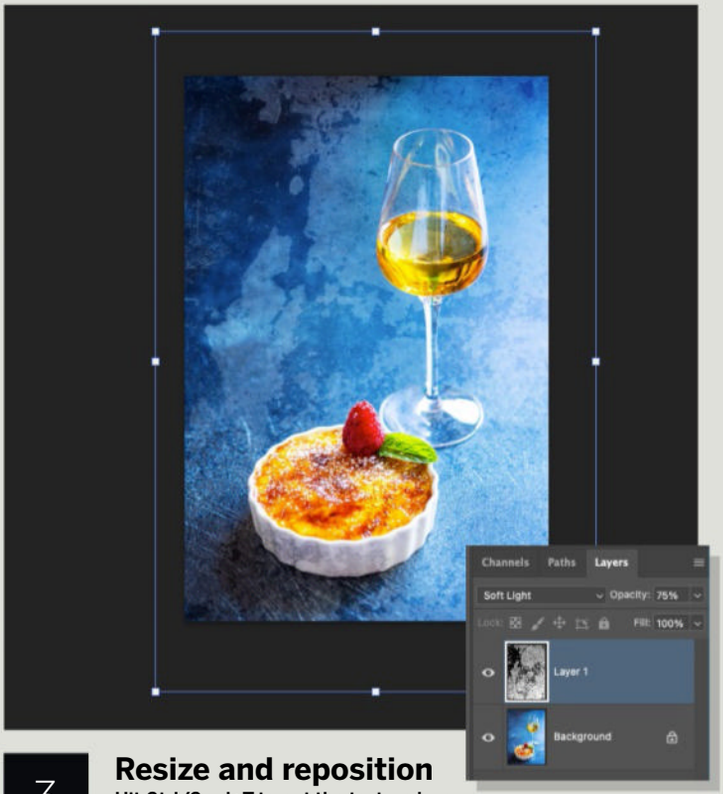
1 Open your image and texture

Go into Photoshop (or Photoshop Elements) and open up the image you would like to work on. Then go to File > Open and navigate your way to the free texture pack supplied with this month's downloads (see page 92). Open one of the textures you like the look of and hit Ctrl/Cmd+A to select it, followed by Ctrl/Cmd+C to copy and Ctrl/Cmd+W to close it down. Now, back in your main image, hit Ctrl/Cmd+V to paste it in.



2 Blend the texture

Next, we need to combine our texture layer with the original image on the layer below. To do this, head up to Window > Layers and in your Layers panel, click the dropdown box that says Normal – this box contains your blending mode options, and from here, you can choose a blending mode that works well with your image. The Soft Light, Hard Light and Overlay options usually do a pretty good job, but you can experiment until you find one that suits your image. If you find the effect a little too strong, you can also lower the Layer Opacity.



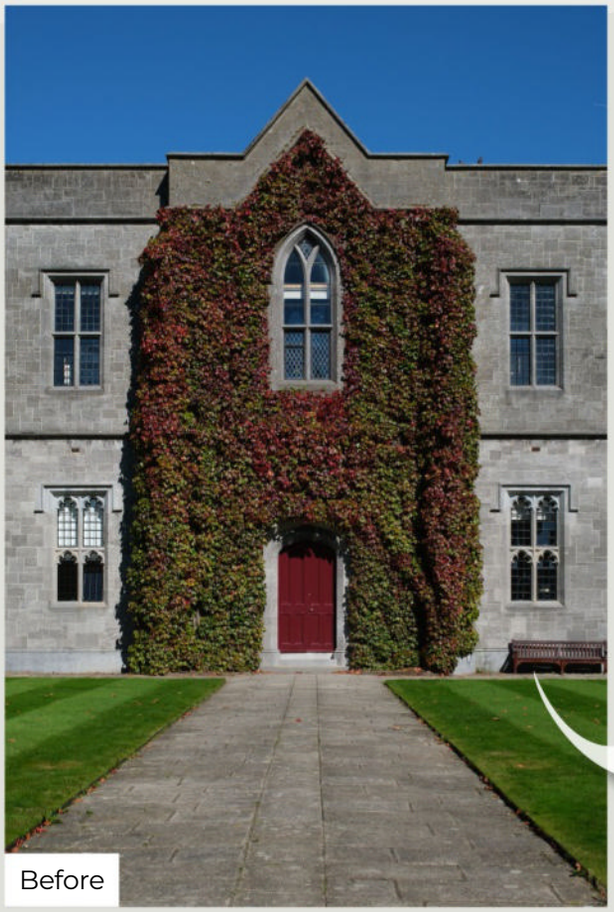
3 Resize and reposition

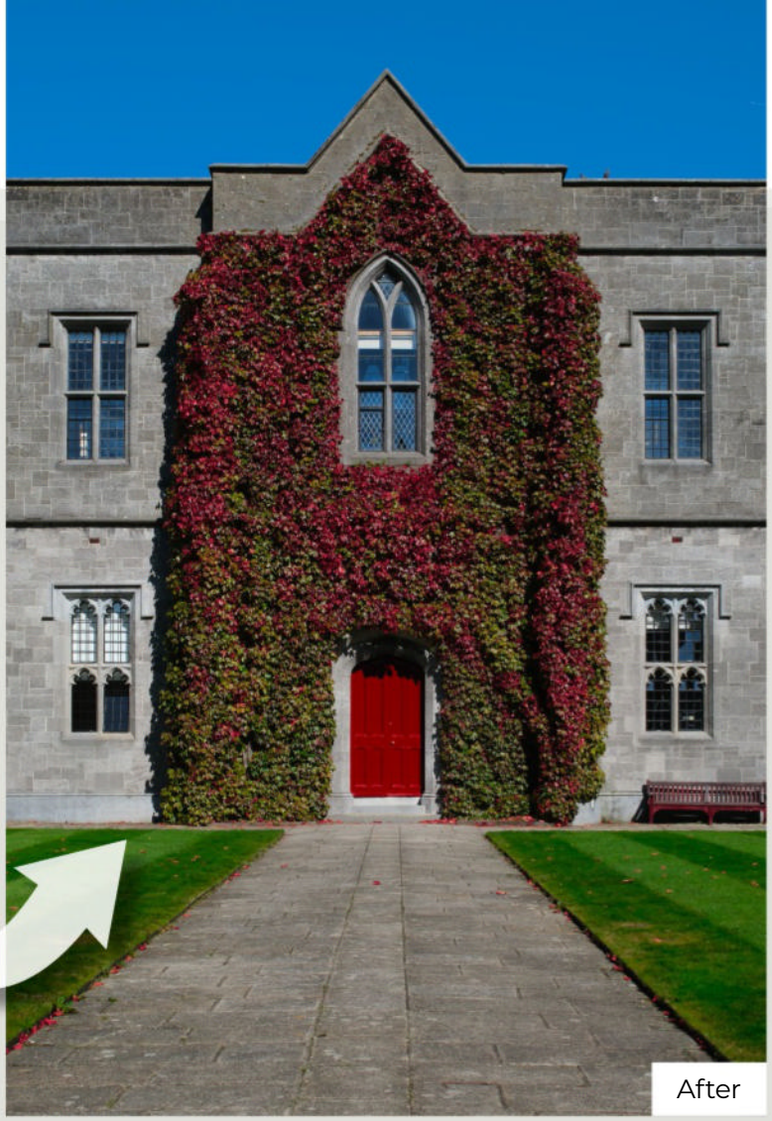
Hit Ctrl/Cmd+T to put the texture layer into Free Transform mode. Now you can click to drag it around the frame and reposition it until it sits in a location that works with your picture. You can also click and drag the corners of the bounding box to resize or hover your cursor over an outside corner until you see a double-ended arrow, which will allow you to rotate it, too. When you're done, hit Return to set it in place.



4 Apply the finishing touches

To finish off the effect, you can restrict where you want the texture to appear by adding a layer mask in the Layers panel. Now paint with a black brush over the image to mask this part off and selectively target where you want the texture to appear. You can also adjust the strength of the texture by hitting Ctrl/Cmd+L. This brings up the Levels panel, from which you can change the Shadows, Midpoint or Highlights sliders to adjust how the texture interacts with the layer below.





Master colour control

Lightroom has a range of tools for the task, says **Sean McCormack**

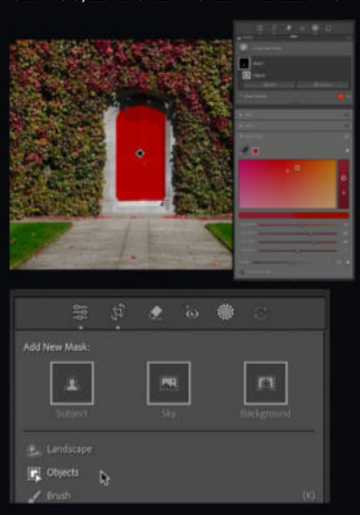
I love going for walks with my Fujifilm X100VI. I tend to take photos that I wouldn't otherwise do, and to me, that is the perfect reason for having it. This photo, taken on a stroll around my local university campus with the X100VI, gives me the ideal opportunity to talk about Lightroom Classic's newer colour tools.

For a while now, we've had the HSL panel, with its huge bank of sliders giving an impressive range of controls. Still, the centre point and range of these colour regions were fixed, so it was more limited than the volume of sliders would suggest. Adobe then gave us Point Color, which offers an additional layer of control by allowing us to choose the centre colour via an eyedropper and a range slider. This slider could be expanded for separate hue, saturation and luminance range control.

As if that wasn't enough, you can overcome the global nature of this tool by using it with Masking – a game changer for colour control. Even with all this power, Adobe had one more thing up its sleeve. The latest release included a new Variance slider, which allows you to smooth colours into a more continuous tone or to enhance the existing colour differences. This is ideal for polarised skies or skin.

Hold the door

Get a better door colour by going to Masking, then Objects and painting over the door. Go to the mask's Point Color and use the eyedropper to click on the door. Drag around the point until you like the result and change Lum Shift. Here, it's Hue Shift 12, Sat. Shift 36, Lum Shift 46 and Variance 0.



Download your files

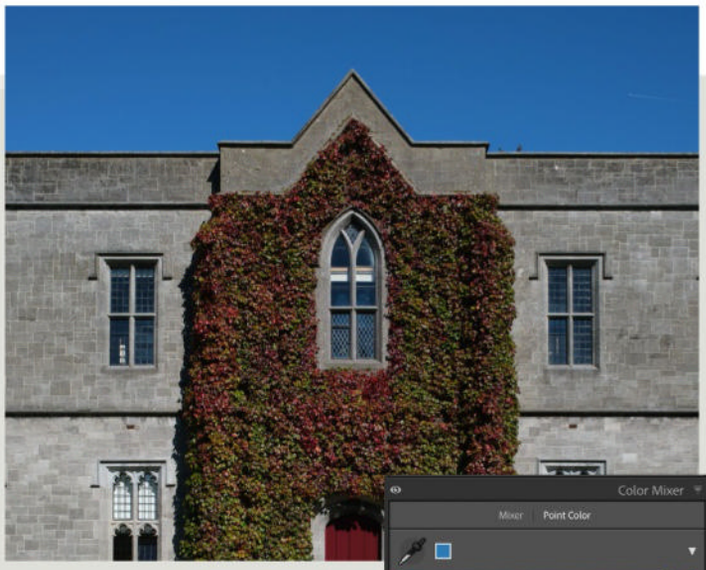
www.digitalcameraworld.com/dc303

Download your files and video tutorial from the folder titled 'Lightroom_Colour Control'

Four Lightroom Presets

9-minute video tutorial

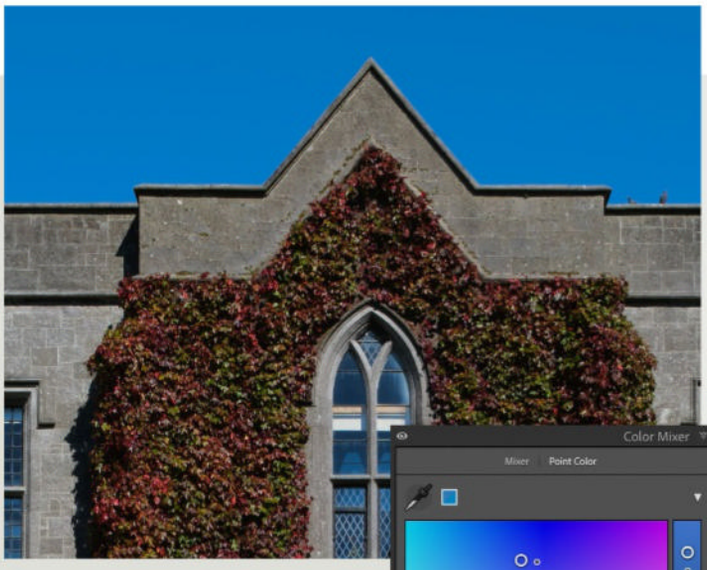
Project files and instructions





1 Colour mixing

Go to the Colour Mixer Panel. Choose the right option, Point Color. Click on the eyedropper and use it to select a point in the sky. The grey panel now centres on your selected colour. You can edit the colour by dragging the point around in the window for Hue and Saturation Shift, with the Luminance control in the smaller panel on the right. Alternatively, you can use the sliders.

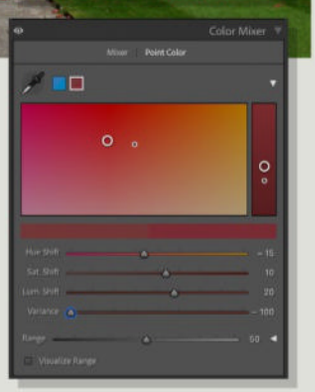




2 Blue skies

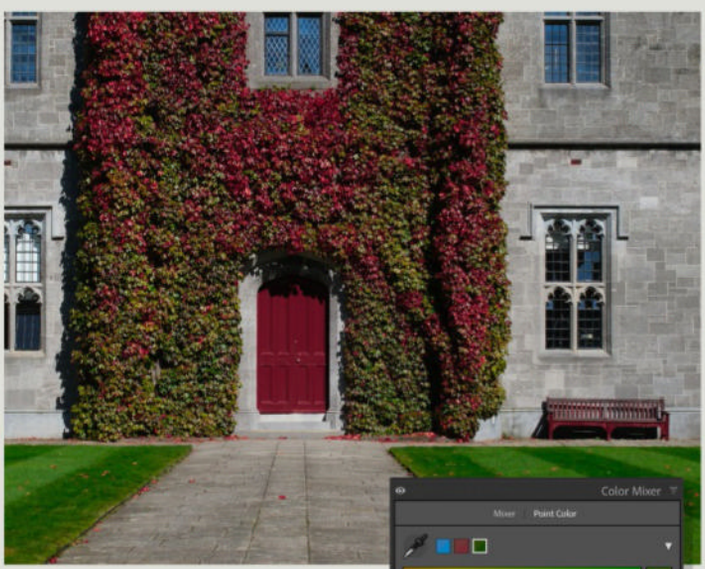
Now you get to make some colour choices. Do you want a deep blue sky with polarised tones? Or maybe some of the cyan tones of summer? Set your Hue Shift to -7 for a more cyan look. Lighten the appearance with a Luminance Shift of 41. Increase the colour with a Saturation Shift of 5. And the coup de grâce? Bring Variance down to -80, which does a fantastic job of making the sky tone look more even, instead of being brighter on one side than the other.





3 Seeing red

We're not quite done yet. You can have up to 8 sample points, so let's sort the red leaves next. Again, click the eyedropper and choose one of the leaves; the loupe will assist with your accuracy on this one. If in doubt, use the Visualize Range checkbox to see what's selected. Opt for a redder hue with Hue Shift of -15, increased colour with Saturation Shift of 10 and then lighter with Luminance Shift of 20. Finally, drag Variance all the way down to -100 for better pop.





4 The green, green grass of home

Our final global colour is the greens, so click on the darker strip of grass. Here we're going to accentuate the green with a Hue Shift of 15, so moving to the right this time. Here, a subtle Saturation Shift of 15 will bump the colour. This time, we're going to darken the grass with a Luminance Shift of -20. The grass has a proper lawn cut with strips, so you can accentuate them by using a Variance of 70 to highlight the range of colours.





Use Photo Filters for creative effects

Photo Filters are used for colour correction, but combined with Blending modes, they are a versatile tool, says **James Abbott**

When you shoot film, either colour or black and white, colour filters are an easy and often essential way to add in-camera effects. What's more, corrective filters can also be used to shoot colour-corrected photos under artificial lighting using daylight-balanced film. There are ways of achieving these effects using white balance in-camera and Photo Filters in Photoshop for digital photography, but we're going to take things further.

Photoshop's Photo Filters can be used in all of the above ways, but we're going to push them harder for a range of effects. Using a combination of Blending modes and Opacity, we're going to create a variety of creative colour effects that can be used to add strong or subtle effects to your winter shots. Some approaches will make sense, while others might surprise you because of how the Blending mode reacts with the Photo Filter.

Download your files

www.digitalcameraworld.com/dc303

Download your files and video tutorial from the folder titled 'Photoshop_Photo Filters'

Four Actions for Photoshop

5-minute video tutorial

Project files and instructions



1 Strawberry haze

Click on the Create new fill or adjustment layer icon at the bottom of the Layers panel and select Photo Filter. When the dialog opens, select the Green filter, set Density to 50 per cent and close the dialog. Next, change the Blending mode from Normal to Divide, which will make the image turn completely pink, apart from the highlights. Now reduce the Opacity of the Layer to 15 per cent for a soft pastel pink haze. Divide changes the Photo Filter's colour, so it's great for experimenting.













