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Issue 312 October 2026

AUTUMN SPECIAL

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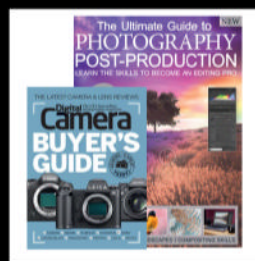


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Welcome

Autumn is almost upon us, and we're here to help you make the most of it. October's cover feature (p62) has 12 pages of pro advice for capturing the wondrous colours of the season in a variety of creative ways. You'll find more ideas for outdoor shooting in Photo Skills (p41), while Camera Clinic (p82) focuses on the key ingredient for photography – lighting. Classic car fans will enjoy the sleek lines of the automotive subjects in our Apprentice (p8), and we go behind the scenes of a solar eclipse shoot (p92). October's kit reviews include the best small cameras for taking on holiday (p106), plus new lenses from third-party brands Tamron and Meike. Enjoy the issue.

Niall

Niall Hampton, editor
niall.hampton@futurenet.com



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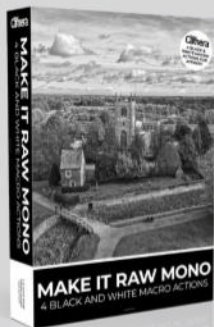


This issue's bonus gifts **Find out more on pages 6 and 104**



Nine all-new photo tips cards

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



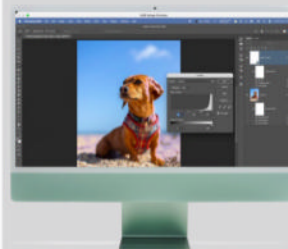
14 Actions, presets, textures and macros

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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Photo © Gelert Gombai / IPPAWARDS

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Will Cheung



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Camera Clinic _ Of all the photo skills worth learning, how to use light tops the list, says imaging expert Will Cheung. Over 10 pages, he shows you how to make the most of light... and even more importantly, how to use it right



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Apprentice _ We're at the Haynes Motor Museum in south-west England for a day of photographing cars old and new, static and moving, under the guidance of top automotive photographer James Mann... set your sat nav to page eight!

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Ken Crossan



Peter Fenech



Peter Fenech
Photographer and writer

An editor of our former sister magazine, *Digital Photographer*, Peter is also a landscape and travel photographer. He helms our autumn special feature. **Page 62**



James Mann
Automotive photographer

With decades of experience photographing some of the world's finest cars, James was an ideal choice for being the mentor in our reader photo challenge. **Page 8**

Ken Crossan



Ken Crossan
Naturalist photographer

Walks in the country led Ken to take up photography, which in turn led to him shooting natural history. See his photos of the Caithness coast from **page 120**

Kate Ventress



Helena Miscioscia
Photographer

A creative photographer based in England, Helena used a colander to shoot a portrait of her mother at the recent partial solar eclipse, and sent social media abuzz. **Page 92**



Jon Devo
Photographer and writer

Our resident tech columnist enjoys considering the latest developments in photography and digital imaging. Read his latest dispatch on **page 30**



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 82**

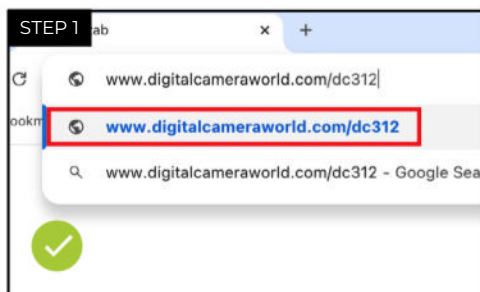
How to get your 30 digital gifts

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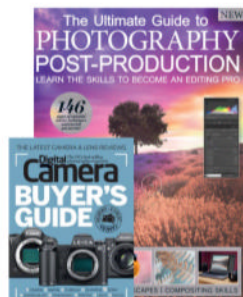
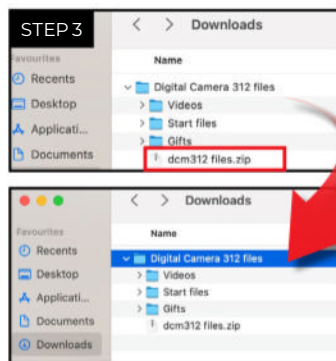
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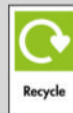
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Digital Camera APPRENTICE



The Pro

Name: James Mann

Camera: Canon EOS 5DS

Experienced automotive photographer James has travelled all over the world photographing cars, people, landscapes and events. His photos have appeared in more than 80 books and hundreds of magazines. He has also competed in classic saloon car racing and numerous classic rallies, as navigator and driver.
Website: www.jamesmann.com

The Apprentice

Name: Rufus Rogers

Camera: Nikon Z 8

A wildlife, adventure and sports photographer based in Wiltshire in the UK, Rufus recently graduated from university, so he is now free to devote more time to his photography passions. His long-form photo project, *The North Cliffs*, can be viewed on his website.

Instagram: [@rufusrogers.photo](https://www.instagram.com/rufusrogers.photo)

Website: rufusrogersphoto.com

Red route

How to shoot cars, on location at the Haynes Motor Museum, with top pro **James Mann**

W

elcome to *Digital Camera Apprentice*, where we pair a reader with a professional photographer for a day of shooting together. The concept is simple: the pro acts as a photographic mentor, sharing their expert insights to help the reader improve their favoured genre of photography – it's like a one-to-one

workshop, but one that will be enjoyed by a wider audience. This month, we're at the Haynes Motor Museum in south-west England, a leading attraction for anyone with an interest in the automotive world. Someone who knows the museum very well indeed is James Mann, a seasoned car photographer with decades of experience. James has offered to mentor Rufus Rogers, a keen enthusiast photographer →





Camera:	Nikon Z8
Lens:	Nikkor 24-120mm f/4G VR at 48mm
Exposure:	1/250 sec at f/16, ISO 200



Pro James indicates the point at which Rufus should aim his focus in the shot above.

ABOVE: 'ENTRANCE DISPLAY'

THE APPRENTICE: "Having waited for museum visitors to pass through the scene, I wanted a clean image of the cars, shooting down the line."

THE PRO: "This great establishing shot in the foyer is a mix of daylight, spotlighting and a pop of flash in the foreground to fill in the nearest front grille."

who has just graduated from university. Alongside wildlife and adventure photography, Rufus also loves shooting action and has a passion for cars, so he didn't need any encouragement to apply to be this month's Apprentice. And while most of our day at Haynes Motor Museum will be spent focusing on the static indoor displays, the museum has kindly offered us the chance to shoot one of the exhibits outside in the afternoon – driven by a volunteer – so Rufus can practise his action photography skills. *Digital Camera* was delighted and requested a red Ford Mustang.



Rufus Rogers



Haynes Motor Museum

Thanks to... Haynes Motor Museum

Located in Somerset in south-west England, the museum is home to 300 vehicles, housed within 15 exhibition spaces. It's a great day out for lovers of all things automobile, celebrating the impact of motorised vehicles on humankind and telling the stories behind the engineering endeavours of the people behind them. The museum was founded in 1985 by the automotive publisher John Haynes, creator of the eponymous car manuals beloved by DIY mechanics across the world. Address: Haynes Motor Museum, Sparkford, Somerset BA22 7LH www.haynesmuseum.org

Meeting in the museum's excellent café on the appointed day, we make our introductions, then go to discuss our proposed shoot plan with the museum's reception staff. We're shooting on a Wednesday in the school summer holidays, during standard museum hours, so we'll have to fit around the paying visitors. This means being considerate at all times and not impeding access to any of the exhibits, and most importantly of all, making sure that members of the public don't appear in any of Rufus's photographs.

We put this into practice straight away, as James suggests starting the shoot in the

reception area, where there are around a dozen cars, many from top-end brands. While there's more natural light here than anywhere else in the museum, it's also the main walking route from the museum to the café, so there's some intermittent footfall to contend with.

An editorial assignment

Rufus sets up his tripod, mounts his Nikon Z 8 full-frame mirrorless on it and attaches his 24-120mm lens. With all his experience of shooting photos for magazines, James wants Rufus to treat today like an editorial assignment. How would Rufus meet

How to shoot cars

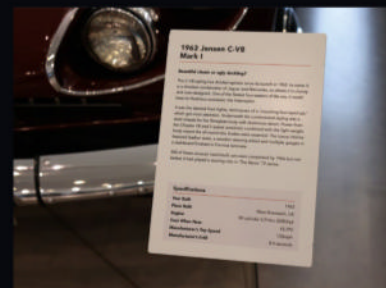
Things to bear in mind when taking pictures in a motor museum



Rufus Rogers

1 Be considerate

If you're photographing during opening hours, be mindful of visitors enjoying the exhibits and displays. Wait for the frame to be clear of people before taking the shot, and if you do have to ask someone to move, be friendly and polite.



2 Information boards

Don't risk capturing a superb shot of one of the cars, then not remembering which one it is. A quick photo of the sign next to the vehicle will help identify it, and a fun fact or two on the sign might make it worth taking some extra shots.



Rufus Rogers

3 Composition

Enable the rule of thirds grid in your viewfinder and frame up carefully. Consider the point of view. Don't always shoot at shoulder height: go low for a 'hero' shot. To avoid reflections in the bodywork, shift your shooting position.

"While most of our day at the museum will focus on the static indoor displays, we're doing an action shoot in the afternoon"

Technique assessment

Top tips for terrific photos of cars – whether static or on the move



1 Camera settings

For full control of aperture and shutter speed, Rufus shot in Manual mode all day. He kept the ISO around 200 for clean images, aimed for apertures around f/11 to avoid diffraction and selected Auto White Balance.



2 Autofocus mode

For any static shots of cars, a single autofocus point and single-shot autofocus were ideal. To capture the Ford Mustang in motion in the afternoon, Continuous AF was enabled, with a small cluster of autofocus points.



3 Shoot raw files

The Nikon Z 8 is a high-resolution camera, so shooting uncompressed raw files means that Rufus can get the most from every pixel. Plus, raw files allow colour temperature (white balance) settings to be changed during editing.



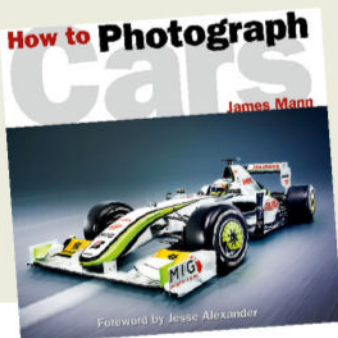
Our pro's kit Canon EOS 5DS

Launched in 2015, this camera still holds the record for the highest-resolution full-frame DSLR, with a 50.6MP sensor and 61-point autofocus system. It's popular with professionals who need to output high-resolution prints. James uses his 5DS with lenses including a Canon EF 17-40mm f/4L and a 70-200mm f/2.8L. www.canon.co.uk

Buy James's book!

How to Photograph Cars explains how to shoot outstanding pictures of cars in every situation, from studio to location, static and at speed. Published in 2016, its print run sold out, but copies can be obtained from sellers of pre-owned books, including Amazon.

www.jamesmann.com



the needs of a magazine's art editor, James asks? Rufus knows about print resolutions and colour spaces, but there are other variables to consider when shooting editorial photographs – leaving room for text to be overlaid, and avoiding elements sitting in the middle of the frame when composing an image that might be used across a spread.

With this in mind, our apprentice soon has Super Shot #1 on his memory card. A line of cars including a Rolls-Royce, a Bentley and a Porsche; there's space for text to appear in the top right and bottom left... captured at 1/250 sec to keep the shoot moving quickly.

“A longer shutter speed to capture more light also means the faces of any visitors walking around the car will be blurred”



Rufus Rogers

Camera:	Nikon Z 8
Lens:	Nikkor 24-120mm f/4G VR at 32mm
Exposure:	1/2 sec at f/11, ISO 200

ABOVE: 'THE RED ROOM'

THE APPRENTICE: “The symmetry that James suggested made for a good composition. In hindsight, a higher angle might have been better.”

THE PRO: “Symmetry is the key here, with a long exposure and the camera on a tripod using the self-timer and available museum lighting.”

Entering the museum, we pass through the John H Haynes room, which explains how the publisher of the eponymous Haynes repair manuals established the museum to house his collection of cars all under one roof, instead of being spread around various sites.



SUPER SHOT #2

From there, we head into the Red Room, a sizeable space devoted to 40 cars of varying hues of red (ignore the paint, concentrate on the car, said John Haynes). Our pro guides his apprentice to a 1939 Delahaye 135DM DHC, the centrepiece of a display. The illumination comes from spotlights, unlike the reception area, so our pro suggests using a longer shutter speed to capture more light. There's another advantage of doing this: the faces of anyone walking around the car will be blurred.

With a few extra frames as backup, Super Shot #2 is ticked off – and there's space on either side of the car for any text to appear.

Old-timers

Retracing our steps, we pause to admire some exhibits in the Veteran & Vintage section. We peer at a 1928 Rolls-Royce Overland special, powered by a Rolls-Royce V12 27-litre tank engine – it's the



Fine-tuning the framing options for a shot in the Wheels Around the World exhibition hall.



SUPER SHOT #3

Camera:	Nikon Z 8
Lens:	Nikkor 24-120mm f/4G VR at 28mm
Exposure:	1/2 sec at f/11, ISO 200



Rufus opted not to use flash for this photo, shooting from a tripod instead for a half-second exposure at a medium aperture and a low ISO.

ABOVE: 'WILLIAMS HEROES'

THE APPRENTICE: "I saw this photo straight away when we walked in, having the famous FW14 at an angle to lead the viewer's eyes into the image."

THE PRO: "A strong graphic background and knowing this car is the most famous one in the Williams F1 room really makes the shot."

biggest engine in a vehicle in the Haynes Museum collection, according to a sign.

An advantage of visiting the museum with someone like James is that in addition to all his technical expertise, he knows which cars photograph well and exactly where to find them. James leads the way to the Wheels Around the World hall, where he has his eye

on a Fiat X1/9, a two-seater sports car manufactured between 1972 and 1982.

The spotlights suspended from the ceiling don't illuminate the cars evenly; some areas are darker. James suggests that Rufus fills the shadows with flash, but a technical problem will need to be overcome. Nikon-shooter Rufus doesn't have a flash with him; James has a flashgun, but it's Canon-compatible only.

James proposes a workaround. To keep the ISO value low, for producing images with negligible digital noise, plus a narrow aperture for front-to-back sharpness, Rufus's Z 8 (again, mounted on a tripod) is giving a shutter speed of 1.3 seconds. James asks Rufus to count him in, following



Rufus Rogers



Duesenberg display



Fiat X1/9

Rufus Rogers

Pro tip Shooting indoors

Prioritising image quality and depth of field in low-light conditions meant that our apprentice had to use a tripod for all his interior photos. Bumping the ISO to enable handheld shutter speeds would have introduced digital noise to the images, and while modern software can deal effectively with noise, it is better to avoid it at the point of capture. For low ISO values and longer exposures to capture as much light as possible, shooting from a tripod was essential. The museum placed no restrictions on Rufus using a tripod, but working in a space with such valuable exhibits, he had to be careful when using it. "With cars that are worth tens of millions, always have one tripod leg pointing towards the car," James advised. "If the tripod is at risk of falling over, then it won't fall towards the car – it will fall in another direction."

Camera skills Fill flash

As the illumination from the spotlights was uneven, fill flash was used to lift the darker areas. This is typically achieved using off-camera flash fired by a remote trigger, but our apprentice's camera and our pro's flash wouldn't communicate. So James fired his flash manually, syncing with Rufus's camera shutter. "With a bit of practice, you can do exposures of half or one-quarter of a second," James says. "The key is taking a few exposures and varying the flash power. In the film days, you had to use gels to balance mixed lighting, but it's rare to have discolouration in images from a digital camera."



the countdown on the camera's self-timer (which Rufus is using in preference to pressing the shutter, so there's no chance of causing camera shake), then James will fire the flashgun using its test-firing button.

As the flash isn't linked to the camera in any way, it has to be used in Manual mode, where the flash power is expressed in fractions from 1/1 to 1/128. James and Rufus shoot a few

frames to practise their timing and find a power setting where the flash isn't too bright – James settles on 1/4 power. Rufus takes some more shots, and they check the results.

"This is looking good," enthuses James. "See these little highlights on the bodywork? They're called speculars, and you won't get rid of all of them with flash, but you can clone them out in editing afterwards."

1930s glamour

Continuing our progress around the museum, our pro and apprentice deploy fill flash again, in The American Dream hall, for a shot foregrounded by a burgundy 1959 Cadillac Sedan DeVille. Again, it's all about adding light to the scene, to give the exposure (0.6 sec at f/11, ISO 200) a boost, without having to increase the ISO or reduce the depth of field of a photo where the number plate on the furthest-away car needs to be readable.

James wants Rufus to capture a few more pictures before a quick pit stop ahead of the afternoon's outdoor session. One of these is the Duesenberg display, a trio of 1930s cars on a riser at the end of the hall. →

"As well as all his technical expertise, our pro knows which cars photograph well and exactly where to find them in the museum"

SUPER SHOT #4



Camera:	Nikon Z 8
Lens:	Nikkor 24-120mm f/4G VR at 44mm
Exposure:	1/400 sec at f/11, ISO 200

Pro tip **Detail shots and interiors**

When shooting editorial photos of cars, the magazine or website will want to have a series of detail shots to accompany the full exterior views. These will typically include the pictures that our apprentice has captured here. Classic cars are often works of art in their own right,

with many aesthetic features worthy of being photographed. Our pro James Mann has a power tip for taking detail and interior shots.

"When the car is nice and clean, start the shoot with a series of static shots," he says. "What you don't want to do is make the

bodywork dirty by shooting action photos, then having to clean the car afterwards."

For wheel shots, make sure the badges are horizontal, and use the roof of the cabin as a diffuser: shoot from the rear seat and bounce some flash off the fabric above, adds James.



All photos by Rufus Rogers

OPPOSITE: 'MAGAZINE COVER PHOTO'

THE APPRENTICE: "Standing on a ladder and shooting down onto the Ford Mustang, I made sure that the car was big in the frame."

THE PRO: "The parallax effect is a great tool to guide the eye to your subject, and the extra height of the camera position offers a fresh perspective."

John Haynes described Duesenberg as "Perhaps the best car in the world, ever". The centrepiece car is a 1931 Duesenberg Model J, with an Auburn Model 852 Speedster in the foreground (Auburn was a part of the Duesenberg empire), and they instantly evoke the glamour of 1930s Hollywood.

Rufus takes some shots of the display, shooting with the tripod head at shoulder height for a natural perspective. Next door is the Williams F1 hall, where Rufus photographs the 1991 Williams FW14 driven by Nigel Mansell in the 1991 Formula 1 season. Captured with a 0.5 sec exposure, this becomes Rufus's Super Shot #3 (page 14).

Pro tip **Cornering**

Find a safe shooting position and use a long lens (between 150-300mm). With the car taking the corner around 10mph, wait for it to change from coming towards you to crossing in front of you. "That's the point when you press the shutter," says James. Recommended shutter speeds: 1/500-1/650 sec.



Rufus Rogers

Pro tip **Panning**

With the car side-on, follow its movement smoothly. The slower the car is travelling, the faster the shutter speed needs to be. "Start with 1/250 sec, then slow down to 1/30 sec," James says. "1/125-1/60 sec will give a good hit rate." Here, Rufus used a focal length of 110mm on a 70-200mm lens.



Rufus Rogers

Under the bonnet

James wants to show Rufus the Hall of Motorsport, so we walk over to the opposite corner of the museum. Here, the display of Grand Prix racing and rally cars evokes a period of motorsport that Rufus is too young to have known, but some *DC* readers may remember the 1971 Ford Escort Mexico.

There are two more photos to tick off while we're indoors. So far, James has got Rufus to focus on exterior views of the exhibits to test his framing and exposure skills, but another key aspect of automotive photography is what's under the bonnet. James suggests a 1960 Chevrolet Corvette C1, as its V8 engine is pleasing on the eye. He asks one of the museum staff to open the hood and helps Rufus set up. Again, the flash needs to be fired manually to help define the chrome air filter and blue cylinder head covers against the dark engine block and its components.

Pro portfolio James Mann

James Mann



Jaguar E Type V12

"We parked it in a taxi rank in the middle of a London street to get this shot. It probably took about 30 images to get the buses in the right place, shooting at a range of exposures from 1 second down to 1/15 sec."

James Mann



Tunnel Porsche

"I tried this shot in several tunnels, but many of them had distracting overhead lighting or were too long and dark. This one was ideal. The camera was mounted on a small sucker rig, and the light in the foreground gave us some extra detail for the 1 sec exposure."

James Mann



Alfa Romeo SZ detail

"Big close-ups of car details often work well, but you need to be careful to keep the image clean, making sure to avoid any distracting reflections produced by the shiny surface of the chrome."



From the top: Our pro's ladder allows Rufus to get a commanding perspective. Bouncing in light for close-ups of the front wheel. Panning at 30mph.

Rufus Rogers

Camera:	Canon EOS 5DS
Lens:	Canon EF 17-40mm f/4L USM at 40mm
Exposure:	1/30 sec at f/22, ISO 160

Rufus then deploys his newly acquired skills on a 1994 Tatra T613-4, a luxury sedan hailing from the Czech Republic with an air-cooled V8 sitting between its rear wheels.

It has been a busy morning, a brisk walk around a museum that really needs a whole day, so we race to the café for a quick image review session – and an excellent Cornish pasty – before venturing outdoors.

Mustang sally forth

The museum isn't running its outdoor vehicle displays today, due to the temperature being 28C, but it is making a 2005 Ford Mustang GT Coupe available to us for a couple of hours. We sally forth to the overflow car park to meet Alan, a volunteer who will drive the Mustang for us. James runs through his proposed shoot plan with Alan and Rufus: before progressing to motion shots, our apprentice will focus on static views of the car.

Again, the objective here is a low ISO for clean images, at a narrow aperture for as much front-to-back sharpness as possible. With so much light available, Rufus can dial in fast shutter speeds and shoot handheld. After capturing a shot from an elevated height (Super Shot #4), and a series of close-up details, it's time to get some wheels in motion.

With half of the car park to ourselves, Rufus attempts a series of signature automotive photography shots: cornering, panning and tracking. This requires Alan to make repeated loops of the car park, so Rufus gets plenty of chances to hone the techniques.

Things are going swimmingly for our apprentice until all the action empties his camera battery. He doesn't have a spare on him, and there's no time for charging, but our pro comes to the rescue. Rufus shoots the tracking shots on James's Canon, then we're setting the sat navs for our drives home. ●



Pro tip **Tracking**

This shouldn't be attempted on a public road. On the 'camera car', ideally a hatchback, pull over the rear seatbelts and have the other car follow at a distance of five metres. Both cars should be travelling at steady speeds of up to 30mph. Use a lens between 28-50mm and shutter speeds of 1/125-1/30 sec.



ABOVE: 'MUSTANG TRACKING'

THE APPRENTICE: "I positioned the car so there was room in the frame for it to drive into. Shooting at 1/30 sec, it took a few attempts to get it right."

THE PRO: "A great result, Rufus. The car-to-car hit rate depends on a steady hand, a smooth road, good drivers and the correct shutter speed."



Apprentice verdict

"It has been an amazing day. Shooting outside, I was in my comfort zone, but I learned lots of new things about taking pictures indoors from James."



Pro verdict

"Rufus has been the perfect apprentice today. As a wildlife shooter, he already has a high level of skill and picked up the motion techniques quickly."

BE OUR NEXT **APPRENTICE!**

Are you looking to take your photography to the next level, whatever genre you shoot? *Digital Camera* can help. Let us know what you'd like some help with, and we could pair you up with a top pro for the day! Email us with 'The Apprentice' in the subject line, let us know which camera you use and share some examples of your photos. Apprentice shoots take at least half a day and you'll need to be able to travel to them independently.

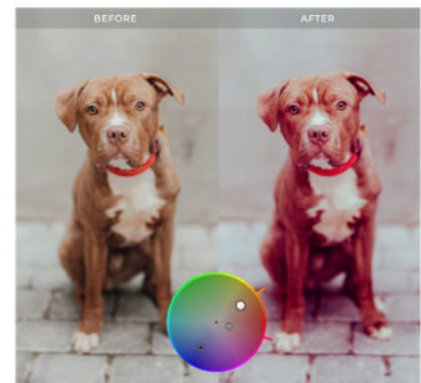
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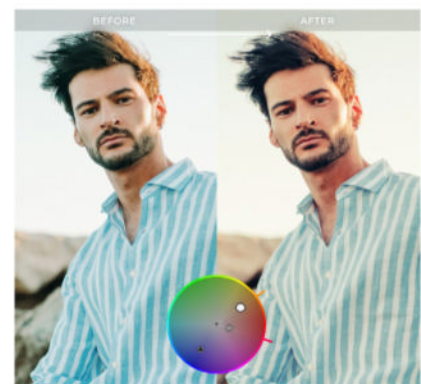
Photography news from around the globe

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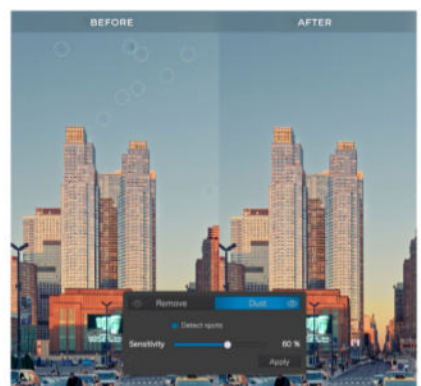
PL DxO PhotoLab 10



2 COLOUR GRADING 1
A powerful new Colour Grading tool has been introduced and is designed to make advanced colour work both intuitive and precise.



3 COLOUR GRADING 2
A streamlined interface with a single colour wheel allows users to adjust shadows, midtones, highlights and the overall colour balance.



4 SENSOR DUST REMOVAL
Automatic detection and removal of sensor dust and small imperfections before entering the editing process.

1 EXPANDED AI CAPABILITIES

The suite of tools now includes individual people selection, face segmentation and automatic sensor dust removal. AI Masks can now identify every person within a scene (above).

DxO unveils PhotoLab 10

New masking tools, powerful colour grading capabilities, smarter AI-assisted workflows and more... some headlines from the latest PhotoLab update

Based in France, DxO is perhaps best known for its Nik Collection of plugins, which can either be used standalone or in other image editors, such as Adobe Photoshop. DxO also offers an all-in-one image editor, PhotoLab, which combines image browsing and organising with advanced non-destructive editing of both raw files and jpegs. The brand has traditionally focused on extracting every ounce of quality from raw files, but version 10 expands that vision, says DxO.

Depth Masks are a powerful new way to create local adjustments based on distance from the camera, rather than shape or colour, and allow photographers to precisely target foreground, mid-ground or

background elements in a scene. A powerful new Color Grading tool is designed to make advanced colour work intuitive and precise, says DxO, and PhotoLab 10's AI-powered editing tools have been expanded to make complex edits faster and more efficient.

Local adjustment tools have been upgraded, with a new Control Brush and the ability to switch Control Points from circular to elliptical. These masking improvements allow users to choose the most effective selection method for every image, so that sophisticated local adjustments become faster, more intuitive and more precise.

**Find out more at: www.dxo.com;
£229.99/\$249.99 (new). £114.99/
\$129.99 (upgrade from PhotoLab 8 or 9).**

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Music Photo Pro

Top touring photographer Christie Goodwin launches dedicated coaching app

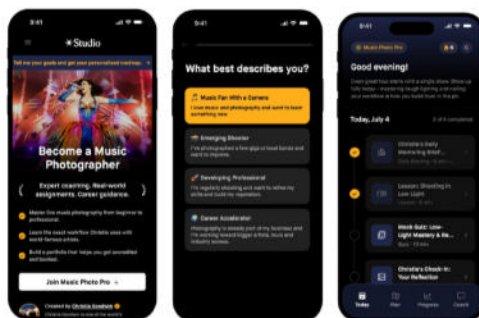
An app for emerging music photographers looking to break into the music industry, Music Photo Pro has been released at a time of rising demand for live music content. And as a renowned touring photographer for over 25 years, Christie has plenty of expertise to share.

While Music Photo Pro develops the technical and creative skills needed to capture powerful live images, it also goes backstage – helping the user understand venue access, relationships and the professional structures behind live music. Open to photographers of all levels, the app includes practical resources, such as templates for pitching for work, guidance on working in 'the pit', licensing, copyright and more.

Find out more at: studio.com/christiegoodwin/musicphoto. £72.55/\$99 per quarter (3-Month Plan); £182.47/\$249 per year (Annual Plan)



Christie Goodwin



Samyang AF 60-180mm F2.8 FE

New zoom completes a 'holy trinity' of budget lenses from the brand (Rokinon in the US)

An affordable alternative to the more traditional 70-200mm f/2.8 trinity zoom, the Samyang AF 60-180mm F2.8 FE has been co-engineered with German optical brand Schneider Kreuznach. The lens has a nine-bladed aperture and comprises 17 elements in 14 groups, including one high refractive, seven extra-low dispersion and two aspherical elements, combining to reduce aberrations and deliver sharper, clearer images.

The lens also features a linear stepper motor (STM), and the physical controls include an AF/MF switch, a focusing ring, a zoom lock and a USB-C port for firmware updates. A weather-sealed optic, the Samyang AF 60-180mm F2.8 FE accommodates filters via a 77mm thread.

Find out more at: www.lksamyang.com; £949/\$TBC



Samyang

Focal point

Rounding up what's new and exciting this month



52 Assignments Night Street Photography

The latest addition to this popular series has a year's worth of projects designed to hone photographing urban life at night. It is written by leading educator and photographer Brian Lloyd Duckett. www.ammonitepress.com; £12.99/\$14.99



Major update for AI-powered Luminar photo editor

Known for its sky replacement tools, Luminar's latest update improves usability, enhances software performance and optimises its AI tools. And more is coming – an autumn update will focus on atmospheric effects, and much more. www.skylum.com; from £99/\$99

New edition of Robert Capa's Death in the Making book

A reprint of the original book published in 1938, the new edition replicates the original layout, caption text and preface, and "dramatically improves the image quality". An essay with new information about the original book also appears. www.damianibooks.com; £40/\$50

Courtesy of Damian Books





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Packed with news, camera and lens reviews, buying guides and much more, this leading photography website is home to all the things you love about digital imaging.

Website: www.digitalcameraworld.com

ENTER NOW! Travel Photographer of the Year 2026 is open for entries

Showcasing photographic talent from around the globe, this competition celebrates the best in contemporary travel photography. A range of categories can be entered, and there's also a public vote. Entries close on Monday 12 October.

Website: www.tpoty.com **Fees:** £14/\$19 (one photo) or £28/\$37 (4-image portfolio)



Billingham Icon

A 12-litre messenger bag from the makers of the Hadley range

Designed for commuting, travelling and carrying daily essentials, the Icon Messenger Bag is a new everyday carry option from the makers of the much-loved Hadley range.

While pitched primarily as an everyday messenger bag, there's nothing stopping photographers from turning an Icon into a discreet mobile shooting solution. Add a suitable protective pouch or

1 SIGNATURE BILLINGHAM FINISHES

The Icon bag is available in several of the company's familiar canvas FibreNyte and leather combinations.

Billingham's optional Capsule 1 insert, and there's enough room for anything from a premium compact camera to the likes of a Fujifilm X-E5 body and a small lens. A laptop measuring up to 14 inches, or a tablet computer, can be accommodated within the Icon's full-width internal pocket. The Billingham Icon's internal capacity is 12 litres.

Find out more at: billingham.co.uk; £330/\$377



1 EASY ON THE SHOULDERS

Lighter and more compact than the G Master and third-party versions, the lens weighs 654g.

Sony FE 100-400mm F5.6-8 OSS

Designed for hobbyist users who have never experienced shooting with a telephoto lens

Described as a lens "built for the future to grow your skill", the Sony FE 100-400mm F5.6-8 OSS is a non-G Master offering that enables E-mount users to experience genres like birding, wildlife and aircraft or trainspotting, along with fully exploring other areas like travel,

landscapes and family photography. The lens has a 10-group optical formula with 15 elements, including a pair of extra-low dispersion (to suppress chromatic aberrations) and a pair of aspherical (to control aberrations) elements, with new multi-coatings. Dual linear motors offer fast

and precise autofocus without noise, says Sony, and enable the lens to keep up with the tracking and burst speeds of Sony's top cameras. It also features a nine-blade aperture and teleconverter compatibility.

Find out more at: www.sony.co.uk; £799/\$849



Storm warning



This is a shopping forecast issued on behalf of customers of Christopher Ward, Bell Street, Maidenhead. General synopsis for September 2026. **Trident Biscay Automatic.**

New pressure north, occasionally backing north-west. Anodised aluminium bezel, 250 HV Vickers, moving 0 to 12. Anti-cyclonic, 360 degrees. Visibility clear. Legibility and luminosity excellent to depths of 200 metres. Movement accuracy variable, minus four, veering plus six, constant. Sales storms, force 10, imminent.

Do your research.



Christopher
Ward

christopherward.com



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**OPEN NOW! Sony World Photography Awards 2027**

This leading global photography competition is free to enter. SWPA consists of four competitions: Series (previously the Professional competition), Single Image (previously the Open competition), Student and Youth. Closing dates vary – check the website.

Website: www.worldphoto.org/sony-world-photography-awards

**1 OSMO POCKET 4P VLOG COMBO**

Also includes the FrameTap remote controller (handy when recording alone), DJI Mic Mini 2 transmitter, compact tripod, larger carrying case and additional accessories.

2 DJI OSMO POCKET 4P
The Pocket 4P adds a second 60mm-equivalent f/1.8 camera, with a genuine 3x telephoto perspective – ideal for capturing cinematic-looking footage.



DJI Osmo Pocket 4P

Update to brand's pocket gimbal camera adds a 3x telephoto

Bringing a dual-camera system to DJI's pocket gimbal camera range for the first time, the DJI Osmo Pocket 4P is more than a modest update to the standard Pocket 4, launched in April this year. The Pocket 4P's main camera combines a 20mm equivalent f/2 lens with a 1-inch CMOS sensor, while a second 60mm equivalent f/1.8 camera introduces a genuine 3x telephoto perspective.