2 Colour grade

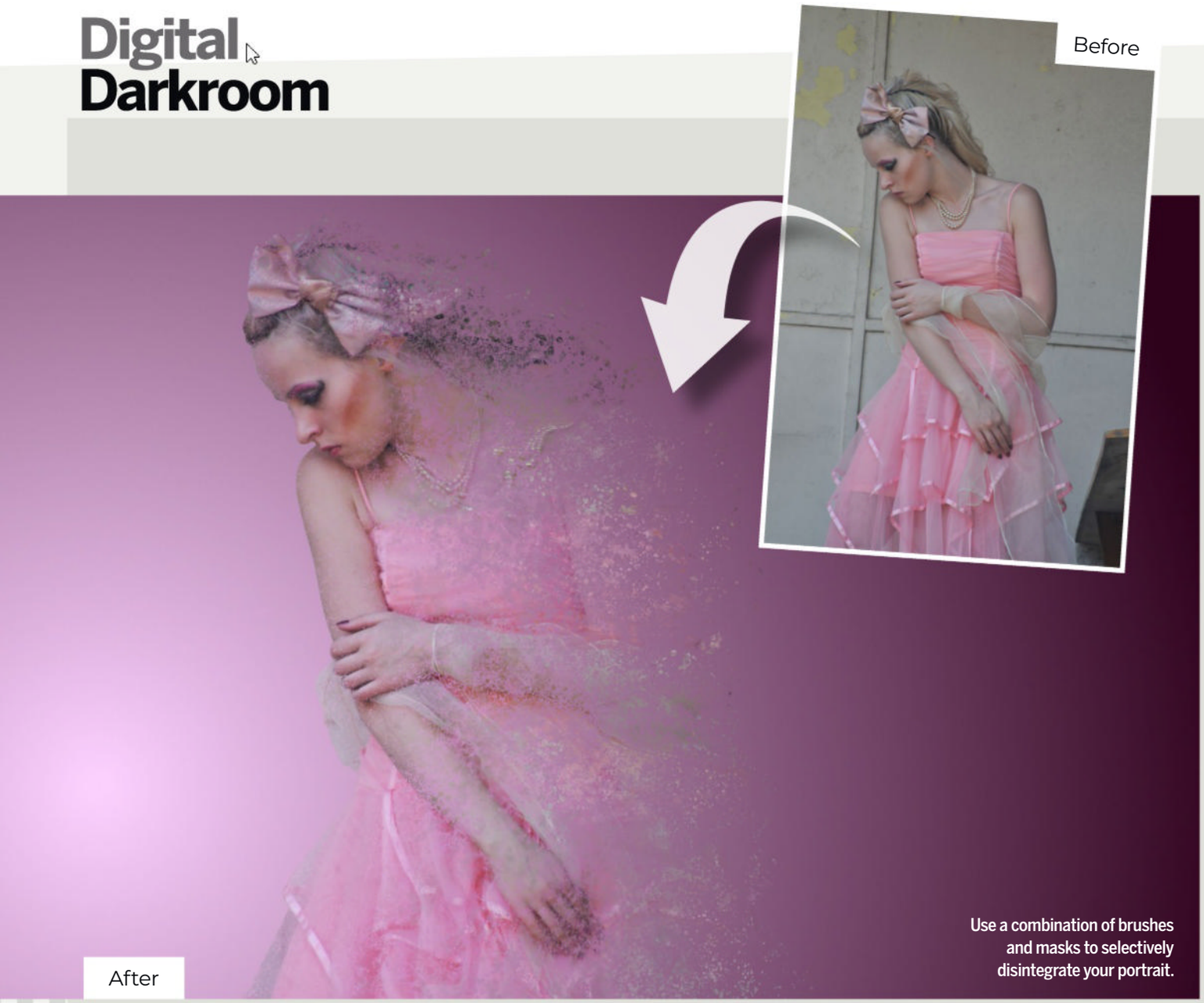
Create a Photo Filter Adjustment Layer, select Cooling Filter (82), then close the dialog. The Layer Mask is active, so go to Image > Apply Image and click OK with the default settings. Invert should be unchecked. Next, run Apply Image again. Create a new Photo Filter, select the Warming Filter (LBA) and set Density to 50 per cent before closing the dialog. Run Apply Image once and check the Invert checkbox. The cooling effect targets lighter tones, while the warming targets darker tones.

3 Cool high contrast

Create a Photo Filter Adjustment Layer, and when the dialog opens, select the Underwater filter. Now set the Density to 75 per cent and close the dialog. Next, change the Blending mode from Normal to Soft Light to add a boost of contrast, alongside adding the colour of the filter. If you'd prefer stronger contrast, use the Overlay Blending mode instead. Conversely, if you'd prefer a more subtle result, reduce Layer Opacity until you're happy with the strength of the effect.

4 Golden light

Create a Photo Filter Adjustment Layer, select Sepia, set Density to 50 per cent and close the dialog. Set the Blending mode to Multiply, then press Ctrl/Cmd+J to duplicate the Layer. Set the Blending mode of this copied Layer to Screen to balance the darkening effect of Multiply with the lightening effect of Screen. Next, hold down Shift and click on the first Adjustment Layer so both are selected and press Ctrl/Cmd+G to Group the Layers, then set Opacity to around 40 per cent.



Use a combination of brushes and masks to selectively disintegrate your portrait.

Wendy Evans

Make with the destruction!

Wendy Evans explains how to create disintegrating portraits with the help of Affinity Photo 2's brushes, layer masks and Mesh tool

Download your files
www.digitalcameraworld.com/dc303
Download your project files from the folder titled 'Affinity_Disintegrating Portraits'.

No software giveaways this month

No video tutorial this month

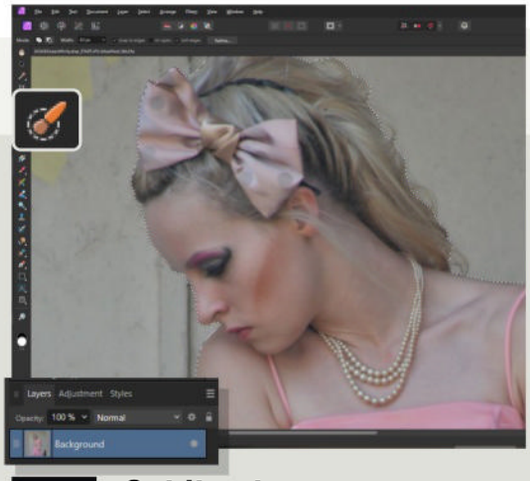
Project files to follow along

This is a technique that's often seen on film posters. It's basically a portrait, but with the image gradually starting to disintegrate. You can either have the person facing the camera or to the side, which offers more dynamism. There are several ways of doing it, from making the destruction side into crude pixels or blocks, or taking a more artistic approach, which is what we're going to do here. Either way, you need a portrait shot that won't take ages to cut out, so preferably one with a simple background.



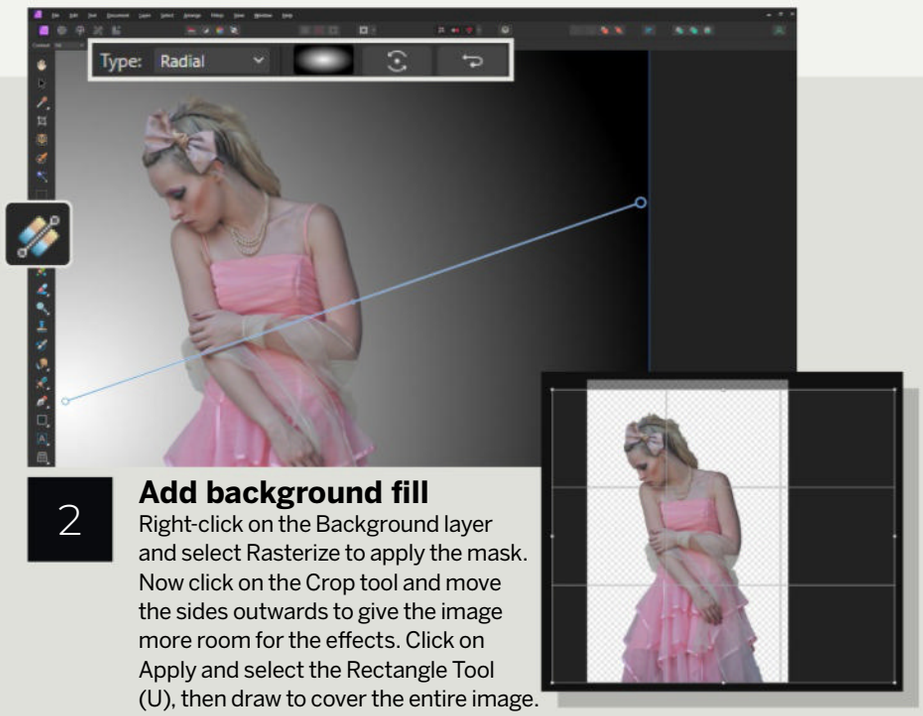
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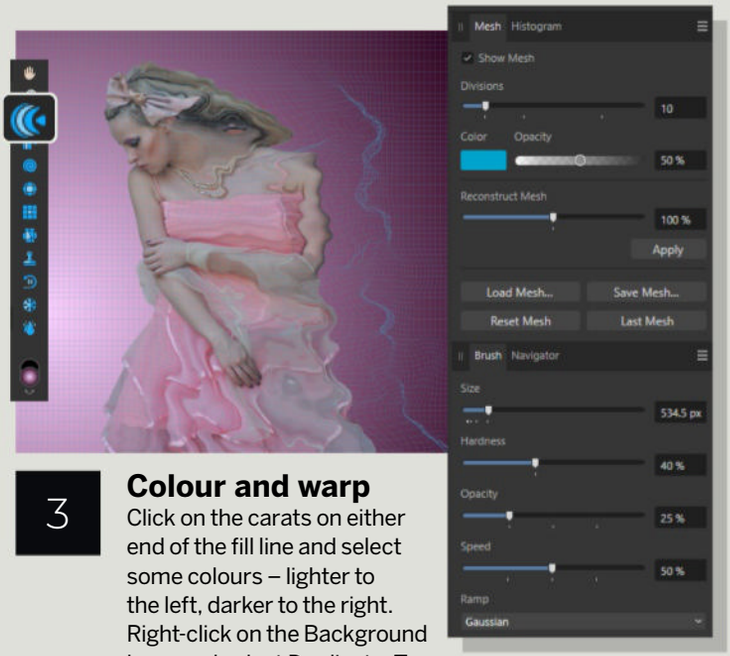
1 Cut it out

Load your portrait and use whichever method you prefer to select the figure. Here, I've used the Selection Brush tool (W). You can fine-tune it using Refine or do it manually by first clicking on the Mask icon in the Layer palette, which cuts out the background. Press Ctrl-D to remove the selection. If you click the down arrow on the layer, it will show the mask. You can use the paintbrush to add or subtract from it.



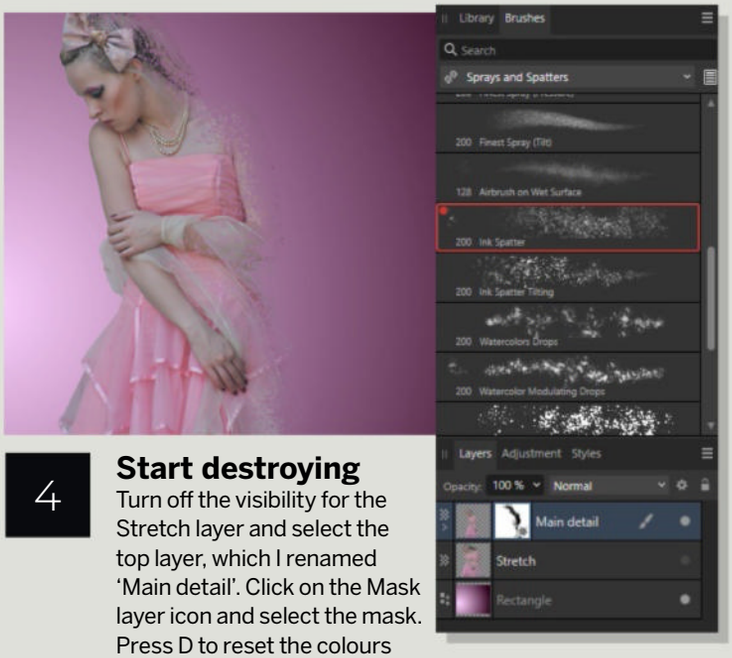
2 Add background fill

Right-click on the Background layer and select Rasterize to apply the mask. Now click on the Crop tool and move the sides outwards to give the image more room for the effects. Click on Apply and select the Rectangle Tool (U), then draw to cover the entire image. Move this layer to the bottom. Select the Gradient Tool (G) and draw a line from one side to the other. Change the type to Radial.



3 Colour and warp

Click on the carats on either end of the fill line and select some colours – lighter to the left, darker to the right. Right-click on the Background layer and select Duplicate. Turn this layer visibility off, select the layer underneath and rename this as 'Stretch'. Click on the Liquify Persona icon on the top row and use this tool to drag and warp the image, but avoid warping the face. Click on Apply.

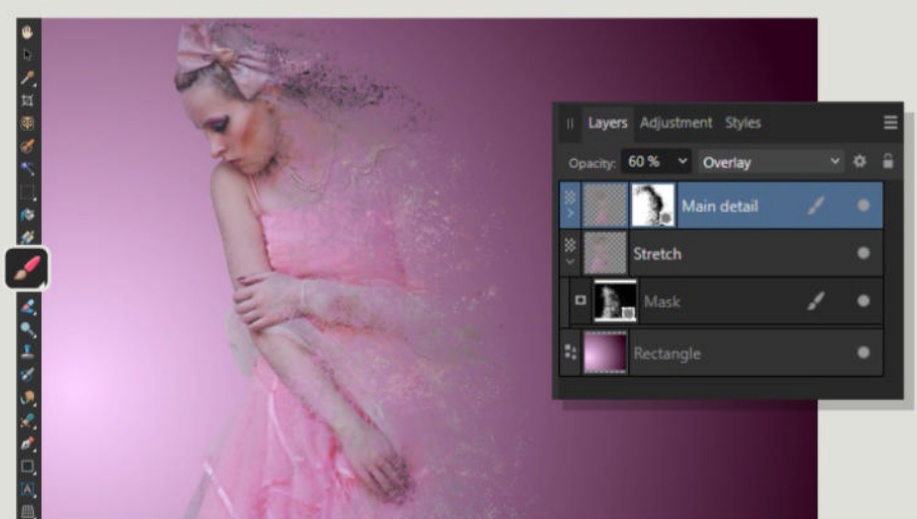


4 Start destroying

Turn off the visibility for the Stretch layer and select the top layer, which I renamed 'Main detail'. Click on the Mask layer icon and select the mask. Press D to reset the colours and select Black. With the Paintbrush tool selected, go to the Brushes palette and select Sprays and Splatters. For this layer, use 200 Ink Splatter. Paint over the edge of the figure to remove some detail.

5 Disperse the details

Now click on the Stretch layer and add a layer mask. Select the mask and press Ctrl-I to invert it. Turn the layer visibility back on. Set the Paintbrush colour to white and brush over the area where the stretched parts are. Switch brushes to the Watercolour Drops, the Droppler and the Magic Stippler to get the destructive effect you want. If you find that you've revealed too much, switch back to black to remove the detail.



PART 1 OF 4

See issue 304, on sale 30 Jan, for part 2

Get to know ON1 Photo RAW MAX 2026

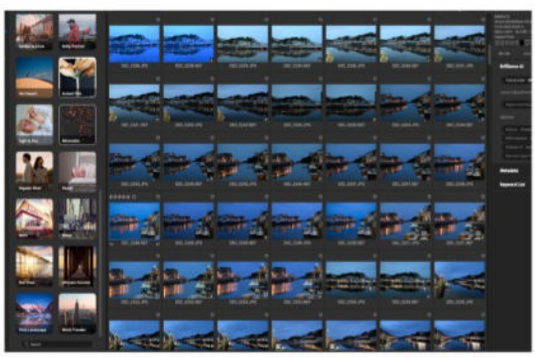
Wendy Evans takes a tour around the key features of this new raw editing package

To turn the heads of dedicated Adobe users, any new raw editing package will have to offer something notable to push its way past Lightroom and Adobe Camera Raw and into your photo editing workflow. The same can be said of Affinity Photo, as it's highly capable of editing your raw files (see issues 299 and 301). But ON1 Photo RAW MAX 2026 could be the software that tempts you. It offers photo management with libraries, presets for fast results, general editing and spot adjustments. Notably, for Adobe users, when you've finished tweaking, you can send the photo directly to Photoshop, Lightroom or another app – or simply export the result.

Here, we'll look at the general interface and before taking a deeper dive into the main features in the rest of this four-part series.

1 File browser

The two main sections are file management and editing, both of which can be accessed here. Beginning in Browse, you can now rate, tag and organise photos into catalogues using a large preview screen or a collection of thumbnails. We'll take a closer look next month.