This gives filmmakers far greater control over composition and makes the camera particularly attractive for portraits, interviews, product videos and more cinematic-looking footage. DJI has also introduced 10-bit D-Log 2 recording and claims up to 17 stops of dynamic range from the main camera. Video can be

captured at up to 4K 60p during normal recording, while the wide-angle camera offers 4K slow-motion at up to 240fps.

A 3-axis mechanical stabilisation system, ActiveTrack 8.0 and the rotating 2-inch screen complete what is easily the most ambitious Osmo Pocket camera DJI has produced so far.

The Standard Combo is the most affordable way to get started and includes the Osmo Pocket 4P, a fill light, a carrying pouch and a handle with a quarter-inch tripod thread.

However, for anyone planning to use the Pocket 4P regularly for vlogging or professional content, the £605 Vlog Combo is likely to offer better overall value.

Find out more at: www.dji.com;
£529/\$N/A (Standard Combo);
£605/\$N/A (Vlog Combo)

3**3 STABILISATION AND CHOICE OF COLOURS**

There's a 3-axis mechanical stabilisation system, and the Osmo Pocket 4P is available in black or pearl white (retailer-dependent).



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AskMatthew

All your questions answered. Send your questions to digitalcamera@futurenet.com



Matthew Richards

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



Photo by Artur Widak/NurPhoto via Getty Images

A bonus of using APS-C crop mode in full-frame cameras and lenses is that you can cherry-pick the best image quality from the centre of the frame, which is useful for sports and wildlife photography.

Get more reach

Q I often find that I'm lacking telephoto reach for sports and wildlife photography. Are there any advantages to using APS-C crop mode on a full-frame camera, instead of buying a teleconverter?

Martin Dicks

A There are indeed! For starters, many lenses aren't compatible with teleconverters, as they lack the necessary physical

space between the mounting plate and rear optical element. Next up, teleconverters can be quite pricey, and you'll have to carry an extra bit of kit around with you. There can also be some degradation in image quality and autofocus speed. Last but not least, a 1.6x teleconverter will cost you an f/stop in aperture reduction, and it's two full f/stops for a 2x teleconverter.

Switching your full-frame camera to APS-C crop mode gives you an 'effective' 1.5x extension of telephoto reach (1.6x for Canon), with no loss of aperture rating, nor any other degradations, and no financial outlay. The only real catch is that you'll get a reduced megapixel count for your photos, from around 24MP to 10MP or 45P to 19MP, by way of example.



You can also add versatility to prime lenses by using the APS-C crop factor, for example, transforming a 50mm standard lens into a portrait-friendly 75mm prime.



The 10-stop Hoya ProND EX Filter is a quality item, available in various filter thread sizes from 49mm to 82mm. The 77mm option costs around £90 (\$90). Three-stop and six-stop versions are also available.

Through a dark glass

Q I'm after a 10-stop neutral density filter so that I can take long exposures under bright lighting conditions. Would you recommend a square or circular type of filter?

Sue Salmon

A Back in the days of film and DSLRs that lacked Live View, I used square 10-stop filters like the Lee Big Stopper. With the filter in place, the viewfinder image was basically black, so taking photos was quite literally like a 'shot in the dark'. With square filters that fit into a holder on the front of the lens, it's easy to compose the shot and focus without the filter, then simply slot it into the holder.

However, the live exposure preview that's available in mirrorless cameras is a game-changer for 10-stop filters, as you can view the composition and focus accurately even with the filter attached, so screw-in filters are more convenient.

Buy one, get one free

Q I'm looking for a travel tripod, and somebody told me about a new Heipi model that is 'three tripods in one'. How does it work, and is it any good?

Graham Forster

A The carbon fibre Heipi 3-in-1 Travel Tripod's party trick is that it has a three-pillar centre column that lifts out and transforms into a standalone mini-tripod or selfie stick. The supplied ball head can be mounted on either set of legs and features an integral smartphone mount. I've extensively tested the Heipi, and although it isn't the sturdiest tripod in the world, it's definitely one of the most versatile.

Thanks to its innovative three-pillar centre column, the Heipi Travel Tripod is more like two tripods in one, with a selfie stick thrown in for good measure, for a grand total of £349 (\$399).



Second-hand superstar

A go-faster 35mm prime for Canon and Nikon DSLRs that was something rather special

Q I've been a Tamron fan since the early 1980s, when I used some of its 'Adaptall' lenses. Would the 'special' 35mm lens be a good used buy for my Canon DSLR?

Charlie Yates

A **Matthew recommends...**
Tamron SP 35mm F/1.4 Di USD

This gem of a lens is the very definition of 'second-hand superstar', if ever there was one



Cooked up to celebrate the 40th birthday of Tamron SP lenses, the 35mm was designed to be something of a showstopper

Released (year): 2019

Price new £799/\$899

'Excellent' £549/\$575

'Good' £475/\$500

Every once in a while, something special comes along. Tamron really pushed the boat out when designing this 35mm prime, announcing it as the 'ultimate lens to commemorate the 40th anniversary of SP series lenses'. In Tamron's vernacular, SP stands for 'Superior Performance', so it's off to a good start. Moreover, the 35mm was developed to showcase Tamron's expertise and craftsmanship, combining exceptional resolution with beautiful bokeh, fast and accurate Ultrasonic Silent Drive autofocus, next-gen coatings and multiple weather-seals. It's a proper gem of a lens for Canon and Nikon DSLRs, although the timing could have been better, with it being launched just as the world went mirrorless.

1 USD autofocus

Old-fashioned ring-type ultrasonic autofocus comes with full-time mechanical manual override and a focus distance scale under a viewing panel.

2 BBAR-G2 coating

The lens boasts the much-improved (and still-used) second generation of Broad-Band Anti-Reflection coating, a warrior in the fight against ghosting and flare.

3 Glass fest

The optical layout includes four LD (Low Dispersion) elements and three GM (Glass Moulded Aspherical) elements.

Elements/groups: 14/10
Aperture diaphragm: 9 blades
Optical stabilisation: No
Min focus distance: 0.3m
Max magnification: 0.2x
Filter size: 72mm
Dimensions: (L x D) 105 x 81mm
Weight: 815g (Canon), 805g (Nikon)

Readers' Letters

Have a burning question about the future of photography? Want to discuss a feature or a tutorial in the magazine? Send us your letters...

★ Star letter prize ★

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Neil Hudspeth

Neil's shot (left) of the endangered and native red squirrel, taken near Wooler in Northumberland. Neil was inspired by issue 310's Apprentice reader challenge.

Star letter: Save our red squirrels!

I would sincerely like to congratulate you and your team on the excellent article about red squirrels (August issue, 310) and the dangers they face. It was encouraging to see the iconic native species receiving such well-deserved attention. Your article highlighted not only the beauty and importance of red squirrels but also the very real threats they continue to face, including habitat loss, road traffic, disease and competition from the invasive North American grey squirrel.

As someone with an interest in photography and red squirrel conservation, I found the article both informative and inspiring. I hope it encourages more people to appreciate these

remarkable animals and to play their part in protecting them for future generations.

One of my go-to locations for seeing them and getting involved with their welfare is Wooler in Northumberland. I was there in July this year and was lucky enough to capture a few images of this little guy. Thank you once again for highlighting such an important conservation issue. I look forward to reading more articles of this quality in the future.

Neil Hudspeth, by email

Digital Camera says: Thank you for your kind words, Neil. We're glad you enjoyed the article and the importance of red squirrel preservation.



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Simone Zita @simone.zita

A superb collection of travelogue-style imagery from Simone's travels around the world, mainly in black and white and based on themes of light and shadow.

Ganesh Vanare @haram_khor_

A visual storyteller from India who captures the world vividly in stills and video. His focus is on daily life in India and shots from trips to Kazakhstan.

Martin Lindsay
@martinlindsayphotography
Photographer from north-east England who captures people, scenes and football culture on the streets of Newcastle, Sunderland and elsewhere.

Karl Roddis @rodkarlosphoto

Derbyshire-based landscape photographer with stunning scenery and landscapes, mainly from around the Peak District National Park.

Chris Gurton
@chrisgurtonphotography
Photographer from Suffolk, UK, who has gained international recognition for his beautiful captures of British farming and agriculture, using his DJI Air 2S drone and Nikon D7500.

TURN TO PAGE 42:
Read about Chris's prize-winning agriculture and farming photography



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Our growing community is where you can see our readers' amazing work, plus get regular updates for challenges, Rate My Photo and subscription offers. We also showcase the highlights of our latest issue.

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Cutout options

I am an Affinity Photo 2 user, though I also have the new Canva version, which I have only skirted around. I find the Affinity tutorials you do every month really valuable – I take them out of the magazine when I'm finished with it and keep them all together in a folder. I also save all the LUTs and software extras with the downloads every issue.

Now, here is the million-dollar question. Using either version of Affinity, is it possible to remove the surroundings from this shot (right) and leave the vehicle in situ, or clone it onto a blank canvas? I took it on my phone just before the truck moved off, but I want to know if I can isolate it or at least improve it.

Malcolm Piper, by email

Instagram: [@malpipimages](https://www.instagram.com/malpipimages)



Malcolm Piper

Technique Editor Wendy Evans replies: There are two ways of doing this: one is to use the Selection Brush tool (W) to paint the truck, make a selection and copy it to a blank canvas. The other is to use the Pen tool (P) to draw a path around it. The problem with the Selection Brush tool is that it isn't very accurate and works best when there is an obvious boundary. The second option is normally more accurate, but takes longer. However, looking at your

image, if I used the Pen tool, I would consider including the ground that the halftrack is on; otherwise, it would take much longer to get around all the elements underneath. The other consideration is that when you have isolated and copied the halftrack, you then have to match the perspective to the new image you are adding it to. It's an interesting topic, so after speaking to Malcolm about it, this will be the subject of an Affinity tutorial in next month's Digital Darkroom section (issue 313).

File size matters

I am wondering why you require images to be at least 10MB in size to be published in the Reader Gallery section of the magazine? The attached photo (below) is 6.06MB in size and, according to my image viewing software, will print up to 14.53 x 9.69 inches. The majority of my images are all around this size because I prefer to frame slightly wide and crop into the image. I don't want to waste my time (or yours!) by sending images in if you are going to be strict about the file size you require for publishing. **David Handley, by email**

Digital Camera says: You are correct, David; the file size isn't as important as the resolution, so we will update this. It would be more accurate to say 10MP, as the resolution is key. As you have pointed out, your image is large enough for the gallery. Magazine production uses a print density of 300dpi, which gives exactly the print dimensions you have mentioned.

David's image was under 10MB, but measured 4359 x 2906, which is big enough for the Reader Gallery.

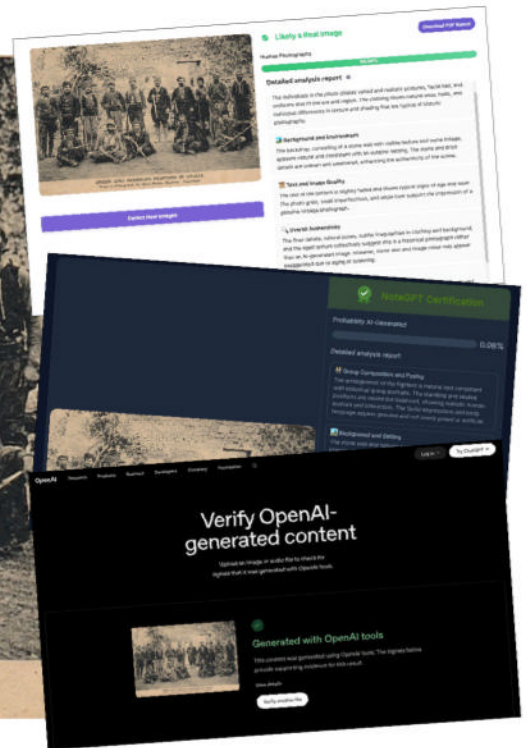


David Handley

Scanning ahead...



ChatGPT



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

Jon is a professional photographer, videographer and technology journalist.

This fake WWI-era image of Greek and Armenian fighters was unintentionally generated by a Reddit user called u/No_idea_479 using ChatGPT.

I recently came across a Reddit post where a user had unintentionally created a historical photo of Greek and Armenian soldiers in Cilicia, in what is now south-east Turkey. Using ChatGPT, the user asked: "Is there any image of Armenian and Greek rebels fighting together in the Greco-Turkish War or WWI?" ChatGPT assumed this was an image request, resulting in something indistinguishable from genuine 19th-century archive material. It even fooled eight out of the top 10 free AI detection software tools available. Only OpenAI's verification portal flagged it as 99 per cent AI, as it detected its own SynthID watermarking standard for AI content.

Our critical thinking skills have never been more necessary than they are today. As AI image and video generation continues to improve, instead of hunting for extra fingers or logic errors, people need to think critically: who is sharing the content? How might that influence your behaviour or attitudes? Even if you're becoming apathetic, fatigue may be the point. Resist apathy and be critical of what you see. ●

Scanning ahead...

AI-generated imagery is a present danger, says **Jon Devo**, but could it rewrite the past, too?

Seeing is believing" has been the presiding principle throughout photography's 200-year history. But

with the ubiquitous presence of artificial imagery, how can we know that what we're looking at is genuine? Not being able to tell if photos are real is an issue when looking at current events. But what about the impact of AI photos being created in the style of historical archive material?

Recently, a friend of mine shared a post on social media featuring a carousel of images and a video clip of Bruce Lee sharing some typical wisdom. However, to my eye, something wasn't right. The quality wasn't consistent with the time

that the event would have taken place. It turned out that the video clip and some of the images were AI-generated.

What's the harm, you may ask? Normalising manipulated content is almost as old as photography itself. Ernest Eugène Appert faked images of the 1871 Paris Commune Massacres, cutting and pasting the faces and figures of prisoners onto scenes portraying key participants. Not only did Appert use the images to fake real-world crime scenes, but he also supplied the headshots to a military tribunal, so the faces used in fabricated crime scenes were submitted in trials that ended in executions and deportations. The potential societal harm was deemed so serious that the French government banned the images.

What's increasingly concerning is that AI tools, like ChatGPT, manipulate the truth so freely by 'accident' that a bad actor like Appert isn't required to create and disseminate misleading propaganda. AI learns from what it's fed, so it's easy to imagine how fake content will further bias AI databases.

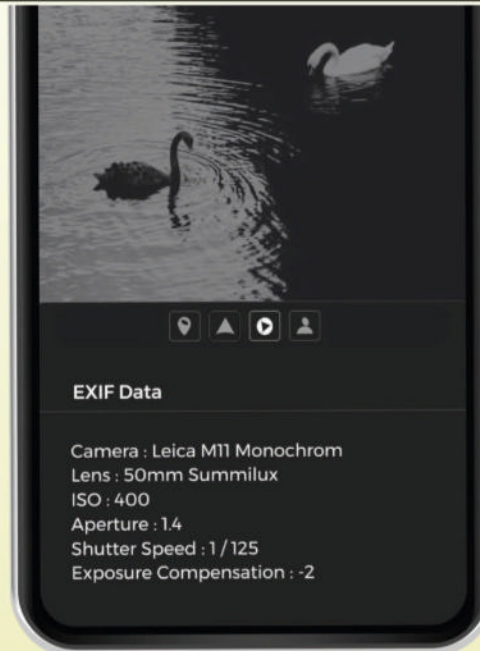
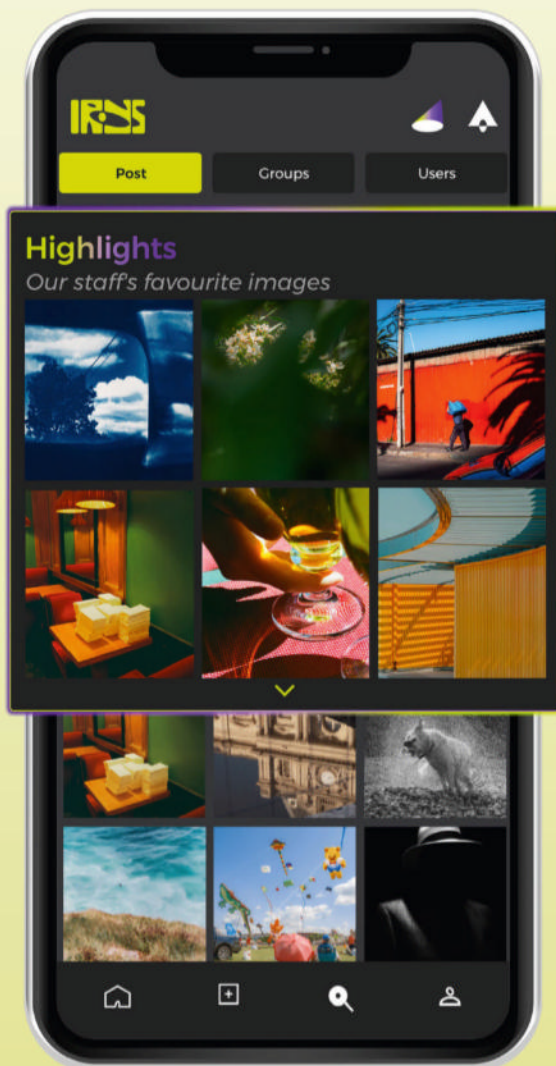
"What's increasingly concerning is that AI tools, like ChatGPT, manipulate the truth so freely"



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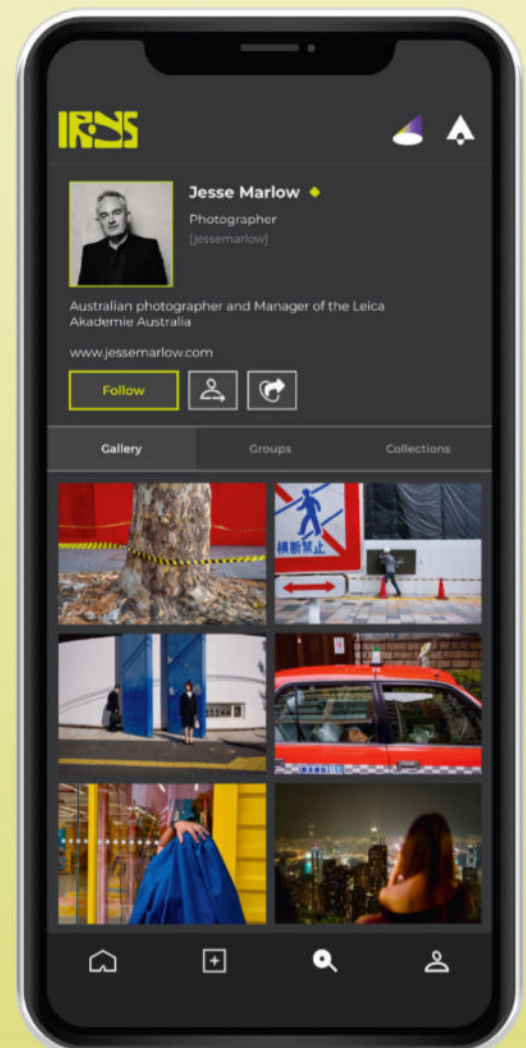


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Reader gallery

1 'Milky Way Over Stonehenge' by Simon Tregidgo

"This has been on my bucket list for a while, but I decided to wait until the summer as it's important for the positioning of the galactic core of the Milky Way. The moon also needs to be relatively new, or low in the sky, to avoid it blowing out the stars." Shot on a Sony A7R with a Sony FE 35mm. Settings: 15 secs at f/1.4, ISO 1600.

Instagram: @sim.o.tre

Digital Camera says: Expertly done to capture the core in one shot. That early morning light is gorgeous as well.

Reader gallery

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





2 'Whitethroat' by Paul Gregory

"This photograph is of a common Whitethroat bird and was taken in East Yorkshire." Shot using a Canon EOS R5 with a Canon 200-800mm lens at 742mm. Settings: 1/2,000 sec at f/10, ISO 1600." Instagram: @paulgregory786

Digital Camera says: This is a lovely bird shot – it's well-framed with the bird looking across the image into the empty space. The focusing is spot on, and thanks to the long lens, the background is out of focus with muted colours. The light falls nicely onto its head and chest, and capturing the bird in song is the final touch.

3 'Red Dragon' by Chris Metcalf

"I like this image because of its dramatic impact. The Loco 9351 Mogul was working hard on the West Somerset Railway and producing great 'chuff'. The countryside setting and splashes of pink and purple wildflowers help make the scene, while enthusiasts hanging out of the carriage windows perfectly sum up the excitement." Instagram: @railsandtarmactrails

Digital Camera says: There's a great use of leading lines here, with the track guiding your eye to the oncoming steam train.



4 'Path of the Eclipse'
by Jakub Bors

"I love that this shot shows the story of the solar eclipse in one frame. You can follow the sun across the sky, but at the same time, the windmill and sunset make it feel very much like a landscape photograph. Once the eclipse started, I really didn't want to be changing things or experimenting. I had the composition, focus, solar filter and settings ready beforehand and then concentrated on capturing each stage consistently."
Instagram: @borsphotography

Digital Camera says: It was a great idea to capture all the phases of the partial eclipse in one single frame.

5 **'Devotion' by
Laura Peyton**

"This image was taken at RSPB Bempton Cliffs in Yorkshire, using a Canon EOS R7 and Canon RF 100-500mm lens. The seawater behind the gannets was creating a beautiful bokeh effect, and I loved that I was able to capture this affectionate moment. It gave the overall image a dreamy atmosphere." **Instagram:** @laura_peyton_photography

Digital Camera says: This is a perfectly timed capture, with a brilliant pose and incredible light.





6 'Cromer Pier' by Richard Potter

"This was taken one autumn morning in Cromer. I wasn't intending to go out at sunrise, but the forecast was promising. Luckily, I ended up with a shot I was happy with. Nikon D810 and 16-35mm lens, with a 0.6 soft grad and a Lee 3-stop full ND filter."
Instagram: @richardpotterphotography

Digital Camera says: Beautiful light, perfectly exposed and a slow shutter speed that conveys movement in the water.

7 'Flower Beetle' by Bill Pitcher

"I've been in the shed studio, having a go at shooting male and female flower beetles from East Asia. It was shot with some grasses and small stones that I found on a beach on Mull. The lighting I used included three Bowen LED panels, two top lights and a large light, directed up through the stage."
Flickr: bill.pitcher2

Digital Camera says: This was the most striking of a set of three lovely bug images.



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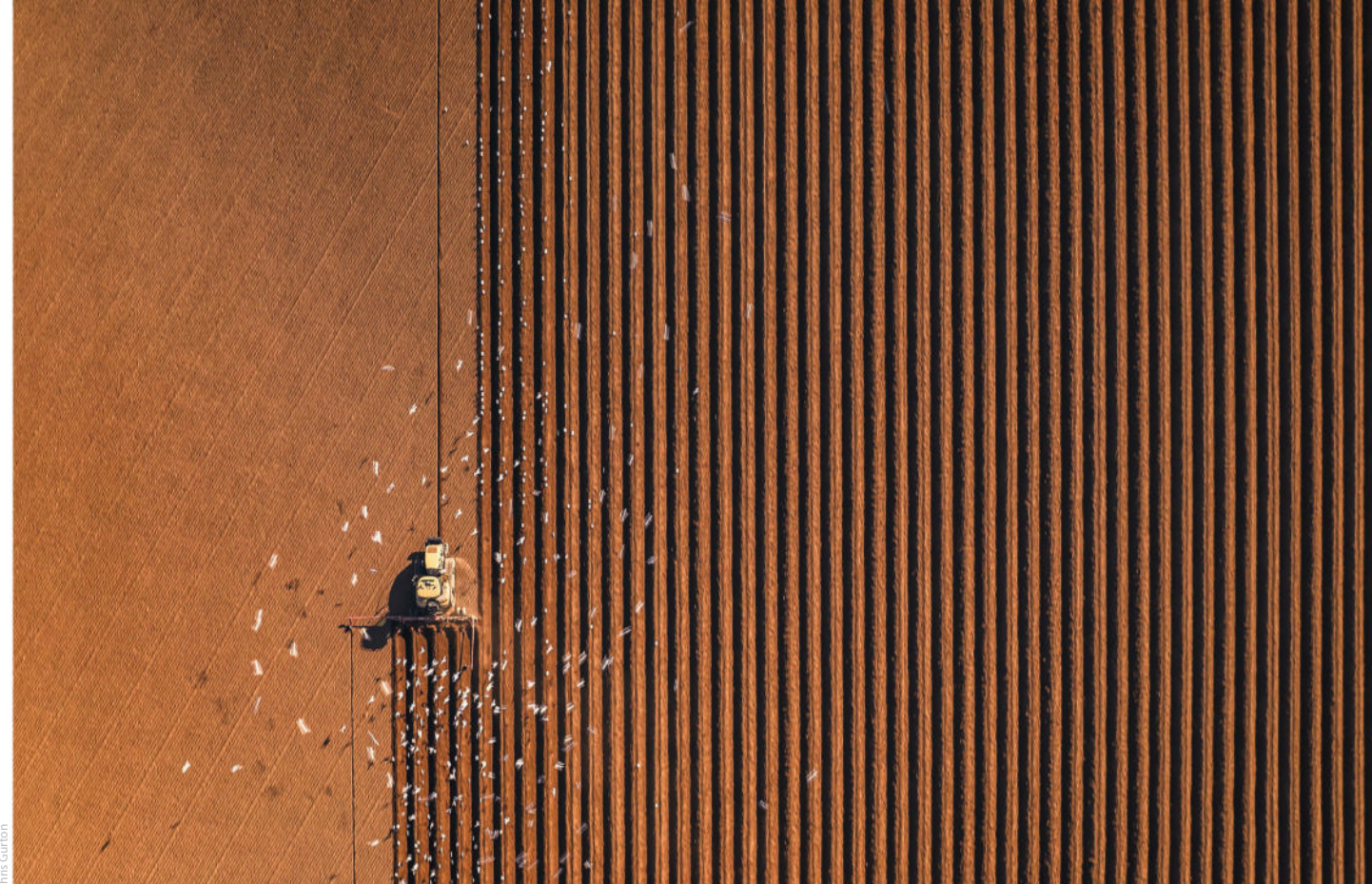
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And if you would like to get your work published in our reader gallery, send your images to digitalcamera@futurenet.com



01 DRONES Bringing in the harvest

With the support of farmers, Chris Gurton is gaining international recognition for his fantastic captures of agriculture and farming scenes

Above: Potato Ridging

This shot won the Drone category of this year's International Golden Shot Photography Awards. It also made the official selection of best images in the International Aerial Photographer of the Year Awards.

Settings: 1/8 sec at f/2.8, ISO 100.



Chris Gurton is a photographer from Suffolk who received an honourable mention in the Special Night Photography category of the International Photography Awards last year for his 'Harvesting at Night' image. He also came second in this year's Lumearth

photo awards, in the Agriculture and Rural category.

"Although photography has become a huge part of my life, I don't currently do it full-time," says Chris. "Every opportunity to photograph farming has been built around my day job, which makes the support I've received from farmers and the recognition my work has gained even more rewarding. My ambition is to make agricultural photography my full-time career one day, continuing to tell the stories of the people and landscapes behind our food production."

What got you into shooting farming or agricultural photography as a subject?

I'd always been fascinated by aerial images, particularly the work of French photographer Yann Arthus-Bertrand. His book *The Earth From the Air* had a huge influence on me, showing how a change in perspective could transform familiar landscapes into something extraordinary. That style of photography felt out of reach because it relied on hiring helicopters or light aircraft. Consumer camera drones completely changed that, giving photographers like me the

opportunity to create aerial images from viewpoints that had previously been inaccessible.

Living in rural Suffolk, I'm surrounded by farmland, so it felt natural to start exploring the agricultural landscape from above. I became fascinated by the skill, precision and sheer hard work involved in producing our food, and that's what I try to capture in my photography today.

Have you developed good relationships with farmers to capture them at work?

Building good relationships with farmers has been one of the most rewarding parts of my photography journey. Trust is incredibly important because I'm often photographing people while they're concentrating on complex tasks with large machinery. They need to know that I'll work safely, stay out of the way and never interfere with what they're doing.

I think those relationships also help me to create stronger images. Spending time on farms has also given me a much deeper appreciation of the skill, dedication and long hours that are involved in producing our food, and I hope that understanding comes through in the images I make.

What camera equipment do you use?

My main camera is a Nikon D7500 DSLR with a selection of lenses, including a wide-angle and 35mm prime to a 500mm telephoto lens, depending on what I'm photographing. For my aerial work, I use



Chris Gurton



Chris Gurton

a DJI Air 2S camera drone, which has been an incredible tool for capturing the patterns, textures and scale of the agricultural landscape.

Neither is the latest or most expensive piece of equipment on the market, but I've never believed that creating a great photograph is simply about owning the newest camera. It's far more important to understand light, composition, timing and the story you're trying to tell.

What made you interested in covering this subject?

What really drew me to agricultural photography was the opportunity to tell stories that many people never get to see. Most people only see the finished product on the supermarket shelves; I wanted to capture what takes place right at the start of the food production process.

I've been incredibly fortunate to receive fantastic support from the farming community. The farms that I've worked with have trusted me to document their work in an authentic way, and those relationships have grown over time. As well as creating images for my own portfolio, I've also produced photographs for farmers to use across their social media, websites and promotional material.

Website: www.chrisgurtonphotography.com

Instagram: @chrisgurtonphotography

Above: Harvesting at Night

This image received an honourable mention in the Special Night Photography category of last year's International Photography Awards.

Settings: 1/5 sec at f/2.8, ISO 800.

Safety note and legal obligations

Thinking of using a camera drone? Make sure you know the rules

- In the UK, users of camera drones weighing between 100g and 250g must obtain a Flyer ID and an Operator ID. To get a Flyer ID, you must register with the Civil Aviation Authority and pass the CAA's official theory test.
- Respect the CAA's Drone Code [www.caa.co.uk] and any local restrictions that might apply.
- Check for Temporary Flight Restrictions [TFRs] or NOTAMs [Notices to Aviation] before flying.

Left: Unloading the Wheat

This shot made the official selection of this year's International Photography Awards (results to be announced). It was also shortlisted for last year's British Photography Awards.

Settings: 1/4 sec at f/2.8, ISO 100.

Five tips from Chris for capturing harvest time

✓ Ensure safety always comes first

Harvest is one of the busiest periods of the farming year, with multiple machines working together. Never assume you can simply walk into a field with a camera – always ask the farmer or landowner for permission first. If you want to get closer, you have to respect that they're running a business. Always stay aware of your surroundings, keep well clear of working machinery and never distract operators.

✓ Learn how harvest works

Understanding what's happening in the field makes a huge difference. If you know when a combine is likely to unload, where tractors will position themselves, or how the crop will be worked, then you can anticipate these moments.

✓ Make the most of the light

Some of my favourite harvest photographs have been taken during golden hour or even after sunset. Dust hanging in the air and low-angle light can completely transform a scene, so don't pack away your camera when the sun starts to disappear.

✓ Tell a story, don't just show a machine

A combine harvester is an impressive machine, but the strongest photographs include the wider story. Look for leading lines in the crop, dramatic skies, birds following the machinery or people working together. These details add context and help viewers connect with the image.

✓ Be patient and enjoy the process

Harvest rarely goes exactly to plan. Weather changes, machinery breaks down and the light doesn't always cooperate. The best photographs often come after hours of waiting, so be patient and keep looking for new angles. If the conditions aren't right, don't be afraid to call it quits and return on another day.

02

WILDLIFE

Capturing harvest mice

Wendy Evans dispenses advice on how to photograph Britain's smallest and cutest rodent

As we say goodbye to summer, spare a thought for Britain's smallest rodent, the harvest mouse. The little chap is only 50-70mm long, but uniquely among mice, has a 60mm prehensile tail. That means it can grip things with it, such as tall grasses, to hold on while eating. You can find harvest mice in tall grasses, hedgerows and reed beds, but you'll have to be extremely patient as they have excellent hearing and can detect danger from some distance.

The harvest mouse's diet consists of seeds and berries, topped up with small insects, and they are most active at dusk and dawn. Getting close enough to photograph one is tricky, especially considering how small they are. Out in the wild, you're looking at a 600mm focal length as your starting point. You won't catch one while they are moving; they're too quick, so look for them pausing to eat. Unless, of course, you go to a harvest mouse workshop. This uses mice that are specifically bred for the workshop, with lighting set up for the best results. You'll be able to get a lot closer – this photo was shot at 120mm.

Settings: 1/125 sec at f/8, ISO 64.



Getty / Peter Atkinson / 500px

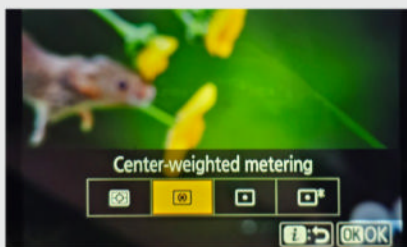
Step by step Pointers for mouse shots

Optimise your camera to get the best results



01 Which ISO rating?

This depends on whether you're in a field using a 600mm lens or a workshop with a 120mm lens. In the latter case, you could probably stick with a standard ISO 100 rating as there will be plenty of light. For those in a field, you might need to ramp the ISO up to 800 for a fast enough shutter speed.



02 What's important, and what's not

Centre-weighted metering is normally a good option here. Continuous focus and shooting are less critical because if the mouse runs, you won't track it anyway. So there's no real need for those – you're just filling your memory card with similar shots of the mouse at rest.



03 Focusing options

An animal-based focus tracking mode is useful for the simple reason that it will pick out the eye of the rodent and get a better focus. Use a focus box, rather than multiple points, so you can pick out the mouse. Select something like f/8 to get enough depth of field so that the whole mouse is in focus.

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 **WHITE WALL**

By using a tripod, filters and a low ISO, you can create a long exposure to blur moving clouds.



Future

03 CAMERA KNOW-HOW

Blur the clouds

Highlight the windy conditions by using a long exposure, as **Wendy Evans** explains

If you've ever been up a hill on a windy day, taken a photo and then realised that what you've captured is a frozen tableau, then this Photo Skills project is for you. What you want is to convey some of the movement and drama that you felt on the day, and the way to do this is with a long exposure. Using a tripod, you can ensure the

ground element is sharp and in focus, but the clouds will start to blur with movement. The more you can lower the light coming into the camera, the longer the shutter can stay open and the more the clouds will blur.

The two essential pieces of equipment here are a set of filters and a tripod. There's another element to consider, and that's the effect of the wind on your tripod. Your

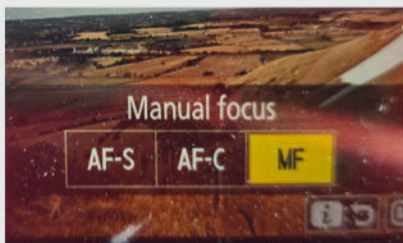
camera might stay steady, but if the tripod is getting battered by the wind, the photo will be ruined. So see if you can find a more sheltered position from which to shoot.

Camera: Nikon Z 8 with Nikkor 24-200mm, NiSi JetMag Pro Tru Color CPL, NiSi JetMag Pro FS ND1000 filter

Settings: 15 secs at f/6.3, ISO 32

Step by step How to set up a daylight long exposure

The longer the exposure, the more the clouds will blur



01 Manual focus

The trouble with dark filters is that autofocus can sometimes struggle to work through them. Set up the camera in position and focus where you want in the scene. Then turn AF off by setting the focus to manual before you add the filters.



02 Find and fit the filters

The aim is an exposure of 15 seconds or longer, so you'll need dense filters to get longer exposure times. Here, I used an ND1000 filter, which reduces the light by 10 stops. I added a circular polariser for extra cloud definition, but this also reduces light.



03 Select Manual mode

If shooting at 15 seconds or longer, it's best to use Manual mode rather than Aperture Priority. Set the shutter speed to 15 seconds, aperture to f/8 and the ISO to as low as possible. Then shoot and check the result. Adjust as necessary for the conditions.



Adam Davis

04 BLACK AND WHITE Taking the plunge

Adam Davis reveals how he shot this multi-layered candid portrait of teenagers on a diving board in Croatia



Despite Adam Davis having a background in theatre, he takes a different philosophy for his photography, seeking unrehearsed moments amid the everyday chaos for his

candid street scenes and portraits of strangers.

"A constant stream of teenagers were taking the plunge from this high diving board at Zadar in Croatia. The carefree joy of bygone summers drew me to the scene, but while the action was a rotating formula, I needed a figure to frame and layer the shot.

"I spotted a teenager taking a more relaxed approach to the commotion and crouched down beside him. There was a milky, glacial expression on his face – it was a natural moment, candid and uncomposed. It became

a dance, dodging splashes from belly floppers and divers. I waited for a jumper to launch a dive from the top board and took the shot.

For me, there are three layers to this image, which I called 'The Plunge'. There's the anticipation of the teenagers jostling for space on the high board, the jumper plummeting chest-first towards the water and the teenager in the foreground lying down, staring at the sky, disconnected from the action. I'm always chasing slices of life with multiple layers to compose against. In this rare instance, all three layers came into play."

Camera: Ricoh GR IV

Settings: 1/400 sec at f/9, ISO 400

Website: adamcdavisphotography.com

Instagram: @dada_mavis

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Ricoh GR IV



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www.lightpixlabs.com

Five tips from Adam Davis for street portrait photography



Play the game

Street photography is a game of actions and reactions. Don't overthink your compositions; simply have fun and shoot with the curiosity of a child. When it doesn't work, don't stress; enjoy the process and the images will come.



Take your finger off the playback button

Once I've checked my exposure, shutter speed and f-stop, I'm a glutton for looking at my LCD screen – 'chimping' – which slows me down. The better photo often comes after I stop looking at the screen.



Become a space invader

Nuzzle yourself close to your subject. If it feels awkward, you are doing something right. Once you have the shot, show the picture, smile and offer to send them a copy. You can apologise later.



You are not a detective

I often see photographers picking off street portraits with a telephoto lens, like they're private investigators. Bring a short prime lens, move close to the action and don't hide your camera.



Thumbs up, camera down

When you take a street portrait, thumbs pop up and smiles leap onto faces. Selfie culture indoctrinated us with this strained reflex. Open conversations to ensure your subject is relaxed, then take the photo.



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PHOTOS!**

If you've been inspired by any of these projects and have attempted them yourself, we'd love to see your results.

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05

STILL-LIFE

Create a smokin' floral display

Wendy Evans heads inside to put together a colourful still life using lights and smoke

While it seemed like the baking heat of summer would never end, all things must pass, which means we're now welcoming the changeable autumn weather. But when the rain inevitably arrives, don't despair; get some flowers from your garden, the market or a nearby petrol station and see if you can create an atmospheric, yet colourful still-life.

For this, you'll need a couple of lights that can produce colour, a small smoke machine – or something that produces smoke, such as incense – and a plain background. The lights I used were the PL60C kit from Neewer, which produces light in white or a range of colours and colour temperatures – these aren't expensive, and they're great for home projects. I also used a handheld Smoke Ninja machine, which is easier than burning things. Some plain, dark material is best for the background. I used the darkest material I could find, but it had a pattern.

This isn't a macro project, so a short telephoto lens is ideal. I used the Nikkor 24-200mm, with most of the shots being around 70-90mm focal length. There are several ways you can do this, and it largely depends on how much space you have and how dark you can make the environment. Turn off any interior lights and draw the

curtains, or simply set it up in the evening when it's dark – the point is to exclude as much ambient light as possible, so that only the LED lights register.

Camera: Nikon Z 8 with Nikkor Z 24-200mm f/4-6.3 VR

Settings: 1/200 sec at f/6, ISO 100, Highlight metering



For added smoke effects, you can burn incense or use a small machine, such as the Smoke Ninja.



Light the flowers with dramatic colours, then add some smoke for even more drama.

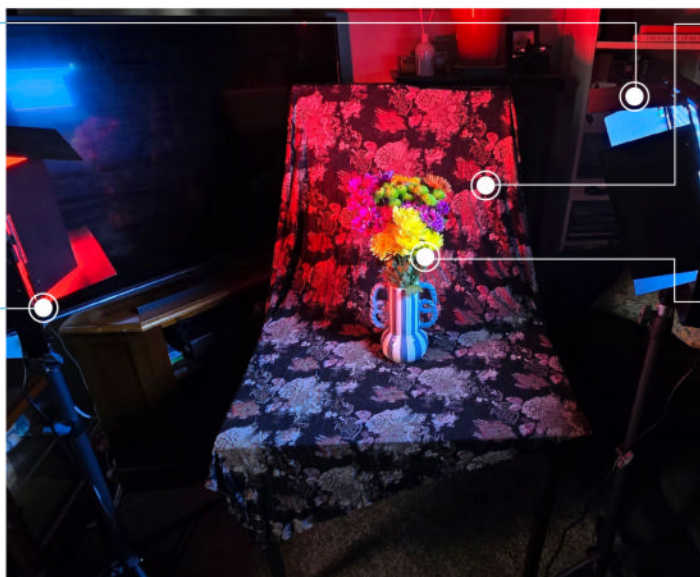
How to set up the smokin' hot flowers shot

Lighting positions

The lights are positioned so that the one on the left shines on the flowers on the left and the background. The one on the right is the key light, so it is further in front, illuminating the vase and most of the flowers. This way, the colours transition from one to the other across the fabric.

Lighting colours

The left light is set to red, while the one on the right is blue. You can do this by using the colour temperature settings, but it's quicker and more fun to use the gel colour wheel. That also means you can experiment with different colour combinations. You could use white for the foreground and red or blue for the background.



Background fabric

Ideally, you should use plain, dark fabric for the background. However, I only had dark, patterned material, so to minimise the impact of the pattern, I used Highlight metering. This meant that the background was rendered darker than with Centre-weighted metering.

Focus here

Focus on the flowers and start applying the smoke. Using the telephoto zoom, take several shots, including some close-ups. An aperture of something around f/6 will ensure most of the flowers at the front of the image are in focus, while the background and bottom of the vase are out of focus.

Step by step Get ready to smoke

Configure the lights and camera before you start filling the room with smoke



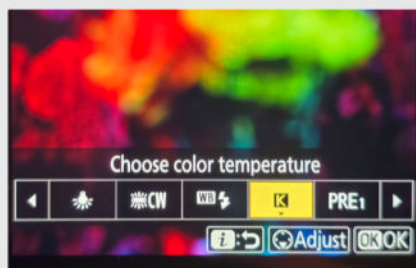
01 Decide on the colours

Using modern LED lighting such as this Neewer PL60C kit means that you can create custom colour combinations easily, without having to use coloured gels, like in the old days. Blue and red make a dramatic combination, which worked best when blue was the main light and red was the background.



03 Metering options

Using Centre-weighted metering produced shots that were a little too bright, exposing more of the background. I preferred to use Highlight metering, which meant the yellow flowers were correctly exposed, but everything else was underexposed. I brightened up the mid-tones in editing afterwards.



02 Set the colour temperature

Strictly speaking, when shooting in raw format, you don't need to bother with this, but why make life harder for yourself by having to make adjustments later? Set the camera to a manual white balance setting of 5600K as the colour temperature. It also means any jpegs shot at the same time will be correct.



04 Final settings

Having removed most of the ambient light, the only light source was coming from the LED lights. With an aperture of f/6, at ISO 100, this gave a shutter speed of 1/200 sec, which was fast enough to shoot handheld. Another option would have been to shoot a longer exposure to blur the smoke.

Switching colours

Experiment with your colour options to see what works best

For this shot, I switched the colours around and placed the red light on the right and the blue on the left. Does it work? I'm not convinced. The red dominates the colours of the flowers on the right and the vase itself, while adding blue light to the purple flowers on the left made little difference; it simply added some highlights. Although this combination certainly looks more lurid, I don't think it works as well as the main shot.



Future



Kevin Winter

06 LANDSCAPES

Rate my photo

Kevin Winter's quaint harbour photo of Staithes in North Yorkshire at sunrise comes under scrutiny

Staithes is a small fishing village on the North Yorkshire coast and a place Kevin Winter visited lots with his family as a child. "I have fond memories of crab fishing in the harbour and exploring the narrow cobbled streets," he says. "When I got into photography, I found a beautiful viewpoint looking over the rooftops, which was the ideal spot for capturing the sunrise over the North Sea."

"I've visited this place many times over the years. I prefer to arrive early in the morning when it's still dark to capture the streetlights and house lights during the blue hour. Then, as the sun rises, I gradually capture the reflected light in the clouds."

Camera: Nikon Z 6II and Nikkor Z 14-30mm

Settings: 1/15 sec at f/10, ISO 100

Instagram: @krwinterphotos

✓ Lovely colours

The sunrise has illuminated the clouds to the right and on the horizon, while the sky to the left has a delicate blue colour. Best of all, though, there is a reflection of the golden clouds in the water in the foreground of the image. There's also the greens of the hedge and the yellows and reds of the houses.

✓ Well exposed

The exposure is excellent, especially considering that the houses could have been dark and underexposed. As it was shot at sunrise, all the light is over the horizon, with some reflected onto the river. However, it has been well balanced out so that the houses, which are in the shade, are sufficiently bright so that you can see the details. The image could use a little more overall contrast, though.

✓ Lots of detail

It's an image you can explore, with plenty of winding roads, the river and the houses of the main village. The greenery at the forefront of the image sets the scene and shows that the viewer has a high vantage point and is leaning over a hedge to see the view. The boats on the water add a final touch.

✓ How much focus is there?

The use of a 14mm focal length and an f/10 aperture means there's plenty of depth of field, right from the hedge all the way through to the background. However, from about halfway into the village, the image isn't particularly sharp. The blame for this lies with the choice of an f/10 aperture, which isn't the sharpest part of the lens. Some post-production sharpening was required.

What's in the middle?

A 2:3 vertical composition doesn't work as you'd end up with too much sky and not enough of the village. A 3:4 format, favoured by Micro Four Thirds camera sensors, starts to look better, but the 1:1 square format suits this image even more. With the 1:1 format, you can crop out some of the empty sky, part of the redundant hedge and all of the wasted area on the right of the photo.



✗ Does the composition work?

It works in rough third slices horizontally, but there isn't anything really interesting on the cross points with the vertical thirds. In terms of leading the eye through the scene, the hedge doesn't help – it cuts across the image, and while the river and roads lead the eye down to the sea and towards the harbour, there's nothing on the right to catch the eye.

07

LOCATIONS

Discovering landscape gardens

Capture the grandeur of a country estate, with **Wendy Evans**

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While landscaping the estate gardens has been a pastime of the landed gentry since Tudor times, it wasn't until the Georgian era that geometric patterns and symmetry fell out of favour and sweeping, natural-looking vistas started to dominate. Designers such as Lancelot 'Capability' Brown and William Kent were renowned for removing stuffy walls and formal layouts in favour of scenes that conjured up images of pastoral paintings. Throw in the nobility's penchant for building follies and pseudo-Greek temples, along with lakes and water features, and you have an attractive, but entirely man-made landscape.

Landscape gardens are the subject of this Photo Skills project, so grab your flexible wide-angle zoom lens, leave the tripod at home and head for your nearest private, National Trust or English Heritage country estate. Some estates don't mind if you use a tripod, but for outdoor shots in good weather, it shouldn't be necessary.

What you should bring, though, are some filters, including a circular polariser and possibly some graduated ND filters, to enhance clouds, remove reflections and balance the exposure.

Camera: Nikon Z 8 and Nikkor Z 24-200mm f/4-6.3 VR at 43mm

Settings: 1/100 sec at f/8, ISO 100, -0.3EV exposure compensation

Right: Try to arrange the features of a landscaped garden so that your eye follows them into the background.



THANKS TO... NATIONAL TRUST STOURHEAD

Early morning access for photographers this autumn starts on 23 October.

Adult tickets: £23, Child (5-17): £11.50. Family tickets (two adults, three children): £57.50. Parking is free for NT members.

Opening times: Garden: 9.30am-4.30pm, House: 11am-4pm.

Location: Stourton, near Mere, Wiltshire BA12 6QD.

Website: www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/wiltshire/stourhead



Future

Step by step Get set up for landscapes



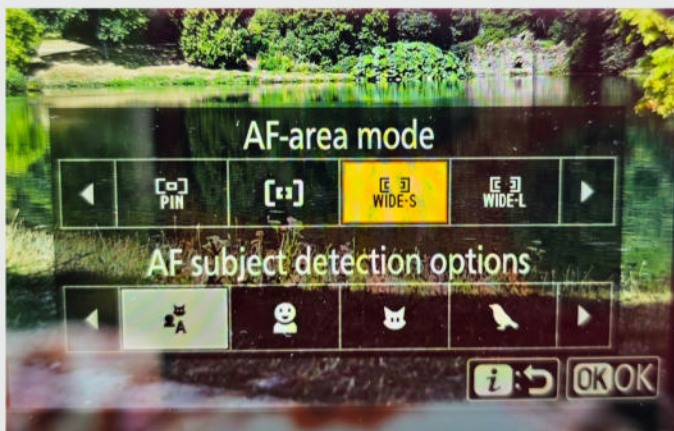
01 Fit your filters

I took a 24-200mm lens, offering the ideal combination of wide-angle lens and telephoto reach. You should also take a circular polariser, whether it uses a filter holder or is magnetic, like these NiSi JetMag Pro filters I used. This will either cut out reflections on water or enhance the sky, depending on which way round it is. Rotate the filter until you get the effect you want.



02 Set the mode

For landscapes, it's all about aperture, focal length and depth of field, so I prefer to shoot in Aperture Priority mode and set the aperture to f/8. With the focal length at 43mm, that meant the hyperfocal distance was 7.75m away, but I focused on the vegetation in front of the bridge, as the nearest parts of the landscape were not in view.



03 Focus options

Single focus rather than continuous focus is fine here. I set the AF area mode to a wide box, but not too wide, so I could move it around the screen to pick up specific areas where I wanted the focus point to be. It's better to do this than use a general multi-point AF because you can control where the depth of field starts from more easily.



04 Final settings

For the main image, the final settings I used were 1/100 sec at f/8, with -0.3EV exposure compensation to ensure there were no blown highlights. I used Centre-weighted metering, which is a good option for landscape scenes like this. You could go with a slower ISO, such as ISO 64, but remember that the polariser will reduce the amount of light available.

Using the polariser

What difference does it really make?

To illustrate the difference that using a polariser makes, I took two images from the same spot. One is essentially the same as not having it fitted because it isn't cutting out any of the light. The second image shows that you can now see through the water to the lake bed, but more importantly for this scene, the clouds are much more distinct in the sky.



Without polariser



With polariser

While you're there What else can you shoot?

There are plenty of other features worth photographing in the landscaped estate



Future

Check out the house

Of course, there's going to be a vast country house on a sprawling estate. Stand as far back as possible and zoom in to reduce the converging vertical distortion. It's still going to happen to some extent, so you can correct this in software. An $f/8$ aperture was used here.

Go inside for a look

See how the landed gentry live by touring the rooms inside. With the low levels of light here, you'll need to ramp up the ISO. Thankfully, with a wide-angle focal length needed to show the rooms, you get more depth of field, so here, I used $f/4$ along with ISO 1000 and a shutter speed of $1/30$ sec.

Find the follies

Wherever you go on the estate, there will be some monument, folly or intricate piece of set decoration.

Show it in the context of the grounds, but try to dodge the other tourists or clone them out later, which is what I did in this case. An $f/8$ aperture was used here, focusing on the monument itself.





Imogen Tinkler

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08 URBAN Resort Icons: Margate

Imogen Tinkler explores Margate's weathered theatres, arcades and promenades, finding beauty, history and everyday life in the visual language of the British seaside



Imogen Tinkler is a Kent-based documentary photographer whose eye was shaped early: her father filming family life on his Betamax camcorder, and

her mother screeching the car to a halt to shoot the golden light hitting the wildflowers. Imogen's ongoing series, *Resort Icons*, explores the theatre of Britain's seaside towns, their faded architecture, rituals and enduring characters. She photographs the space between performance and solitude, interested in the memories places carry and the feelings they stir in us.

What is your zine about?

Resort Icons is a social documentary photography zine capturing the eccentric reality of the British seaside. It began as a love letter to Margate's hidden corners and overlooked communities. I explore nostalgia and reinvention: what remains, what changes and why these places matter.

How did you gain access to the places that are normally off limits to the public?

Access came through patience, research and conversations. I contacted owners, operators and locals, explaining the project. Sometimes, it meant responding quickly when doors opened to the public. Luck played a part, but embedding yourself locally matters more than being an armchair tourist.

What were the technical challenges and how did you use to overcome them?

The main challenge was time. At Dreamland, I had only 20 minutes with other visitors. Coastal light changes quickly, while interiors can be very dark. I worked handheld, using wide apertures and higher ISO settings, watching highlights closely and responding quickly to whatever light was available.

Did you do any post-processing to give the photos a specific look and feel?

I tend to keep post-processing restrained, because I want the photographs to feel

observed rather than manufactured. I make modest adjustments, often retaining cool shadows or faded tones. The aim is to convey a sense of time passing, with enough texture for the viewer to imagine the place.

Are there any photographers who influenced your style or approach?

I'm drawn to photographers who find poetry, humour and social history in ordinary places. Martin Parr's attention to British behaviour is a touchstone, while the colour, framing and oddness in Stephen Shore's work encourage me to look harder at familiar scenes.

Where next as you document the seaside?

Kent's resorts remain inexhaustible. This summer, I was at the Broadstairs Folk Week as music and dance transformed the town. I'm the resident photographer at Margate's Tom Thumb Theatre, documenting this tiny seaside gem under a new artistic director.

Website: www.imogentinkler.com

Instagram: @imogentinkler.resorticons



Imogen's five tips for documenting fading seaside towns and places

1 Start beyond the postcard

Begin with the story, not the postcard. Walk without a camera first, notice overlooked details and speak to people about what matters to them. Then photograph how the resort lives.

2 Work with the weather

Coastal weather is part of the subject. Return in rain, sea mist, low winter sun and after dark. Each condition changes colour, surfaces, mood and the people present within it.

3 Find the telling detail

Look beyond obvious decay. A hand-painted sign, repaired bench, patterned carpet or locked door can carry more history and emotion than a broad view of an empty building alone.

4 Respect the location

Photograph responsibly. Seek permission for private or sensitive locations, listen to people who care for them, do not trespass and leave every site exactly as you found it.

5 Edit as a story

Make a cohesive edit. Mix establishing views with small details and human traces, then sequence images by colour, rhythm or feeling. Not all your best photos will make the final cut.



Imogen Tinkler



Get the zine Resort Icons: Margate

Resort Icons: Margate is available to order from Imogen's website, priced at £12 (\$16), plus postage. Follow her on Instagram for updates from the Resort Icons series, new work and forthcoming editions. She is happy to receive messages from people with stories, locations or memories to share. www.imogentinkler.com/shop



09

LANDSCAPES

A stunning sunset on the Faroe Islands

Daniel Goddard was the winner of August's Sunset/sunrise photo challenge with this cracking shot

Drangarnir was a place I had wanted to visit for many years. On a recent trip to the Faroe Islands, I got the exciting opportunity to visit at sunset. When I arrived, it was mostly foggy, so I didn't think I'd get any

kind of sunset. Thankfully, there was a gap in the clouds, so the sun was able to shine through and illuminate the scene. The sky was taken using a fast exposure to keep the birds sharp, and the foreground was taken with a slower exposure to maintain shadow detail and give the water a lovely motion-blur effect.

Camera: Sony A7R V with Sony FE 16mm F1.8 G

Settings: 1/10 sec at f/16, ISO 100

Instagram: @danielgoddard__photo

IMAGE ANALYSIS

1 MOVING WATER

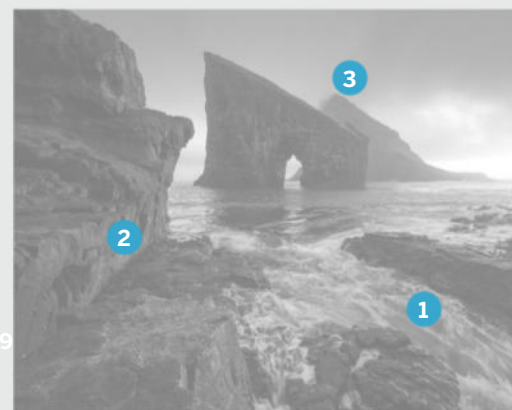
Using a slow shutter speed, without straying into long exposure times, has conveyed the dynamic movement of the water. This has given it a sense of action and drama that brings the image alive.

2 BEAUTIFUL LIGHT

By persevering through the misty conditions, Daniel was in place to capture the moment when the sunrise broke through the clouds, illuminating the sides of the rock facing into the scene, as well as those on either side of the water channel.

3 DEPTH OF IMAGE

The three levels of rock from the foreground to the arch in the middle and the island in the background give the viewer something to look at throughout the image. The slightly unusual aspect ratio includes all the detail; there's nothing wasted in the frame.



Daniel Goddard



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10 LANDSCAPES Autumn challenge

From falling leaves or misty mornings to Halloween, we want to see your autumn shots

W

elcome to our monthly reader photo challenge, where the winning image will be featured in the magazine. For October, the theme is 'Autumn', which

gives you plenty of latitude to interpret the subject however you like. This could include a shot of a golden canopy of leaves in an arboretum or a spectacularly spooky Halloween setup. You could go macro with

conkers, some colourful autumnal fungi or get up early and capture the morning mist. It's anything that reflects and is associated with the autumn season. So get your thinking caps on and let's see your best autumn shots.

Enter via email

Email digitalcamera@futurenet.com with 'Autumn' as the subject. Please attach your entry (sending it as a high-res jpeg version,

rather than links) and include a description of how you came to take the image. Remember to list your social media handles or website, so that we can give you due credit if you win. Enter by 8 October and remember, only one image per reader, please.

The winner will be announced in the December 2026 issue (314) of *Digital Camera*, on sale from Thursday 5 November.

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

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AWESOME AUTUMN

Learn to capture seasonal colour like the pros by mastering top landscape shooting techniques with **Peter Fenech**

In many genres of photography, the most dramatic images can be found during periods of change, and that's especially true for landscape photography. As the elements move from one state into another – water vapour turning into a liquid or solid, as rain or snow – or weather conditions transition into something else, contrasts of colour, texture and tone become increasingly noticeable, transfixing the viewer.

In no other season is this more apparent than autumn. In a matter of weeks, the entire landscape changes colour, introducing vibrant reds, yellows and magentas that invert the balance of contrasts seen during spring and summer. For the nature photographer, every scene becomes a creative playground, and it can seem impossible to capture a bad image while surrounded by such a wide range of photo opportunities.

However, the modern age of social media and smartphone photography poses a challenge that photographers didn't experience even a decade ago. Everyone can now shoot and share images instantly, meaning there is much more competition for our viewers' attention, and making photos that seem unique is tougher than ever.

This is where it really pays to have a deep understanding of colour theory, and perhaps more importantly, what it actually is about an autumnal scene that is so attractive to the human eye. Once we have identified this 'secret formula', we can learn to emphasise these elements and create autumnal masterpieces that speak to our audience at a subconscious level. The biggest lesson a landscape photographer can learn is that capturing colour in autumn is just the start of the process, and that if you want to shoot photos that people will remember, you'll need to rethink how you use your camera gear to capture something less literal.

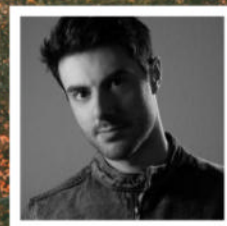
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PRO SHOT Colour playground

Autumn is a fantastic season to shoot both in cities and out in the countryside. The best photos make use of layered colours and a strong subject.
Settings: 1/8 sec at f/4, ISO 640



PETER FENECH

Peter Fenech is a landscape and travel photographer who was the former editor of *Digital Camera*'s sister magazine, *Digital Photographer*. He now splits his time between shooting editorial images for magazines, reviewing camera kit and leading photography workshops and overseas tours for Light&Land.

Instagram @luminouspixels

Website fenechimages.com

Peter Fenech

PART 1

GETTING IT ALL IN

Capture wide autumnal scenes in all their colourful glory by learning to use advanced composition techniques

One of the biggest challenges of autumn landscape photography is that, with so much potential subject matter, it's easy to capture images that overwhelm the senses. The elements that make autumn such a magnetic season for photography are also its biggest potential problems; the overlapping layers of colour and detail are stunning, but each frame can lack a definitive focal point, making it tricky for the viewer to know where to look first.

This is especially true when using wide-angle lenses, which pull in details from all areas of the scene and create busy images. Yet it's unthinkable that you'd head out into the countryside and not try to capture sweeping scenic shots that show how the seasonal colour transforms the location.

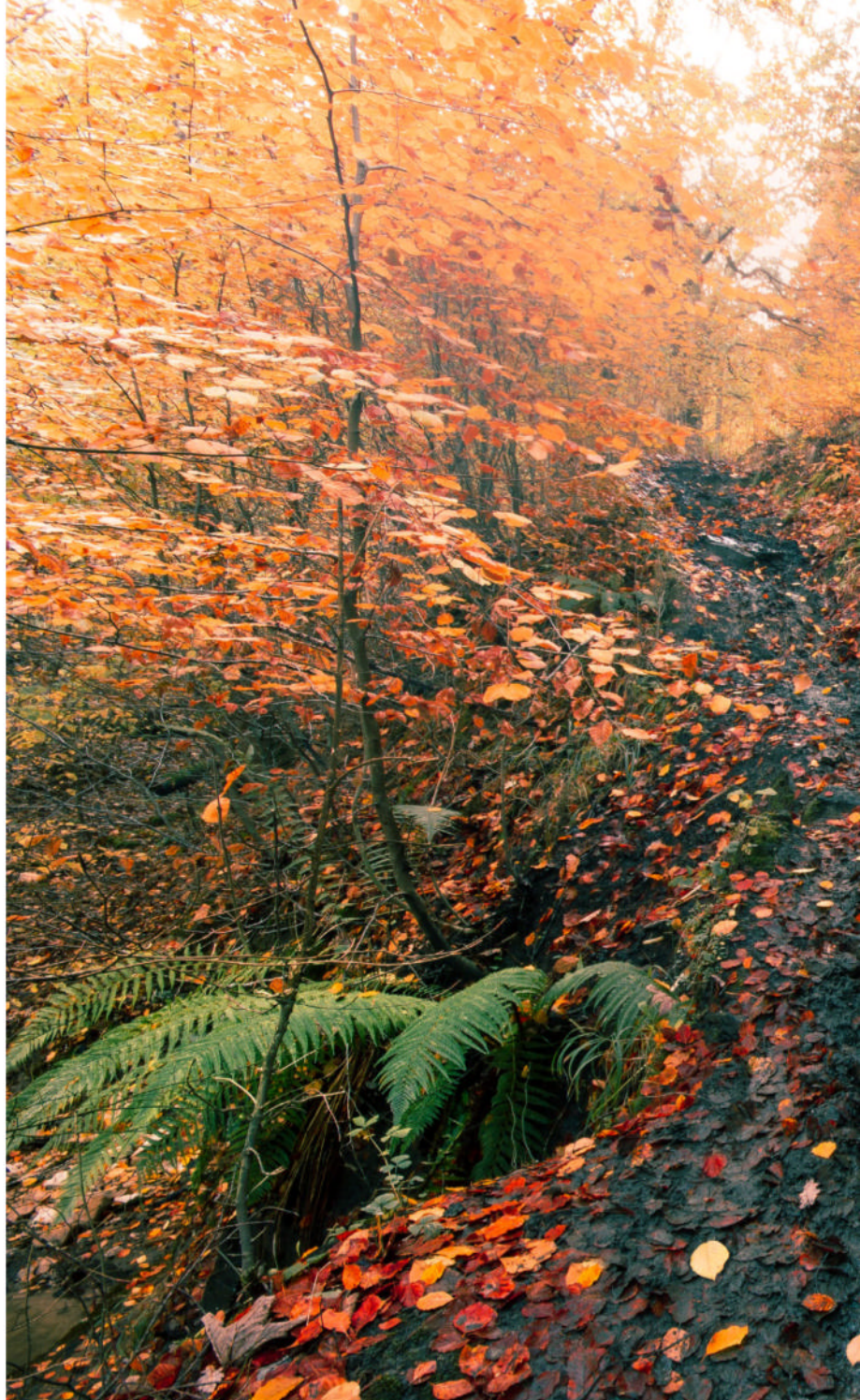
The solution is to understand how to control the interaction of colours in your shots so you can predict the impact it will have. Wide shots are inclusive, but they don't have to be messy or confusing. You simply have to know the best ways to package up all of the elements within the image frame. Don't expect the viewer to have to seek out the main subject – it's your job as the photographer to present it to them.

PRO TIP USE LAYERS

How to catch the viewer's eye



The problem with bright colours is that they will compete for your viewer's attention. The way to get around this is to arrange them so that they all get a slice of the image frame to themselves. Move the camera until you can regiment bands of colour vertically or horizontally. This way, the eye can move from one section of colour to the next, creating a direction of travel through the composition.



PRO ADVICE CHANGE ASPECT RATIO

Switch up your frame shape for creative success

1:1 Great for compositions when the subject is close to the middle of the frame, this square format will show the stretched wide-angle perspective without including too much visual information around the frame edges. Ideal for capturing individual trees.





PRO SHOT

Subject matters

Settings: 13 secs at f/13, ISO 100

Even with lots of incredible colours in the scene, it's important to ensure that there is a clear main subject in your photos.

Peter Fenech



2:1 If your wide lens is showing too much sky, try this longer frame instead. It will capture the impact of broad, colourful landscapes while also reducing vertical detail. Images will also fill most laptop and phone screens.



4:3 The native ratio for many smartphones is a good choice when a wide focal length shows too much edge detail horizontally. It's close to the 'normal' 3:2 camera ratio, so it's still familiar.

Peter Fenech

PART 2

PICK OUT SMALLER DETAILS

Look closely at elements of the autumn landscape to tell a more intricate story about the most colourful season

The most incredible aspect of autumn is that it changes the landscape at every level, from the widest vista to the smallest corner of your garden. This means there are opportunities for photography at each category of depth – big and small, high and low. You can find subject matter in the tree canopy, at ground level and down at the forest floor. By capturing all this, you can paint a picture of the seasonal transformation as it happens.

There are two approaches to this. Firstly, you can shoot at each of these levels using the same camera equipment and adjusting your composition to match what is around your chosen subject. This provides the viewer with a more life-like representation of each scene and a consistent portfolio if you are displaying your images together. Shooting with a standard lens, for example, gives a perspective similar to that of the human eye, creating the effect of placing the viewer in the scene and the experience of them seeing it for themselves. This method places the subject in the



PRO SHOT Leaf, laugh, love

Lens used: 15mm fisheye

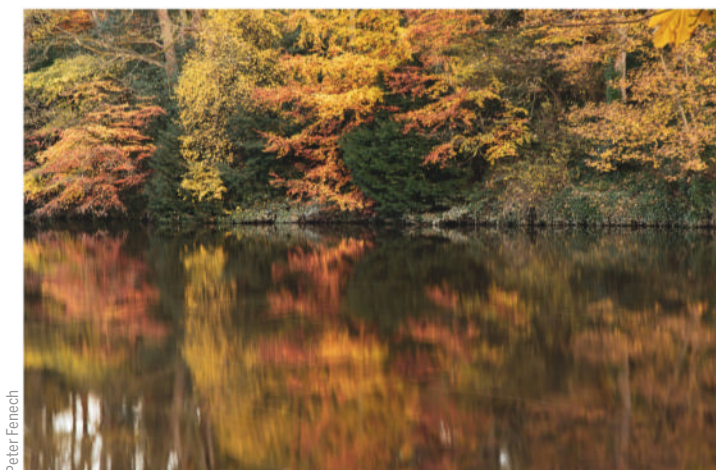
Settings: 1/2 sec at f/22, ISO 800

While shooting landscapes with a fisheye lens is uncommon, in this case it helped show the first leaf fall of the season by capturing the foreground leaves in the wider context of the river gorge location.

wider context of the autumn landscape, showing it as one part of the bigger story.

An alternative approach is to adapt your kit to match each level. Using a macro lens to shoot life-size images of small forest floor details will isolate them from the rest of the landscape, creating standalone studies.

Similarly, using a telephoto lens to capture the tree canopy will compress perspective and make colour variations the subject in their own right. In either example, you are showing something the viewer can't see themselves and decoupling your subjects from their environment.



PRO SHOT Mirror, mirror

Lens used: 24-70mm at 70mm **Settings:** 5 secs at f/14, ISO 100

Use the long end of your standard zoom lens to crop in on the surface of a river or lake. Focus on the area where the real and reflected images meet, using a shutter speed over one second to smooth out ripples for a glassy mirror image.