2 Editing photos

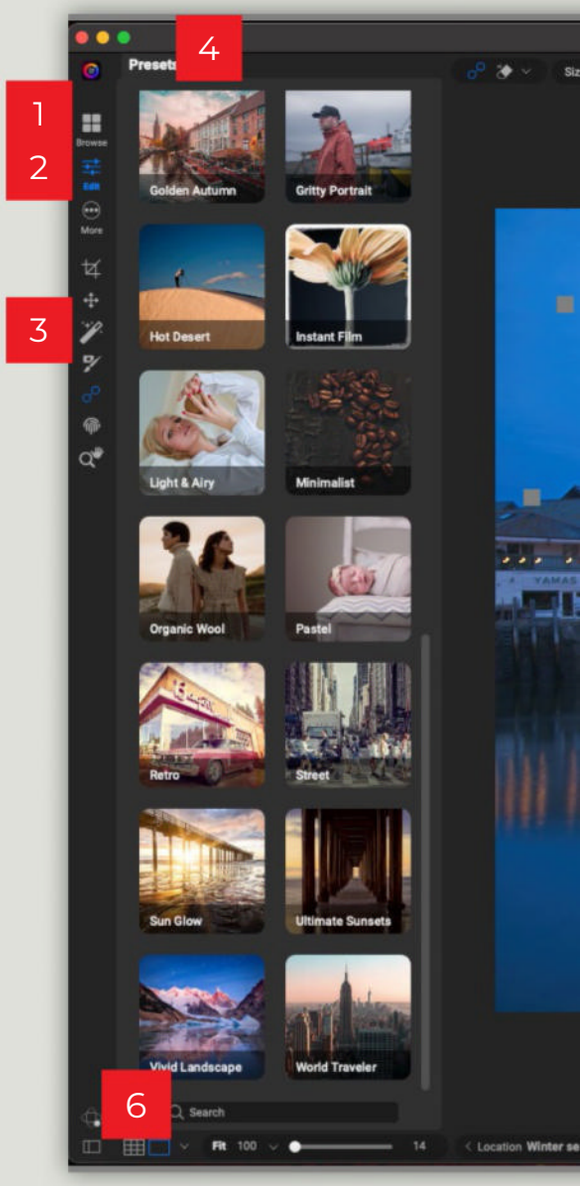
Clicking here jumps into the Editor interface, replacing the file browsing panel with the Presets panel. However, this Presets panel can be minimised so you can make more space for the main image, if required. Switching back and forth between the two main modes is fairly straightforward, though.

3 Editing tools

When on the Edit screen, these tools appear, allowing you to carry out a range of tasks, including: crop and straighten the image; move, rotate and resize; use a magic selection brush to add localised effects; use a masking brush to select areas; clone out problems; warp parts of the image; and use the zoom tool.

4 Presets panel

In the editing stage, you can access presets to give your image a new overall look. There are several presets under each heading – Gold Autumn has 13 different styles, for example. All are non-destructible, so that you can revert to the original image if you change your mind.



7 Local edits

Here is the result of some local edits with the Healing brush. Click on any of the grey squares and it will show the cleaned-up area and the source area from which it was sampled. If you find the results are unsatisfactory, you can move the source area to a different location.

EXCLUSIVE READER OFFER!

Get a 40% discount off Photo RAW MAX 2026, until 30 April 2026

Go to this link:
on1.sjv.io/dc26
and use the code:
DIGITALCAMERA40

5 Tool parameters

Once any individual tool is selected, the parameters for it will appear here. These are the ones for the Healing brush, which has several alternative functions besides simply removing problem areas. For example, you can copy parts of an image from one location to another.

6 Switch modes

If you're in the Editing mode, then clicking here will switch you back to the Browse file browser. However, if you're already in that mode, then clicking on the empty square icon will pull up a larger preview of the currently selected file, while remaining in the Browse mode.



ON1 Photo RAW MAX 2026 offers an alternative to the Adobe workflow.

8 Make a mask

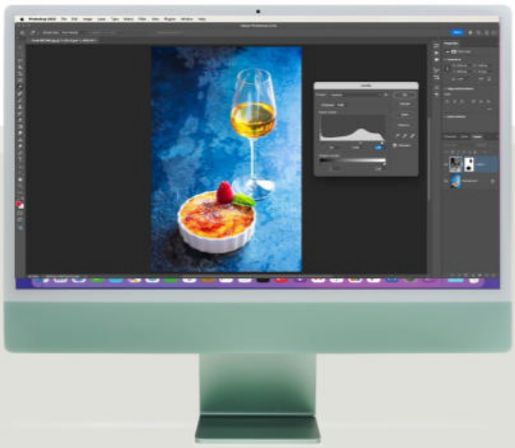
There are many masking options, from local edits to automating some of the processes for replacing large areas. The selection of icons gives a quick method of creating a mask for a specific purpose, like replacing the sky or isolating the subject for editing based on depth of field.

9 Layer categories

Another large section that features separate tabs for various categories, each one containing a range of tools. For example, there are tools for Develop, Effects, Local adjustments, the Sky and Portraits. The Develop tab is where you will make your initial adjustments.

10 Layer edits

The one selected here is the Develop tab, where you can alter the colour temperature, Vibrancy, Saturation, Structure (like the Clarity tool in Photoshop), Noise and Sharpening, AI image enhancement, Lens Correction and other adjustments across the overall image.



THIS MONTH'S SOFTWARE EXTRAS

18 Actions, presets and overlays

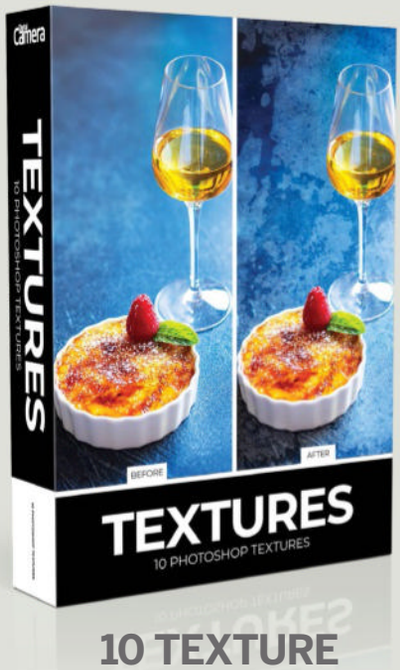
Download these files and give your shots a new look

This month, we're giving away a collection of 10 textures and four Photo Filter Actions for Photoshop, plus four Colour Control presets for Lightroom. The textures can also be used in any image editing software that supports layers. Simply drop them onto your images and play with the blend modes to tweak the effect. The four Photo Filters run the filter as a Photoshop Action, so you can adjust the strength of the creative effect. There are also four Colour Control presets for Lightroom, and these enhance colours in specific ways. Download and install them in your list of presets. Remember, we are also giving away three videos of the tutorials for you to download and watch.

How to use your software extras

Once you have downloaded the 'dcm303-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.

DOWNLOAD FILES & VIDEO AT www.digitalcameraworld.com/dc303



10 TEXTURE OVERLAYS

Software: **Photoshop**

(Version 25.5 or higher)

Add some extra punch and grit to your photos with a texture layer. We have 10 assorted textures for you to experiment with and add to your images. Once you've added them, try different layer blend modes to see what results you can create.



FOUR PHOTO FILTER ACTIONS

Software: **Photoshop**

(Version 25.5 or higher)

Discover how Photo Filters can enhance your images with this set of four Photoshop Actions. These four filters will add a strawberry haze, colour grading, cool high contrast and, finally, a golden light effect to your shots.



FOUR COLOUR CONTROL PRESETS

Software: **Lightroom**

Here's a collection of Point Colour presets. The Colour Control preset matches the colour effects in the article. The Summer Cyan preset makes a warmer sky. Seeing Red accentuates red tones, while Green Green Grass cools and enhances differences in grass.

Download all three packs from: **www.digitalcameraworld.com/dc303**



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Ask Matthew...



Matthew Richards

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

Feeling frustrated by flashguns? Misfiring autofocus making you anxious? Send your technique and camera questions to **digitalcamera@futurenet.com**

Like a speeding bullet

Q I've bought a Canon EOS R5 Mk II, but I'm struggling with the autofocus for close-up subjects like butterflies, due to the tight depth of field. Do you have any tips?

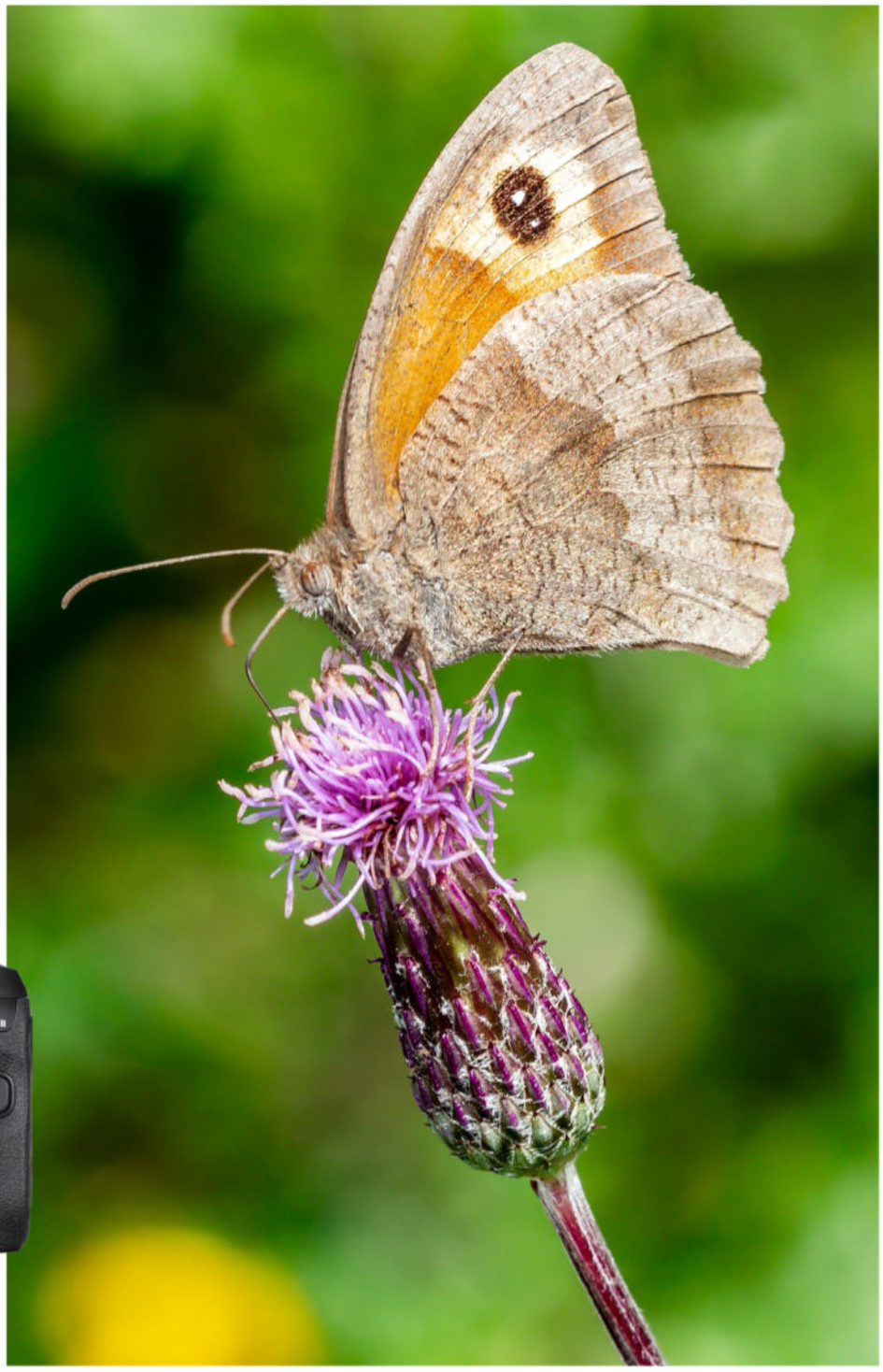
Sean Dunne

A The slightest movement by either you or the butterfly can cause defocusing. I used to major in Single/One-Shot autofocus, but have switched to Continuous/Servo. If subject recognition isn't available, I generally place a single AF point on the subject using the joystick controller or by tapping the touchscreen.

Compared with DSLRs, autofocus and stabilisation are in a different league in the latest mirrorless cameras. An engineer at Canon once described the speed increase in data communication between EOS R system cameras and RF lenses to me. He said that if the original EOS 35mm film system had data transfer equivalent to walking speed, the latest DSLRs and EF lenses would be a moped and the EOS R system would be a bullet train.



Thanks partly to massively faster data transfer, autofocus speed and accuracy in the latest Canon EOS R system mirrorless cameras and lenses are vastly superior to older DSLR cameras.



Getty



Getty

The new Neewer Z3 is powerful and has plenty of features, with a colour touchscreen interface and LED modelling lamps, along with fast recycling and a rechargeable Li-ion battery.

Smooth operation

Q I've been told that a flashgun with a round rather than rectangular head gives a smoother lighting effect. Is this true, and if so, which one would you recommend?

Jerry Tinknell

A Flashguns with circular heads tend to feature a built-in Fresnel-type lens that gives a smoother, softer and more even lighting effect. One of the best of the breed is the Godox V100, at around £330 ($350). It builds on the strengths of the V1Pro and the original V1, which is less powerful and more basic, but still available and particularly good value at £189 ($199). Even so, I'd go for the top-performance and brilliant Neewer Z3 100Ws, which has just been launched at £235 ($280).

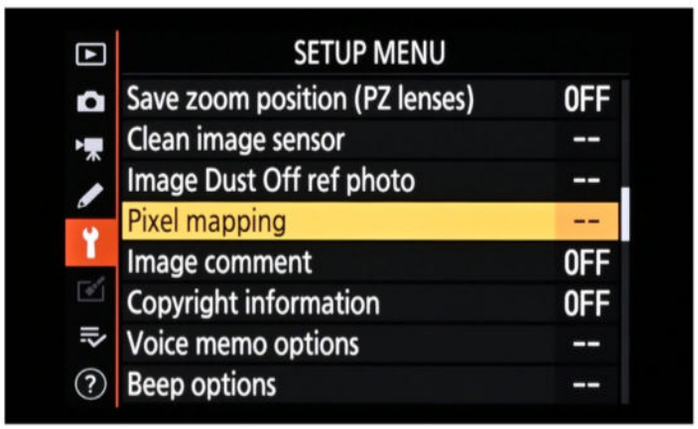
Going dotty

Q I just noticed that all my recent photos taken with my Nikon Z 6II camera have a white dot in the same place within the image frame. What's going on here, and can it be fixed?

Alison Lloyd

A These bright or white spots are generally only noticeable if you zoom in to a high magnification when reviewing images. Dark spots are more of a problem, as these are caused by specs of dust on the image sensor. A bright dot is typically caused by a 'hot' or stuck pixel within the sensor.

On the Z 6II and many other makes and models of camera, there's a 'pixel mapping' or remapping option available in the Setup or Settings menu. Ensure your camera battery has plenty of charge, then run this option to remap the pixels.



Bright spots that consistently occur at the same place in the image frame aren't usually a major problem, and they can be cleared by running the pixel mapping or remapping routine from the Setup menu.

Second-hand superstar

This lens is both fast and wide, offers premium build quality and handling, and is still amazingly good value for money

Q I'm looking for a fast, ultra-wide-angle prime lens to use with my Fujifilm X-T100 camera, but I'm on a particularly limited budget. What would you suggest as a good used option?

Mark Hutton



The lens is impeccably turned out with a high-quality metal barrel and smooth-action focus and aperture control rings. Sharpness is excellent, even when shooting wide-open at f/1.4.

A

Matthew recommends... Viltrox AF 13mm f/1.4

There's a Viltrox lens that's ideal for this. I have the Nikon Z-mount version of the lens and have always been pleased with the image quality and all-round performance.

Released (year): 2022
Price new: £440/$486
'Excellent' £285/$380
'Good' £250/$350

I gave this lens a five-star rating when I reviewed it, and promptly bought one myself. With an 'effective' 19.5mm focal length in full-frame terms, it's brilliant for landscape photography. The fast f/1.4 aperture also makes it ideal for gloomy interiors and astrophotography. The lens has a really high-quality look and feel, with a metal barrel and multiple weather-seals.

The original Fujifilm X-mount version was followed by Nikon Z and Sony E-mount editions. Like many of Fujifilm's own upmarket lenses, it features a physical aperture control ring, as well as fast and virtually silent stepping motor-based autofocus.

1 Filter attachment thread
For easily using filters like ND grads, circular polarisers or variable ND filters, there's a 67mm attachment thread at the front.

2 Aperture control ring
The aperture ring is permanently de-clicked for stepless aperture adjustments when shooting video. The 'A' position is for camera-driven aperture control.

3 USB-C port
The weather-sealed metal mounting plate includes a USB-C port for applying firmware updates.

Elements/groups: 14/11
Aperture diaphragm: 9 blades
Optical stabilisation: No
Min focus distance: 0.22m
Max magnification: 0.1x
Filter size: 67mm
Dimensions: 74x90mm
Weight: 420g

In Focus

The latest photography news from around the globe



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Come to The Photography Show!

The annual celebration of the still and moving image returns to the NEC Birmingham on 14 March. Charlie Waite will be a key speaker at the event – buy your tickets today!