PRO SHOT Mushroom to explore

Lens used: 60mm f/2.8 Macro **Settings:** 1/125 sec at f/4, ISO 400

Fungi are often seen as a classic macro detail shot of autumn. Here, this ultra-low-level composition captures small elements while using extreme near and distant objects to create a sense of depth. Angling the lens upwards uses sun flare to create a splash of warm colour.



Peter Fenech

PRO TUTORIAL CAPTURE FALLING LEAVES

Three steps for catching one of autumn's finest displays



FIX YOUR GEAR

1 Sometimes, you may find that merging exposures later produces stronger results. Therefore, it's best to leave your gear fixed in place on a tripod so it doesn't move between shots. This will also reduce blur imposed by lengthening the exposure during the following step.



DRAG THE SHUTTER

2 Fast shutter speeds will freeze the falling leaves, which can look uncomfortable and distracting when they are small in the frame. Instead, select an exposure of around 0.5 seconds to introduce some attractive motion blur to the leaves as they fall to the ground.



CHOOSE BURST MODE

3 Capture leaves in multiple positions once they start to fall. Hold down a remote trigger and shoot their complete journey downwards, giving you the choice of positions – if they cover an area of the frame you would like the viewer to see, you might want to choose another frame.



Peter Fenech

LIGHT TECHNIQUE 1 Foggy low contrast

Camera: Canon EOS R1 and 24-70mm lens with circular polariser Settings: 1/6 sec at f/11, ISO 800

Mist and fog naturally diffuse the light from the sun, scattering it throughout the scene. This acts like a softbox, but unlike overcast conditions, there can still be some shadows present. Use +1EV exposure compensation to avoid underexposure caused by your camera's metering system misreading the overall brightness, or try +1.5EV to give your shots a dreamy high-key glow. If your camera struggles in AF mode, use manual focus.

PART 3 MAKE THE MOST OF THE LIGHT

Use shifting shadows and dreamy sunlight for maximum drama

The light in autumn is often hugely atmospheric and tangibly different from the light you see in the landscape at other times of the year.

The shallower angle of the sun throughout more of the day means the light travels through more of the atmosphere, which, together with the increased levels of moisture in the air, contributes to warmer sunlight and a unique glow. In addition, the autumn season is characterised by some amazing weather effects, from misty mornings to electrifying rainstorms and shimmering sunsets.

If you really want to capitalise on these unique photographic opportunities, then you should learn to observe how each lighting condition affects the landscape. Look closely, and you'll often notice this occurs in more subtle ways than simply the harshness and direction of shadows. The ways the air scatters light around the scene will also change how colours appear in your shots, and the apparent depth of the subject and background.

At this time of year, the essential camera settings you'll need to control are exposure compensation and white balance, though you may also need to master focus mode

depending on the complexity of the scene you are shooting. The pro secret to successfully capturing highly recognisable lighting conditions, such as those found during the autumn months, is to emphasise the aesthetics that are already present in the scene. If there is low-contrast light, make this a feature and don't try to introduce a high-contrast look.

Similarly, if the sun is casting bright and saturated light, don't try to capture a flat, misty style. Remember to work with nature, not against it, especially in autumn, when your viewer will know what colour and light combinations to expect.



Peter Fenech

LIGHT TECHNIQUE 2 Contre-jour

Camera: Canon EOS R6 and 24-70mm lens Settings: 1/60 sec at f/16, ISO 200

This term contre-jour means 'against the light' and refers to shooting towards the sun. This works best in woodland scenes, as the light can be captured streaming through the canopy, breaking up areas of overexposed sky. Use Evaluative Metering mode and +1EV exposure compensation, and shoot the sun so it is partially covered by leaves. Set an aperture of f/16 to turn the light source into an attractive starburst.



LIGHT TECHNIQUE 3 Saturated side lighting

Camera: Sony A7 IV & 70-200mm Settings: 1/160 sec at f/11, ISO 400

Switch to Spot Metering and take a reading from any bright highlights on the side of your subject facing the sun. This prevents distracting clipped areas from blowing out. Choose the Daylight or Cloudy white balance preset, as these will strike a balance between the natural warmth of the sun and introducing over-saturated yellows and oranges.



LIGHT TECHNIQUE 4 Overcast colour

Camera: Sony A7 IV and 85mm lens with circular polariser

Settings: 1/15 sec at f/10, ISO 640

Seasonal sunsets are great, but cloudy weather often produces deeper colours. Switch to Cloudy or Shade white balance, or set a temperature of 6000-8000K for a warm theme. Use a circular polarising filter to cut down on sheen on leaves and wet rocks, increasing saturation further.

PART 4 GO ABSTRACT

Turn your autumn shots into works of art using creative photo techniques

W

ith so many images being taken around this time of the year, sometimes even the most incredible colour

can fail to truly encapsulate the feeling of walking through a stunning landscape location. This is where creative photography can prove to be a superb tool.

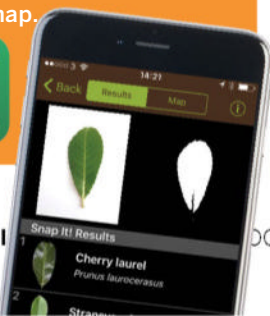
Combining images in-camera using multiple exposure functions brings together elements that would otherwise prove impossible to feature together in a single frame. This is a fantastic approach when you want to make the colour of the season the main subject in your images, but where a more literal shot fails to provide any real point of interest.

Similarly, intentional camera movement (ICM) imagery creates photos that are less about texture and more directed by colour interactions and shapes. This technique is not new, but applied to autumnal photography, it is a brilliantly effective way to play with the subliminal impacts of warm colours on the human brain. We've become tuned to see these as cosy and appealing. What's more, their intensity during autumn makes this the perfect time of year to use them for painterly impressionistic shots.

Both techniques, used in isolation or combined, are great solutions when you need to fill out your autumnal portfolio with images that stand out from the thousands of others that are sure to appear on social media over the next couple of months.

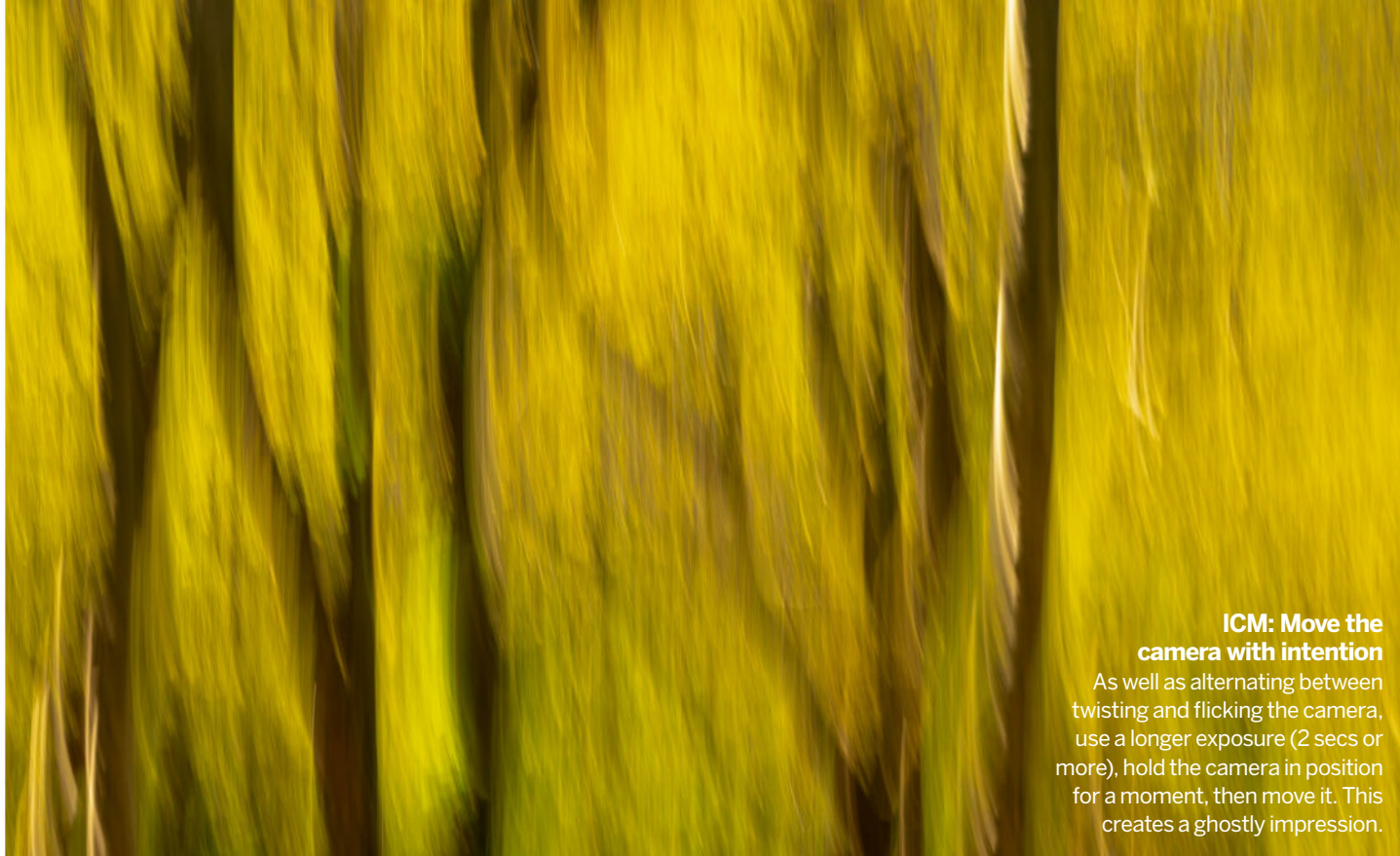
PRO TIP NOTE YOUR PLANTS

Why not make a collection of leaf portraits or take notes about the plants you are taking pictures of with a plant identifying app, such as Leafsnap.



Double the drama with a multiple exposure

Use in-camera multiple exposure mode to combine bright and dark elements of the autumnal landscape, such as a leaf and tree bark or rocks in a riverbed.



ICM: Move the camera with intention

As well as alternating between twisting and flicking the camera, use a longer exposure (2 secs or more), hold the camera in position for a moment, then move it. This creates a ghostly impression.



GO SLOW

1 ICM images only work if they look intentional, rather than an out-of-focus accident. Ensure your shutter speed is below about 1/20 sec to stop your images from looking only slightly blurry, which can be mistaken for an accidental long exposure.



CROP THE SHOT

2 Zoom in using a focal length of more than 50mm. This not only makes the ICM effect more visible, but it also makes the frame cleaner and focuses attention on one colour interaction or shape combination.



CONSIDER YOUR APERTURE

3 Even though detail is blurred, your aperture will still impact the depth of field, controlling how defined edges are in the foreground. If you want to smooth out detail close to the camera, shoot in A (Av) mode rather than S (Tv), and use a wider aperture.



SHOOT AND RESHOOT

4 There is lots of trial and error involved in ICM photography. Shoot plenty of frames to give you the best possible range of choices. As you press the shutter button, swing the camera up or down, or pan left to right, preview your shot, then try again.

PART 5

PRO TIPS FOR BETTER SHOTS

Four more ways to capture the beauty of autumn and its colours



PRO TIP 1
Capture colour gradients

Make colours stand out by using natural contrast. If your images seem to lack the 'pop' you remember from when you shot the scene, it's probably because of a lack of contrast. Make sure you include some cool hues in your shots too, such as blue sky or cool storm clouds, to create a beautiful gradient of colour temperatures.



PRO TIP 2 Experiment with depth of field

You don't need to have your whole scene in focus. In landscape photography, we're taught to use a deep depth of field so that the scene looks sharp from back to front – but don't be afraid to break the rules. Use an aperture of at least f/2.8, or wider if you have a fast lens, to blur the nearest and furthest areas and create a strong sense of separation between each element of the landscape.



PRO TIP 3 Separation, not saturation

This colour technique is a pro's secret to success. It might be tempting to turn up the saturation of the colours in your autumn shots, but this can lead to unnatural-looking results. Instead, in raw editing software, adjust the Luminosity and Hue of individual colour channels. Turn down the greens and adjust the balance of yellows and reds to separate leaf layers within the shot, creating the impression of added saturation.

**PRO TIP 4 Show movement**

Inject some energy into your photos by showing natural motion. Using a longer exposure to capture wind movement in the trees or the flow of water in a stream adds another layer of contrast – fixed objects and motion. Set up on a tripod, stop down to at least f/11, select ISO 100 and compose stationary and moving subjects together.

Hotshots

**FIRST PLACE:
PHOTOGRAPHER
OF THE YEAR**

Untitled

Gellert Gombai (Hungary)

Captured on an iPhone X

Location: Alsoörs, Hungary

Focal length: 4mm (28mm equivalent)

Exposure: 1/1500 sec at f/1.8, ISO 20

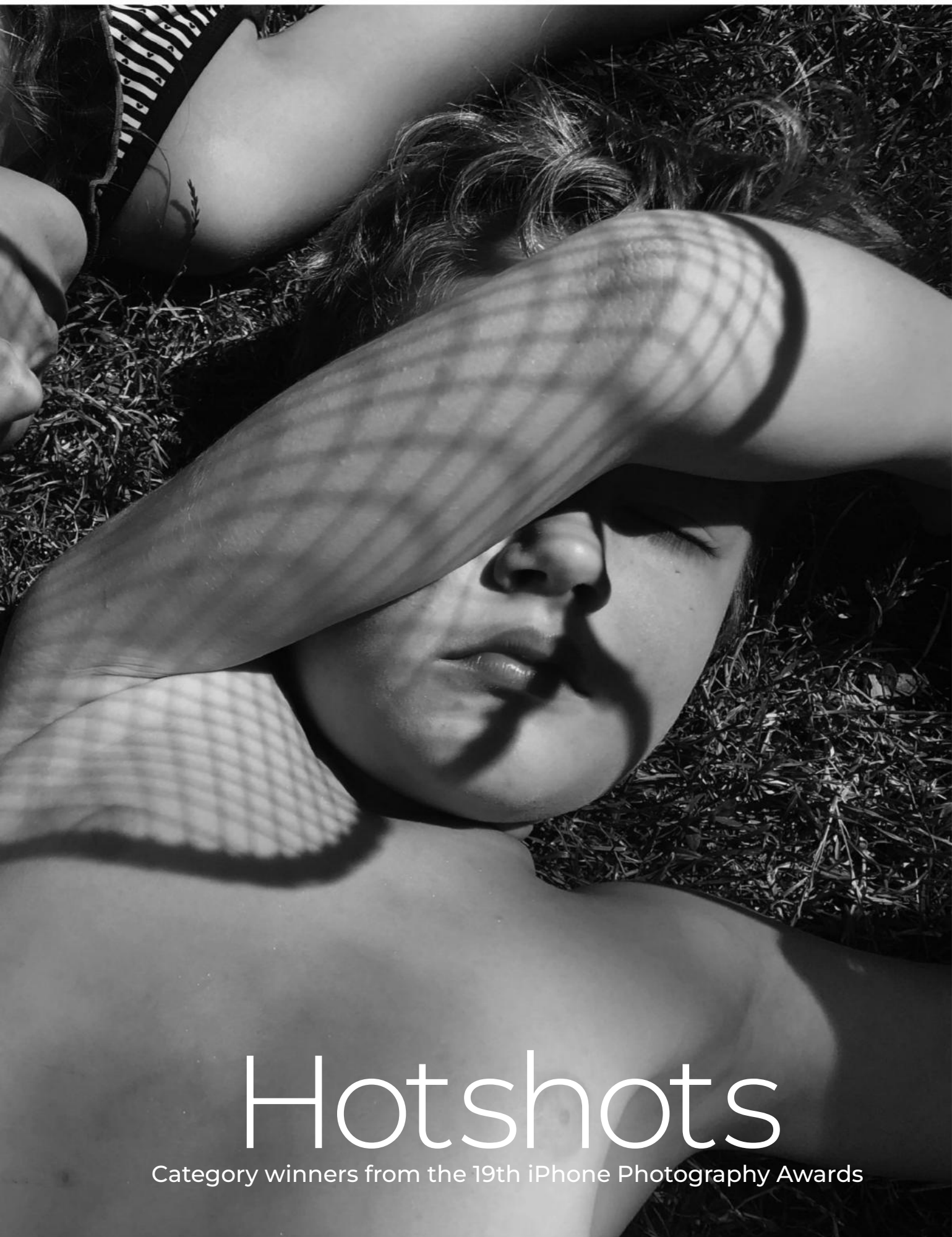


IPPAWARDS

About the competition

With thousands of submissions from all over the world, this year's winning shots showcase the unique ability of iPhone photography to connect us to the world in profound ways. The 20th annual awards competition is open for entries now.

www.ippawards.com



Hotshots

Category winners from the 19th iPhone Photography Awards

Photo © Gellert Gombai / IPPAWARDS

**GRAND PRIZE:
PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR**

Untitled

Robyn Jensen (Cayman Islands)

Captured on an iPhone 15 Pro

Location: Yepocapa,
Chimaltenango, Guatemala

Focal length: 6.765mm
(24mm equivalent)

Exposure: 1 sec at f/1.8,
ISO 12,500



Photo © Arnold Plotnick / IPPAWARDS



SECOND PLACE: PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR

Untitled

Arnold Plotnick (United States)

Captured on an iPhone 16 Pro

Location: Amsterdam,
Netherlands

Focal length: 6.765mm
(29mm equivalent)

Exposure: 1/60 sec at f/1.8,
ISO 320

THIRD PLACE: PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR

Untitled

Catherine Wang (United States)

Captured on an iPhone 16 Pro Max

Location: Oakton, Virginia, USA

Focal length: 6.765mm
(24mm equivalent)

Exposure: 1/40 sec at f/1.8, ISO 250



Photo © Catherine Wang / IPPAWARDS

Hotshots

LANDSCAPE: FIRST PLACE

Untitled

Anthony Ginns

Captured on an iPhone 16 Pro Max

Location: Camperdown,
Victoria, Australia

Focal length: 6.765mm
(24mm equivalent)

Exposure: 1/12,000 sec
at f/1.8, ISO 80



Photo © Anthony Ginns / IPPAWARDS

LIFESTYLE: FIRST PLACE

Untitled

Bertram Greenhough (United Kingdom)

Captured on an iPhone 13 Pro

Location: Brighton, UK

Focal length: 9mm (77mm equivalent)

Exposure: 1/1150 sec at f/2.8, ISO 32

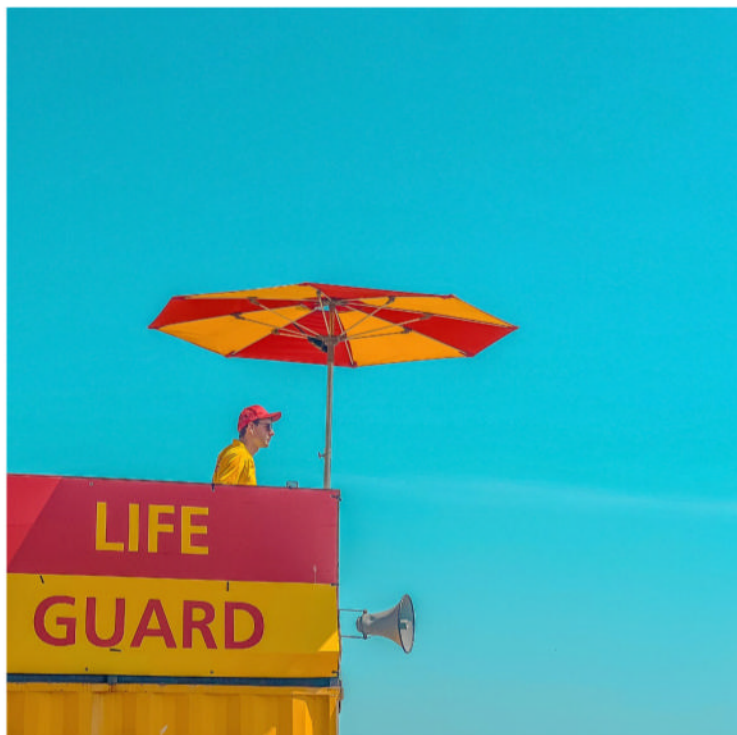


Photo © Bertram Greenhough / IPPAWARDS

ANIMALS: FIRST PLACE

Untitled

Peter Crome (United Kingdom)

Captured on an iPhone 14 Pro

Location: London, UK

Focal length: 9mm (77mm equivalent)

Exposure: 1/400 sec at f/2.8, ISO 32



Photo © Peter Crome / IPPAWARDS



PEOPLE: FIRST PLACE

**Untitled Jenny Dang
(United States)**

Captured on an iPhone 12

Location: San Francisco, USA

Focal length: 4.2mm
(26mm equivalent)

Exposure: 1/120 sec
at f/1.6, ISO 40

ARCHITECTURE: FIRST PLACE

Untitled

Ziwen Chen (China)

Captured on an iPhone 17 Pro

Location: Lougang, Guangdong, China

Focal length: 6.765mm (48mm equivalent)

Exposure: 1/18 sec at f/1.8, ISO 1000





Photo © Adrian Beasley / IPPAWARDS

CITYSCAPE: FIRST PLACE

Untitled

Adrian Beasley (United Kingdom)

Captured on an iPhone 17 Pro

Location: Prague, Czech Republic

Focal length: 16.89mm
(200mm equivalent)

Exposure: 1/750 sec at f/2.8, ISO 20



Photo © Brice Picard / IPPAWARDS

PORTRAIT: FIRST PLACE

'To Go Up In Smoke'

Brice Picard (France)

Captured on an iPhone 15 Pro

Focal length: 6.765mm
(24mm equivalent)

Exposure: 1/90 sec at f/1.8, ISO 200

CAMERA CLINIC

Master the art of modern photography

This month: Creative light
Of all the photo skills worth learning, how to use light tops the list



Creative lighting is a challenge for photographers, but one of the wonders of the medium.

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

When it comes to outdoor photography, there's no such thing as creative light (despite the title of this feature). Light is light, and it's what you do with it that's important. We all have different ways of interpreting scenarios. Many photographers find full midday sun appealing and love its contrast and harshness; others only turn on their cameras when the sun is lower and warmer. The same applies to dull days, when many camera users don't even bother getting their kit out, while others revel in the soft, almost shadow-free light.

Naturally, subject matter plays a part. Landscapers generally favour a low, warm sun, so they are busiest at both ends of the day. Many street photographers like strong sun, while nature photographers often tolerate full sunlight, but prefer a sun diffused by high cloud for easier contrast control and smoother tonal rendition.

The thing to remember is that there are no hard and fast rules when it comes to light and how we use it. Give three photographers the same subject in sunlight; one will go for front lighting; another will take the backlighting option; and the third will use side-lighting. You can bring in another three photographers: one will underexpose for a low-key look; another will overexpose for high-key; and the last will move the subject into the shade.

All these approaches are legitimate and could be construed as creative. There's no right or wrong, just what works in a specific situation. Essentially, creative lighting comes from within, taking the essential raw ingredients and producing something fit for hanging on the living room wall. It's a challenge, but one of the wonders of the medium. This month's Camera Clinic takes you through how to make the most of the light in front of you.

Get the knowledge

Different subjects suit different lighting types

In a studio, a light or flash unit can be precisely controlled in terms of direction, output, lighting quality and colour. If the pictures come out poorly lit in that environment, the photographer is wholly responsible.

But in the great outdoors, there's little or nothing you can do, and whether it's full sun or totally cloudy, you can't reach for a switch and turn off the sun or blow away

the clouds. That said, you have more control than you might think. You could, for example, swap from the planned landscape shoot to tackling nature macro or head to an urban scenario.

The way to learn, though, is to plough on and make the best of the situation and not give up. Remember, there's no such thing as bad light, just bad photography.

The need for speed

Fast-aperture primes for the shopping list



THE WIDE OPTION

How wide you go depends on what you shoot, the camera format and lens mount. The full-frame Sigma 14mm F1.4 DG Art (£1,499/\$1,839) is great for astro, but it's chunky. More portable is the Viltrox AF 16mm F1.8 (£530/\$580). Less ambitious in speed are the Samyang AF 18mm F2.8 (£324/\$269) and the Sigma 16mm F1.6 DC DN Contemporary (£389/\$414) for APS-C.

SETTING THE STANDARD
Suited to a wide range of subjects, the standard focal length gives a natural perspective and is an essential lens for every kitbag. One recent arrival is the Sigma 35mm F1.4 DG II Art (£849/\$1,059), a wider standard and high-level performer. For manual focus, the super-fast Laowa Argus 33mm f/0.95 CF APO (£519/\$449) is for APS-C format and for full-frame, there's the Zeiss 50mm f/1.4 Otus ML (£1,949/\$1,999).



AN EYE FOR DETAIL

After the 50mm, the 135mm prime was once the second lens that most photographers bought. Today, fast 135mm lenses are popular, high-performing optics, and many are well priced. From Samyang, there's the AF 135mm F1.8 (£638/\$799); Viltrox has the AF 135mm F1.8 LAB (£829/\$899), while 7Artisans has a 135mm f/1.8 (£615/\$689). For even more speed, there's the Sigma 135mm F1.4 DG Art (£1649/\$1899).

Making the most of wonderful light

Three accessories to heighten your photo experience

THE FILTER TO OWN

If there's one filter every photographer should own, it's the polariser. It's best known for its ability to tone down reflections off glass and water and enhance blue skies, but its skills for controlling glare off shiny surfaces such as foliage, rocks and painted areas are underestimated. Remember to rotate the filter in its mount to determine the best effect and take it off once you have finished the shot.



SMALL MEANS PORTABLE

The mini tripod won't give much in the way of shooting height, but it can provide stability in a wide variety of situations. For example, a mini tripod can be used on a wall, table or even braced against a tree, while products such as the GorillaPod are versatile and can be wrapped around a railing.

The GorillaPod family has models to suit different camera sizes and user needs.



TRAVELLING LIGHT

Taking support on your adventures is a burden, but a carbon-fibre travel tripod is one option. It doesn't give the working height of a full-size tripod, but it will be enough for most purposes and can be used with the centre column extended. Buy the best model your budget allows and opt for a four- or five-section compact model. Also, invest in a good tripod head with a payload rating to match your camera kit.



Perfect examples of creative lighting

The light might be awesome, but you still need to use it right for the best photos



SPOONWING AT SUNSET

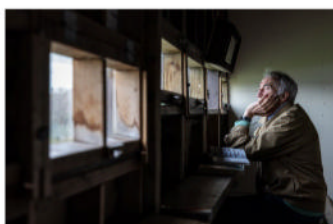
These images feature spoonwing lacewings, which I captured on a photo trip to Bulgaria. They are quite rare and localised, so it was a joy to see them. It was well into the evening and the sun was setting over the mountain, so time was running out for a nice backlit image. I spotted an insect resting on a tall grass stem, so it was a matter of getting a camera position for an upward-looking shot. That sounds easy but it was a challenge, particularly because getting low meant foreground grasses got in the way. Also, with the camera almost at ground level, seeing what was on the small monitor and checking focus was tricky.

Luckily, it all came together before the sun disappeared.



1/160 sec at f/5.6, ISO 800

Will Cheung



THE BIRDWATCHER

Visiting nature reserves often means sitting in hides and waiting ages for something to happen. I don't usually photograph fellow visitors, but on this occasion, I was struck by the lighting on the birdwatcher. In such situations, the lit areas are the priority, not the darker hide interior, so I exposed for the highlights and let the shadows look after themselves. With the live exposure preview active, I could see that the camera's multi-zone metering pattern was doing its job and the scene didn't need any exposure correction, so I pressed the shutter button when he raised the binoculars.



1/40 sec at f/6.3, ISO 400

Will Cheung



DEEP PURPLE

It doesn't always pay to linger once the sun has dropped below the horizon, especially when it's cold. However, on this occasion, I was happy to have stayed on. The sunset was quite ordinary at the beginning, but it kept on getting better and better. My favourite shot came during twilight when some low cloud rolled in and turned the scene a deep shade of purple, changing the mood of the scene completely. I had been shooting with an ND 0.6 graduated filter to help retain detail in the sunset sky, but I took this off as twilight took over because I felt that the sky didn't need any extra help.



1.5 secs at f/14, ISO 200

Will Cheung

How to make the most of light

Every photograph needs light, but you also have to use it right

Colour, direction, intensity and quality are the variables of light and appreciating them will help your photography. Visible light has a colour, with warmer light being more welcoming than a cool look. You can alter this with the camera's white balance or in editing. You can't control sun direction, so you will have to move to get the desired look.

Intensity is the strength of the light source, which depends on the sun's position and cloud cover, and has a profound effect on your camera settings. Quality varies from the hard light of a midday sun, when shadows are sharp. On dull days, clouds act as a diffuser, so the shadows are soft.

Nine creative lighting techniques to try



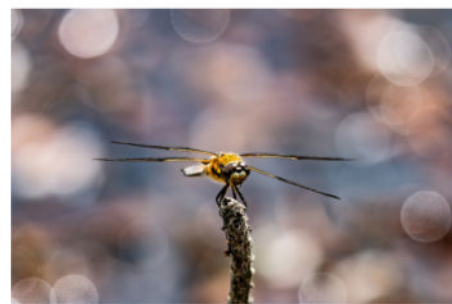
THE SHIMMERING SEA

As the sun gets lower at the coast, there's an opportunity for silhouette photos against a bright, sparkling sea. Using a telephoto lens means you can compose shots without the sun in the frame, so that contrast is less intense and easier to handle.



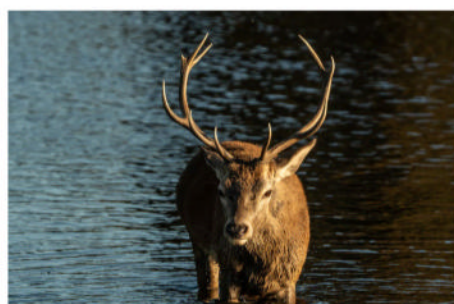
SHADOWS ON THE STREET

Strong sunlight can work well in urban situations when the high contrast can make for wonderful plays of light. Here, the mix of light and shade made this subway scene worth shooting, so I waited for people to appear and exposed for the highlights.



BOUNTIFUL BOKEH

Focusing on the subject and background highlights can give a beautiful bokeh. The ideal is to have a background with strong, sparkling highlights behind the subject. A wide f/stop usually works best, but try different focal lengths and aperture settings.



BRING OUT DETAILS

Side-lighting brings out texture and detail, while using a telephoto lens gives good separation from the background. Make sure the subject is correctly exposed because a light or dark background can fool the camera into poor subject exposure.



A WINDOW ON THE WORLD

Windows are ideal light sources for environmental portraits as well as tabletop photography. On bright days, it can be harsh and unforgiving, but on dull days, the light is lovely and soft. The downside is that it's also weak, so you need fast lenses or a tripod.



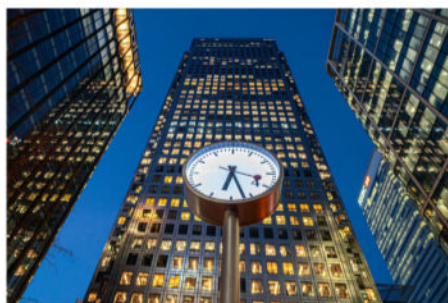
ADD A SPLASH OF FLASH

Good light can often be enhanced, depending on what you're shooting. Portraits and macro can often be improved by using a flashgun. The skill of adding flash is to not overdo it – it should play a supporting role, with daylight being the dominant source.



GO BACK-LIT FOR DRAMA

Backlighting suits many subjects, but exposure can be a challenge. The brave approach is to expose for the lighting, so the subject is in silhouette. Increasing the exposure means more shadow detail, but overdoing it will burn out the back-lit areas.



ENJOY TWILIGHT

After sunset, there's a short period of colourful sky, and it's a fabulous time to be shooting. Twilight lasts around 30 minutes, and it can be equally good at the end of sunny or dull days. However, with time at a premium, be ready to shoot and work quickly.



ENJOY THE DARK

Night is a great time to be out with the camera. With no natural light, you have to work with artificial lighting and, of course, there isn't much of that, so a tripod is essential. The beauty of night shooting is that scenes are open to your creative interpretation.

Pros and cons

Making the most of great light

Don't miss the shot, get familiar with your kit

Knowing which way a knob turns to engage compensation, or instantly locating and pressing the AE-L button, can make sure you capture the decisive moment. Practice, practice and even more practice with your camera will help. You can do this in real situations, but you can also hone your skills and develop your muscle memory at home in front of the TV. Just get used to button positions, how they work and customise the camera to your taste.

✓ Keep it clean

Before every trip out, make sure the lens front and rear elements are clean. Fingerprints and dust on the lens will adversely impact picture quality and cause flare and softer images. For best results, use products designed for lens cleaning.

✓ Take it off

Filters, even high-quality ones, can create problems when shooting towards the light, so if you are experiencing ghosting, take the filter off. Remember to replace it afterwards.

✓ Custom options

To activate auto-exposure lock (AE-L), many cameras have a dedicated button, or it's brought into play with a partial depression of the shutter release. If these options don't suit and you prefer another way of working, try the camera's customisation options.

✓ Live previews

When using the live exposure preview, you can see the effect of any exposure and white balance changes that you make in real time.

✗ Beware of the sun

Never look at the sun through the camera viewfinder – use the monitor to frame up the shot instead. Including the sun in the picture can work well when it's low in the sky and diffused by haze and low cloud. At other times, however, its intensity means burnt-out highlights that won't be recoverable, and the result will look harsh and ugly.

✗ Spot matters

Most cameras have a spot meter that measures a tiny (two or three per cent) part of the image area. They need to be used with care for great results, and you can run into problems if you aim it at the wrong area of the scene. Often, you're better off using the default multi-zone pattern and getting to know how it behaves in different lighting scenarios.

✗ Fleeting light

Wonderful light rarely lasts long, so learn how to compose, meter and shoot quickly. For example, at sunrise/sunset, twilight and during days of changeable weather, the intensity of light and the sky colour can change from minute to minute. Don't waste time enjoying the view – simply shoot now and refine the results later.

Check your exposure

Get exposure 'right' in-camera.

Lens technique

The ultimate way to avoid flare

In difficult lighting, use your hand or a piece of card to avoid ghosting

Stray, non-image-forming light can cause flare and reduce contrast, and a lens hood can help. But lens hoods are compromises, notably with zoom lenses where a hood only has serious benefit at the lens's shorter focal lengths. Also, the vast majority of hoods are round, while image formats are rectangular.