Taking place in the NEC Birmingham's Hall 5, where the event ran until March 2019, The Photography & Video Show is a four-day extravaganza that celebrates both still and moving images. It's also the best place in the UK to get up to speed with the latest photographic products and services, and try out the latest kit from a roster of leading brands. Details of confirmed speakers and exhibitors include landscapes legend Charlie Waite and content creator Brandon B. Regular show attractions, CreatorCon, featuring top creators and influencers, will return, as well as the immersive Creator Playground. Talks and demonstrations from brands including Canon, Fujifilm, Nikon and Sony will take place over the four days of the show, and there will be plenty of unmissable programming across the Photo Live and Fundamentals stages, as well as the Editing and Post-Production Suite and InMotion Studio theatre. The show will also be home to a selection of galleries showcasing inspirational photography, and there will be a series of meet-ups, including photo walks, so showgoers can meet and network with like-minded people. **www.photographyshow.com; £18.95 (standard day ticket), £15.95 (concessions).**

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Sony A7 V

Updated mirrorless has a new partially stacked 33MP sensor, 30fps shooting, cropped 4K 120p and built-in AI processing

Sony claims its latest A7 puts the "professional edge within your reach", and its credentials certainly look impressive. While the resolution remains the same as the outgoing Sony A7 IV, a new sensor is paired with a new Bionz XR2 processor to offer "true flagship performance". This includes 30fps blackout-free burst shooting along with up to one second of pre-capture (on par with the Sony A9 III).

The Bionz XR2 has built-in AI processing, bringing with it Real Time Recognition Autofocus and subject detection. The processor also helps extract a claimed 16 stops of dynamic range from the ISO 100-51,200 sensitivity. For video, the A7 V can achieve 4K 60p video along with 4K 120p, both with a slight crop. In-body image stabilisation is now rated at 7.5 stops in the centre, and 6.5 at the edges. **www.sony.co.uk; £2,799/$2,899 (body)**



The rear screen has been improved, with a size and resolution boost, and a four-axis multi-angle design.





Like its predecessor, the updated 28-70mm lens features weather-sealing and optical stabilisation.

Sony FE 24-70mm F3.5-5.6 OSS II

New kit lens has been designed to keep up with the faster frame rates of the Sony A7 V

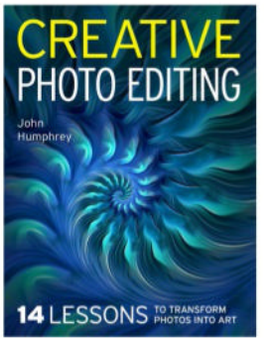
This new compact zoom lens will be paired in a kit with the A7 V and supercedes the original Sony FE 28-70mm F3.5-5.6 OSS, which launched in 2013, in the kit. The new lens is designed to keep up with the frame rates of the newer Alpha cameras and uses a linear autofocus motor designed to keep up with 30fps bursts. Sony says the lens supports autofocus and autoexposure tracking at up to 120 fps, and it also supports autofocus while zooming. Both the original and the second-generation lens use an optical design comprising nine elements in eight groups, along with a seven-blade aperture, as well as weather-sealing and stabilisation. The new lens weighs 293g. **www.sony.co.uk; £429/$449**

Focal point

Rounding up what's new and exciting



New DJI Osmo Action 6 has a variable aperture
This latest action cam features a lens-swapping mechanism and a larger 1/1.1-inch CMOS square sensor, bringing up to 13.5-stops of dynamic range. There's 50GB of available storage and auto subject tracking.
www.dji.com; £329/$379



Learn how to turn photos into art
This new book by John Humphrey will show you how to "take, edit and create photos that impress and last". *Creative Photo Editing* contains 14 lessons and the author specialises in art, abstract, close-up and macro photography.
www.crowood.com; £16.99/$19.99

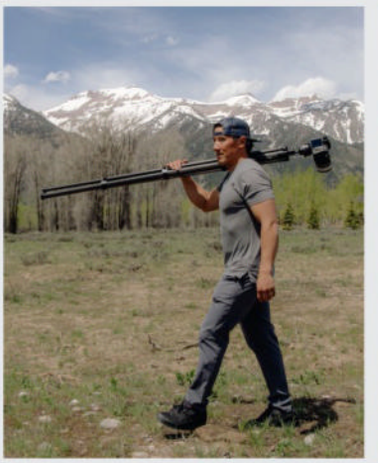
Billingham Capsule 1 camera pouches
These versatile pouches have a wide doctor-bag style opening, ideal for slipping into a larger everyday carry bag or standing alone for compact gear use. It is available in four colours.
www.billingham.co.uk; £125/$143









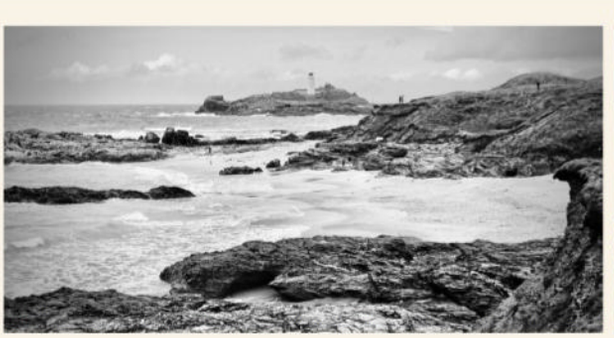




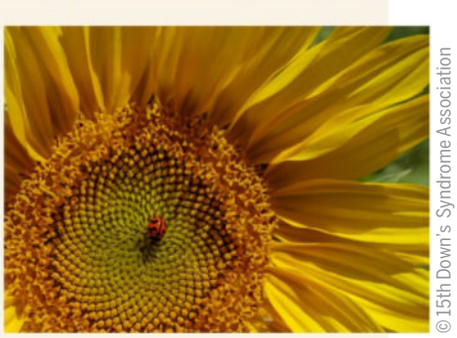
Peak Design Pro Series tripods

These simple and streamlined sticks build on the design of the Travel Tripod

These tripods continue the streamlined design of the Travel Tripod but add more stability, higher weight capacity, taller heights and a redesigned ball head. The **Peak Design Pro Lite** tripod (weight capacity 15.9kg) packs down to the same diameter as the Travel Tripod – but it's a bit taller and there are four leg sections instead of three. The **Pro** and **Pro Tall** take it further with larger legs that can support up to 18.1kg, and the Pro Tall can reach up to 197.4cm. It reaches this height with longer leg sections, rather than more of them, to boost stability. The Pro Ball Head is sleek and minimal, with ease of use a priority.
www.peakdesign.com; from £700/$800 (Peak Design Pro Lite)



© 15th Down's Syndrome Association photo awards / Stephen Lucas

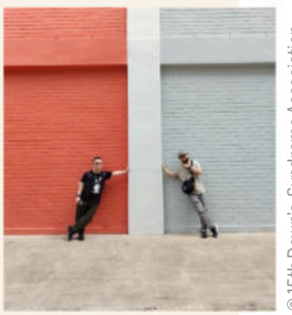


© 15th Down's Syndrome Association photo awards / Samuel Chapman

My Perspective 2025 winners

Entrants from around the world top the 15th Down's Syndrome Association photo awards

A record-breaking 252 photos were entered this year. The Judges' Choice Award (Adult) winner went to Brieuc Devaud from France for 'After the Rain', and 'Ladybird on a Sunflower' by Samuel Chapman from Australia (above right) won the Stephen Thomas Award. The People's Choice Award (Adult) was won by Enoch Tan from Singapore for 'The Different Colors' (right). To view all shortlisted entries, visit:
www.downs-syndrome.org.uk/our-work/our-voice/my-perspective



© 15th Down's Syndrome Association photo awards / Enoch Tan







© Joel Meyerowitz

Joel Meyerowitz to be honoured by SWPA

The colour photography pioneer will receive the Outstanding Contribution to Photography award

The celebrated street, portrait and landscape photographer will join a roll call of recipients including Susan Meiselas (2025), Sebastião Salgado (2024), Edward Burtynsky (2022) and Nadav Kander (2019). Since the 1960s, Joel Meyerowitz has produced an impressive body of work over the course of a long career, having appeared in over 350 exhibitions and in 57 monographs. When he started out, he was an early pioneer of colour photography, at that time seen as inferior to black and white photography. The Sony World Photography Awards exhibition takes place from 17 April to 4 May at Somerset House in London, following the ceremony on 16 April. **www.worldphoto.org**



© Joel Meyerowitz







1 **SL3 REPORTER**
Dark green paintwork, black control elements and no Leica red dot all help the SL3 Reporter to blend in.

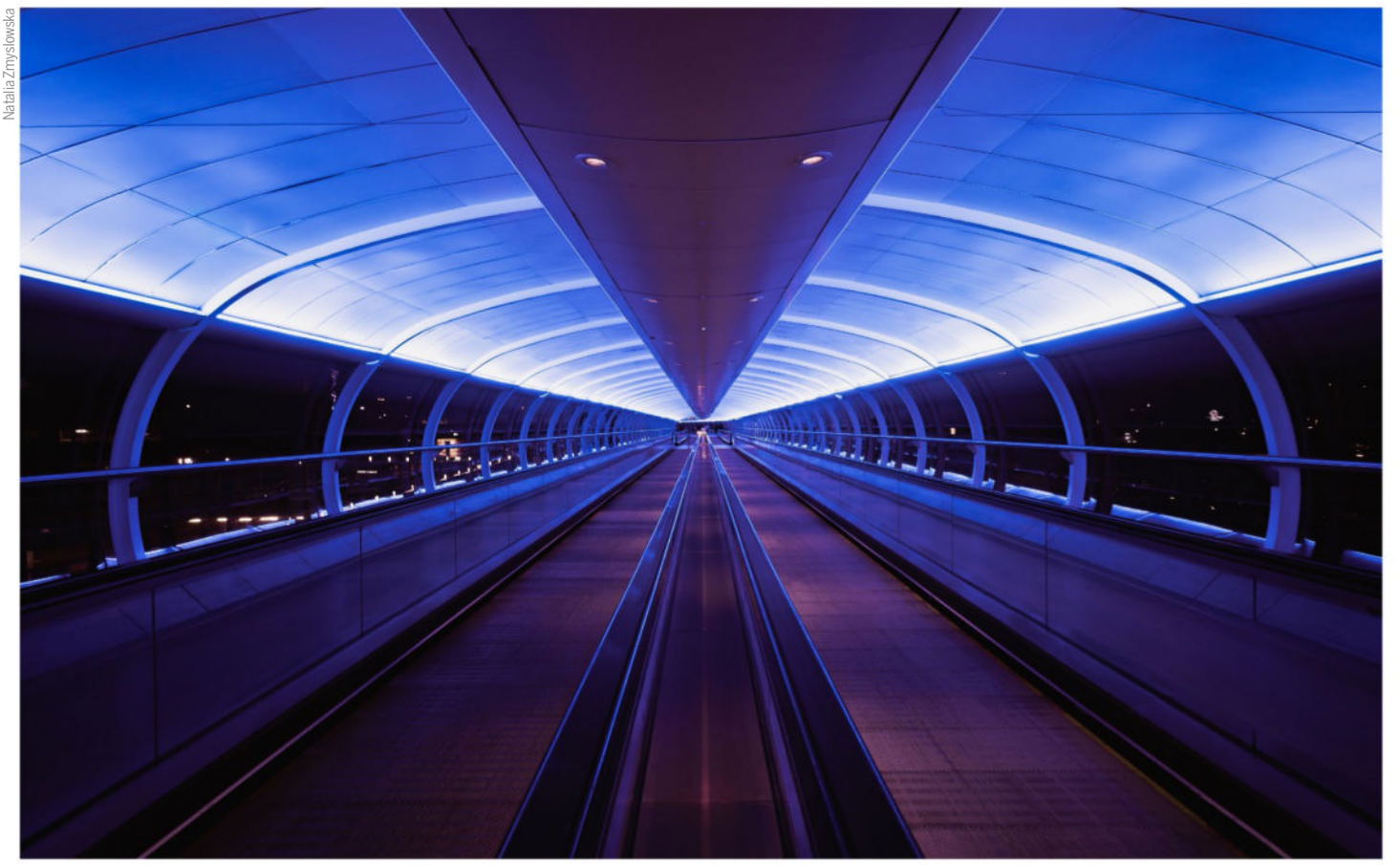


2 **Q3 MONOCHROM**
With an integrated Summilux 28mm f/1.7 ASPH lens, the Q3 Monochrom has an all-metal black body.

A pair of new Leicas

A new rugged version of the SL3, and a Q3 engineered for black and white, join the esteemed line-up

The iconic German brand beloved by Joel Meyerowitz (see above) recently launched a pair of new cameras. The **Q3 Monochrom** is the second black-and-white model in the Q series, with a 60MP monochrome sensor. Equipped with Triple Resolution Technology, users can choose between 60, 36 or 18MP output, make use of a sensitivity range from ISO 100 to 200,000 and record video at up to 8K resolution. The **SL3 Reporter** is a rugged design variant of the full-frame mirrorless SL3 and, manufactured with hard-wearing materials, is tailored for the toughest reportage and press environments. **leica-camera.com; £5,800/$7,790 (Q3 Monochrom). £6,200/$7,995 (SL3 Reporter, body only)**


Natalia Zmyslowska

The world with Nat

Try capturing the world in-between, says our new columnist **Natalia Zmyslowska**

The most haunting images are often found in liminal spaces – in-between settings, loaded with atmosphere.



Natalia Zmyslowska
www.theworldwithnat.com
@theworldwithnat

Camera: Canon EOS R with 16mm f/2.8 lens
Exposure: 1/13 sec at f/7.1, ISO 200

Hello! I'm Nat, and in this column, I'll be sharing my approach to photography and how I capture genuine moments. A subject I particularly like is liminal spaces: images that seem to exist in-between worlds. Moments that are not fully here, not quite there – doorways lit at dusk, empty corridors that hum with yesterday's footsteps, train platforms waiting for someone to arrive. I've always been drawn to them because they echo the moments in life when we, too, are in-between.

I rarely go looking for liminal spaces directly, but when I slow down, they start appearing. A stairwell with the faint glow of a security light. A hotel lobby just after midnight, chairs perfectly aligned yet strangely lifeless. An empty escalator. These are the quiet settings most people pass without a glance – yet in the frame, they become loaded with atmosphere.

Capturing these places is less about technical mastery and more about tuning into mood. Light is everything. Harsh sun tends to flatten them; twilight, fog or the glow of streetlights can turn the ordinary into the uncanny. Long exposures can heighten the sense of stillness, while slightly off-kilter framing can suggest unease. I often shoot with a wide aperture, letting the edges fall soft, as if the photograph is unsure where it begins or ends. The trick is to resist the urge to overfill the frame. Negative space – empty walls, vacant floors, stretches of sky – is what lets the liminal quality breathe. Often, what's absent is more powerful than what's present. You aren't documenting a place so much as inviting the viewer into a pause, a suspension.

Perhaps that's why these images resonate. We all know what it's like to stand on the edge of change – moving house or waiting for news. Photographs of liminal spaces act like mirrors, reflecting our fragile in-between state. Next time you're out with your camera, don't chase the apparent subject. Linger in the hallway. Pause at the threshold. Often, the most haunting photographs are found not in the arrival or the departure, but in the space between. ●



TOP PHOTOGRAPHER
Konstantin Slobodchuk, Russia

GuruShots

We've joined up with GuruShots, the world's greatest online photography game, to present the winning images from its Mostly White contest

GuruShots is billed as the world's leading photo game. It's an online platform conceived to give global exposure to people who love taking photographs. GuruShots members start out as 'Newbies' and compete with other photographers to win challenges, increase their ranking on the site and progress to the coveted 'Guru' status. Challenges are voted on by Gurus and the wider GuruShots community, and there's a fresh challenge every day, for example, 'Mostly White'. Winners receive prizes from GuruShots' partners, including Adobe Stock, Lowepro and Kodak.
Find out more at www.gurushots.com

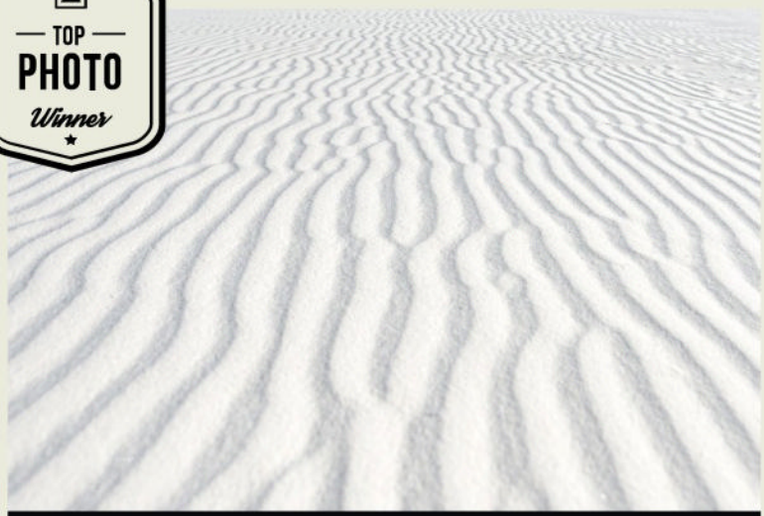
Enter GuruShots contests

Sign up to GuruShots for free, upload your best photos, enter challenges and receive helpful feedback from the GuruShots community. The best photography game in the world is now available on mobile! Download the app and get the GuruShots experience anywhere, anytime!
www.gurushots.com

GuruShots
THE WORLD'S GREATEST PHOTOGRAPHY GAME

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TOP PHOTO
Olga Robertson, United States