While a few prime lenses have dedicated rectangular hoods and concertina bellows lens hoods are available, the options are limited. Your hand or a piece of card (black, ideally) are workaround solutions. Position the card or hand just out of frame to shield the lens from stray light. This isn't practical with a long lens unless it's on a tripod, but it's a technique that works well with a handheld camera and shorter lenses.





CAMERA
CLINIC

Work quickly

Great light is often fleeting,
so don't waste any time.

Try bracketing

Bracket shots if you're unsure.



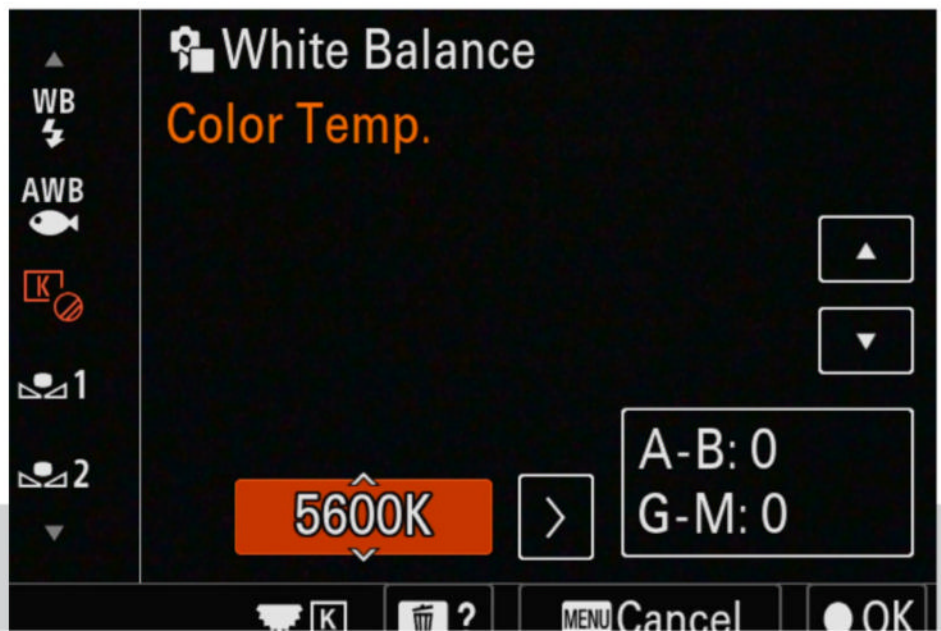
Will Cheung

Lens tech Fine-tune white balance

Use the colour of light to evoke a mood in your photographs

Visible light has a colour temperature measured according to the Kelvin (K) scale. Warmer, more orange light has a lower colour temperature, typically 3000-3400K, while a cooler, bluer light will be 8000K upwards. Normal daylight is around 5500K.

For natural-looking photos, you can usually rely on the camera's Auto White Balance (AWB), but you can use one of your camera's presets or even a manual K setting. For example, in daylight, selecting the shade or cloudy option will give a warmer result; manually setting 8000K will give a similar look. The same approach can be used to give your shots a cooler appearance by using the incandescent preset or setting 3200K.



Shoot photos like a pro

There's no such thing as poor light, just poor photography

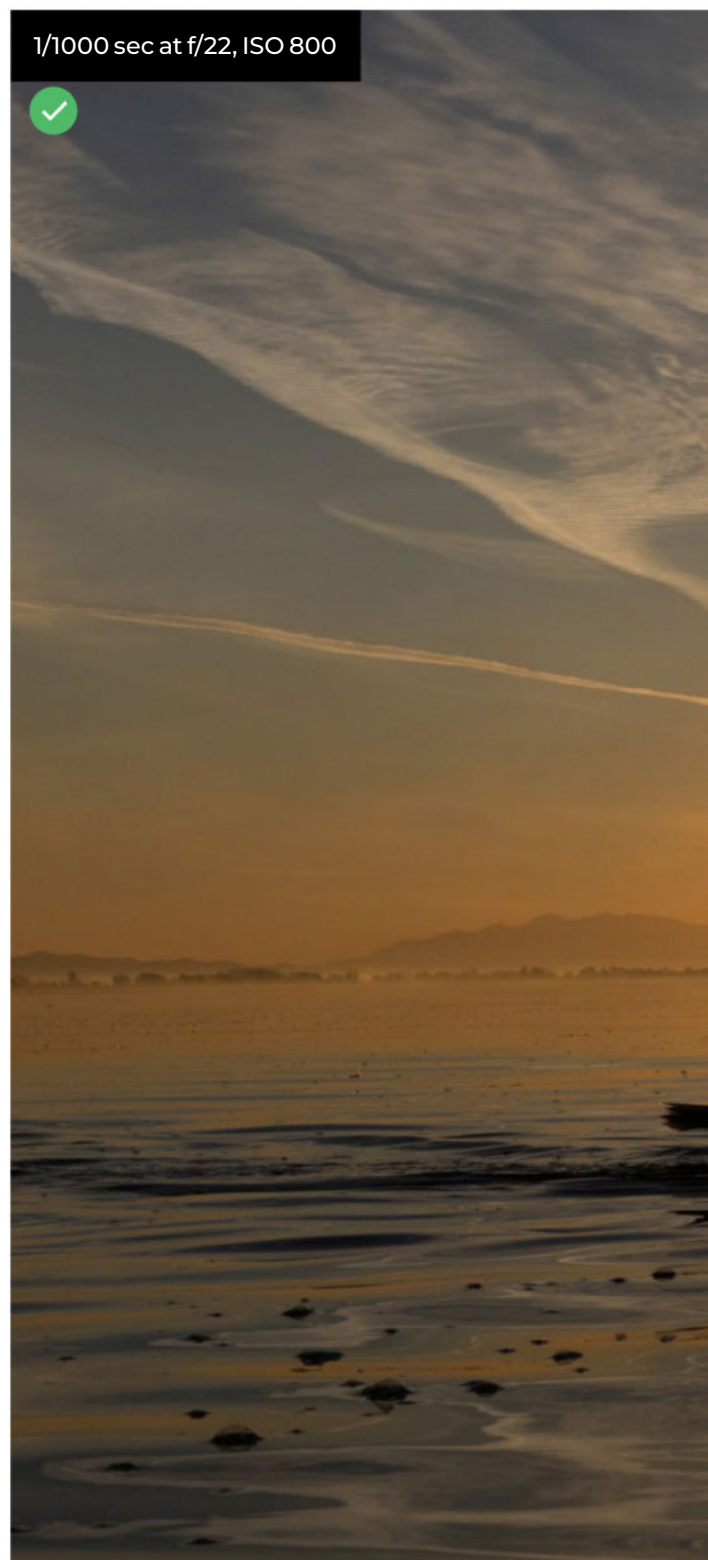
Appreciating light and how to get the best out of it with the kit at your disposal takes time, experience and practice. Having an open mind and being brave help too. For example, some photographers shy away from shooting towards the sun because the results can be harsh, contrasty and tricky to get right, yet

photos can be dramatic and powerful. We also have different ideas of what is good light, but it pays not to be dismissive when you are out with the camera. A dull day might not be what you want, but such conditions can suit black and white images, and soft light works for close-up shooting. In short, it pays to be flexible.

Shield the sun

Including the sun within the frame often makes it impossible to control hotspots and the risk of lens flare. If you can, use the subject or part of the scene to shield the sun. Scenes of such extreme contrast can be a metering headache. Expose for the subject, and the highlights will blow out completely; expose for the highlights, and you get a silhouette, which is the effect that I went for here.

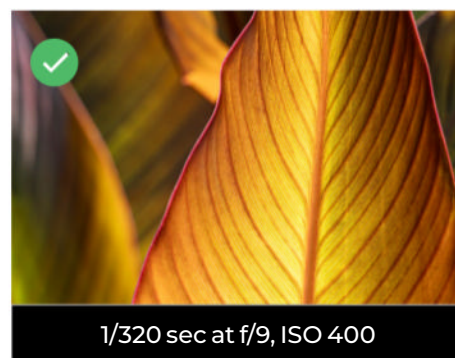
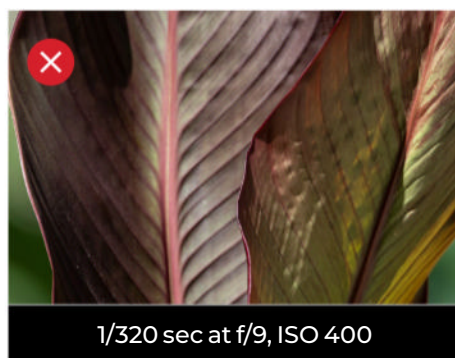
Dialling in -2 stops of exposure compensation ensured the best result.



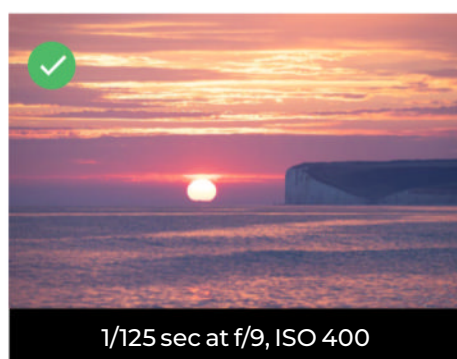
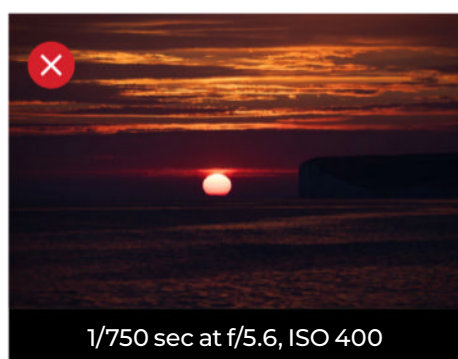
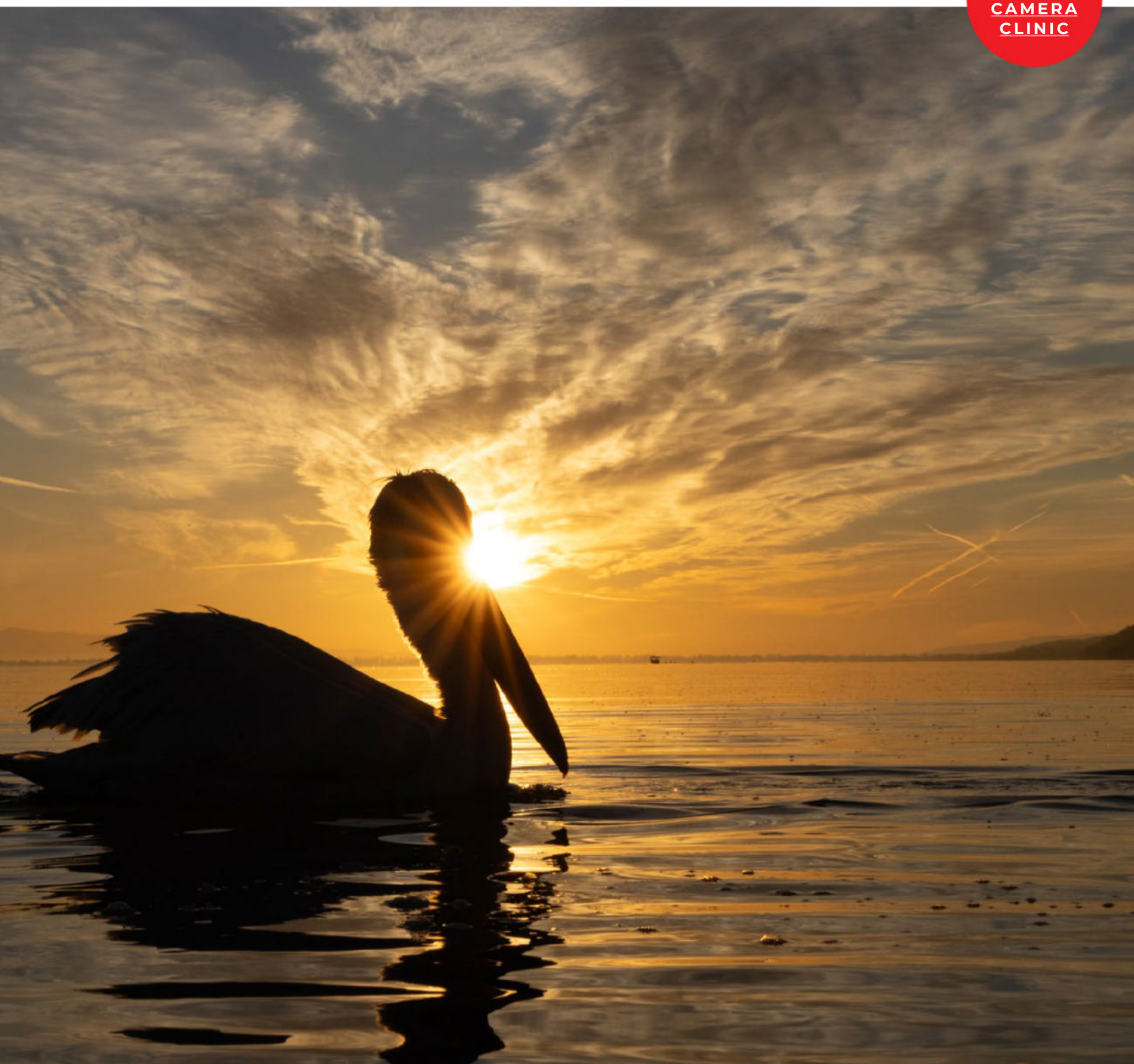
Go backlit for drama

In the woodland gardens of Bushy Park in London, the canna lily's purple leaves looked promising with intense colour and texture.

I took a frontally lit shot, which worked well, but moving around for a backlit photo revealed an even better opportunity with the prominent veins and colour changes. To make the most of the bold patterning, I used a telephoto zoom at its minimum focusing distance to give a shallow depth of field.



Will Cheung



Will Cheung

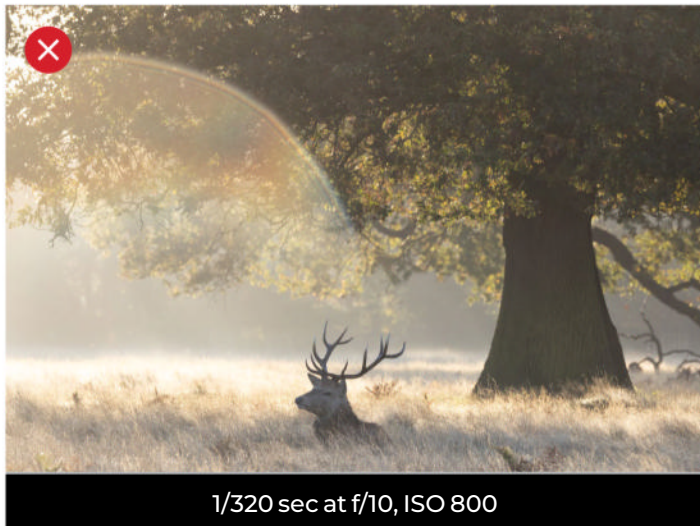
Sensational sunsets

Having a strong light source at the centre of the frame will inevitably underexpose the overall scene. In the case of sunsets, dialling in extra exposure will invariably produce a better result. Do this with exposure compensation or angle the camera to meter from an area of bright cloud to one side of the sun; use AEL to lock a reading and then re-frame the composition. Always use the rear LCD, not the EVF, for sun shots.



Fun with shadows

With sunshine come shadows, so look for creative ways of using these photogenic plays of light. Predominantly light-toned scenes can come out underexposed and darker than you would expect, so in this example, shot in Valencia, overexposure of 0.6 stops was added to maintain the scene's lightness. I also felt the scene needed a point of interest, and the cyclist proved ideal and a better option than the scooter rider.



A flair for flare

When the sun is sitting low in the sky, there is a greater risk of creating distracting lens flare, especially with long telephoto lenses, even when the sun is excluded from the frame. In this pair of shots, a 200-800mm zoom was used at 570mm, and a lens hood was fitted. The hood, however, was not working effectively, so with the camera and lens on a tripod, I positioned my hand just out of the frame to shield the front element from the light.

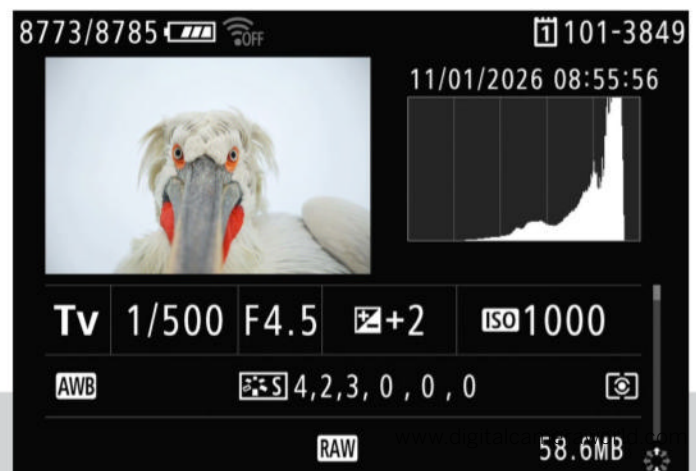
Camera skills Exposing to the right

Use the camera histogram for detail-packed raw photos

A raw file retains more information in the highlights than in the shadows. The brightest f/stop has 50 per cent of the recorded levels, the next brightest has 25 per cent and the one after that has 12.5 per cent. Take a typical daylight scene with a 10-stop dynamic range, and by the time you reach the deepest shadows, there's relatively little data.

What this means in editing is that highlight recovery will potentially be more successful because there is so much more information to work with. By contrast, recovering shadows with fewer levels means boosting hidden data and creating more noise, which impacts the picture quality.

Exposing with the histogram to the right helps to make the most of this property of digital sensors, but it's important to keep the brightest highlights within the histogram and ensure that they aren't 'blown'.





Changing for the better

Bright, windy days bring rapidly changing conditions, and wonderful lighting is ephemeral, so when the moment comes, be prepared to catch the drama. Having an idea of your composition is important, and so too is having the appropriate filter attached and ready to shoot. In this case, a polariser was used. If you wait for the light to be perfect and then think about adding a filter, you're probably going to miss the moment.



Take the stairs

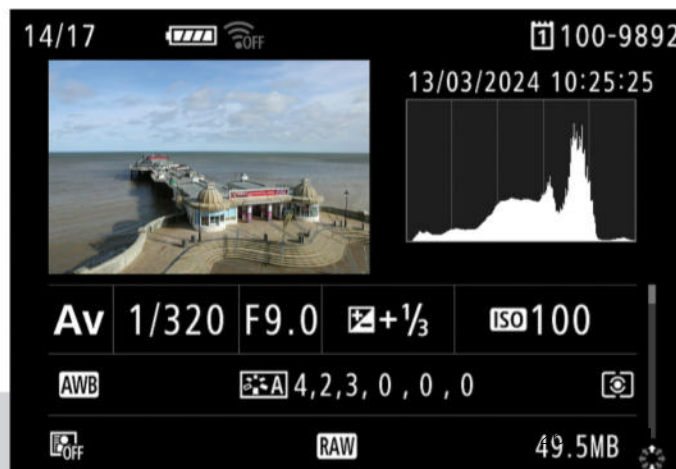
This is the famous Tulip Stairs located inside the Queen's House in Greenwich, London. You aren't allowed to use a tripod in the house, so I shot an exposure bracket of seven frames at ± 1 stop. This would guarantee a decent shot, but it also meant that I'd have a sequence I could merge. I ended up with a good traditional shot (left), but I preferred the graphic, monochromatic look of the -3 stop shot. It shows the impact exposure can have on the mood of your photos.

Pro tip Use the live histogram

Keep an eye on the histogram to avoid losing highlights

Checking the preview's histogram to make sure you have a good exposure is worth doing. However, using the live histogram, if your camera has it, saves time, and you can see in real-time the effect that making alterations to the exposure settings has. Having the graph on show in the viewfinder or monitor is distracting to start with, but you'll get used to it, and you can probably assign a function button to toggle it on and off.

Adjust settings to keep the histogram within the boundaries of the graph, especially the right side, which represents the highlights.





Kate Ventress



Helena Miscioscia Photographer

Title: 'Eclipse through a colander
(on the face of my mum)'

Location: Bath, UK

Camera and lens: Canon EOS R6 and
Canon RF 85mm F2 Macro IS USM

Settings: 1/500 sec at f/2, ISO 500

Instagram: @helena.m.photography

Website: www.helenamphotography.com

"I was quite cross with my mum when she made this face," says Helena. "I was trying to get a ethereal image of the subject bathed in sun and moon shapes."

a startled owl ended up being the most eye-catching image that I captured during the partial solar eclipse.

"Funnily enough, I didn't like this image at all initially, and was quite cross with my mum when she made this face. We didn't have much time to get a good photo, as the eclipse crescent was getting increasingly bigger. I was trying to get a peaceful, ethereal image of the subject bathed in these sun and moon shapes."

However, when Helena imported the images into Lightroom, she noticed how arresting and surreal the picture was. While she hadn't intended to create such a stark portrait, it turned out to be pretty distinctive.

During a solar eclipse, a kitchen colander can be used as a pinhole projector, as its holes project multiple small images of the sun onto a piece of card. Helena found it difficult to direct her model, position the colander, hold her camera and stand somewhere she wasn't blocking the light.

"Fortunately, my husband came back from work and was able to hold the colander; that freed up one of my hands so I could move into a better position to capture the full effect of the colander circle across my mum's face.

"The shoot took 14 minutes from start to finish – it was chaos! The more silly faces my mum made, the more frustrated I was getting. Eventually, I told everyone that they didn't understand my vision whatsoever, and stormed off into the garden. The eclipse definitely played with everyone's mood.

"It was only when editing the images that I saw how fun and cool they were. I shared them on my Instagram feed and thought nothing of it. But the next time I looked, they had got thousands of views and lots of lovely comments. It was wonderful to see how they resonated with people and how my mother's owl stare made it across the internet!" ●

See more of Helena's family and wedding photography on her website at:
www.helenamphotography.com

Shot of the month

Helena Miscioscia captured the shared experience of the partial solar eclipse with this endearing portrait of her mother

A creative photographer based in Bath, south-west England, Helena Miscioscia focuses on relaxed and informal portraiture, seeking to capture the magical connections between people and places. With her equipment setup geared towards producing that kind of work, she knew that photographing the UK's partial

solar eclipse in August could be a challenge. Instead, she turned her camera away from the sun and focused on the people around her and the shapes that the sun and moon were casting on their hands and faces.

"I had directed everyone to look peaceful and keep their eyes shut," Helena recalls. "However, to try to amuse the children, my mum rebelled against my instructions. The final image of her staring down the lens like



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Page 104

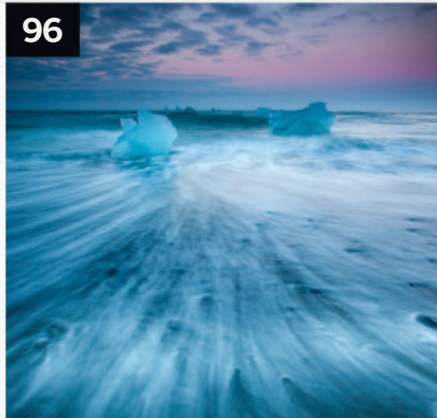
Digital Darkroom

Transform your photos with our easy, effective guides

94



96



98



100



102

**PAGE 94****Photoshop**

Turn your images into watercolours with these fine-art paper textures.

PAGE 96**Lightroom**

Discover the power of vignettes to draw the eye to key parts of an image.

PAGE 98**Photoshop**

Use the ACR filter to edit your jpegs with a range of techniques.

PAGE 100**Affinity**

Convert your images to mono, using the Raw developing module.

PAGE 102**Affinity**

Introducing Affinity's Live Filter system and its creative glitch effects.

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

Turn photos into watercolours

Dan Mold creates painterly effects in Photoshop using Smart Filters, downloadable brushes and his free fine-art paper textures

I've always been into art; however, painting and drawing have taken a back seat in recent years because they're both messy and costly, and whatever spare cash

I have usually goes on photography kit. Not to worry! I have plenty of digital images on my hard drive that, with the help of some clever tricks in Photoshop, I can magically turn into painterly pictures with this beautiful watercolour effect.

To make the effect more convincing, we're supplying four different art paper textures from rough watercolour paper to heavy cotton canvas in this month's free download folder. These will sell the effect by making it look like your image was painted on a heavy textured fine art paper.

I'll also show you how to use Smart Filters, which allow you to go back and edit your filters at any time to change their settings, strengths and blend, so you can dial in the watercolour effect and make it look perfect for your photos. So download the project file images, fire up Photoshop and follow along the step-by-step tutorial and accompanying video lesson to see how it's done in real-time. Let's get to it...

Download your files

www.digitalcameraworld.com/dc312
Download your files and video tutorial from the folder titled 'Photoshop_Watercolours'.



Four
paper
textures



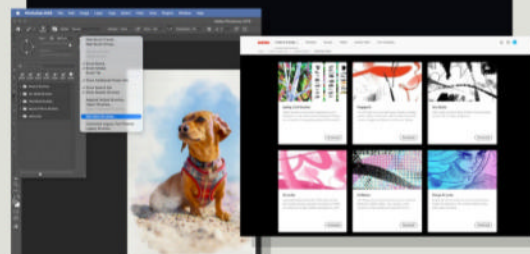
9-minute
video
tutorial

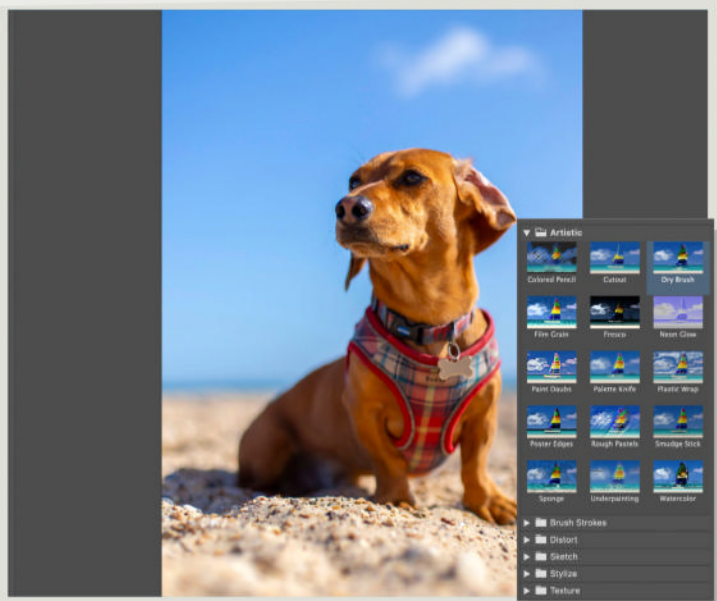


Project
files and
instructions

Download free watercolour brushes

While you can buy premium watercolour brush packs online for around £20 online, did you know that if you're paying for Adobe Creative Cloud, you'll already have access to a wide variety of artistic brushes that you can download for free? To do it, activate the Brush Tool in Photoshop and click on the Brush Preset Picker from the Tool Options at the top of the screen. Now click the settings icon in the top right and choose Get More Brushes – this takes you to Adobe's website, where you can download a bunch of extra brushes.

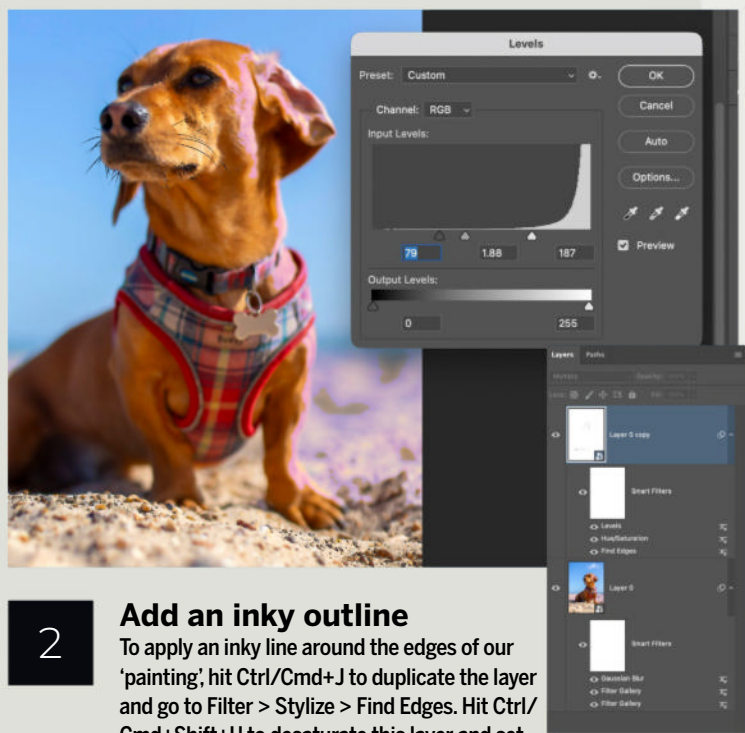




1

Apply the watercolour filters

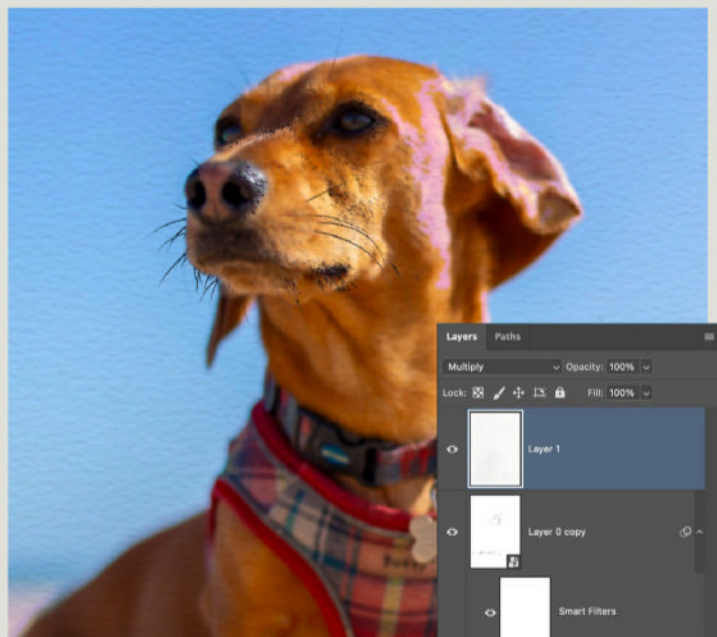
Open up your image in Photoshop and go to the Layers panel (Window > Layers). Right-click the image layer and choose Convert to Smart Object. Now, go to Filter > Filter Gallery > Artistic > Dry Brush and use settings of Brush Size: 10, Brush Detail: 10 and Texture: 1 and hit OK. Head back to Filter > Filter Gallery > Artistic > Cutout with settings of Number of Levels: 5, Edge Simplicity: 4 and Edge Fidelity: 1 and hit OK. Change the Blending Mode of this filter layer to Pin Light.



2

Add an inky outline

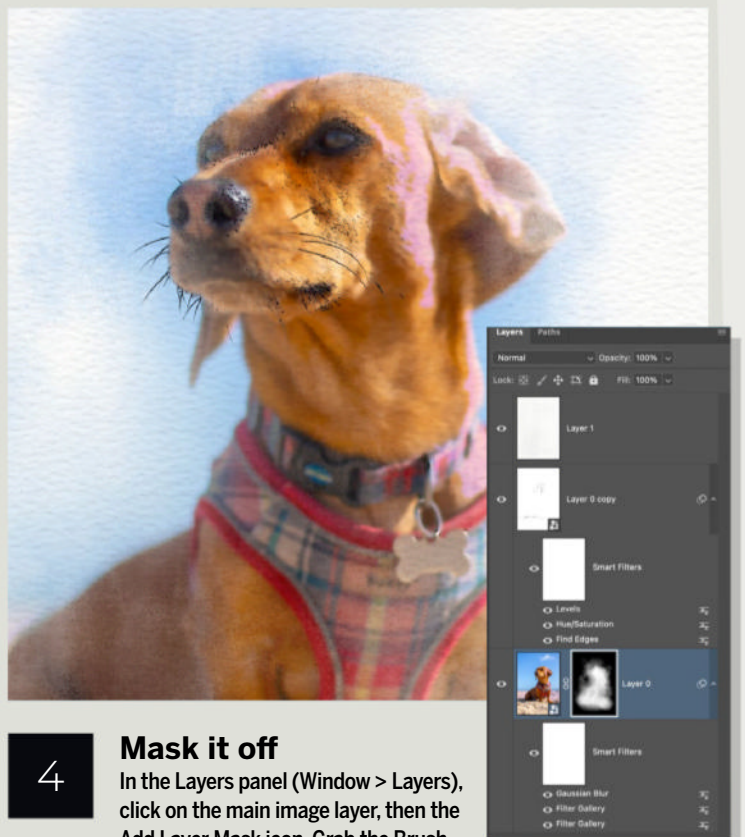
To apply an inky line around the edges of our 'painting', hit Ctrl/Cmd+J to duplicate the layer and go to Filter > Stylize > Find Edges. Hit Ctrl/Cmd+Shift+U to desaturate this layer and set this layer to Darken. Hit Ctrl/Cmd+L to bring up the Levels panel and drag the three sliders for shadows, midtones and highlights until your inky outline is the correct strength for your picture. Hit OK to apply the Levels adjustment, right-click on this ink layer and choose Create Clipping Mask.



3

Add the paper texture

Open one of the free texture files in Photoshop and hit Ctrl/Cmd+A to select it, Ctrl/Cmd+C to copy and Ctrl/Cmd+W to close it. In your main image, hit Ctrl/Cmd+V to paste it in. Press Ctrl/Cmd+A to put it into Free Transform Mode and pull the corners so the paper texture covers the whole image. Hit Return and set Blending Mode to Multiply.



4

Mask it off

In the Layers panel (Window > Layers), click on the main image layer, then the Add Layer Mask icon. Grab the Brush Tool (B) and in the Brush Preset Picker, choose an artistic brush such as Wet Media or Watercolor (see panel). Set the Opacity to 15 per cent and use the square brackets to resize the brush. Invert the layer mask by pressing Ctrl/Cmd+I, then paint with a white brush to reveal your painting layer as you build up the strokes.

Before

After



Use a vignette to help direct your viewer's gaze

Sean McCormack explains how to use the Vignette tool in Lightroom to focus on the key part of your image

Vignette? What's that exactly? A small film clip or story? Not quite. In photography, vignetting refers to the darkening of the corners of an image caused by imperfections in a lens design. These days, Lightroom corrects this using an automatically applied lens profile. So we're not discussing lens corrections, but rather a more creative application of vignetting. Your eye is generally drawn to the brightest part of a photo, so selective darkening can make other areas appear brighter. It's often a subtle effect, only becoming clear when viewing the before and after shots. One way of doing this is by using a Radial Gradient; however, Lightroom Classic has a dedicated tool with features that can retain highlights along the edges: the Post Crop Vignette tool, located in the Effects panel.

Of the three options – Highlight Priority, Color Priority and Paint Overlay – the first is generally your best choice. Neither of the other tools becomes available until after you set the Amount slider. Moving it to the left darkens the edge, and shifting it to the right lightens it. We'll set this to -50 to start, with Roundness and Feather at 0 to see the effect more easily.

Off-centre vignette

The Highlights slider makes Post Crop Vignette better for centred vignettes, but for off-centre ones, you need to use the Radial Gradient in the Masking panel. Alternatively, go straight to the tool by using the shortcut Shift+M. Click and drag over your subject, allowing some room around it for the transition. Click Invert, then set Feather to 38. Set the Exposure slider to -0.82 to darken the area.

Download your files

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



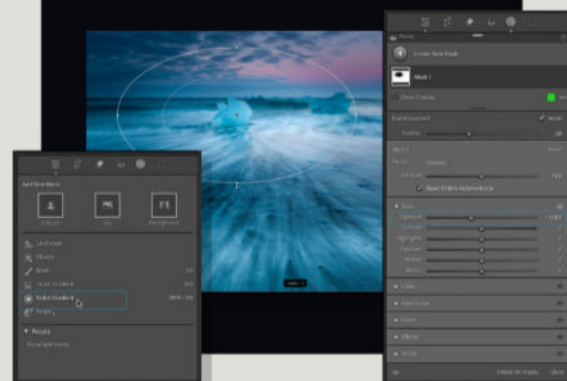
Two
Lightroom
presets

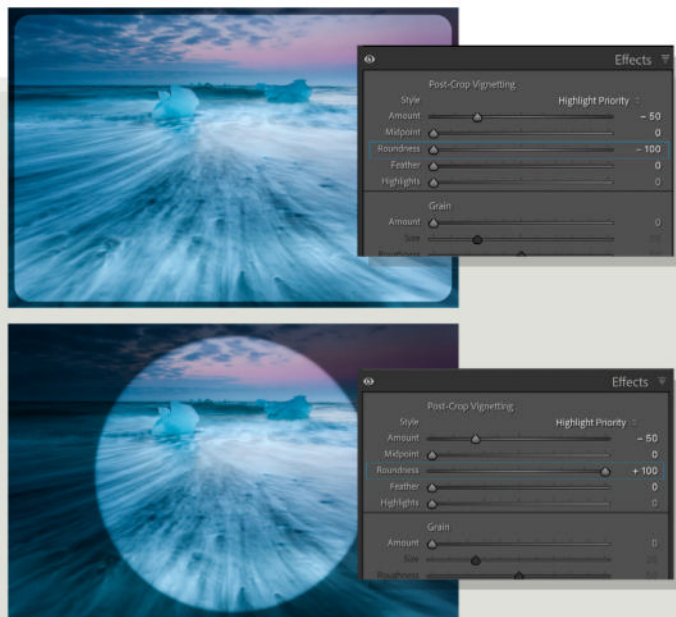


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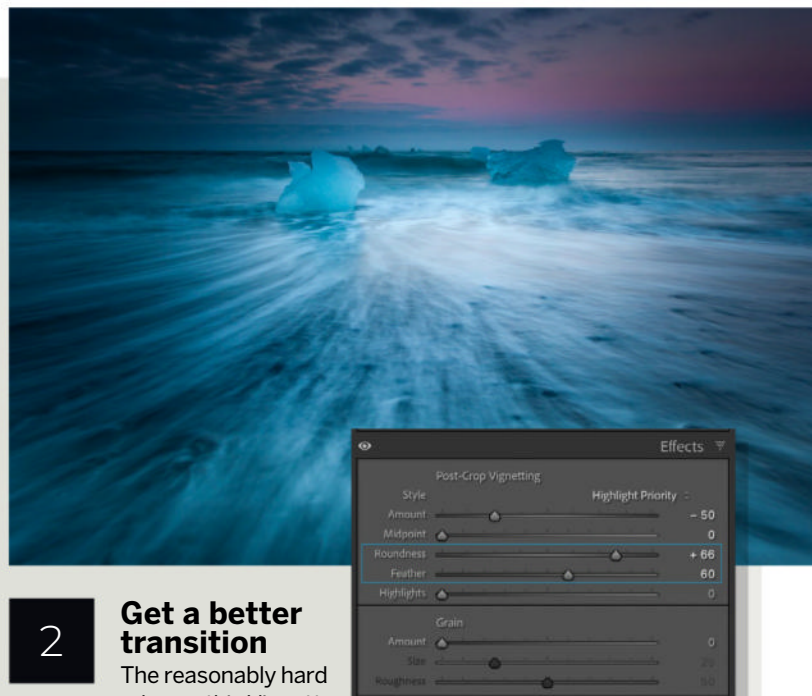




1

Understanding the outline

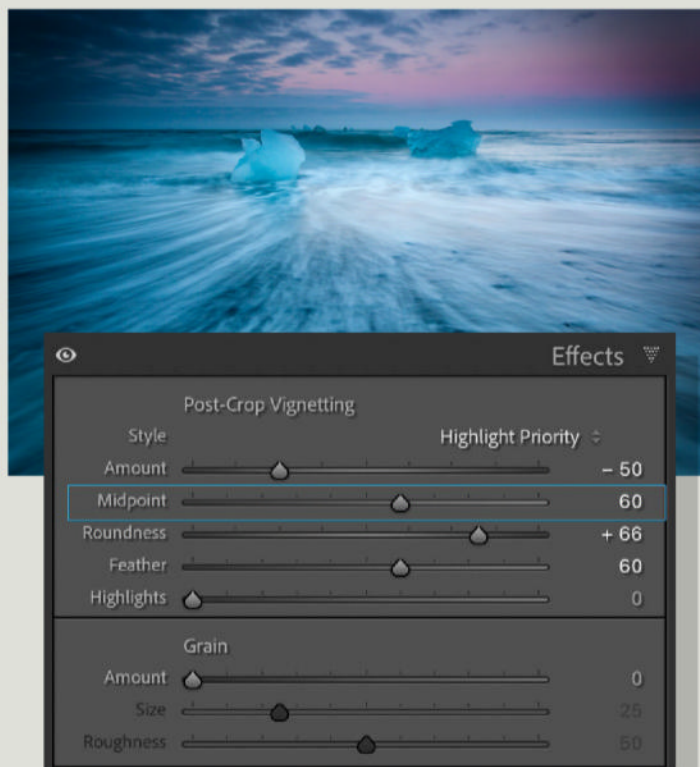
To understand the Vignette tool, it's good to see exactly what's happening. Set the Midpoint to 0 to maximise the effect, then set Roundness to -100. Notice how you have a nice rounded corner effect? Set the Amount to +100, and you've created a rounded white border on your photo. Next, set Roundness to +100 and see how it's now a circle in the centre of the photo. Use this slider to set the shape of your vignette; try +66 for a more oval shape.



2

Get a better transition

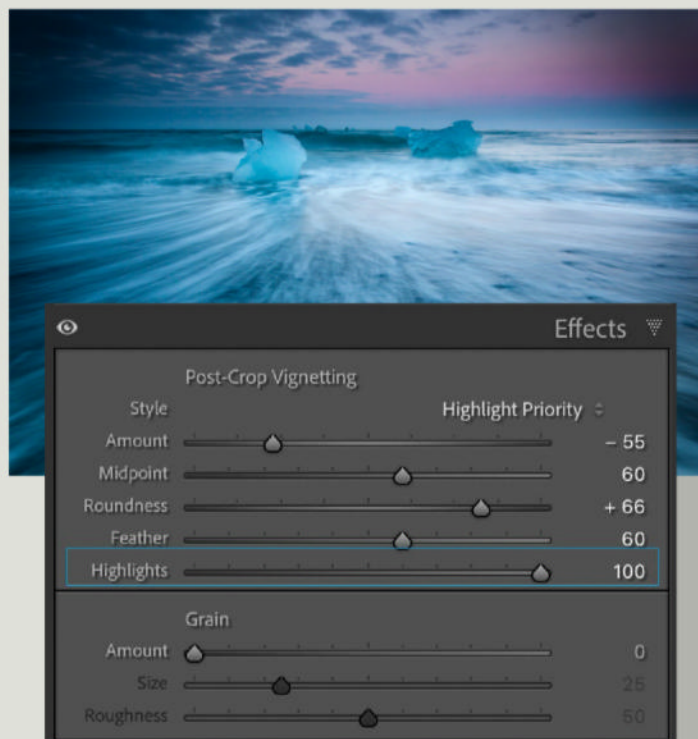
The reasonably hard edge on this Vignette makes the effect far too obvious. You want to apply the effect subtly, but not so much that you reveal your hand. How do we fix this? The Feather slider is the answer. This sets the transition between the darkest part of the vignette and the clear part of the photo. If you set it to 100, you'll see only a light spot at the centre. Instead, set it to around 60, but it's still darkening too much of the photo.



3

Control the Radius

The fix is simple. In the first step, you set Midpoint to 0 so that you can see the vignette properly. This forces the vignette right into the middle of the current crop of the photo (that's why it's called the Post Crop Vignette). Crop the photo again, and the vignette will realign using its current settings. The default setting of 50 looks fine, but pushing it out to 60 seems to be even better.



4

Bring back edge highlights

This shot uses the movement of the waves as leading lines to draw your eyes up towards the icebergs. The vignette loses some of this effect due to the darkening of the edges. You can bring this back using the Highlight slider. You can choose to be subtle, but for this, it really needs the full 100 for the waves to retain their impact. Finally, change the Amount to give you the overall darkness you'd like. Here, setting it to -55 works well.



Before

Edit your jpegs like a raw file

James Abbott unleashes the creative power of the Adobe Camera Raw filter in Photoshop

Download your files

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Download your files and video tutorial from the folder titled 'Photoshop_ACR Filter'.



Four
Actions for
Photoshop



8-minute
video
tutorial



Project
files and
instructions

If you shoot in raw format, the Adobe Camera Raw (ACR) Filter in Photoshop may be something you have used to make adjustments. However, the chances are that you've already done everything you need to do during raw processing. On the other hand, if you are editing jpeg images, you may use the ACR Filter to allow you to make powerful changes to your photos, while making other adjustments with Layers and cloning.

In this tutorial, we're going to look at four different techniques that enhance coastal scenes and landscapes in various ways. Each will be applied non-destructively, too, so you can add more Layers above if you wish. Also, even if you do shoot in raw format and edit your photos in the full version of ACR or Adobe Lightroom, these techniques can also be applied there, so they will still be relevant to you, even if you aren't using the filter version.

1 Sky and saturation boost

With the Background Layer active, press Ctrl/Cmd+J to make a copy of the image to work on. Now go to Filter > Convert to Smart Filters to make Filters editable, then go to Filter > Camera Raw Filter. When the dialog opens, click on the Masking Icon on the right, click on Create New Mask and select Linear Gradient. Drag a gradient over the sky area and set both Temperature and Tint to +40. Click on the Edit icon, scroll down to Calibration and set Blue Primary Saturation to +30.

2 Pseudo HDR effect

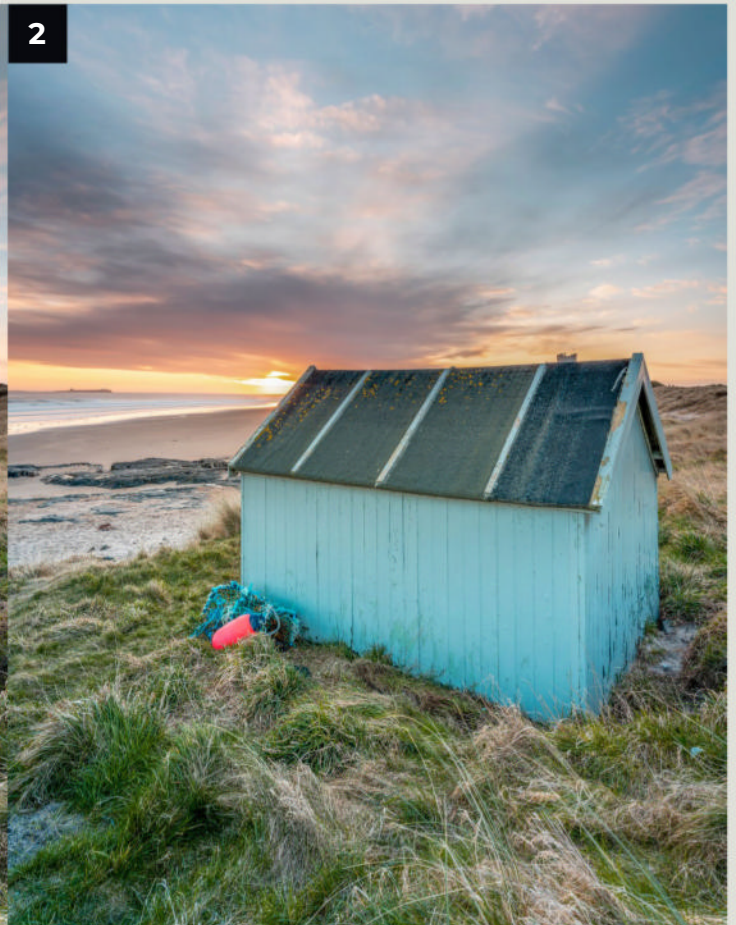
With the Background Layer active, press Ctrl/Cmd+J to make a copy of the image to work on. Go to Filter > Convert to Smart Filters to make Filters editable, then go to Filter > Camera Raw Filter. Now reduce Exposure to -0.25, Highlights to -100, Shadows to +100, Whites to +20 and Blacks to -40. This will apply an HDR style to the image, where more detail has been recovered. If the effect is too strong, reduce the Opacity of the Camera Raw Filter Layer you created.

3 Black & white adjusted preset

With the Background Layer active, press Ctrl/Cmd+J to make a copy of the image to work on. Go to Filter > Convert to Smart Filters to make Filters editable, then go to Filter > Camera Raw Filter. Click on the Profile menu below the histogram, select Browse, expand B&W and choose B&W 06 before clicking Back. Set Highlights to -40, Shadow to +25, Whites +20 and Blacks -25. This creates a dramatic black-and-white conversion.

4 Focus on the central subject

With the Background Layer active, press Ctrl/Cmd+J to make a copy of the image to work on. Go to Filter > Convert to Smart Filters to make Filters editable, then go to Filter > Camera Raw Filter. When the dialog opens, click the Masking Icon on the right, then click Create New Mask and select Radial Gradient. Drag an oval gradient over the centre of the image, and click on the Invert icon. Now set the Exposure of the masked area to -1.55.



Before



Future



After

Make it raw mono

Wendy Evans looks at creating B&W images with the Raw developing module in Affinity

Last month, we looked at basic editing using the Raw module before going into the Pixel editing mode of Affinity. This time, we're going to dive into some of the other ways of converting a colour image to black and white. As before, you can apply the lens corrections in Develop, then do all your work in the Pixel workspace, but this is an alternative workflow that's worth considering.

So let's have a look at the original image. The first impression is that it lacks impact, as most of it is in shade and Lincolnshire is looking as flat as ever behind the church. The sky definitely has potential, though. For a mono image, what we're looking for are contrasts of light and dark, shapes and textures. That makes this image quite a challenge to tweak something impactful out of. However, let's get started by dropping the raw file onto the Affinity workspace, which will instantly launch the Raw editing module.

Get into the action

This month, we are giving away a set of four black and white-themed Macro actions based on this tutorial for you to play around with. Macro 1 simulates some of the processes used here and can be run on landscape images. Macro 2 is for portraits in daylight, while Macro 3 is for moody landscapes and suits cloudy skies. Macro 4 is for urban daylight photos.

Download your files

www.digitalcameraworld.com/dc312
Download your project files and Macros from the folder titled 'Affinity_Raw Mono'.



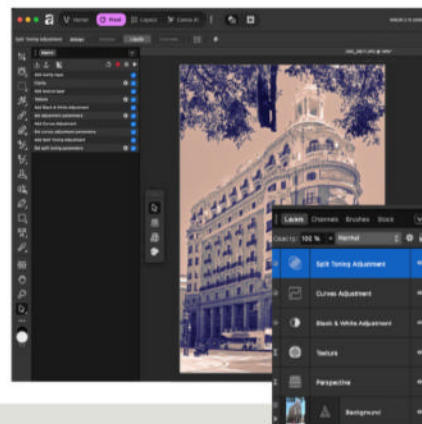
Four
Macro
actions



4-minute
video
tutorial



Project
files to
follow along



1

Balance the tones

As it was shot from distance, there's no need to go into the Lens tab to correct distortion. Go to the Basic tab and tick the Shadows & Highlights palette. Increase Shadows to 50 per cent. Go to the Enhance palette and increase Clarity to 70 per cent and Texture to 25 per cent. Check where the clouds are clipping and reduce the Highlights down by 80 per cent here.



2

Let's go mono

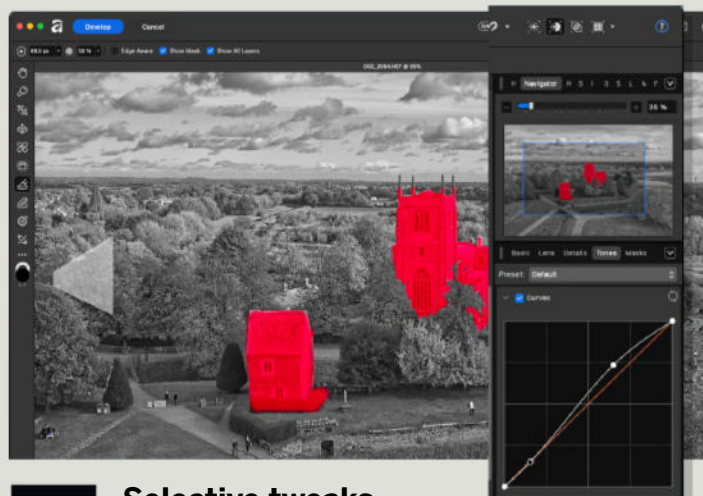
In the Tones tab, activate the Black & White palette. The key here is to avoid the sunlit background overpowering the foreground. Set the Red channel to 170 per cent and the Yellow to 100 per cent. Set Green at 178 per cent, Cyan at 234 per cent and Blue at -3 per cent for the clouds and sky. In the Curves palette, above B&W, tweak the mid-tones and highlights to make them brighter.



3

Selective tweaks

Select the Mask Paint Tool (B), zoom in and paint over the church with the mask. Paint over the little gate house as well. Then go to the Tones tab, select Curves, and put in some control points and pull the top one up and left to brighten both buildings up. Then click on the Masks tab and on the Add new mask icon at the bottom, select Pixel mask as the type. Brush over the tree and moat area, then brighten them up with a Tones curve.



4

Final touches

At this point, click on Develop, or tweak some more areas if you want. The next step is to use the Crop tool to tighten the composition, ensuring that Original Ratio is selected as the crop factor. Then check the image: does it still need a final tweak? I'd say yes, so add a Live filter for Clarity at 42 per cent and an Adjustment layer for Curves to enhance the contrast. As a final touch, use the Adjustment Brush tool with Curves selected to brighten specific areas.





Before



After

Glitch it up

Wendy Evans explains how to use one of Affinity's Live filters for creative effect

Affinity has a lot of filters, but rather than simply applying them to an image, why not use them as a Live filter? The advantages are clear. As a regular filter, the effect is simply applied, but as a Live filter, it sits on the image layer so you can change the parameters whenever you want. That's especially useful for something like the weirdly named Glitch filter, as it has several options to choose from. If the effect doesn't match your expectations, you can either go back and try a different one or simply tweak the parameters.

The Glitch filter inflicts various forms of chaos on your image, but the type of glitch we're going for in this tutorial is called Shred. This slices the image horizontally and/or vertically, as you can see in our example. You have control over the size and distance of the slices, so you can make it abstract, creative or like the result of a cubist painter gone rogue. As it's a Live filter, you can save the project and go back to try the other Glitch Types later.

Other Glitches to try

Once you've finished this tutorial, simply go back to the Glitch layer and click on the icon for it. Now you can try some of the other effects, such as Blast, which looks effective if you set it to the same angle as the pose. The Distort glitch is also worth a look, as are the ones that move the colours rather than the luminosity.

Download your files

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Download your project files and video tutorial from the folder titled 'Affinity_Glitch Filter'.



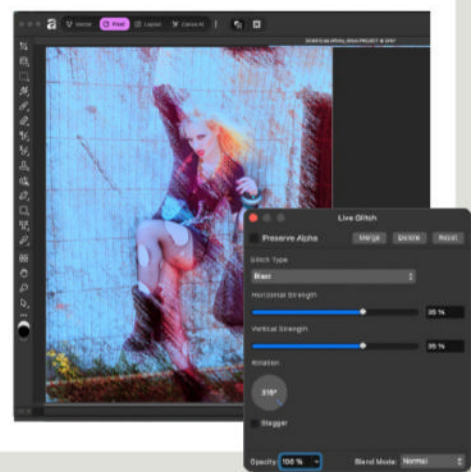
No software
extras
this time



4-minute
video
tutorial



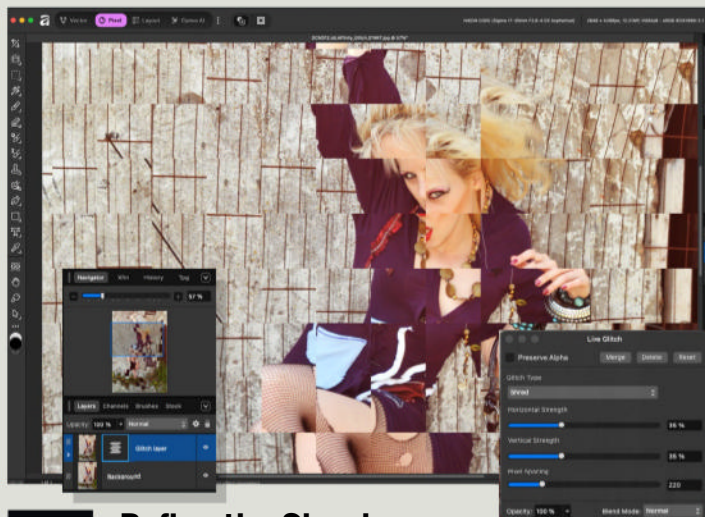
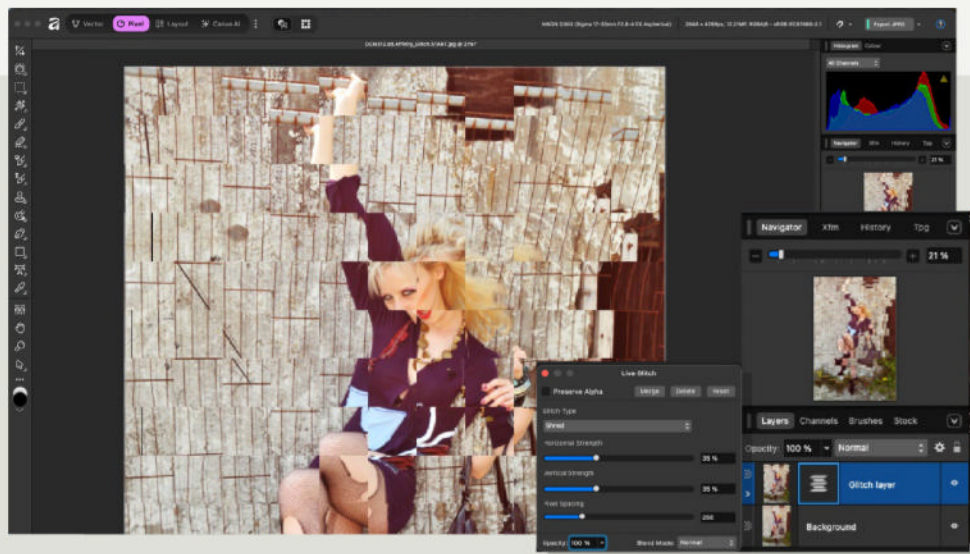
Project
files to
follow along



1

Select your filter

Load the image and duplicate the Background layer so it sits over the original image. Select the duplicate layer, then click on the Filters icon in the Layers palette and select Glitch. Set the Glitch Type to Shred. The Horizontal and Vertical Strengths dictate how far the slices move, so set them to 35 per cent each. To make the image more abstract, try higher values.



2

Refine the Shred

The default Shred slice size is 256 pixels, but this will look different depending on the actual pixel size of the image. For this one, it's quite chunky, so reduce the Pixel Spacing parameter to 220. If you go the other way to around 500, this will produce big blocks, so you'll need to increase the Strength parameters to move them further apart. Click on the picture icon on the Glitch layer.

3

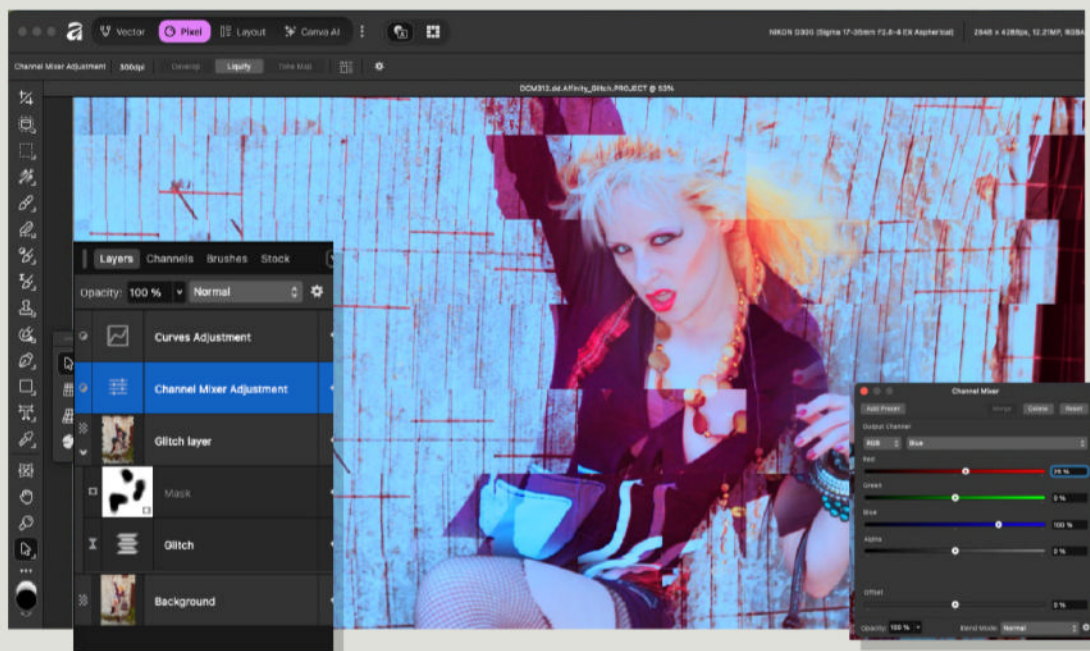
Add a mask

To restore a few details, click on the Mask Layer icon at the bottom of the Layers palette – this is especially important on the more destructive Glitch Types. If a mask layer appears, it means you didn't have the Glitch layer selected properly, so delete it and start again. Select the Paint Brush (B) and set the opacity to 25 per cent. Then, with black as the colour selected, paint over the face, lower hand and knee.

4

Throw in some colour

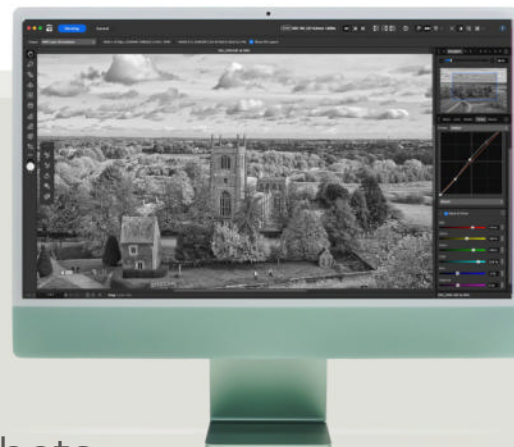
You should have some identifiable body parts, with the rest looking like a serial killer's freezer. For the final element, add a Channel Mixer Adjustment layer, and for the Red channel, enter R: 125 per cent, G: -25 per cent, B: -50 per cent. For the Green channel, enter R: 0 per cent, G: 100 per cent, B: -15 per cent. And for the Blue channel, try R: 25 per cent, G: 0 per cent, B: 100 per cent. Merge your layers to finish, or try some other Glitches.



THIS MONTH'S SOFTWARE EXTRAS

14 Actions, presets, textures and macros

As seen in this month's tutorials, give your shots a new look with our collection of software extras



This month, we are giving away 14 software extras with our Digital Darkroom tutorials. Once installed in Adobe Photoshop, Lightroom or Affinity, these Actions, presets, macros and textures can give your shots a new look in just a few clicks. First, we have four fine-art paper textures to help you turn your photos into watercolours; then

we have two vignette presets for Lightroom, which will draw the viewer's eye to the key areas of your photo. We also have four Photoshop Actions that use Camera Raw to process jpeg images in a variety of ways, such as sky and saturation boosts, pseudo-HDR effect, black and white and central object focus. Finally, there are four black and white macro actions for Affinity.

How to use your software extras

Once you have downloaded the 'dcm312-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.



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www.digitalcameraworld.com/dc312



4 FINE-ART PAPER TEXTURES

Software: Photoshop
(Version 25.5 or higher)

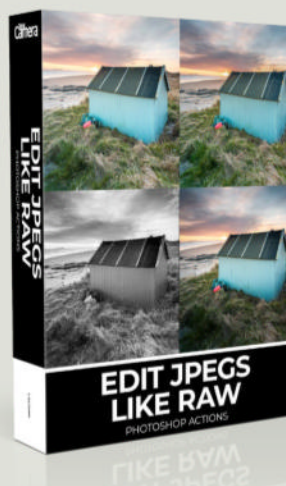
Half the battle in creating a convincing watercolour effect from your photos is the choice of textured paper with which to overlay it. Here, we are giving away four fine-art textures that can be used for just that purpose.



2 VIGNETTE PRESETS

Software: Lightroom

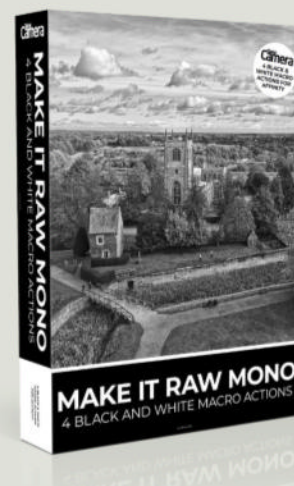
Use the power of presets to add vignettes to your images in Lightroom. These two presets will either darken or lighten the corners of your image, but both will draw attention to what's going on in the key areas. This is ideal if you're looking for a symmetrical composition.



4 PHOTOSHOP ACTIONS

Software: Photoshop
(Version 25.5 or higher)

Deploy the power of Adobe Camera Raw on your jpeg images with this set of four Actions. One of them will enhance the sky and increase saturation; another gives a pseudo-HDR effect. There's also a black and white effect and, finally, one that provides focus on a key object.



4 B&W MACROS

Software: Affinity

This is a set of four macros that produce a variety of black and white conversions. Macro 1 simulates the processes used in the tutorial; Macro 2 is for portraits in daylight; Macro 3 is for moody landscapes; and Macro 4 is for urban landscape images taken in daylight.

Download all four packs from: www.digitalcameraworld.com/dc312



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

Digital Camera
GROUP TEST



106 **Group test** _ Six of the best travel cameras from across the market



112 **Lumix S1R II** _ Updated flagship full-frame hybrid mirrorless



116 **Meike 85mm F1.4 Mix II** _ Portrait prime for Nikon Z, Sony E-mount and L-Mount



118 **Tamron 35-100mm F2.8 Di III VXD** _ Versatile zoom, relatively fast aperture



F or any readers considering some shoulder-season travel in the coming months, we have a few suggestions for smaller but oh-so-capable cameras that will easily squeeze into your luggage, but still offer outsized performance. We've scoured the market for compelling options from the leading brands, at a variety of price points. So whether you're looking for something to capture record shots for memories, or a tool for getting more creative, turn the page to see six of the best travel cameras you can pick up today.

Also on test this month is the Lumix S1R II, the brand's flagship hybrid full-frame mirrorless. These cameras seek to excel in both stills and video, so see what Panasonic has done to stay competitive with its rivals in the hybrid space, from page 112.

Two interesting new optics recently passed through our lab. The Meike 85mm F1.4 Mix II follows its 35mm f/1.8 sibling, which was reviewed in issue 307. Available for three mounts, its affordable price makes it a good starter lens for portraiture... which is just one of many genres that the versatile Tamron 35-100mm can shoot. *Niall Hampton*

The awards bestowed by the Digital Camera lab...



Given to the top product in a group test



For products that receive five stars overall



Given to products that offer superb value for money

Ratings explained

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

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

6 OF THE BEST TRAVEL CAMERAS

The best small shooters for stills and video

Reviewed by Hollin Jones



Things to consider...

Size

Fixed-lens compact cameras often have a zoom lens and are smaller overall, while interchangeable lens models offer more flexibility to choose a focal length, but tend to be larger.

Resolution

A resolution of around 20MP will be ideal for most users, but on some newer models, closer to 40MP is becoming standard – this allows more flexibility for cropping into images, as well as higher print quality.

Battery life

Cameras increasingly use USB-C for data transfer and charging, which is convenient. This means you can recharge from a portable power bank on the go, rather than having to find a mains socket for your battery charger.

Lens

All but one camera here uses an interchangeable lens system, but consider whether a model can also accept third-party lenses for its mount, which are often less expensive.