GURU'S TOP PICK
Catherine Toth, Germany

Ingūna Škestere, Germany

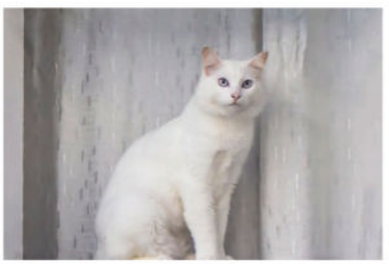


Honourable mentions

Anne Livø Buvik, Norway



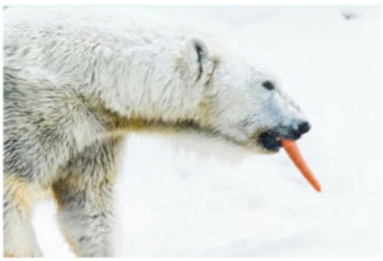
Fernando Coelho, Portugal



Will's Beautiful World, United States



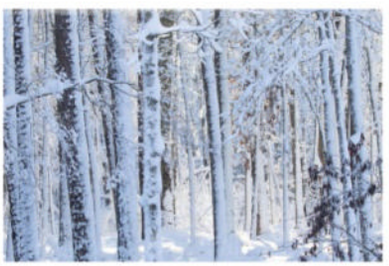
Eduardo Cervantes, United States



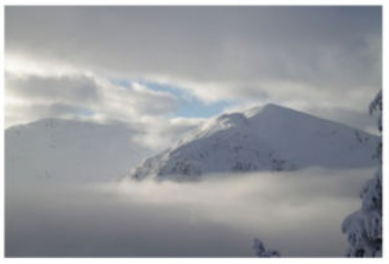
Paolo Barozzi, Italy



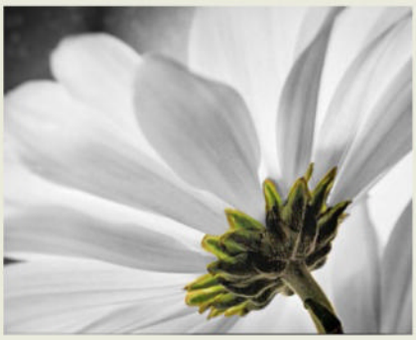
Yvonne Athanasaw, United States



Dave Merritt, Canada



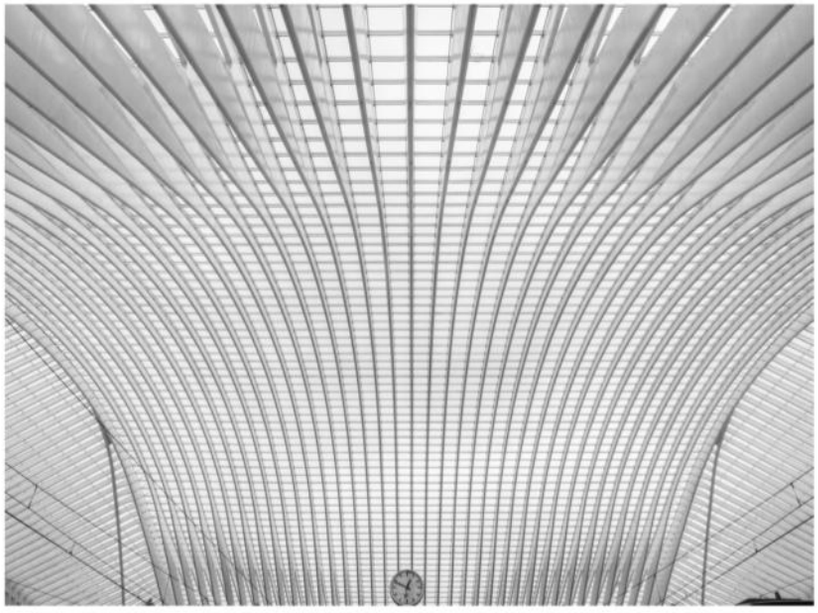






CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Maria Fremming, Denmark; Anna Peredelskaia, France; Paula Jessup, United States; Beata S.J, Poland; Blaz Kosir, Slovenia.

More honourable mentions



Hermann Klecker, Germany



Erika Prikrylova, Czech Republic



Andreina Schoeberlein, Switzerland



Norma George, United Kingdom



Xan White, Switzerland



Russell Smith, United States



Robin Weir, United States

NEW EDITION FOR 2026

ALL OF THE BEST CAMERA, LENS AND ACCESSORY REVIEWS THAT YOU'LL NEED TO MAKE THE MOST INFORMED PURCHASES.



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www.magazinesdirect.com/camerashopper

KitZone

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



106 **Leica M EV1** _ Latest M-series camera drops the optical viewfinder



110 **DJI Neo 2** _ 'Follow me' camera drone packed with DJI's latest tech smarts



112 **Sigma 20-200mm F3.5-6.3 DG | C** _ Superzoom focused on the wide end

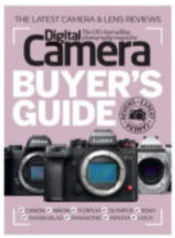


114 **Sony FE 100mm F2.8 Macro GM OSS** _ The brand's first G Master macro lens



Perhaps best known for its M-series rangefinder cameras, a new release from Leica shows that it's not afraid to tinker with a tried-and-tested formula. The new M EV1 is based on the M11 rangefinder, but with one key difference – an electronic viewfinder instead of an optical one. This is a response to customer demand, says Leica, and while it could be a step too far for some of its more devoted following, it could attract some new converts to the red dot cause. Turn the page to see how this new camera fares in our real-world testing. Also under scrutiny this month is the latest camera drone from DJI. The Neo 2 is a follow-me drone that can be launched from the palm of your hand, and responding to fierce competition in this sector, DJI has sprinkled its latest model with some of its most cutting-edge tech.

We also assess a pair of new optics. For a superzoom, the Sigma 20-200mm offers more wide-angle coverage than telephoto reach, and is compact and lightweight for travelling. And Sony has launched a new macro lens that looks like a major step up from its previous offering. ***Niall Hampton***



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

The awards bestowed by the *Digital Camera* lab...

Digital Camera BEST ON TEST — Given to the top product in a group test

Digital Camera GOLD AWARD — For products that receive five stars overall

Digital Camera VALUE AWARD — 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



1
If required, an optional grip can be bought from Leica, for an additional price of £340 ($460).

2
The iconic red dot is front and centre on the M EV1, as it is with other M series cameras.

3
Over 80 Leica M-mount lenses are available, including 28mm and 35mm 'street' primes.

Leica M EV1

£6,840/$8,895 (body only)

An alternative – and controversial – take on a classic

www.leica-camera.com

Specifications

Sensor: 60.3MP full-frame, CMOS
Image processor: Maestro III
Lens mount: M-mount
ISO range: 64-50,000
Stabilisation: No
Max burst: 4fps
Viewfinder: 5.76m dot EVF, 60Hz, 0.76x
LCD: 2.95in TFT, 2.33m dot
Max image size: 9528 x 6328px
Video: No
Storage: 64GB internal SSD, 1 x UHS-II SD
Connectivity: Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, USB-C
Battery/ shots: BP-SCL7, 244 shots (approx)
Dimensions (W x H x D): 140 x 80 x 38mm
Weight: 484g (incl battery)

The Leica M series has featured some of the most esteemed cameras in the industry, which have been used to take some of the world's most recognised images, winning it a cult-like following. With such dedicated and impassioned users, the pace of change has been slow and measured, with the switch from film to digital being the most significant change to the series in around half a century of incremental refinement.

With the introduction of the Leica M EV1, the M series faces another momentous milestone – it's the first one not to feature an optical viewfinder. Instead, the M EV1 uses an electronic viewfinder (EVF). As hallowed ground for street photographers, any change to the M series is going to be divisive, but this is an alternative to the Leica M11, not a replacement. And it's far from the first Leica camera to use an EVF; the Leica Q series is a popular rangefinder-style option that has never featured an optical viewfinder.

With a range of over 80 M-mount lenses, the Leica M EV1 will most likely be used with either a 28mm or 35mm lens stuck permanently to the front. With the OVF gone, I'd question whether the better buy is a Leica Q3 or Leica Q3 43 – both of which offer a fixed lens but the same EVF and sensor, while adding autofocus, video and image stabilisation to the package – and for a lower price.

However, for frequent lens changers, or those who like the stripped-back simplicity and shooting experience of an M camera over the more complex Q, how does the Leica M EV1 compete with the other M11 cohort?

Build and handling

The elephant in the room with the Leica M EV1 is the new EVF. While dedicated fans may bemoan Leica for betraying the soul of its M rangefinders, others simply won't care. If you want a pure M experience, there are four rangefinder M-series cameras you can buy, so the existence of the M EV1 shouldn't be something to get worked up about.

The EVF itself is excellent. It's slightly slower than the one used in the Q3, topping out at 60fps instead of 120fps – but it matches the 5.76m-dot





4
Thanks to an EVF, exposure flaws can be corrected in real time rather than in editing.

5
The rear LCD screen has no tilting mechanism so it isn't the easiest one to use.

6
A single card slot is housed in the battery cavity; there's also an internal 64GB SSD.

7
With no hood, the EVF is prone to picking up face and finger grease, says our tester.

8
The tactile controls have a reassuring feel, as you'd expect from a Leica camera.

9
The M EV1 weighs 82g less than the M11 camera on which it's based.

resolution, and it's easy to use. The only issue is that the lack of a hood around the EVF means that it tends to pick up grease from your face or fingers.

The main benefit of an optical viewfinder is the ability to frame a shot while still seeing what's happening around the frame. With an EVF, you lose that as it only shows the area that will be captured in the image – for many street photographers, this is invaluable to their process. But if that is your preferred way of shooting, Leica's optical M rangefinders aren't going anywhere.

The EVF has some significant benefits that probably outweigh the arguments for a traditional OVF. Having a clear screen for focusing is a godsend for manual-focus cameras – especially for anyone with poor eyesight. The EVF allows you to magnify the screen by either 1.3 or 1.8 times, getting in close to nail the focus. You can also adjust the screen by -4 and +2 dioptres to aid different visual impairments. The EVF (and rear screen) also support Leica's focus peaking, which highlights the in-focus area with a particular colour.

The other benefit of an EVF is that you can see exactly how your image will look, live in the viewfinder – and correct flaws in exposure on the fly rather than through trial and error or in editing.

Finally, on the EVF, I wish Leica had moved the logo to the gap where the viewfinder used to be. The Leica dot sits in the middle of the M series cameras – and that's where it is on the EV1 →



The body covering is the same diamond pattern that features on the Leica Q compact camera.



Gareth Bevan

When using the digital cropping modes, a box in the EVF or rear screen will indicate the cropped area.



Gareth Bevan

Battery performance is rated at 244 shots via the rear LCD, or 237 shots when using the EVF.



Gareth Bevan

During testing, the ISO performance of the M EV1 was excellent. We were happy to shoot up to ISO 3200 without being concerned about image noise.

Mirrorless Leica M EV1



Gareth Bevan

The Queen Anne statue outside St Paul's Cathedral in London. Captured on a 35mm Summicron M ASPH lens, with settings of 1/640 sec at f/5.6, ISO 400.

– but the open space draws attention to the fact that there's nothing else there.

Apart from the missing viewfinder, it's hard to tell the Leica M EV1 apart from the rest of the M11 cameras. It features the same beautifully designed magnesium and aluminium body with a leatherette cover – it's one of the most luxurious cameras I've used (although to be expected at the price). It comes in regular black only, with no silver brass version so far. The Leica M EV1 is also slightly lighter than the M11, weighing 484g compared with 530g.

As beautiful as the camera is, handling could be an issue. There is a small nub of a thumb grip on the rear of the camera, but the camera has no front grip, so it's not the most comfortable to hold for long periods one-handed. You can buy an optional grip from Leica for an additional £340 ($460).

Rival cameras



Fujifilm X100VI
£1,599/$1,599
A new sensor improves the image quality over the X100V, autofocus is faster and video has been greatly improved.
Reviewed: Issue 280



Sigma BF
£1,969/$1,999
Made from a single block of aluminium, the 24.6MP BF offers a friction-free touchscreen-driven experience.
Reviewed: Issue 296



Sony A7C R
£2,799/$3,398
A 61MP full-frame mirrorless with a powerful image processor, amazing resolution and workable low-light performance.
www.bit.ly/dcm303_a7cr

Like previous models, the battery is accessed via a switch on the bottom, which pops the cell out but requires a further press to unlock the mechanism. It's a clever way of doing it without having a battery cover or door, and it's quick to get used to. However, the USB-C charging port is on the base of the camera, which means it can't sit flat when being charged, which is a bit awkward and means you either have to lay the camera down on its screen or leave it balancing on the end of the charging cable. The single SD card slot is also behind the battery, meaning that you have to take the battery out to remove the SD card. It's a minor annoyance, but it allows the M EV1 to keep its clean lines without needing a separate SD slot door.

The Leica M EV1 comes with 64GB of built-in SSD storage, which is accessible via the Leica Fotos app or USB-C, so you might not need to take the SD out as often.

Performance

The Leica M EV1 packs in a 60.3MP sensor, but employs the company's Triple Resolution tech to shoot either 36.5MP or 18.4MP images using the whole sensor area for smaller raw (DNG) or jpeg files. The DNG files range from 70 to 120MB, depending on the size, and jpegs at around 15 to 30MB.



Gareth Bevan

Impressive dynamic range means there's plenty of scope for pulling out the detail captured in raw files.



Gareth Bevan

Photos from the M EV1 are distinctly 'Leica' – contrast-heavy and leaning into cooler tones.



Paired with the M EV1, the 35mm Summicron lens rendered photos with distinct subject separation.

The camera can also make use of digital cropping modes during capture, which crop in either 1.3x or 1.8x, saving the cropped image as a jpeg, but the DNG as the full uncropped file, with the crop data accessible in editing software such as Lightroom. When using the crop mode, the camera displays a box in the EVF or on the screen to show the cropped area.

Photo performance is excellent, with the sharpness being particularly good. Large images have a lot of cropping potential and the dynamic range is impressive, with a good amount of scope in raw files to pull detail out of the shadows or highlights. ISO performance is also good; I was comfortable shooting up to ISO 3200 without being concerned about grain, with it only starting to become visible from 6400 onwards.

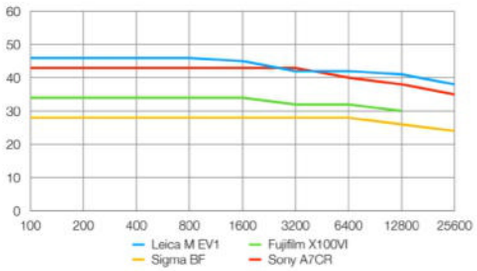
There is no mistaking the photos from the M EV1 as distinctly 'Leica'. They are fairly contrast-heavy, leaning more into cooler tones with accurate but bold colours. The Summicron-M 35mm f/2 ASPH lens I used renders photos with a distinct subject separation, with the kind of unique bokeh these lenses are renowned for. This is due to the lens, but vignetting was an issue wide-open – though these were easily cleaned up in Lightroom – and many would argue that it adds character to the images.

I shot most of my photos in either the natural profile of the camera, which I found the most balanced for colour, or Leica's high-contrast monochrome setting for punchier black and whites. There are other profiles and looks for different tastes, including a colourful Leica Vibrant and a more neutral Leica Monochrome.

Battery performance is acceptable, but longevity isn't its strongest suit, being rated at 244 shots using the LCD or 237 via the EVF. However, the nature of the Leica M EV1 and its manual-focus lens made me more careful about how I was shooting, which actually meant the battery easily lasted for a whole day of wandering around London shooting, though heavier shooters might want to carry a spare. ***Gareth Bevan***

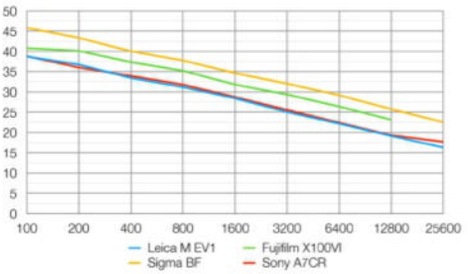
"There is no mistaking photos from the M EV1 as distinctly 'Leica'"

Resolution



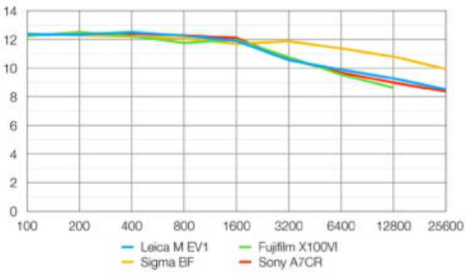
With megapixel counts in excess of 60MP, the Leica and Sony cameras were always going to come out on top when it comes to resolving fine detail.

Dynamic range (EV)



The more pixels on a sensor, the more susceptible it is to generating image noise, so the 60.3MP Leica produces noticeably noisier images at all sensitivities than the 24.6MP Sigma BF.

Signal to noise ratio (decibels)



The M EV1 matches the Sony and Fujifilm cameras for dynamic range. The Sigma BF is in a class of its own for low-light dynamic range, though – a payoff from a lower megapixel count and more light-sensitive pixels.

Digital Camera verdict

4.0 ★★★★☆ Excellent

Features	Build & handling	Performance	Value
4.0	5.0	4.0	3.0

For diehard fans, the Leica M EV1 is controversial. Optical viewfinders may be favoured by street photographers, but the benefits of an EVF outweigh those concerns. Images are every bit as good as Leica's other M cameras, with excellent sharpness, accurate colours, great dynamic range and Leica's distinct look. The camera is as beautifully designed as ever, although the grip is fairly minimal. How much the Leica M EV1 appeals to you depends on whether you want to switch out lenses or you value the simplicity of the stripped-back shooting experience.