While smartphones have replaced point-and-shoots for some people, anyone serious about their photography knows the benefits of using a dedicated camera. But carrying a full-sized model around can be inconvenient. Thankfully, there are some excellent digital compacts around that offer practically all the benefits of a larger system.

Often using sensors and other technology derived from their pro-level siblings, these cameras can produce gorgeous images, mostly let you swap out lenses and offer the full manual and other modes demanded by experienced photographers. Portability can bring trade-offs – only the Sony here is full-frame – but these aren't necessarily cameras you would use for work. Rather, they give you most of the benefits of a serious device in a more affordable package that slips easily into a backpack.

If you are already invested in a particular manufacturer's ecosystem and own lenses, that could influence your choice of travel camera. Alternatively, you might be new to the world of travel cameras, or looking for a change. Either way, read on to find out which of these models might be the one for you.

How we tested them

The ergonomics of the camera are the first thing we looked at – how does it feel to hold and use? Each manufacturer's operating system and its approach was also considered. Both stills and video performance were tested, though we concentrated on stills as the primary function of these cameras. We also considered the connectivity and, of course, the quality and feel of the images captured. We took into account the price-to-performance ratio of each model too, and who the target audience might be.

ON TEST...

01 Canon PowerShot G7 X Mark III	Page 108
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06 Sony A7C II	Page 110



Canon PowerShot G7 X Mark III

£860/\$880

Sticks to a winning formula

www.canon.co.uk

The G7 X Mark III is one of Canon's most compact models, aimed at vloggers as much as photographers.

It's a fixed-lens model, with a 24-100mm equivalent zoom lens that opens as wide as f/1.8 for decent low-light performance and bokeh. With a 20.1 MP resolution, it can also shoot 4K video and has a built-in multi-mode flash, as well as digital zoom beyond its optical limit, though quality drops at the extreme end.

Autofocus is solid, and there is face detection, though it's not

quite as accurate as some. The compact size means the screen is small, though it does pop out and can be pointed backwards, making it easy to see yourself while recording video. At the more affordable end on test here, the Canon is a capable and competent performer, and perfect for travel.

VERDICT

- ✓ Very compact
- ✓ Perfect for vlogging
- ✗ Tech a little dated
- ✗ Specs not far off an iPhone



Fujifilm X-E5

£1,299/\$1,699 (body only)

Is this the best in the line-up?

www.fujifilm-x.com

Fujifilm's smallest interchangeable lens camera, the X-E5, raises the stakes compared with its predecessor with an impressive 40.2MP resolution and 4K video. Compatible with the X Series family of lenses, it has a superb metal build quality.

Paired with a 23mm f/2.8 lens in our test, the X-E5 is compact, but just on the border of pocketable – though its rangefinder form is on the more portable end of things.

Fujifilm's legendary colour science is much in evidence here, with the X-E5 camera producing beautiful raw files that respond well to enhancement in

post-production. The on-body controls are reminiscent of classic cameras, with the key aperture, ISO and shutter at your fingertips and a joystick for easy menu navigation on screen. Autofocus is much improved, and face detection works quickly and accurately.

The Fujifilm X-E5 looks and feels amazing, and using it, you really are reconnecting with the fundamentals of photography.

VERDICT

- ✓ Superb look and feel
- ✓ Intuitive manual controls
- ✓ Produces stunning files
- ✓ Excellent connectivity





Nikon Z50 II

£849/\$910 (body only)

Pro power in a baby body

www.nikon.co.uk

The Z50 II is an APS-C mirrorless interchangeable lens camera with ergonomic improvements over its predecessor. The Expeed 7 processor also brings its performance and speed closer to much pricier models.

On the downside, it only offers 21MP resolution and lacks IBIS (in-body image stabilisation), but it's compact and comfortable to hold, with an excellent screen that unfolds and can be reversed to face you when vlogging.

The Z50 II's video features are a real selling point, supporting up to 4K recording with N-Log and 4K 60p for slo-mo, though

with a 1.5x crop. The AF is impressive, with eye, face and subject type detection working well, and a clever 'pre-release capture' feature in specific modes to burst-save frames when the shutter is half-pressed, helping you avoid missing the moment.

Paired with a kit lens or two, the Nikon is a relatively affordable way to get a powerful and flexible system.

VERDICT

- ✓ Fast in use
- ✓ Sensibly priced
- ✗ Only 21MP
- ✗ No image stabilisation

★★★★★



OM System OM-5 Mark II

£1,099/\$1,199 (body only)

A versatile outdoor camera

explore.omsystem.com

OM System (formerly known as Olympus) has a long history of manufacturing mechanical cameras, but its digital range is small. Quite literally in this case – with the OM-5 Mark II being a Micro Four Thirds interchangeable lens camera that's compact and sits lightly in your hand.

The OM-5 Mk II has a 20.4MP resolution and up to 30fps continuous shooting, USB-C charging and an IP53 dust and water resistance rating, which is fairly unusual among compact cameras. It has IBIS, and its updated menu system is clear and straightforward to use. The on-body dials and controls

are effective, too, putting key parameters within easy reach. Autofocus works well, and there is face and eye detection, though it is a little less advanced than some.

Video shooting, should you need it, is at up to 4K resolution. A bit of an outlier in the wider marketplace, the OM-5 Mark II is a fun and versatile camera, though its specs can feel more limited than the competition.

VERDICT

- ✓ Very compact and light
- ✓ Fun to use, good results
- ✓ Weather proofing
- ✗ AF modes limited

★★★★★

Group test Travel cameras



Lumix G97

£649/\$620 (body only)

Affordable hybrid camera

www.panasonic.com



Sony A7C II

£1,999/\$2,498 (body only)

Pro-level specs in compact form

www.sony.co.uk

One of the most affordable cameras on test, this Micro Four Thirds model is a strong video performer, though a single card slot limits this somewhat.

Its 20.3MP sensor pairs with a five-stop image stabilisation system, which means even though the camera is compact and lightweight, shake shouldn't be an issue. It has a pop-up flash module and a moveable touchscreen to access its clear and friendly menu and setup system. The OLED viewfinder is clear and crisp.

Connectivity is solid with USB-C, micro HDMI, mic, headphones, remote, Wi-Fi and

Bluetooth available. The rear and top panels feature a good selection of real-time controls for the essential stuff without being cluttered, and stills performance is impressive in all conditions. This is a great camera for hybrid shooters, someone who regularly creates video as well as stills, and also makes for a reliable travelling companion. We particularly liked the DSLR-style feel.

VERDICT

- ✓ Powerful and affordable
- ✓ Video performance
- ✓ Compact and portable
- ✗ Single card slot

★★★★★

The most expensive camera here, Sony's A7C II essentially gives you a version of the larger A7 IV in a more compact body.

As the only full-frame model on test here, it has 33MP resolution, IBIS and works with Sony's excellent E-mount lens family. Autofocus is superb, with multiple tracking modes, so you are unlikely to ever miss the shot, and up to 4K video support with S-Log3 produces great-looking video files ready for pro-level grading.

Despite being compact, the A7C II feels good and solid to hold, though attaching longer lenses can make it a little

unwieldy. The camera's menu system has a tendency to feel a little cluttered, but the pictures it produces look fantastic – in terms of image quality, there are very few compromises. Shooting video is equally powerful and flexible.

Battery life is also excellent, but the price means that the A7C II creeps more towards the budget of a serious enthusiast or even a professional.

VERDICT

- ✓ Superb stills and video
- ✓ Full-frame model
- ✓ Closer to pro specs
- ✗ The price

★★★★★



Digital
Camera
GOLD
AWARD

Digital
Camera
BEST
ON TEST

The winner is: Fujifilm X-E5

A camera that makes you want to take more pictures

The Nikon Z50 II is a great all-round camera, especially if you already own

Nikon lenses, though its overall resolution remains a little low by modern standards. The Canon PowerShot G7 X Mark III is pocket-sized, but has a fixed

lens and lacks the easy manual controls of others. The Lumix G97 is arguably more notable for its standout video performance than it is for stills.

The OM-5 Mark II is solid and feels great in the hands, plus it can use any Micro Four Thirds mount lens, which is a bonus. Sony's AF and image quality are

superb, though if you aren't already a Sony lens owner, adding one will take the cost to well above £2,000/\$2,500.

However, Fujifilm's X-E5 wins the day. It's a thing of beauty, with retro looks, rangefinder design and superb build as impressive as the rich, involving images it produces. Compatible

with any X-mount lens, it's a camera that makes you want to take more pictures – compact enough to carry around easily, but offering the resolution, flexibility and shooting control of a pro model. For what you get, it's also respectably priced, especially if you're already invested in Fujifilm lenses.

How the cameras compare



Specs	Canon PowerShot G7 X Mark III	Fujifilm X-E5	Nikon Z50 II	OM System OM-5 Mark II	Panasonic Lumix G97	Sony A7C II
Price	£860/\$880	£1,299/\$1,699 body only	£849/\$910 body only	£1,099/\$1,199 body only	£649/\$620 body only	£1,999/\$2,498 body only
Website	canon.co.uk	fujifilm-x.com	nikon.co.uk	omsystem.com	panasonic.com	sony.co.uk
Resolution	20.1MP	40.2MP	20.9MP	20.4MP	20.3MP	33MP
Sensor	1.4in CMOS	APS-C X-Trans CMOS 5 HR sensor	APS-C CMOS	4/3 inch LIVE MOS	Micro 4/3 CMOS	Full-frame Exmor R BSI-CMOS
Interchangeable lens	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Battery life (approx)	300 frames	310 frames	1,200 frames	310 frames	300 frames	530 frames
Flash built-in	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No
Max native ISO	12,800	12,800	51,200	25,600	25,600	51,200
Overall	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★

Note: The final verdict scores reflect the overall opinion of a product and are not necessarily an average of the criteria listed in the table.

Mirrorless Lumix S1R II



1
The redesigned grip moves the front control wheel. It now encircles the shutter button.

2
There's a slight drop in resolution from the S1R's 47.3MP; the S1R II offers 44.3MP.

3
An extra video recording button on the front of the camera will be ideal for self-shooting.

Lumix S1R II

£2,999/\$3,299 (body only)

A proper hybrid flagship at a price that's hard to resist

www.panasonic.com

Specifications

Lens mount: L-Mount
Sensor: Full-frame CMOS, 44.3MP
Image processor: Venus Engine
ISO range: 80-51,200 (102,400 extended)
Image stabilisation: Up to 8.0 stops
Autofocus: Phase Detection AF system / Contrast AF system
Max burst: 9fps (mechanical shutter), 40fps (electronic shutter)
Viewfinder: 5.76m dot approx OLED, 100%, 0.78x, 60/120p refresh rate
LCD: 3in approx, 3:2, 1.84m dot, free-angle
Max image size: 8144 x 5424px
Video: 8.1K 30p (17:9), 6.4K 30p (3:2), C4K 120p, 4K 120p, FHD 1080p
Storage: 1 x CFexpress Type B, 1 x SD UHS-II
Battery/ shots: 2200mAh, approx 280 images (EVF), approx 350 images (LCD)
Connectivity: Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, USB-C, HDMI, 3.5mm mic and headphone jacks
Dimensions (W x H x D): 134.3 x 102.3 x 91.8mm
Weight: 795g (incl battery and memory card)

Rleased in 2019, the full-frame Lumix S1 series comprised the original S1 as a hybrid do-it-all camera, alongside the Lumix S1R as a resolution specialist, and subsequently the video-focused Lumix S1H. Since then, there has been an explosion in hybrid cameras, which are capable of being image and video powerhouses at the same time.

Panasonic hopped on this trend with the Lumix S5 II, combining the best of both stills and video in an affordable package, while the Lumix S5 IIX kept the photo specs and added some more specialist video features.

So where does that leave the flagship S1 lineup? The Lumix S1R II sits on top of the Panasonic full-frame lineup. But while it might have the R designation for resolution in the name, that's certainly not all that this camera is about. The S1R II appears to blend the S1, S1R and S1H lineups into one hybrid powerhouse.

With headline features including a 44MP sensor, 40fps shooting, improved

autofocus, 8K video with 14 stops of dynamic range and 8K open gate video, on paper, the Lumix S1R II certainly looks like it has both the photo and video chops to challenge the best flagship hybrids from rival brands. However, away from the spec sheet, can it deliver?

Build and handling

At around 20 per cent smaller and lighter than the original S1R, the new model weighs 796g compared to the first generation's 1016g. Panasonic has actually managed to keep the size of the S1R II body to just two per cent larger than the Lumix S5 IIX.

To be capable of handling the amount of additional heat that recording video in 8K open gate format is likely to produce, the S1R II contains an internal fan and three vents around the viewfinder controlling heat dissipation. With no additional physical changes, Panasonic seems to be relying on the improved efficiencies of its sensor and processor to achieve smooth 8K open gate recording.

Lumix S1R II Mirrorless

Gareth Bevan



Most of our testing with the Lumix S1R II was carried out with the excellent Lumix S 70-200 F4 at 200mm. Exposure: 1/250 sec at f/4, ISO 4000.

Gareth Bevan



The background falls into pleasing defocus in this backlit shot. Lumix S1R II and Lumix S 70-200 F4 at 200mm. Exposure: 1/250 sec at f/4, ISO 320.



4

The rounded eyecup featured here is often associated with premium cameras.

5

A 3-inch 1840k-dot free-angle LCD screen trumps the S1R's two-way tilting screen.

6

As well as CFexpress B and UHS-II SD cards, the S1R II can record directly to an SSD.

7

Physical connections are on the left-hand side; there's an individual cover for each port.

8

The shooting mode dial occupies the space vacated by the S1R's PASM dial...

9

...this moves to the other side of the EVF, where the top-plate display used to be.

The overall design won't be unfamiliar to S1R users, though the layout has been refined so it's more in step with recent Lumix mirrorless cameras. The S1R II has gained a new 3-inch 1840k-dot free-angle LCD screen (albeit at a slightly smaller size and lower resolution than the S1R), in keeping with the S1R II's pitch to be a full hybrid camera with a vari-angle screen that makes composing video a lot more freeing. However, it is becoming increasingly easier to use your smartphone as an external video monitor or recorder, with

accessories like the Ninja Phone or various apps including Panasonic's own brand-new Lumix Flow app, so you might actually find yourself using the camera's screen less and less.

The OLED viewfinder has the same resolution and a rounded eyecup as the previous S1R. The viewfinder is enjoyable to use – it's both sharp and clear and has a particularly good refresh rate. It proved fairly easy to track and compose fast-moving subjects with it, and there is no blackout when shooting at high frame rates.

While I don't necessarily think that Lumix S models are the best-looking cameras on the market, the control layout is well thought out. There is a physical dial or button for pretty much everything, and it's all clearly labelled and within easy reach. Someone coming to Lumix cameras for the first time won't struggle to pick it up pretty quickly.

The buttons are raised enough so that they are easy to find without looking, but they also have a good spring to them so they aren't easy to press by mistake. The dials have enough resistance for subtle changes with a satisfying audible click. Overall, the S1R II feels solid, well built and every inch the flagship camera that you would expect.

In terms of glass, there are now plenty of L-Mount lenses available across the L-Mount Alliance, including Lumix, Leica and Sigma, plus the newer members. This pits Lumix cameras up against Sony for the sheer choice of lenses available, with Canon and Nikon still reluctant to open up their lens mounts to the same extent as their rivals.

Performance

The majority of my testing was done with the excellent Lumix S 70-200mm F4, →

Mirrorless Lumix S1R II



Gareth Bevan

Autofocus subject detection modes on the Lumix S1R II include one for animal faces and eyes. Both the head and the eye of this panther chameleon are sharp, showing that the system works well, and the colours are rich, too. Lumix S1R II and Lumix S 70-200 F4 at 200mm. Exposure: 1/250 sec at f/4, ISO 4000.

which renders well, and when combined with the S1R II's 44MP sensor, it records plenty of detail. The ISO performance is also excellent; at full size, I was comfortable shooting at ISO 12,800 with only minor image grain perceptible.

Now using Panasonic's latest phase- and contrast-detect system with some AI-assisted subject recognition thrown in, autofocus has been vastly improved from the S1R. You can snap to a manually selected

focus point in an instant, with barely any noticeable instances of it hunting for focus. I'd say that Panasonic's AF has almost caught up with its closest rivals.

Subject detection autofocus is solid, although you will still need to delve into the menus and manually select the subject that the S1R II should be hunting for from the options; there's no automatic subject selection as offered by rival brands. The detectable subjects are human faces and

eyes, animal faces and eyes, cars, bikes, trains and aeroplanes. The system is excellent at picking out human subjects, selecting the subject's face and eyes virtually every time, but doesn't quite have the same stickiness as Sony or Canon's systems. The AF could be a little skittish at times, with snappy subject movements briefly causing the tracking to lose focus before pulling it back. Animal recognition was also reliable and had no issue picking out the bodies and eyes of a range of animals and birds.

For a flagship camera, the battery life is disappointing. Rated at 340 shots (screen) and around 280 (EVF), it fails to match rivals such as the Canon EOS R5 Mark II at up to 640 shots. Batteries often outperform their rating in practice, but the S1R II barely got through an afternoon. Video quality is incredible, though. Not all 4K is created equal, and definitely not all 8K, but both are sublime on the S1R II. I'd even go as far as to say that the S1R II produces some of the best video you'll see from a hybrid camera.

The S1R II has an almost overwhelming range of recording options, and it's difficult to avoid getting sucked into the spec race. [For more on the S1R II's video capabilities and to see a sample video, visit our website via this link: www.bit.ly/dcm312_lumix.] For serious moviemakers, the Lumix S1R II

Rival cameras



Canon EOS R5 Mark II

£4,499/\$3,999

AI-powered predictive autofocus, reduced rolling shutter, Eye Control AF – it's Canon's ultimate camera.

Reviewed: issue 295



Fujifilm X-H2

£1,899/\$1,999

With its 40MP resolution and 8K video, the X-H2 takes on some full-frame big guns and proves great value at half the price.

Reviewed: issue 261



Nikon Z 8

£3,999/\$3,999

Inherits the vast majority of the Nikon Z 9's specs, including its blisteringly fast electronic shutter and EXPED 7 processor.

Reviewed: issue 270





While the Lumix S1R II's AF isn't quite as 'sticky' as Canon or Sony's systems, it had no problem picking out animal bodies like this Fischer's turaco. Lumix S 70-200 F4 at 200mm: 1/250 sec at f/4, ISO 4000.



The Lumix S1R II will snap to a manually selected focus point in an instant, with barely any noticeable focus hunting. Lumix S1R II and Lumix S 70-200 F4 at 148mm. Exposure: 1/320 sec at f/4, ISO 80.

is a powerhouse, but others should pause and consider whether you really need the cutting-edge video specs the S1R II offers.

Panasonic's Dual IS (image stabilisation) system is a standout again, now offering up to 8.0 stops of stabilisation, although this reduces to 7.0 stops at the peripheries of the telephoto lengths. I shot a lot of my footage around 200mm; static shots were solid and panning was smooth. For more movement, the usual High and Standard electronic image stabilisation (EIS) modes work well for movements such as walking, albeit at a crop – if you're going to get much more

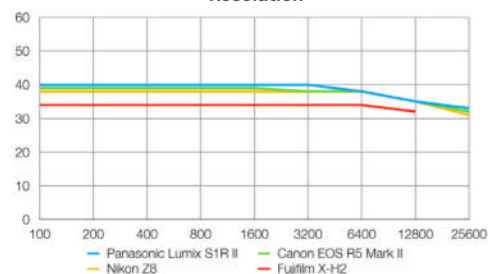
vigorous than that, then invest in a gimbal. The S1R II's new cropless EIS mode only works with wide-angle optics and relies on the modern trait of lenses having in-camera corrections applied. The cropless EIS mode uses the peripherals of footage before it is corrected for distortion to assist with stabilisation, with the caveat that this might add some vignetting to the footage. This vignetting is easily correctable in post-production, and I'd take the minor inconvenience of having to do this for wider stabilised footage.

Gareth Bevan

“Autofocus has been vastly improved from the Lumix S1R – Panasonic's AF has almost caught up with its closest rivals”

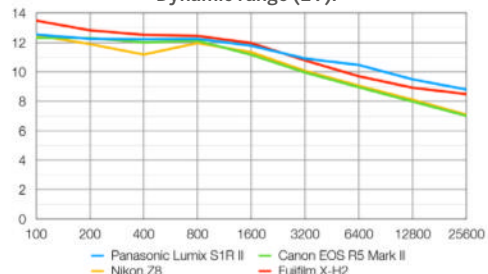
Lumix S1R II **Mirrorless**

Resolution



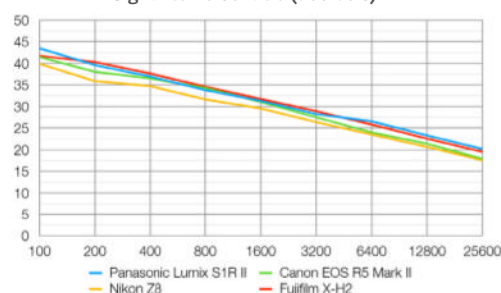
Despite a marginally lower megapixel count compared to the Canon and Nikon, the S1R II resolves the most detail, although the real-world difference is negligible.

Dynamic range (EV):



The S1R II captures more dynamic range than its full-frame rivals throughout our tested range, with its high ISO performance especially impressive.

Signal to noise ratio (decibels):



The Panasonic, Canon and Fujifilm are matched in terms of image noise, but the S1R II produces cleaner images where it matters most at high sensitivities.

Digital Camera verdict



The S1R II is a much-needed refresh of the flagship Lumix camera, and puts it firmly back on top of Panasonic's mirrorless lineup as the highest-resolution model with the best video specs. With this update, Panasonic has managed to do pretty much everything any Lumix fan would be begging for in a flagship camera – with a smaller body, faster sensor, much-improved autofocus performance and video specs with an incredible 14 stops of dynamic range in 8K, and 8K open gate video. The biggest improvement for stills is speed, with the electronic shutter able to handle up to 40fps, up from the S1R's 9fps. Perhaps the most astonishing number, though, is the price – the S1R II makes other flagships look overinflated.

Prime lens Meike 85mm F1.4 Mix II



Meike 85mm F1.4 Mix II

£429/\$569

Desirable portrait prime for Nikon, Sony and L-Mount full-frame cameras

meikeglobal.com



High-end handling extras ensure there's never a dull moment for your fingers and thumbs.

thread. The front takes up almost all of the available space and looks an imposing size, typical of a pro-grade 85mm f/1.4 lens.

85mm prime lenses are often considered 'portrait primes', as the focal length enables a natural working distance for portraiture and the telephoto compression of perspective is also flattering. With many of the latest cameras featuring highly advanced face/eye-detection autofocus with continuous tracking facilities, autofocus is the order of the day. The Mark II features a quieter and smoother 'Hyper STM' autofocus system, but the electronically coupled manual focus ring works with smooth precision.

Switching between autofocus and manual focus modes is courtesy of a switch on the side of the lens barrel, which I prefer over delving into camera menus. There's also a customisable function button, which I tend to use for AF-hold. I often think that twice as much is twice as good, enjoying dual function buttons on the side and top of a lens, so they fall naturally under the thumb in both landscape and portrait orientation shooting. The Meike only has a single function button, positioned on the diagonal.

Next up on the pro-grade handling wish list is a physical aperture control ring. This is present and correct, with one-third f/stop click steps available for stills, plus a click/de-click switch that enables smooth and silent aperture transitions when shooting video. The aperture ring itself is positioned in time-honoured fashion towards the rear of the lens, and has a grippy textured surface. The iris that it operates is well-rounded, based on 11 diaphragm blades, enhancing the quality of bokeh when stopping down from the widest aperture of f/1.4.

I'm delighted that the lens features a locking button for the A (Auto) position of the aperture ring. Maybe I'm clumsy, but I get frustrated with the vast majority of modern lenses that have an aperture control ring but no locking switch or button. I find it all too easy to nudge the ring from its Auto position to the narrowest end of the aperture range, at which point I'll suddenly find that I'm shooting at an aperture that

1
The manual focus ring works with smooth precision, and it's large and grippy, too.

2
The lens features a locking button for the A (Auto) position of the aperture ring.

3
The mounting plate also hosts a USB-C socket for applying firmware updates.



A couple of months ago, I reviewed the Meike AF 85mm F1.8 SE II, a basic yet capable portrait prime for Nikon Z, Sony E and L-Mount mirrorless cameras. Before that, I reviewed the Meike 35mm F1.8 Pro AF (May 2026 issue, 307), which has more exotic handling, akin to the 'Mix' lens reviewed here. As expected, the Meike 85mm F1.4 Mix II is bigger, heavier and more expensive than its 85mm f/1.8 partner, being nearly twice the weight and more than twice the price. Even so, it's more compact and lightweight than the original f/1.4 lens, boasts smoother and quieter 'Hyper STM' autofocus, and claims better sharpness that does justice to the ultra-high-resolution Sony A7R VI with 67MP under the hood. The same applies to the highest-resolution Nikon Z and L-mount cameras.

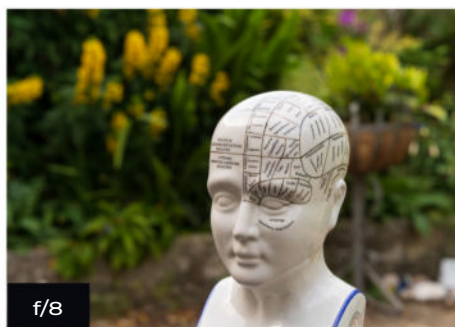
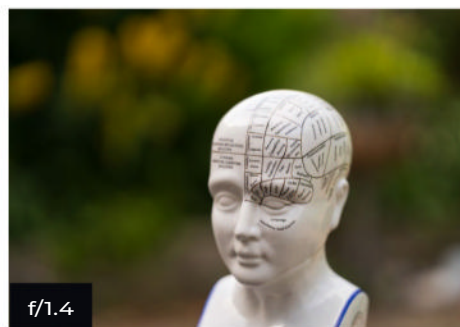
The Mark II also has a shorter minimum focus distance of 0.81m compared with 0.98m, and is billed as having better resistance to flare. And if you happen to think that lenses are a black and white issue, the Meike is actually available in a variety of colourways.

Build and handling

There's nothing wrong with the cost-cutting Meike AF 85mm F1.8 SE II, but advanced handling exotica only extends to an AF/MF focus mode switch. The 'Mix' lens reviewed here has all sorts of handling finery, but let's start with the glass. Compared with the original f/1.4 lens, the Mark II has two fewer elements, but they're arranged in three extra groups, comprising 15 elements in 11 groups in total. Those include three ED (Extra-low Dispersion) elements, three HR (High Refractive index) elements and one aspherical element, along with multilayer coatings. The Mark II is marginally smaller and noticeably lighter than the original lens, but has the same 77mm filter



The Meike 85mm f/1.4 Mix II is capable of a shallow depth of field when wide open. Focusing on the bicycle bell in this shot at f/1.4, pretty much everything else in the frame is defocused. Captured on a Sony A7 III.



The lens performed well in testing using a phrenology head, and the 11-blade aperture diaphragm also helps to maintain a circular appearance for bokeh disks caused by bright spots when stopping down.

I really didn't want. The Meike's Lock button effectively puts a stop to this.

The supplied hood has a circular rather than petal-shaped profile and feels of good quality, complete with a ridged inner surface. It fits to the lens with the traditional bayonet-style attachment, and can be reversed for compact stowage. As I'd expect with a short telephoto lens, fitting the hood in business orientation adds noticeable length but also gives physical protection to the front glass element against bumps and scrapes.

Going from front to back, the mounting plate of the lens is made from sturdy metal, rather than plastic. It features a rubber weather-seal gasket to reduce the risk of moisture and dust entering through the joint between the camera body and the lens. However, Meike doesn't claim that this lens has comprehensive weather-sealing.

Performance

It's a tall order, but I like my portrait primes to be sharp and blurry in equal measure. I'm after crystal-clear detail in the eyes, along with soft and dreamy bokeh for defocused areas. The Meike delivers on both counts, with impressive sharpness and resolving power for fine detail and texture, even when shooting wide-open at f/1.4, along with smooth and buttery bokeh. The f/1.4 aperture enables a tight depth of field, which effectively isolates the subject by blurring

the background, as well as helping to create the visual effect of '3D pop'.

Shooting a phrenology head (above) in my back garden gives good indications of sharpness and the quality of bokeh for defocused areas. Moreover, 'fast' lenses often suffer from axial/longitudinal chromatic aberration at the widest apertures, also known as bokeh fringing. This displays as colour fringing around high-contrast transitions, just in front of and behind the plane of focus. The black lines and writing on the white porcelain of the phrenology head are a good test for this.

Although it's often labelled as a 'portrait prime', an 85mm lens certainly isn't a one-trick pony. It can be equally useful for still-life and product photography, and for any time you simply need a short telephoto focal length to cover a bit of distance. The Meike works well for long shots, with excellent sharpness and clarity, along with minimal distortion and colour fringing.

Getting back to portraiture, although it can be beneficial for creative effect when shooting other subjects as well, the 85mm focal length gives a slight compression in perspective. Naturally, with a tight depth of field on offer, the accuracy and consistency of autofocus becomes hugely important. I'm happy to report that the lens performed well in these respects throughout my testing.

Matthew Richards

Prime lens

Specifications

Mount options: Nikon Z (FX), Sony E (FE), L-Mount

Full-frame: Yes

Autofocus: Yes

Image stabilisation: No

Lens construction: 15 elements in 11 groups

Angle of view: 28.3°

Max aperture: f/1.4

Min aperture: f/16

Diaphragm blades: 11

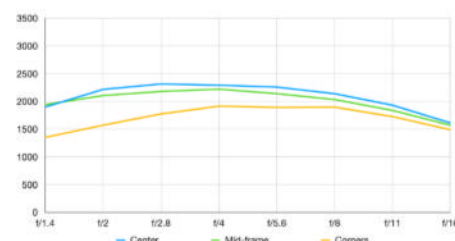
Min focus distance: 0.81m

Max magnification ratio: Unspecified

Filter size: 77mm

Dimensions (L x D): 110 x 85mm

Weight: 650g



Sharpness:

Sharpness is excellent in the centre of the frame, even wide open, and stays so as you move towards the corners. Only in the corners themselves does sharpness start to drop off, but it's only noticeable at larger apertures, and not distractingly so.

Fringing:

0.36

Lateral chromatic aberration is negligible, even at the extreme edges and corners of the image frame, and will generally go unnoticed with automatic in-camera correction disabled. Axial/longitudinal chromatic aberration is also minimal, even wide-open at f/1.4.

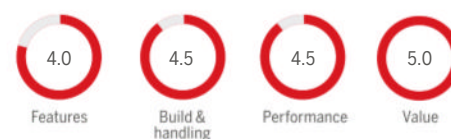
Distortion:

0.9

There's a hint of pincushion distortion, but it should only be apparent when shooting geometric subjects, and even then it won't be distracting.

Digital Camera verdict

4.5 ★★★★★ Outstanding



The Meike 85mm F1.4 Mix II is even better than its sibling AF 85mm F1.8 SE II that I reviewed a couple of months previously. And so it should be, as it costs more than twice the price. Even so, both Mark II lenses are standout value for money. I love the excellent image quality and all-round performance of the 'Mix' f/1.4 lens, as well as its exotic handling characteristics and solid build quality. This is a properly good portrait prime for Nikon Z, Sony E and L-Mount cameras.

Zoom lens Tamron 35-100mm F2.8 Di III VXD



Tamron 35-100mm F2.8 Di III VXD

£799/\$895

Useful range and a relatively fast aperture

www.tamron.eu

Tamron was an early pioneer of 'alternative trinity' lenses, which generally have a slightly different zoom range compared with those big, heavy and expensive-to-purchase 'trinity' lenses, but retain an f/2.8 constant aperture. The company's latest offering in this sector of the market is the 35-100mm F2.8 Di III VXD, which comes in the same Nikon Z and Sony E-mount options as the 35-150mm F2-2.8 lens. It doesn't stretch so far into telephoto territory, but builds a constant-aperture design into a much more compact, lightweight and affordable package.

Tamron is aiming for this lens to become one of the best wedding and event photography lenses around, and also potentially one of the best alternative trinity zooms for people who prefer to have extra telephoto reach rather than greater wide-angle coverage.

Build and handling

In my career, I've done a fair bit of wedding photography and have covered events from corporate gatherings to equestrian shows and a range of various competitions. To minimise the risk of missing important, unrepeatable shots because you happen to be swapping between different lenses on your camera when a crucial moment pops up, my usual solution is to use two camera bodies with a different type of lens on each.

That's a rather expensive and cumbersome way of doing things, so for people like me, the biggest attraction of this Tamron lens is its combination of a 35-100mm zoom range with a relatively fast and constant f/2.8 aperture rating. The zoom range works really well for weddings and events, from scene-setting and group shots to individual portraits. Some might feel that the wide-angle coverage



Multiple weather-seals are incorporated into the design of the 35-100mm F2.8 Di III VXD, including a rubber gasket on the metal mounting plate.

at 35mm is a bit limiting for group shots, but I wouldn't go any wider, or people located towards the edges of the frame are in danger of getting their heads stretched.

The focusing mechanism is fully internal, but it does physically stretch in length as you sweep from the shortest to the longest focal length. Frankly, I'd expect nothing less in a lens with a 35-100mm zoom range. In fact, I'm surprised that the physical extension is as small as it is, equating to about three-quarters of an inch.

The advantage of shooting a lengthy wedding or other event with a single camera body and lens (for at least most of it) is somewhat negated if the lens in question is big and heavy. The 35-100mm that's on review here is a relative lightweight, at just under half the weight of its 35-150mm sibling, tipping the scales at 1,165g.

The autofocus system is of Tamron's VXD variety, powered by Voice-Coil Extreme-Torque Drive and is rapid, yet virtually silent in operation. There's a big range on offer as well, as the focusing distance comes down from infinity to just 0.22m at the wide-angle end of the zoom range, and 0.65m at the telephoto end. This gives you a maximum magnification ratio of 0.3x and 0.17x (telephoto), meaning that this lens is capable of pretty extreme close-ups.

The lens is based on 15 optical elements arranged in 13 groups, including three glass moulded aspherical elements, two LD (Low Dispersion) elements and one XLD (eXtreme LD) element, aiming for optimum resolution and clarity with minimal aberrations.

There's no dedicated aperture control ring, but the lens does feature a customisable function button and three-way custom settings switch. Using the Tamron Lens Utility and optional Tamron-Link Bluetooth adapter, you can assign aperture control to the lens's focus ring, as well as setting up focus points for automatically switching between them.

The lens comes complete with a petal-shaped, reversible hood that has the usual bayonet-fit arrangement. You also get front

1

BBAR G2 and eBAND coatings have been added to minimise ghosting and flare.

2

The function button can be used for AF-hold, but other options will be available.

3

The Tamron-Link Bluetooth adapter offers custom settings and remote control.



Paired with a Sony A7 III and captured at the longest telephoto focal length. The 35-100mm F2.8 Di III VXD maintains excellent sharpness and clarity across the zoom range. Exposure: 1/2000 sec at f/5.6, ISO 200.



Above left: The compact, lightweight build makes this lens a good fit for street and walkabout photography. Right: The lens delivers pleasingly soft bokeh, but can't compete with the likes of an 85mm f/1.4 optic.

and rear lens caps, the front one having a pinch-style mechanism that can be operated even with the hood attached in its forward-facing orientation. Overall, the build quality feels solid and robust, despite the lightweight construction of the lens.

Performance

The performance of the autofocus system in the Tamron 35-100mm F2.8 Di III VXD lives up to its billing, with fast and virtually silent operation of the Voice-Coil Extreme-Torque Drive system. I also found that autofocus was consistently accurate during my tests, and easily able to keep up with moving subjects in conjunction with face- and eye-detection AF modes.

The 35-100mm zoom range is useful in practice, and the lens maintains excellent sharpness and clarity throughout. There's no optical image stabilisation, or 'Vibration Compensation' as Tamron prefers to call it. That isn't really an issue with Nikon and Sony full-frame mirrorless cameras, all of which feature in-body image stabilisation (IBIS), apart from the original first-generation Sony A7 series cameras.

However, the omission of VC is a disappointment if you want to use the lens on an APS-C format Nikon or Sony camera, which mostly lack IBIS. It's still a tempting option, as the lens has an 'effective' zoom range of 52.5mm to 150mm on an APS-C body, neatly covering standard to medium telephoto focal lengths.

Naturally, image quality is never just about sharpness. The opposite comes into play, especially with relatively 'fast' lenses that can deliver a tight depth of field for isolating subjects against a blurred background. I've always thought that fast Tamron lenses tend to deliver pleasant bokeh, and this one reinforces my opinion. The lens can't compete with really fast primes with aperture ratings of f/1.2 to f/1.8, but it's still capable of a pretty tight depth of field at f/2.8, especially towards the long end of the zoom range and when shooting close-ups.

For me, another performance bonus is that the compact, lightweight build for an f/2.8 zoom adds versatility in practical terms. It puts travel, street and walkabout photography on the agenda, where the fast autofocus system enables you to react quickly to spontaneous moments.

The application of Tamron's BBAR G2 and nano-structure eBAND optical coatings enhances the inherent design of the lens in terms of minimising ghosting and flare.

Distortions and colour fringing are technically present, but they are of a low order and well within the remit of automatic in-camera corrections. Unlike many modern lenses designed for mirrorless cameras, especially those that aim to be compact and lightweight, the Tamron doesn't rely on automatic correction for distortion being 'forced on', and so you can disable it in the camera's settings if you don't wish to use it.

Matthew Richards

Zoom lens

Specifications

Mount options: Nikon Z (FX), Sony E-mount (FE)

Full-frame: Yes

Autofocus: Yes

Image stabilisation: No

Lens construction: 15 elements in 13 groups

Angle of view: 63.4-24.4°

Max aperture: f/2.8

Min aperture: f/22

Diaphragm blades: 9

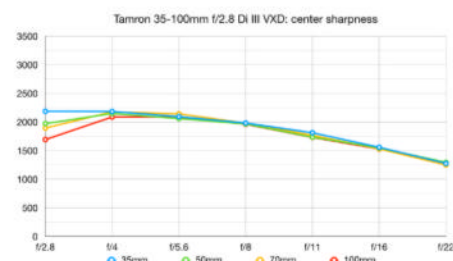
Min focus distance: 0.22m (W), 0.65m (T)

Max magnification ratio: 0.3x (W), 0.17x (T)

Filter size: 67mm

Dimensions (L x D): 122 x 81mm

Weight: 570g



Sharpness:

Sharpness in the centre of the frame is exemplary throughout the zoom range, even wide-open at f/2.8. Stop down to apertures between f/4 and f/8 for premium sharpness at the edges and corners of the frame. Overall, though, sharpness is very impressive.

Fringing: Short 0.31 Long 0.35

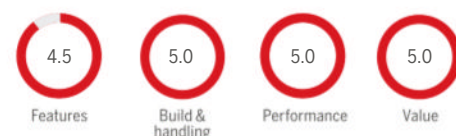
Colour fringing is minimal across the frame, as is the lateral chromatic aberration, even at the edges and corners, with automatic in-camera correction disabled.

Distortion: Short -1.13 Long 3.25

There's a little barrel distortion at the widest-angle zoom setting of 35mm, whereas pincushion distortion can be noticeable in the 50-100mm sector of the range.

Digital Camera verdict

5.0 ★★★★★
A best-in-class product



I wish the Tamron 35-100mm F2.8 Di III VXD had been around a couple of decades ago, when I used to do a fair bit of wedding and events photography – it would have come in enormously useful for that. I say 'enormously', but the biggest attraction of the lens for this type of scenario is that it's amazingly compact and lightweight, while offering a useful zoom range with a relatively fast and constant f/2.8 aperture. Size and weight are important factors, especially if you're shooting all day long and into the night. Image quality and all-round performance are highly impressive, and the Tamron is great value for the price. It's a keeper.

Ken Crossan

The naturalist photographer's book showcases the beauty of the Caithness coastline, as **Niall Hampton** discovers



Ken Crossan

Ken Crossan Naturalist photographer

Based in Wick in Caithness, north-east Scotland, Ken took up photography at the age of 40, after buying a film camera.

He turned to photography to document what he encountered on countryside walks, one of his main pursuits away from work.

Ken's photography has been recognised in the Scottish Nature Photography Awards and Wildlife Photographer of the Year.

His images have been exhibited in venues including the Natural History Museum in London and the Smithsonian in Washington.

A photobook about the rugged Caithness coastline in north-eastern Scotland, *Life At The Edge* is the latest work from local resident Ken Crossan. Ken describes himself as a naturalist photographer, and his work has been recognised in the Scottish Nature Photography Awards and Wildlife Photographer of the Year, among others. Ken's photos focus on the flora and fauna of the county, which is home to landmarks such as John o' Groats and The Flow Country, and have been exhibited internationally. Containing over 280 images, *Life At The Edge: The Natural History of the Caithness Coast*, to use its full title, is the first complete photographic record of the Caithness coastline.

"It has been said that Caithness is separated from Scotland by mountains; connected to the islands by sea," says Ken in his introduction. Given that a photo is said to be worth a thousand words, let's find out more about the book from the man himself.

How did you get started in photography – how would you describe your journey so far?

I was brought up in a city, in Glasgow, but always enjoyed the outdoors. I would go for long walks in the countryside and come back and bore people rigid with stories of what I'd seen. It was suggested to me that perhaps I should get a camera to try recording what I'd seen and experienced. So I bought a second-hand Minolta film camera, found that I really loved it, and

things grew from there. My interest in nature developed into an interest in photography, rather than the other way round. I regard myself as a naturalist who attempts to record what he sees and experiences.

Were you inspired by any of the greats of nature photography – did you bear their work in mind?

There are many nature photographers across the world whose work has inspired me and from whom I've learned so much. Locally, there are Scottish nature photographers such as Laurie Campbell whose work has been really appreciated over the years. Laurie's approach mirrors my view of looking at things from

Ken Crossan





the perspective of a naturalist. It's something about the way he goes about things in the natural world – he uses and develops his fieldcraft so that he can capture as natural a look as he can. And I hope that's the way I approach photography, too.

For any readers not familiar with the area, what makes Caithness such a good location for capturing photographs of the natural world?

Caithness is at the very northern tip of the UK, and there are two key features of international importance. One is the coastline, which is often described as one of the greatest in the world. The second key area is the

Flow Country of Caithness and Sutherland, the largest blanket bog system in Europe, which was recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site two years ago. I believe it's the second-least populated area in Europe – there's an area in Finland that beats it, I think. These are the two key features of the natural world in Caithness. →

Above: Redshank. Nikon D850 with 200-400mm f/4 lens and 1.4x teleconverter. 1/500 sec at f/11, ISO 400. Focal length: 550mm.

“My interest in nature developed into an interest in photography. I view myself as a naturalist who records what he sees”

Ken Crossan



Above: Freswick Head. Nikon D850 and 70-200mm f/4 lens. 25 secs at f/11, ISO 200. ND filter.

Right: Duncansby Stacks. Nikon D850 and 70-200mm f/4 lens. 25 secs at f/10, ISO 100. ND filter.

Opposite (clockwise from top left): Lion's Mane Jellyfish. Nikon D850 and 200-400mm f/4 lens and 1.4x teleconverter. 1/125 sec at f/5.6, ISO 400.

Coastal Lichen. Nikon D850 and 105mm f/2.8 macro lens. 1/8 sec at f/16, ISO 100.

Incoming Tide. Nikon D850 and 70-200mm f/4 lens. 20 secs at f/8, ISO 64. ND filter.

Rock Dove in the Mist. Nikon D850 and 70-200mm f/4. 1/400 sec at f/10, ISO 100.

Sand Patterns. Nikon D850 and 16-35mm f/4 lens. 1/80 sec at f/9, ISO 400.

Ken Crossan



The total length of the Caithness coastline is 147 miles, so how did you tackle photographing it?

I've never walked the whole coastline from start to finish, but I have walked it in sections. That was before I started on *Life At The Edge*, so I was aware of the areas I wanted to explore in more detail in the book.

Which sections of the coastline were the most rewarding to explore?

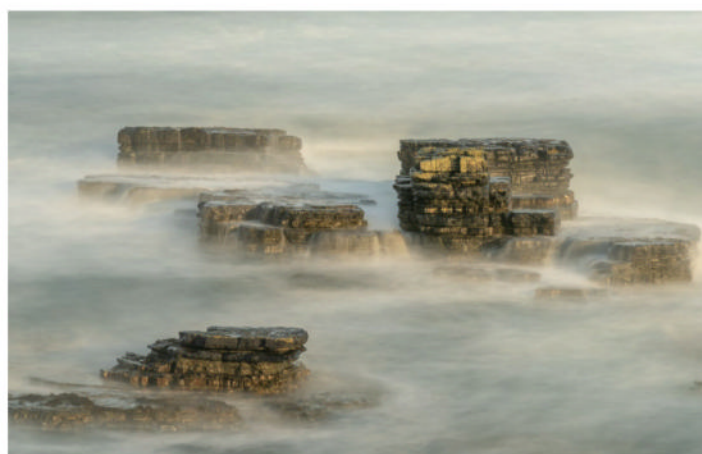
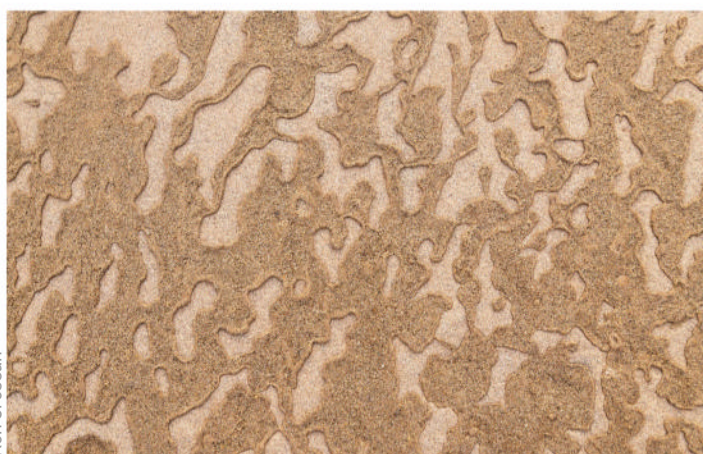
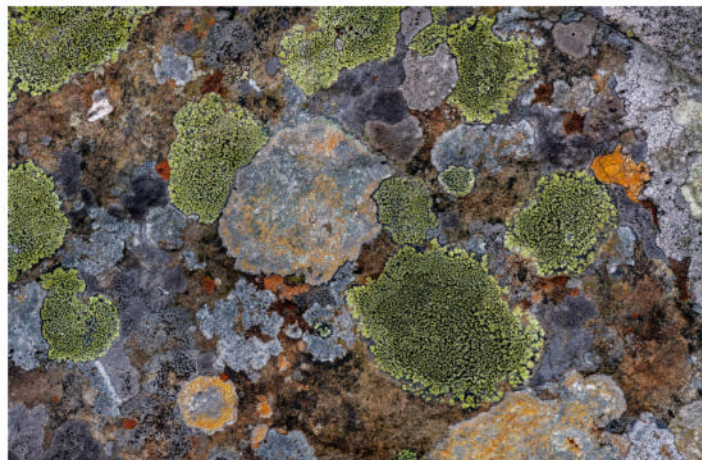
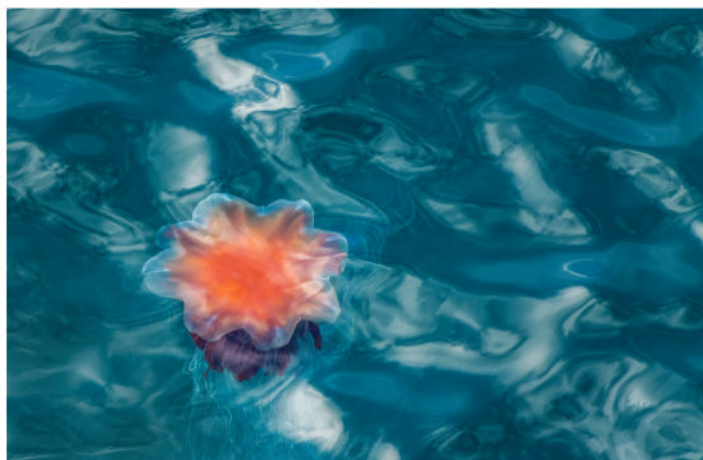
Much of the coast is pretty remote, so you can walk a whole day and not see a soul. Different people will prefer different areas: if you enjoy golden sandy bays, then Sinclair Bay on the east coast and Dunnett Bay on the north coast would be ideal spots. If I had to pinpoint it, my particular stretch would be at the very north, on

the east coast between Freswick and Duncansby Head. This is an area of dramatic geological features with wonderful birdlife, although it's boggy underfoot, so you have to be careful when walking there.

To give your readers a reference point, on page 161 of the book there's a photo called 'The Knee'. When I went out to take that image, the tide and the wind had to be exactly right to get the 150+ feet wave channelling between the mainland and the stack, and it can be a little breezy there. On that occasion, the conditions were probably the most extreme I'd ever encountered. As I walked towards Duncansby Stacks, the wind was extremely strong, probably around 70 miles an hour blowing into my face. Then it started to hail, and the horizontal hail at that speed made for possibly one of the most painful walks I've ever had. Fortunately, it stopped before I reached the coast. I was then able to lie on the cliff edge to capture the image, resting the camera firmly on a beanbag to avoid camera shake.

You haven't concentrated on one particular subject in the book. Why was that?

I am fascinated by all aspects of the natural world and the wide range of species and habitats to be found along the Caithness coast reflects this. When I had given talks on the natural history of Caithness, locally and beyond, audiences always appeared pulled towards the coastal images. As aspects of this coastline are of international importance (for example, in relation to breeding seabirds), and as it had never been photographed in any systematic way, *Life At The Edge* was my attempt to address this and provide the essence of what this spectacular coast has to offer.



Ken Crossan

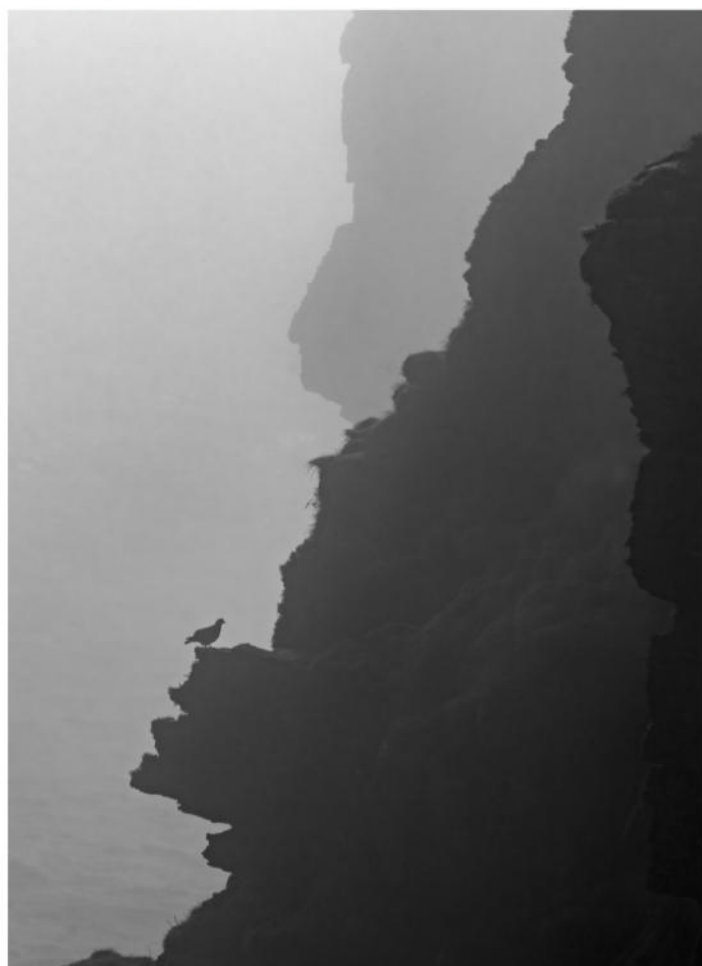
Firstly, I decided on a structure for the book, with five sections [*Harbours; Seas; Beaches; Dunes and Links; Sea Cliffs and Stacks; and Rocky Shorelines*], and once I had the structure of the various coastal habitats, I started filling it in. I didn't have a definitive list of species and places to photograph, but I had a good idea in my head about what I wanted to do. Then it was a question of getting a balance between the geology, the birds, the marine mammals, the invertebrates and the coastal flowers within each habitat to offer a representative flavour of what could be seen there. A lot of the subjects are fairly common and not unique to Caithness – people would be able to see similar things in other coastal areas of the UK – although obviously, there are distinct features to this area.

Do you think *Life At The Edge* could help put Caithness more on the map, as it were?

Potentially, although with a project like this, it's difficult to know whether the interest you generate will encourage too many visitors and spoil things. The Caithness coast has largely remained 'under the radar' and I wanted to put *Life At The Edge* out there and show people what's available if they take the time to explore the area. The main roads follow the coast, so you don't have to walk for miles, but some of the



“Life At The Edge aims to provide the essence of what this spectacular coast has to offer”



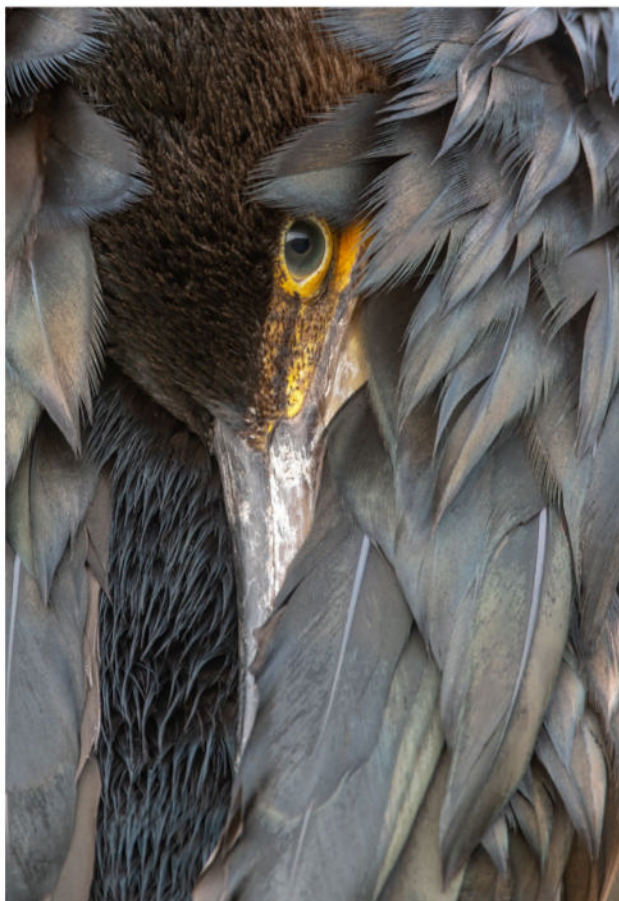
Ken Crossan



Ken Crossan

Above: Grey Seal Pup.
Nikon D850 and
16-35mm f/4 lens. 1/8
sec at f/11, ISO 1250.

Right: Cormorant.
Nikon D850 and
200-400mm f/4 and
1.4x teleconverter. 1/15
sec at f/11, ISO 400.



Ken Crossan

walks are across pretty rough ground and over barbed wire fences, so it's not all straightforward.

And Caithness is a long way away for many people...

Yes, it is. The train from Inverness [to Wick and Thurso] runs two or three times a day and takes four and a half hours. If somebody makes the effort to get to Inverness and wants to explore this area and decides to take the train, then they're going to spend an extended length of time travelling before they even arrive here. Having said that, the Caithness coastline forms part of the North Coast 500 tourist route as well as the John O' Groats Trail. This was a primary impetus for me to produce the book. The ever-popular NC500 brings in many visitors from throughout the UK and abroad.

What was your typical equipment setup for shooting the *Life At The Edge* photographs?

I used a Nikon D850, and my go-to lens for the birds and marine mammals was a 200-400mm f/4 VR with a 1.4x teleconverter. While that might be an obvious lens to use for birds and mammals, I also used it for a lot of plant photography; it allowed me to draw out the particular plant while offering just a feel of the background through the background colours. Depending on the situation, I also used a 70-200mm telephoto when taking pictures of landscapes.

Why did you choose Nikon cameras and lenses?

I started with a second-hand Minolta film camera; I can't remember how moving to Nikon came about, but when

Ken Crossan

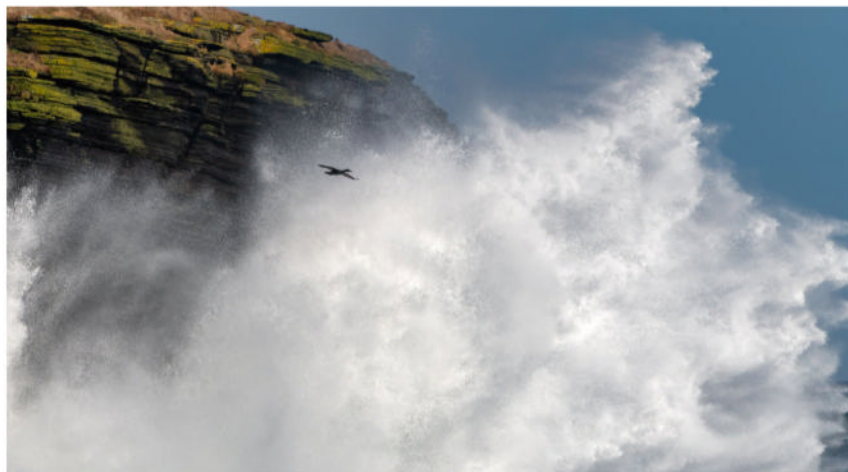


I bought a new camera it happened to be a Nikon. All I wanted to do was try to record what I saw on my walks, then my partner suggested that I join a camera club. I'm not a clubby person, so she dragged me to where the club met and made sure I went in. There, I met an elderly gentleman who took me under his wing, and I learned some of the basics. Although I was taking natural history photos, there were club competitions and assignments involving other genres which I enjoyed and which further developed my photographic skills.

I then transferred to the Paisley Colour Photographic Club – highly regarded in the UK – which had a strong natural history section. I learned a huge amount from experienced natural history photographers like Duncan McEwan and made lifelong friends there. The club used to run an international nature photography competition, the Paisley International Colour Slide Exhibition, and I wrote the script for its commentary for about 10 years. I would organise the slides into a cohesive running order, write a commentary on each slide then return the slides and script for the projected show, seen by various camera clubs around the country.

Are you a get-it-right-in-camera photographer or do you like to spend time editing raw files?

I shoot everything in raw, but my editing process is very basic, with only minimal changes to the image. I started out shooting slide transparencies, so you had to frame your photos correctly – there was no manipulation and, although digital imaging has huge advantages over film (not least of which is being able to see what you have



Ken Crossan

captured immediately and making any necessary adjustments), I still adopt the 'good practice' of scanning around the edge of the frame to make sure the composition is right before pressing the shutter.

For editing, I only make minor adjustments using the basic tools in Photoshop. I never use layers or anything like that. I also use Topaz for sharpening and noise

Above: The Shag. Nikon D850 and 200-400mm f/4 and 1.4x teleconverter. 1/1250 sec at f/8, ISO 400.

Above (top): Lybster Harbour. Nikon D850 and 70-200mm f/4. 1/800 sec at f/11, ISO 800.

“I started out shooting slide transparencies, and you had to frame your photographs correctly”



Ken Crossan

reduction. I'm really not interested in doing a lot of editing; I'm just interested in trying to bring out the reality of what I saw with only minimal manipulation.

How long did it take to produce *Life At The Edge*?

It took me six years to gather the images, then the production side of the book took a further 18 months or so. Rather than make the editing judgements myself, I identified two people to act as external evaluators.

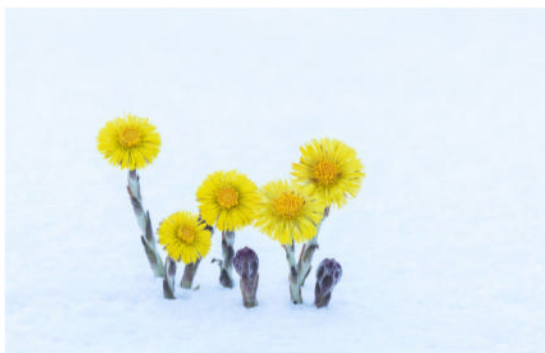
David Osborn is a fellow of the Royal Photographic Society and used to chair its Natural History Photography Distinction Panel, so he has a lot of experience in judging top-rated images. David was the external natural history evaluator, while Fergus Mather was the local one. He's a really good photographer, very creative with a camera, and as a former art teacher, he has a different background from David.

Refining the images I took, which worked out at roughly 100 each year, I presented them to David and Fergus, and if they independently agreed that an image was book-worthy and I supported that choice, then it went forward for consideration. In that way, I built up a bank of images, then was able to work out the balance of images, deciding which ones should go into each section. Selecting the 280 pictures took six years.

Focusing on two of them, can you tell us more about *Lion's Mane Jellyfish* and *Grey Seal Pup*?

Lion's Mane Jellyfish is an example of one of the relatively few 'unplanned' images. Whilst walking along

Ken Crossan



Above: Fungi in the Dunes. Nikon D850 and 16-35mm f/4 lens. 1/160 sec at f/16, ISO 400.

Left: Coltsfoot. Nikon D850 and 105mm f/2.8 macro lens. 1/15 sec at f/16, ISO 200.

the coast, I noticed a lion's mane jellyfish close to shore beneath the cliffs. Lying on the edge of the clifftop with a long lens, I waited until the jellyfish (about 20cm in diameter) surfaced, its orange bell contrasting with the patterns created by the movement of the water and the light playing on the surface of unusually calm seas.

Grey Seal Pup is an image that I had tried to capture on several previous occasions, but the sky had always been bland – detail and interest in the sky is a key element to the balance of the composition. Lying on a flat rock at dawn, I anticipated where the seal pup was likely to emerge and placed it towards the corner of the image, providing enough space for its dramatic surroundings to be appreciated. In an ideal world, I might have preferred the subject to be looking into the frame, but I was comfortable that I had captured the context and atmosphere that I had hoped for. ●

Life At The Edge: The Natural History of the Caithness Coast by Ken Crossan is published by Whittles Publishing (ISBN 978-184995-598-0) and is priced £21.99
www.portopress.com

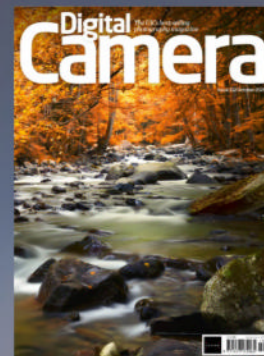


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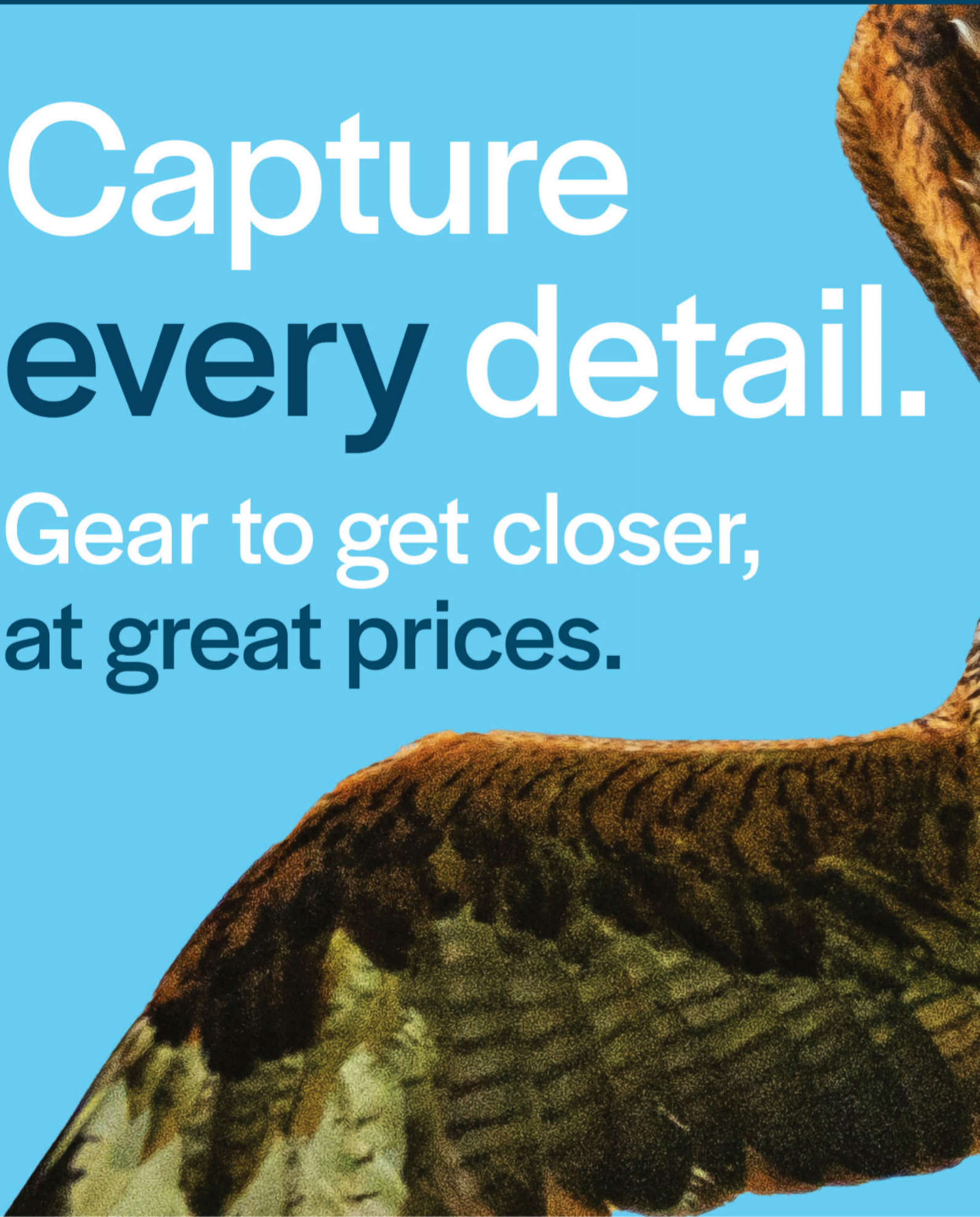
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Joseph Niepce/Stringer/Getty

7 Who said, 'Which of my photographs is my favourite? The one I'm going to take tomorrow'?

- ☐ A Dorothea Lange
- ☐ B Imogen Cunningham
- ☐ C Eve Arnold
- ☐ D Annie Leibovitz

8 Which manufacturer offers cameras with built-in ND grad filters?

- ☐ A Sony
- ☐ B Fujifilm
- ☐ C Ricoh
- ☐ D OM System

9 How many kilobytes (KB) are there in a gigabyte (GB)?

- ☐ A One thousand
- ☐ B One million
- ☐ C One billion
- ☐ D One trillion

10 In the book and film *H is for Hawk*, what does the father do for a living?

- ☐ A Wildlife photography
- ☐ B Wedding photography
- ☐ C Travel photography
- ☐ D Newspaper photography



Roadside publicity

1 Which pioneering 19th-century photographer took this photograph?

- ☐ A Fox Talbot
- ☐ B Wedgwood
- ☐ C Daguerre
- ☐ D Niépce

2 According to the latest industry figures, which are now the top three Japanese camera manufacturers?

- ☐ A Canon, Nikon, Sony
- ☐ B Canon, Sony, Panasonic
- ☐ C Canon, Sony, Fujifilm
- ☐ D Sony, Nikon, OM System

3 Which of these is not a slide film?

- ☐ A Ektar
- ☐ B Provia
- ☐ C Ektachrome
- ☐ D Velvia

4 Which manufacturer was first to use a BSI (backside illuminated) sensor in a mirrorless camera?

- ☐ A Sony
- ☐ B Samsung
- ☐ C Panasonic
- ☐ D Olympus

5 Panasonic makes mirrorless cameras with two different sensor sizes – what are they?

- ☐ A APS-C and full-frame
- ☐ B Micro Four Thirds and full-frame
- ☐ C Full-frame and Medium format
- ☐ D APS-C and Micro Four Thirds

6 What does the P stand for in PNG?

- ☐ A Palette
- ☐ B Photo
- ☐ C Portable
- ☐ D Pixel

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,5B,6C,7B,8D,9B,10D

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