1 This 'follow me' drone is a lot better equipped than its predecessor.

2 The Fly More bundle version consists of the drone and three batteries.

3 The theoretical life of the battery is 19 minutes, which is pretty decent.

Digital Camera GOLD AWARD

DJI Neo 2

From £209/$N/A

A smart 'follow me' drone with options for upgrades

www.dji.com

Specifications

Sensor size: 1/2-inch
Max video resolution: 4K/60fps (100fps)
Max stills resolution: 12MP
Flight time: 19 min
Range: 10km (remote) or 500m (Wi-Fi)
Storage: 49GB
Dimensions: 167 x 171 x 54mm (with propeller guards and DJI Neo 2 Digital Transceiver)
Take-off weight: 151g

The original DJI Neo was an impressive 'follow-me' drone, but it also highlighted one of the few areas in which the brand was playing catch-up. As the original Neo launched, its rival HoverAir X1 was already demonstrating that drones didn't need controllers, with machines that could use AI to follow your activities and capture the moment.

DJI's first response was impressive enough and, as it also offered the option of more traditional remote control (as much as anything in this sector is 'traditional'), it was a comprehensive device with options to spend as much, or as little, as you want to get started.

With the Neo 2, it feels like DJI has raided its high-tech cupboards and included everything it could find – and the result is highly impressive for many reasons. It now boasts omnidirectional sensing as well as prop guards, which is a huge boost to safety. At the front, LiDAR remote sensing technology has been included, while usability gets a boost with the arrival of a display. This is still a 'Follow-me' drone, but it is a lot better equipped than its already mighty predecessor. It still offers plenty of those upgrading options, too, with RC sensors and a transmission system on board, offering the option of 10km control with an optional remote. Is there anything more that a drone needs?

The DJI Neo 2 is available in the UK for a price of £209 for just the drone. A Fly More bundle version, with the drone and three batteries, will set you back £289. A 'real' remote controller with sticks that uses radio signals for extra range and your phone as the screen is available for £289, or £349 in the Fly More Combo bundle. There are no prices in US dollars, because the DJI Neo 2 isn't being launched in the US.

Build and handling

Like its predecessor, the DJI Neo 2 is a rigid frame with a cage-like design around four ducted vents. It has picked up some significant changes, though, which are easily seen on the outside. As well as the dual antennae at the back and fish-eye optical sensors



4 The camera has a 0.5in CMOS sensor and a field of view of 119.8°.

5 A better two-axis gimbal will give smoother results without IS being required.

6 The Neo 2 detects and avoids obstacles when tracking from the front or sides.



The control buttons of the DJI Neo 2 – our reviewer's thumb is hiding the launch button.



In use, the tracking was impressive and operating the drone without the controller was intuitive.

for a collision sensing system (top and bottom, mounted near the back), the drone has two dark patches on the front – a matrix LED display to show the current mode and a LiDAR 3D detection system. The camera, too, is now mounted on a better two-axis gimbal, which means it is able to get smoother results without having to resort to digital image stabilisation. That is a significant enhancement.

Next to the LiDAR sensor is a fairly bright light that changes colour to indicate to the operator whether the drone has recognised and understood any of the range of gesture controls. These are explained by a tutorial in the app, though during testing, a nine-year-old child was able to figure them out – at least the directional ones – on his own on his first time with the drone.

Using the app, which links to the drone and can be used with on-screen controls – even including simulated sticks – is one way to control the drone, and smartphone users will find it reassuring, but it isn't necessary. You can hold the drone in your hand, cycle through the modes with the smaller buttons and launch with the bigger one. The drone will use a built-in speaker to give you a countdown and if you aren't holding it flat on your palm, it will use its sensors to decide whether or not to fly.

The drone can charge its battery via a USB-C port at the rear. This and the 80MB/sec wireless are the means to download content from the 49GB internal storage. It's convenient, although I prefer the charging hub in the Fly More kit, which will charge three batteries without having to swap them. Like many DJI devices, you need to activate it via the app, but this provides useful features, such as maps to warn of nearby dangers, so it's not an issue.

Performance

While testing the DJI Neo 2 with my nine-year-old 'assistant', he ran around trying to give it the slip, but I was impressed with the performance. The new cycling mode was impressive, too, seemingly anticipating where the rider was going. In winter, though, the sensing system might miss a thin tree branch, but the light frame and guards mean that if you're flying over anything other than hard Tarmac road, you should be OK. That means mountain bikers will be better off.

For this review, I took some sample video clips in a field [you can view it at www.bit.ly/dcm303_djineo2]. The quality wasn't ideal, though, as the light was past its best and the breeze was getting up. Though it wasn't quite at the level 5 limit that would bring the Neo 2 down, it made me appreciate the 2-axis gimbal. The ActiveTrack subject tracking was more successful than I anticipated, though my assistant was able to duck under it and lose the drone. It seems a lot smarter than the original Neo, but is clearly not foolproof. ***Adam Juniper***

Digital Camera verdict

5.0 ★★★★★ A best-in-class product

Features	Build & handling	Performance	Value
5.0	4.0	5.0	4.0

The Neo 2 is a genuine technical marvel, with output to rival bigger and more expensive machines. The only compromise is the shorter battery life, although 19 minutes of theoretical flying time isn't too bad. If you're happy to stretch the budget to cover the Fly More kit options, then you will enjoy this drone more. Moreover, the tracking impressed me, and my junior assistant was not only impressed but seemed safe and happy, too. Operating the drone without the controller seemed intuitive and, as a younger pilot, no nostalgic complaint kicked in; my assistant saw the drone as cool and futuristic, making this a great drone for children, beginners and casual use.

As a practical video or camera drone for serious creators, it won't beat those with higher specs, but it can capture content more easily in more situations, which is certainly YouTube-grade. The new Selfie mode, which captures three different framings, also seems like a great way to be assured that you've got the right shot of yourself or your group. There might even be the odd chance to grab shots you wouldn't get elsewhere, and although it's still not a cheap way into FPV, it's great that the option is there.



Sigma 20-200mm F3.5-6.3 DG | C

£799/$999

Travel-friendly 'superzoom' lens with a new twist on wide-angle coverage

www.sigmauk.com

Sigma has long been admired for its ability to think outside the box, dreaming up new lenses that stand out from the crowd, including some game-changers. The Sigma 20-200mm F3.5-6.3 DG Contemporary superzoom joins a flurry of 'world-first' Sigma lenses for Sony E and L-Mount cameras, each one bringing something new and exciting to the market. Unlike the more vaunted Art and Sports lenses, this one is designed with compact and stylish simplicity. Back in the days of DSLRs, I reviewed many superzoom lenses, many of which I wouldn't dream of classifying as a 'travel lens'. The current mirrorless vogue seems to emphasise wide-angle coverage in preference to longer telephoto reach, the Canon RF 24-240mm F4-6.3 IS USM and Nikon Z 24-200mm f/4-6.3 VR being prime (or zoom) examples, although the Nikon Z 28-400mm f/4-8 VR stretches the telephoto envelope. But none of these lenses gives an ultra-wide-angle focal length at the short end of the zoom range. That's where the Sigma 20-200mm is so revolutionary, and it means it's sure to become one of the best travel lenses you can buy.

Build and handling

If you want a superzoom lens for travel and walkabout photography, you don't need one that's big and heavy. The convenience of a single 'do-it-all' lens is great, but I'd rather use a small standard zoom and keep a compact telephoto in my travel bag, if needed. This Sigma 20-200mm fits the brief, measuring a modest 116 x 73mm at its shortest zoom setting and weighing in at 550g. Another sign of its size is the modest 72mm filter attachment thread, which is no mean feat considering the mighty maximum viewing angle of 94.5º.

Even with the petal-shaped hood fitted in its forward-facing orientation, the lens looks and feels compact at its widest-angle zoom setting. It's nicely turned out and feels solid and robust. The design is simple but effective, as we've come to expect from Sigma's 'Contemporary' line. One thing you can expect from superzoom lenses with a large overall zoom range is that either one or two telescoping inner barrels will greatly extend the physical length of the lens when zooming to the longest telephoto focal length and this Sigma is no exception.

I've often found 'zoom creep' to be a problem with superzoom lenses. The lens stretches out as I'm walking around, making it more prone to being knocked, and the focal length can change when the camera is mounted on a tripod and you're shooting at an upward or downward angle. However, the Sigma didn't suffer any zoom creep. For safety, there's a zoom lock switch that you can engage at the shortest zoom length.

Autofocus is impressively quick, thanks to the provision of an HLA (High-response Linear Actuator), or a linear stepping motor by another name. Typically, it's near-silent and enables smooth autofocus transitions when shooting video. The manual focus ring is small and fitted at the front of the lens, but it's there if you need it and is electronically coupled to the HLA system.

The optical path is based on 18 elements arranged in 14 groups, which is quite a complex arrangement. There's no shortage of specialist glass either, with four DS Asp (double sided aspherical), one FLD ('fluorite' low dispersion), three SLD (special low dispersion) elements, along with HR (high refractive index) elements





These two images demonstrate the difference in the physical length of the lens at the 20mm (top) and 200mm zoom settings (above).

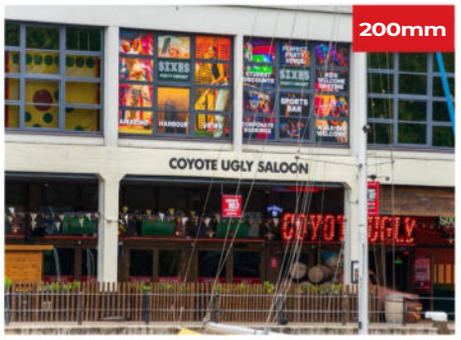
1 There's a fluorine coating on the front element to repel moisture and smears.

2 An AF/MF focus mode switch speeds things up compared with using the camera menu.

3 Even this relatively humble lens has a weather-seal gasket on its mounting plate.

Matthew Richards





Matthew Richards

These shots were taken of the same scene at the minimum and maximum zoom settings. Here, you can see the difference in perspective covered by the 20mm (above) and 200mm (right) extremities.

in the line-up. The aim is for high levels of sharpness, clarity and contrast throughout the entire zoom range, with the minimum of unwanted aberrations, such as colour fringing. Complex aspherical elements also help shrink the size and weight of the lens.

There was a time when Sigma didn't fit weather-seals, even to some of its most upmarket lenses, but this relatively humble 'Contemporary' lens has a moisture- and dust-resistant construction and a weather-seal gasket on its metal mounting plate. It also features a fluorine coating on its front element to repel moisture and greasy fingermarks and allow for easy cleaning.

Performance

Some older superzoom lenses were relatively clunky contraptions. In contrast, the Sigma feels refined with a smooth action to its zoom ring from one end to the other without catching along the way. It features an AF/MF focus mode switch, which speeds things up in practical terms, compared with rummaging around in camera menus.

What sets this superzoom lens apart is its impressive wide-angle coverage, which neatly covers off the ultra-wide viewing angle that you'd only usually get by carrying an additional lens in my bag. I'm impressed that sharpness is good right out to the extreme edges and corners of the frame, even at the shortest zoom setting.

Just as with using the widest-angle focal length of the lens, sharpness across the whole image frame remains good at the long end. I've often found that superzooms with a long stretch of focal lengths tend to drop off in sharpness at the long end, but the Sigma remains comparatively sharp. There's also good clarity and contrast, considering that it was reviewed under overcast skies and dull lighting conditions. Naturally, you can't expect a single lens to give you everything. One facet that's lacking is bokeh, as the necessarily narrow aperture rating at longer zoom settings doesn't deliver a particularly tight depth of field, apart from when shooting close-ups.

On the plus side, the HLA autofocus system lives up to its billing, proving quick and virtually silent as it tracks moving subjects. Even at the longest zoom setting, the autofocus latches onto moving objects quickly and tracks them tenaciously. A more surprising feature of the lens is that it can deliver up to 0.5x macro magnification, thanks to a short minimum focus distance of just 0.17m or 6.7 inches.

Matthew Richards

Matthew Richards

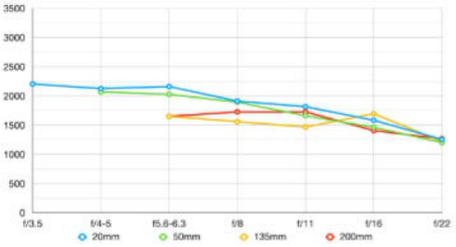


The lens struggles to deliver a tight depth of field, making it relatively hard to blur the background.

Specifications

Mount options: Sony E (FE), L-Mount
Full-frame: Yes
Autofocus: Yes
Stabilisation: No
Lens construction: 18 elements in 14 groups
Angle of view: 94.5-12.3°
Diaphragm blades: 9
Max aperture: f/3.5
Min aperture: f/22
Min focus distance: 0.17m
Max magnification ratio: 0.5x
Filter size: 72mm
Dimensions (L x D): 116 x 73mm
Weight: 550g

Sharpness



Sharpness

The Sigma 20-200mm isn't as sharp as the best prime lenses around, but it's impressive for a superzoom. Importantly for a lens that's less than 'fast', sharpness is good at the widest aperture settings, though it pays to stop down for the best edge and corner sharpness.

Fringing Short 0.25 Long 0.66

Colour fringing is well controlled throughout the zoom range and minimal in the 20-50mm sector. It's slightly noticeable in the longer 135-200mm range, but only at the extreme edges and corners.

Distortion Short -4.72 Long 3.24

The Sigma exhibits fairly strong barrel distortion at 20mm and noticeable pincushion in the 50-200mm sector of the zoom range. Even so, native distortion with automatic correction disabled is much lower than in many competing lenses.

Digital Camera verdict

4.5 Outstanding



This Sigma lens is compact and lightweight, making it ideal for travel and walkabout photography, but it goes further than most others, especially in terms of wide-angle coverage. The upshot is that using the Sigma at its shortest zoom setting feels like taking the blinkers off your photography. There's no optical image stabilisation, but the image quality is pleasing, autofocus is fast and accurate, and the 0.5x macro facility is another bonus. The Sigma is an 'all-in-one' lens that fulfils its promise.



Sony FE 100mm F2.8 Macro GM OSS

£1,400/$1,498

The brand's first G Master macro lens offers up to 2.8x magnification

www.sony.co.uk

After a decade-long wait, the Sony FE 100mm F2.8 Macro GM OSS is finally here to replace the trusty Sony FE 90mm F2.8 Macro G OSS. And there's no question that this lens – Sony's first G Master macro – eclipses its predecessor in every way. The Sony FE 100mm F2.8 Macro GM OSS offers a 1.4:1 reproduction ratio (1.4x magnification) as standard, going above and beyond the 1:1 (1x) true macro ratio for larger-than-life-size reproduction.

That isn't unique, as the Canon RF 100mm F2.8L Macro does the same; however, the G Master goes one step further by offering compatibility with 1.4x and 2.0x teleconverters and delivering up to 2.8:1 reproduction (2.8x magnification). Again, that isn't unique, as OM System's M.Zuiko 90mm F3.5 Macro offers 2:1 (2x) macro as standard and up to 4:1 (4x) macro with a teleconverter. With the crop factor of Micro Four Thirds cameras, that's up to 8:1 (8x) macro.

Still, for the Sony FE 100mm F2.8 Macro GM OSS to offer a full-frame f/2.8 lens with teleconverter compatibility – along with autofocus and image stabilisation – is a triumph. And that's before you consider the G Master's image quality. This isn't just the best E-mount macro lens, it's one of the best macro lenses full stop.

Build and handling

The 100mm Macro looks and feels every inch a G Master lens. It's quite long, but with its working distance, this isn't a problem. Despite its size, this is a pretty light optic, especially given all the glass and clever tech inside it. Some of the extra length is devoted to compatibility with teleconverters, which is one of the headline features of the lens. This really is something to shout about; converters are supported by so few lenses, I always relish the opportunity to dig one out and use it with a new toy.

1 Some of the lens's extra length is due to its compatibility with teleconverters.

2 The manual focus ring has granular control, distance markings and hard stops at each end.

3 The lens is weather-sealed, which is great news for outdoor macro shooters.



Pull the focus clutch down for proper manual control, with hard stops at each end of the range.



Up to 2.8x magnification is possible when this lens is used with a 2x teleconverter (pictured).

Of course, this lengthens the lens even further, and while it balances well handheld, the front-heaviness can make things tricky if you don't have a sturdy tripod. However, the handheld potential of this lens is something that's worth discussing. Anyone who shoots macro knows the perils of doing so when handholding, but the clever stabilisation system here makes it practical. That will be music to the ears of nature shooters, who don't have the luxury of setting up a tripod.

The Sony FE 100mm F2.8 Macro supports Body-Lens Coordinated Control, and also now supports depth of field compensation along the Z-axis – something that's important for this kind of shooting – in addition to angle and shift along the X and Y. The autofocus is fast and accurate, so it keeps up with micro-movements caused by handheld shooting and makes it feasible to shoot tripod-free – although you'd have to be brave to attempt that at 2.8x magnification.

Something else that's essential for macro lenses is a proper manual-focus ring – one that has hard stops at each end with granular control and distance markings. By pulling down the 'Full MF' clutch at the nose of the lens, the 100mm Macro engages this true manual focus system.

You also have control over the aperture ring, both in terms of having it clicked or de-clicked and disengaging it completely. Finally, this is a weather-sealed lens, which again is great news for outdoor shooters who capture macro shots out in the elements.

Performance

As you'd expect from a G Master lens, this is a stellar performer. I tested this lens with a Sony A7R V to test the limits of how well this lens can capture fine detail. While some optics fall apart when you put them under such a ridiculous megapixel microscope,

James Artaius



Taken with a Sony A7R V and FE 100mm F2.8 Macro GM OSS. Exposure: 0.3 sec at f/2.8, ISO 320.

here, it reveals the awesome resolving power of the 100mm Macro. Even when shooting wide open, sharpness is superb across the entire frame – if you can get the whole plane in focus, which can be tricky when working at 1.4x magnification, let alone 2.8x.

I paired the 100mm Macro with Sony's 2x teleconverter for testing. Teleconverters work by increasing the focal length of lenses along with their magnification, but have the inverse effect on the aperture. So with my 2x converter, this 100mm f/2.8 lens with 1.4x magnification becomes a 200mm f/5.6 with 2.8x magnification. With the 1.4x teleconverter, it becomes a 140mm f/4 with 2.0x magnification. This means you can't gather as much light, which requires slowing the shutter speed or boosting the ISO.

Of course, using teleconverters will degrade image quality, but you still get an incredible level of detail – not on a par with using the lens alone, but it isn't far off. Something that is noticeable is a touch of colour fringing. This only occurs in specific situations, such as shooting wide open in a high-contrast situation, but it happens.

While it's more common to stop down when shooting macro to increase depth of field, there are use cases for shooting wide open, both for creative effect and to gather more light. I love the shallow depth of field when shooting close-ups. The kind of wide-open fringing that occurs is pretty minor, but it's worth being aware of. Otherwise, I have nothing but positive things to say about the performance of the Sony FE 100mm F2.8 Macro GM OSS. It does everything you could want of a macro lens, and, in the case of stabilisation and autofocus, does it better than most lenses.

As is always the case with macro glass, there is some focus breathing, though it's well controlled. The bokeh isn't always the most pleasing, as specular highlights exhibit cat's eye rendering towards the edge of the frame when shooting wide open. This isn't really an issue for macro, but a 100mm lens is also well-suited for taking portraits. The lens performed well in this setting, even though you may want a faster aperture for pure portraiture to isolate the subject. Something to be aware of when shooting portraits with a macro lens is that they resolve a lot of fine detail – and that isn't always flattering to your subjects.

However, I can see this being the ideal tool for a wedding photographer who likes taking macro detail shots of the rings, name cards and dress detail, as well as having a great dedicated portrait lens. ***James Artaius***

James Artaius



Even for images captured with a 2x teleconverter, the sharpness of this lens remains sensational.

James Artaius

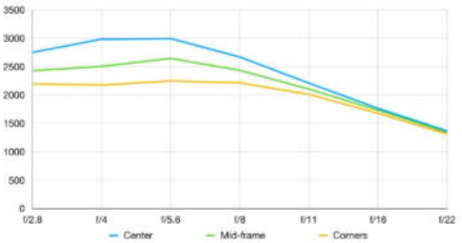


This pair of images shows the magnification produced when using a 2.0x teleconverter (right).

Specifications

Mount options: Sony E
Full-frame: Yes
Autofocus: Yes
Image stabilisation: Yes
Lens construction: 17 elements in 13 groups
Angle of view: 24°
Max aperture: f/2.8
Min aperture: f/22
Diaphragm blades: 11
Min focus distance: 1x: 0.26m; 2.8x: 0.29m
Max magnification ratio: 2.8x
Filter size: 67mm
Dimensions (L x D): 147.9 x 81.4mm
Weight: 646g

Sharpness



Sharpness

Centre-sharpness is superb, even wide open at f/2.8, and stays so through to f/11. Image quality is also impressively sharp right into the corners of the frame, which is particularly important for a macro lens.

Fringing Lens 0.28 2x Tele 0.47

Colour fringing is negligible throughout the tested aperture range, even right out at the extreme corners of the frame.

Distortion Lens 0.28 2x Tele -0.11

There's the merest hint of pincushion distortion, but it should generally go unnoticed in real-world shooting, even if you're shooting geometric subjects.

Digital Camera verdict

5.0 ★★★★★ A best-in-class product

Features	Build & handling	Performance	Value
5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0

The Sony FE 100mm F2.8 Macro GM OSS is a long-overdue optic that E-mount macro shooters deserve. By every measure, this is a fantastic lens. It's sharp across the entire frame, even wide open and when using a teleconverter. I was particularly impressed with the handholding potential of this lens. Between the enhanced image stabilisation and Sony's laser-precise autofocus, this is glass you can happily use to photograph insects or plants, even without a tripod. If you already own Sony's 90mm Macro and you're wondering whether this is worth the upgrade, the performance is a league apart. This is the best macro lens for the E-mount and one of Sony's finest lenses ever.

Right: Dave Stewart, California. "It's a scene that looks like it should be idyllic, but the graffiti has given it a twist, something that's slightly displaced," says Andy.

Andy Earl

He's photographed the world's biggest rock stars and album covers, and tells **Niall Hampton** about his latest exhibition



© Andy Earl

Andy Earl
Music and portrait photographer

Raised in Sussex in England, Andy Earl's first job was working as a mechanic for the British Formula One racing driver James Hunt.

He then swapped car spanners for camera shutters when going to study art at the then Trent Polytechnic (now Nottingham Trent University) in Nottingham.

After graduating, a show at London's prestigious Photographers' Gallery landed Andy his first album cover commission, the controversial *See Jungle!* by Bow Wow Wow.

Since then, he has photographed many of the world's biggest music stars, plus 20 music videos for artists, including the Rolling Stones.

www.andyearl.com

Instagram: @andyearl1

Having photographed over 120 album covers for artists and bands across the whole musical spectrum, Andy Earl has worked with a stellar cast of characters. Pink Floyd, Prince, Madonna, Johnny Cash and Robbie Williams are just some of the names he has collaborated with over four decades. His pictures have been a key part of defining the visual identity of these artists, but whether he's photographing musical royalty or the real thing – King Charles III has also sat for him – Andy's infectious enthusiasm and love for photography always shines through.

And he is keen to help develop the next generation of photographers: Andy is a Doctor of Arts at Nottingham Trent University, a Visiting Professor at Norwich University of Arts and an honorary fellow at the universities of Falmouth and the Arts University Bournemouth. As the latter is staging a new exhibition of his work, let's find out more.

How did your forthcoming exhibition, 'Andy Earl: See or be Seen', come about?
I have always been involved with universities, and see my roles as augmenting the students. And I really enjoy it. When the Arts University Bournemouth gallery first opened, 25 years ago, I had an exhibition there. It has recently been revamped and I was asked by curator Violet McClean to be the inaugural exhibitor. They wanted the show to have an educational bias, so I'm going back to how I started in photography, how things went wrong and how those mistakes enabled me to move on. The show is going on tour to Falmouth University, Nottingham Trent University and Norwich University of the Arts, before travelling to Saudi Arabia, China and Cambodia, to institutions with which these British universities have partnerships.

And what's the theme of the show?
It's mainly talking about the significance of having an education in photography. In the second year of my photography course at Nottingham Trent University, I was fortunate to go to the United States on a scholarship, and while I was there, my mind was opened up to colour photography, thanks to the work of William Eggleston and Stephen Shore. But my course at Trent was fine-art, black-and-white photography – the tutors were Paul Hill and landscape photographer Thomas Cooper.

My final show was pictures of racegoers at the Ascot races, and I used flash when shooting them to make the colours come out because the light back home in England wasn't quite the same as it was in the USA. But I hadn't set the shutter speed correctly; it was on 1/15 sec rather than 1/125 sec, so the flash fired and everything behind went blurry. I thought I'd made a mess, but those photos actually became my final show.

Sue Davies, who ran The Photographers' Gallery, was my external assessor and she was putting together a show about European colour photography, just as I was graduating. She asked if I wanted to show some pictures, and Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood came to view the opening of



© Andy Earl

the show. They liked the painterly qualities, as they put it, of my photographs and asked me to do an album cover for Bow Wow Wow, so that's how I started. Then someone at EMI called to tell me about a bunch of lads from Birmingham, and asked what I could make of them. That was Duran Duran. So completely by accident, I fell into music photography.

Compared to when you were starting out, there are more alternative routes into photography now, and presumably, there will be lots of professional photographers who didn't study it at all...

I'm sure a lot of photographers haven't studied it formally, and while they might say they didn't need to, quite often when I look at pictures at a show, they're good and I like the feel of them, but where's the depth, where's the idea, where's that awareness of the little piece of magic that elevates a picture from being ordinary to extraordinary? It's that sort of eagerness, I suppose, that I'm trying to impress on photography students.

What did you gain by studying it formally?

The course I did was mostly about finding your photographic vision. There was an intensity to it; when we arrived, we were told to eat, sleep and drink photography – the tutors were immersing us in the subject and helping us develop a passion for it. At that time, I'd experienced American photography and knew about the history of photography and had a feel for how it was evolving. I knew what I liked and had lots of ideas. I was more interested in art photography rather →



© Andy Earl

Above: Mark Ronson, USA. "When I looked at pictures of him, he was usually playing live, so I thought I'd try to get him quietly. The white wall behind worked well."

than the commercial side, but I had met photographers like David Bailey and Ralph Gibson, and I had energy and enthusiasm.

The course was more about how pictures looked, what the feel of the picture was, rather than 'Yes, I shot this at f/22'. But those technical aspects do come up if you suddenly want to shoot something in a different way. In my Johnny Cash pictures, for example, his eyes are absolutely sharp, his nose is almost out of focus and his ears have gone out of focus. But this adds to the intensity, to the power of the man, rather than everything looking nice and clean and dry. Modern digital cameras are amazing, but lots of people tend to use Program mode rather than going into Manual and controlling things. I grew up shooting transparencies, where you had to be close to the correct exposure – a third of a stop made a difference whether the picture was too dark or too light. With digital, you have a whole spectrum to play with.

So you would advise prospective photographers to do the same?

A lot of people dismiss photography courses, but I've seen many students benefit from interacting with like-minded people while they're living in shared accommodation and I like the intensity of it. That aside, becoming a photographer is about pushing yourself – persistence is so important – and having a passion for what you do. I wasn't particularly passionate about music, but I was absolutely passionate about taking pictures. When I used to shoot fashion, I got a bit lost because I had to check how the clothes were hanging on the models. But when I'm photographing a band or an artist, there are no rules.

For *See or be Seen*, I play on that story and say that what I learned at college and what I experimented with helped me create my own look and how I approached taking pictures. Talking to students, I tell them that everything that happened to me stemmed from what I did at college, so college can become a recipe for what you can use in your career.

"Becoming a photographer is a passion. I wasn't particularly passionate about music, but I absolutely was about taking pictures"

When working with a band or an artist for the first time, how do you form a creative vision for the photos you want to shoot?

I will have already listened to the music, so that I can see which genre they're part of, even if I'm into music with a different vibe. My job is to make them look individual.

I shot an album cover in Thailand for a band called Dario G. They were on a sandy ridge in the middle of the water and the album was called *Sunmachine*. I bought a load of mirrors, stuck them in the sand and photographed them from a boat with a panoramic camera. As the boat rocked, the movement made the sun's reflection flash in the mirrors, so it really was a photo of a sun machine. The band loved the picture; I was selling them an idea and it gave them a visual identity.

Robbie Williams' *Life Thru A Lens* album cover photo became his identity when he started his solo career, and that was the idea of him being mobbed by the paparazzi.

Do you prefer shooting portraits one-on-one and without artist entourages?

Often, there's a big production behind a shoot and lots of people are involved. But I go into a



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zone. I'm wrapped up in it and all I'm looking for is that one shot – not the one before, not the one afterwards, but the one where all the elements come together. So, even when there are lots of people around, I always find that the bigger the artists are, the more well-known they are, the easier they are to work with. They've seen my work and will quite like the way I take pictures, and I know their music and will have some ideas. I might look at some other photos that have been done before, so even though there will always be people who ask, 'Can we do it this way?', I'll do what they ask for, then say, 'Let's try this'. I'll change something slightly, then I'll get into my zone.

Quite often, some of my favourite pictures are of people not looking at the camera. Mark Ronson looking away (see opposite page) is nice. The man in the Pink Floyd picture (see page 121) is looking away, and in one of my photos of Johnny Cash, he's looking away.

For me, it has always been about the picture. What I get excited about is how all the elements in the image come together, rather than who the person I'm photographing is.

The Mark Ronson shot is a great photo. How did you approach capturing it?

I photographed him at his house in the USA and there wasn't a lot of time. Initially, I was going to shoot him in the garden, but he had a place where he sat outside with a white wall behind it. The light was soft, so I didn't need a flash, and it was just him and me – there were no assistants or managers around.

When I looked at pictures of him, he was usually playing live, so I thought I'd just try to get him quietly. I tried it by the swimming pool, but it wasn't quite right. Having Mark with a white wall behind him, using a shallow depth of field, worked well.

Above: Johnny Cash, Australia. "I didn't think it was working particularly well, until the two dogs came and sat either side of Johnny. That was the picture."

Right: Pink Floyd, Spain. The album cover for *Delicate Sound of Thunder*. "It captures a surreal moment that defines their music."

There are 65 prints, a Rolling Stones video and a Robbie Williams lenticular in the show. Did you enjoy preparing for it?
It was really enjoyable and I re-scanned a lot of my original transparencies for the show. When they'd been previously scanned for books and prints, they looked OK. But by re-scanning and re-editing some of the photos, we suddenly got a lot more out of them compared with what we had before.

I moved over to digital around 2004 and bought a Hasselblad digital back for £24,000. I remember sitting in the kitchen with my wife and saying that I could buy a car for the same money! But digital became the new thing. What I find quite interesting now, having looked again at some of the pictures for the show – especially ones I took on a Linhof panoramic camera – is that once they've been re-scanned, the quality, the feel, the mood and the subtleties are amazing.

With [native] digital files, there's a slightly different look; you can suppress or boost various things in editing, but with pictures shot on film, the colours are lovely – they melt into one another. Whereas with digital, I find that it's a little bit more precise.

Did you rediscover any overlooked photos while preparing for the exhibition?
I've done other shows before, but *See or be Seen* has an educational basis, so you look at all your work in a different way. When finding the pictures, I knew roughly where everything was, but a few surprises did come up, which I really enjoyed. I'd remember a photo that I'd taken, but didn't think it had worked that well. Looking at it again, though, I could see that it had legs; it had potential. I think that's another important thing: always keep looking at your work, always keep a few favourites stuck on the fridge, just live with them the whole time.

There's a series of three pictures in the show: a red car with two shots on either side, which were all taken at different times. But there's a rhythm, and suddenly I noticed that the structure was the same, the lines were the

"I go into a zone. I'm wrapped up in it and all I'm looking for is that one shot where all the elements come together"



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Above: Self Esteem (Rebecca Lucy Taylor), the English musician, songwriter and actress, photographed in London.

Right: Sir David Attenborough in a promotional shot for the BBC's *Blue Planet* series, narrated by Sir David, with help from Elstree Studios.

same, the way they were shot was the same. The balance of these photos complements each other, and when I looked at them next to each other, I could see that these structures were present in the photos all the time.

One wall [in the exhibition] has a lot of pictures on it and I noticed that there was a bit of red in each of them, which I wasn't aware of at the time. Mark Ronson had some red on his T-shirt, there was some red in a picture of Alanis Morissette, then a girl with a red heart. For me, that's quite exciting – old pictures telling you where to go next.

Do you have any particular favourites?

The Rolling Stones video [which pioneered the 'bullet time' concept that was later used in *The Matrix* film], the Pink Floyd album cover from 1987, the Robbie Williams lenticular print where he morphs into a monkey, and the photos of Johnny Cash. I photographed Johnny at the time of such a big change in his career, in Australia and not in the United States – everything with Johnny Cash had been done in America up to then. Rick Rubin [music producer] wanted Johnny, who was dressed all in black like a preacher man, just walking down the track with a guitar case – the man on the road to everything, back on the road. I didn't think it was working particularly well until some storm clouds appeared above the field of wheat and two dogs came and sat on either side of Johnny, literally just for one or two frames. Again, all these elements came together, and that became the picture.

Another one I really like is of Dave Stewart of the Eurythmics in the bottom of a disused, graffiti-covered swimming pool (see page 117), which was one of the photos I rediscovered before the exhibition. It was like a California dream: there's blue sky, a palm tree and a swimming pool – all the elements are there, but the graffiti had given it a twist.

And that's often what I'm looking for, an extra twist or something that's slightly displaced. It's a scene that looks like it should be idyllic, but Dave is squatting in a corner of the abandoned pool with the 'Rebel' graffiti sprayed above him. And I just love the colours, the blue sky and the feel of the photo. This is the American dream, and it's beautiful, but this is the rock and roll side of it all. ●



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• *Andy Earl: See or be Seen* is open until 12 February at TheGallery at Arts University Bournemouth, Wallisdown, Poole BH12 5HH.

• *Andy Earl in Conversation: 40 Years Behind the Lens* takes place on 29 January at 17.00, also at TheGallery at Arts University Bournemouth. https://aub.ac.uk/latest/andy-earl-see-or-be-seen

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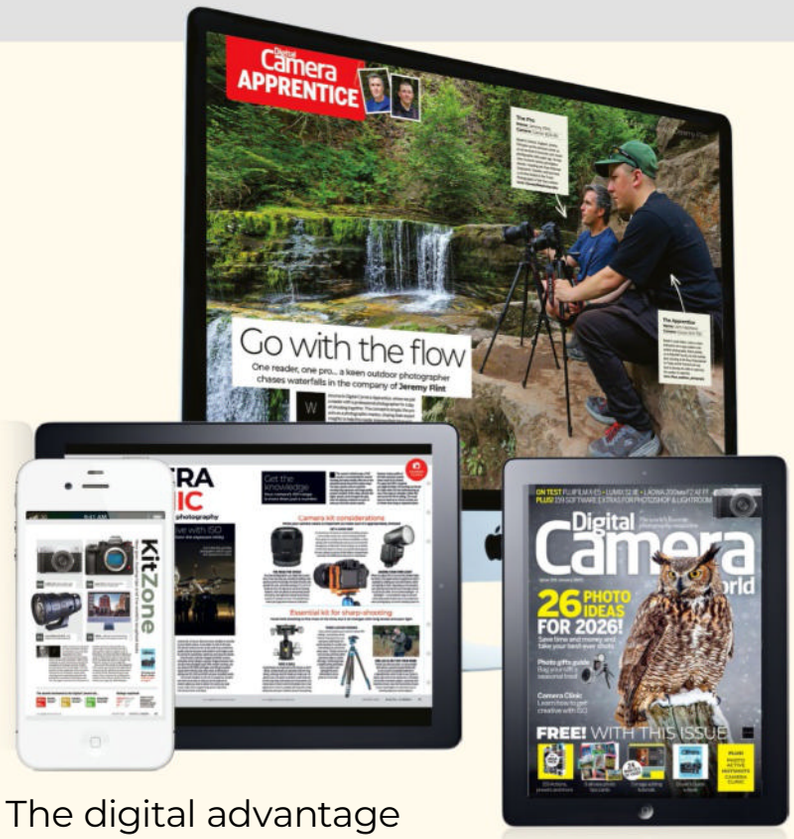
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EOS 3 body £499
A1 body box £199
AE-1 body silver £129
AE-1P body black Box £299
AE-1P body silver £219
FD 200 F4 macro £299

MINOLTA MD USED

X-700 body £199
X-300 body £99

OLYMPUS OM USED

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

Gitzo Used

GT5541LS Carbon Fibre £699



LEICA USED

Voigtlander 50 F3.5 Heliar £369
Televid 77 + 32x eyepiece £599

5x4 MONORAIL USED

Cambo Master 6 5x4 monorail £499
Cambo bag bellows £149
Wista 6x7 roll film holder £149
Wista 6x9 roll film holder £149

GITZO USED

GH3382 QD ball head £329
GT3541LS £499
GT5540LS £599
GT5541LS £699
GT5543LS £699
G2220 Explorer £199
G2380 Fluidhead £239
GM5561 monopod £249

Bronica Used

ETRSi + AEII + 75 EII + Speed Grip + 120 back £699



BRONICA ETR 645 USED

ETRSi + 75 + WLF +120 back £699
ETRSi body £299
40 F4 PE £429
50 F2.8 E MC £199
100 F4 PE macro £299
100 F4 E macro £199
135 F4 PE £349
150 F3.5 PE £299
150 F3.5 E £179
250 F5.6 E £199
120 back RWC late £99
135W back £599
135N back £249
Speed grip E £99 WLF £149
Sports finder £299
AEIII prism £349
AEII prism £199
Rotary or plain prism E £149
Macro bellows E £149

Bronica Used

SQB, 80mm, plain prism, 120 back £799



BRONICA SQ 6x6 USED

SQA, 80, WLF,120 back £699
SQB, 80 plain prism, 120 back £799
SQB, 80, WLF, 120 back £799
150 F3.5 S £299
150 F4 PS box £299
1.4x converter PS box £299
2x converter PS box £149
SQAi 120 back late £149
SQA 120 back early £99
SQAi waist level finder £169
SQAi prism AE late £399
Plain prism S £199
Prism AE early £249
SQA speed grip £99

BRONICA GS 6x7 USED

GS body, 100 F3.5, RFH, AE prism £799
50 F4.5 £299
Speed grip G £139
AE prism £199

Hasselblad Used

503CW Blue, 80 F2.8, A12, WLF £4299



HASSELBLAD 6x6 USED

SWCM with viewfinder £1999
503CW Blue, 80 F2.8, A12, WLF £4299
503CW, 80 F2.8, A12, WLF box £3999
501CM, 80 F2.8, A12, WLF £3199
501C body black £999
PME 90prism £599
PM45 prism £399
PM 90 prism £369
WLF chrome £399
A12 magazine £199/499
A16 magazine £249

Hasselblad Used

SWC/M c/w viewfinder £1999



HASSELBLAD 6x6 USED

40 F4 CFE £1699
50 F4 CFE £999
135 F5.6 CF £599
150 F4 CFI £899
150 F4 CF £499
150 F4 Black T* £399
180 F4 CF £799
250 F5.6 CF £499
250 F5.6 black T* £299
Winder CW £199
Macro bellows & hood £299

Pentax 645 Used

150-300mm F5.6 FA ED £499



PENTAX 645 AF USED

33-55 F4.5 FA £499
35 F3.5 FA HD £699
45-85 F4.5 FA £499
55 F2.8 D FA £599
55-110 F5.6 FA £499
150 F2.8 FA £599
150-300 F5.6 FA ED box £499
200 F4 FA £399
300 F5.6 FA £499 400 F5.6 FA £499

PENTAX 645 MF USED

55 F2.8 £299
80-160 F4.5 £299
135 F4 leaf box £399
200 F4 £299
300 F4 green T* £499
1.4x or 2x converter each £149
Auto ext tube set £149
Helicoid ext tube £199
REF converter angle finder £149

Sekonic Used

L358 £149



PENTAX 6x7 USED

35 F4.5 late £699
45 F4 early box £399
55 F4 late £599
75 F4.5 shift box £499
75 F4.5 box £499
90-180 F5.6 £399
100 F4 macro box £599
120 F3.5 soft focus £299
135 F4 macro £299
165 F2.8 £199 165 F4 leaf £379
200 F4 £249 300 F4 latest £199
400 F4 early £399
1.4x or 2x converter ech £199
Wooden grip £149
REF converter angle finder £149
Helicoid ext tube £149

LIGHTMETERS USED

Sekonic L308B £149
Sekonic L358 £149

40mm F4 CFE £1699



150mm F4 CFI £899



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Colin Waddell

This 'Jesus lizard' was a tricky customer, but what do we think of the image? Read the letter below

Star letter:
Rate my Lizard

I am a disabled person, mostly due to internal conditions, but this means I have free time to dedicate to my photography. I still have a lot to learn, so I would be happy for any advice you might have. This photo is of an Eastern Water Dragon, also known as the Jesus lizard because of its ability to run across small bodies of water on its back feet while using its long tail to steer. This dragon was sunning itself on the rocks when it heard a sound and looked in the ideal direction for me to take its portrait. I was also surprised by how well it blended in with the rocks. The shot was taken at Happy Valley, Queensland, Australia, with a Nikon D610 camera and Nikon 70-200mm lens. Settings: 1/500 sec at f/11, ISO 400. ***Colin Waddell, Australia***

Digital Camera says: It's a great capture, perfectly timed and, in these circumstances, you have to make the best of the scene as it will usually be gone in a flash. The composition is great, the reptile sits on the right third vertical, the tail draws you up the image, it's facing to the left, but looking right at the camera. It's a shame the tail disappears out of view, but again, that's just luck in situations like this.

The head and main body are good and sharp, so it's a pity that the rest of the foot and tail are going out of focus. A narrower aperture would have helped here, especially since it's so bright; there should be no shutter speed issues. The other issue is the overexposure where the sun falls on the rocks. With uneven light like this, it might be an idea to either use Highlight metering, or if that isn't available, dial in -0.7EV exposure compensation. It's always better to be a little underexposed than overexposed.

With uneven light like this, it might be an idea to use Highlight metering

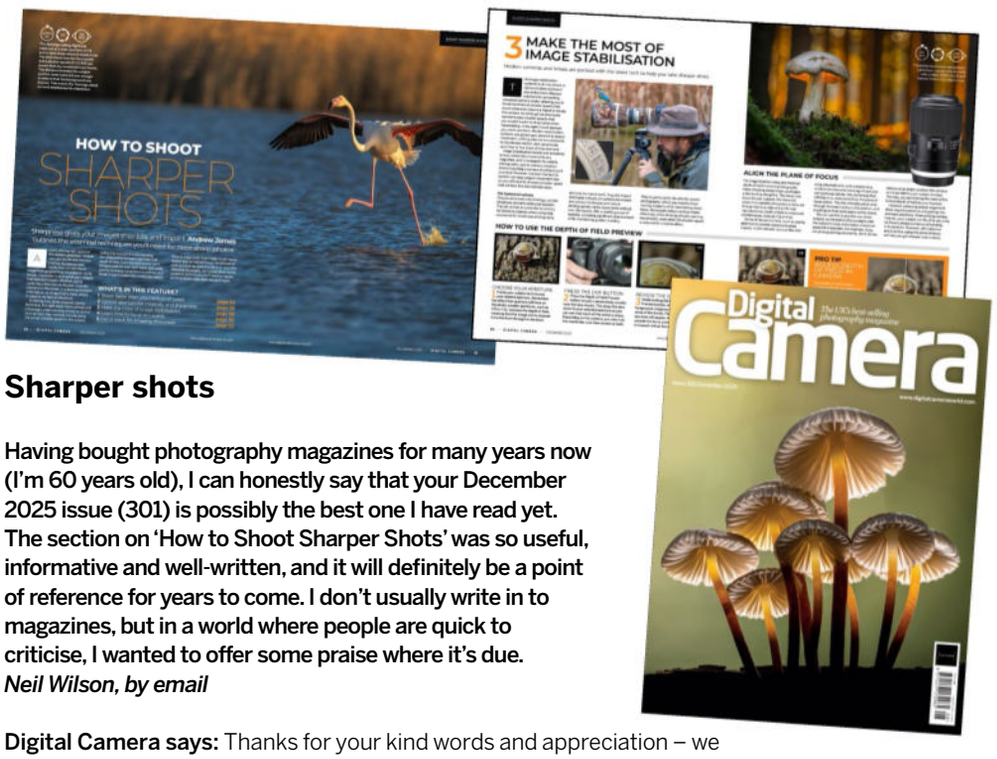


Where is Adobe Camera Raw?

I found your article 'Use Adobe Camera Raw to edit your jpegs' (*Digital Darkroom*, issue 294, May) particularly interesting. Most of the time, I prefer to shoot jpegs rather than raw files because they take a lot less time to process, and I always seem to be short of time. Also, raw files are often extremely large files to store on a computer, so I only tend to use the raw file format in bad lighting conditions.

To improve my jpegs, I use Photoshop with Image > Adjustments > Dark and Light tones, Nikon Capture NX with its fabulous U-Points or I go into DxO PhotoLab (version 1.2), which has good sliders too. However, I can't find any Filter > Camera Raw Filter in my Photoshop CS6. Does it exist in this version somewhere (or under another name), or was it introduced later in some CC version?
Lionel Gerard Colbere, France

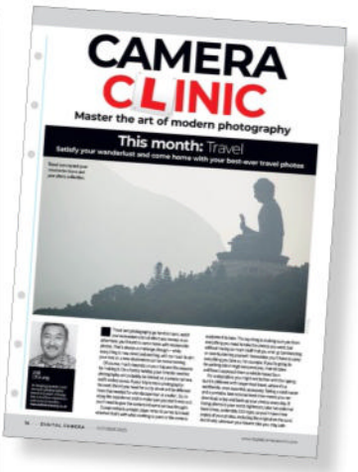
Digital Camera says: Adobe Camera Raw is indeed useful for editing jpegs as well as raw files. It was present in CS5 and CS6, though it isn't supported with the latest camera model updates. Your issue probably stems from the fact that ACR is disabled by default for jpeg images. If you go to Edit > Preferences> Camera Raw Preferences, and look at the entry at the bottom, you can change it so that it works with jpegs as well. There's a YouTube video that shows you how to do this: **www.bit.ly/dcm303_acrjpegs**



Sharper shots

Having bought photography magazines for many years now (I'm 60 years old), I can honestly say that your December 2025 issue (301) is possibly the best one I have read yet. The section on 'How to Shoot Sharper Shots' was so useful, informative and well-written, and it will definitely be a point of reference for years to come. I don't usually write in to magazines, but in a world where people are quick to criticise, I wanted to offer some praise where it's due.
Neil Wilson, by email

Digital Camera says: Thanks for your kind words and appreciation – we hope everyone found it as useful. To read any articles from previous issues, including the Shoot Sharper Shots feature, you can purchase single back issues from **www.magazinesdirect.com**



How many cameras do you use?

Your Camera Clinic on Travel (October issue, 299) had some great tips, but I also appreciated the validation – I have a work camera (Nikon D5, freelance sports), a vacation camera (Nikon Z 7II), but also a Sony RX series point and shoot, and an Olympus TG series underwater camera that I use when travelling. And I chose one lens for the mirrorless; the Tamron 35-150mm f/2-2.8 for Nikon Z is perfect for the job.
Jeff Fishbein, by email

Digital Camera says: Some cameras are definitely better suited than others for specific projects. Just this month, our technique editor Wendy put aside her heavy Nikon Z 8 in favour of the lightweight Nikon Z fc for shooting projects in London. Does anyone else use different cameras for different genres?



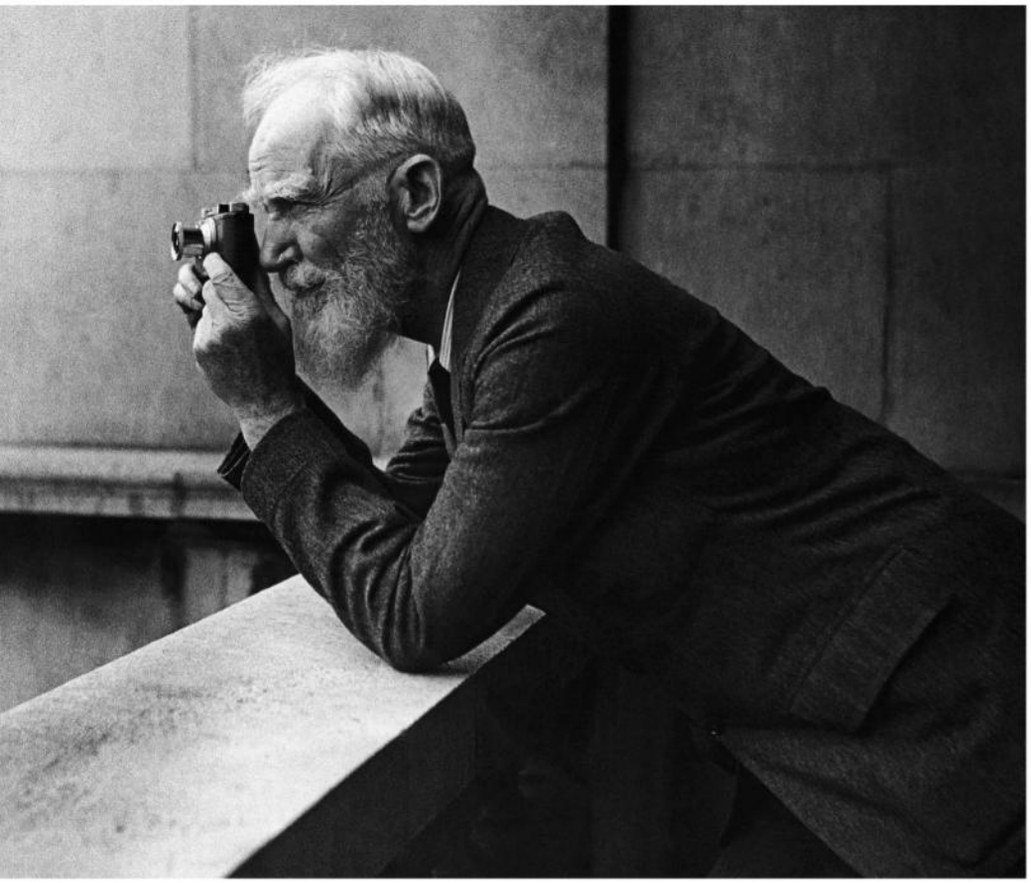
Jeff owns a selection of cameras and lenses for various subjects. Does anyone else do the same?



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!



Alamy / Alfred Eisenstaedt



1 **Who is the famous playwright using a camera?**
- A Samuel Beckett
- B Henrik Ibsen
- C Oscar Wilde
- D George Bernard Shaw

2 **The Pentax K mount has just celebrated a significant anniversary, but which one?**
- A 25th
- B 40th
- C 50th
- D 75th

3 **FPV drones are growing in popularity, but what does FPV stand for?**
- A First-Person View
- B Fully Personal Video
- C Full HD Photo Video
- D Flying Pilot View

4 **Which company has produced a cheap compact camera that doesn't have an LCD screen, so it feels a bit like using a film camera?**
- A AgfaPhoto
- B Camp Snap
- C Kodak
- D Fujifilm

5 **Which of these is not a standard full stop aperture value?**
- A f/5.6
- B f/32
- C f/18
- D f/2.8

6 **What is the name for the chemistry used for processing a colour negative film?**
- A C-4
- B C-41
- C C-42
- D A-4



7 **Martin Parr's autobiography was published shortly before he died last year. Named after a line from his school report, what was it called?**
- A Will never amount to anything
- B Cannot be trusted to behave himself
- C Utterly lazy and inattentive
- D Scored average for most things, including intelligence

8 **Google's generative image generator is named after which piece of fruit?**
- A Apple
- B Banana
- C Tomato
- D Melon

9 **Which pioneering British photographer produced the first photographic book, full of her cyanotypes?**
- A Julia Margaret Cameron
- B Mary Steen
- C Eva Watson-Schütze
- D Anna Atkins

10 **Which manufacturer still sells a compact camera that uses a Four Thirds sensor?**
- A Olympus
- B Panasonic
- C Leica
- D Zeiss

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

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Drone



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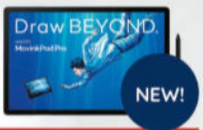


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