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Digital Camera World

The world's favorite
photography magazine

Issue 311 September 2026

SHOOT EPIC MOUNTAIN LANDSCAPES

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✓ Technique ✓ Settings ✓ Kit tips



Here be damselflies
Reader challenge with
macro pro Tony North



ON TEST
Canon RF 7-14mm
Fisheye zoom



Interview
Chris Fallows: having
a whale of a time

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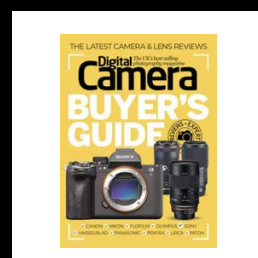
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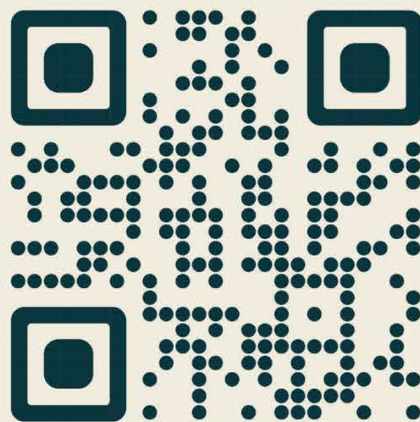
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Welcome

You don't have to be a seasoned climber to capture beautiful views of mountains – this month's cover feature (p64) shows you how to get great results from distance... even from the window of your car. For September's Apprentice, we're on a bug hunt with macro pro Tony North (p8), while Camera Clinic (p88) contains everything you need to know about using depth of field creatively. Another batch of projects to shoot today can be found in Photo Skills (p43) and, in our interview, the leading wildlife photographer Chris Fallows discusses his fine-art approach (p122). Camera and lens reviews include the Leica SL3-P (p112) and PhotoLab 9 from DxO (p120). Enjoy the issue.

Niall

Niall Hampton, editor
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This issue's bonus gifts **Find out more on pages 6 and 110**



Nine all-new photo tips cards

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40 Actions, presets and lookup tables

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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10 ways to scale the heights with your landscape photography, with top outdoor pro **Jeremy Flint**



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Jeremy Flint



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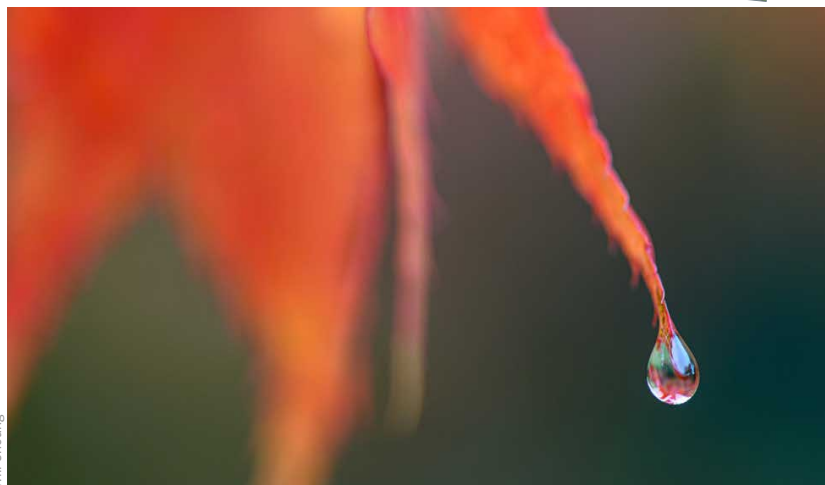
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Will Cheung



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Camera Clinic _ An essential creative skill, depth of field is up there with accurate exposure and focusing. But don't be baffled, befuddled or bemused about it because Will Cheung is here to show you how to get the best from DoF

HIPA



Chris Fallows
Wildlife photographer

An award-winning photographer and conservationist who uses his images to highlight threats to the natural world, Chris discusses some career highlights. **Page 122**



Tony North
Macro photographer

His online summer macro courses are very popular, so we were delighted when Tony offered to mentor a close-up shoot. Macro lenses at the ready, from **page 8**

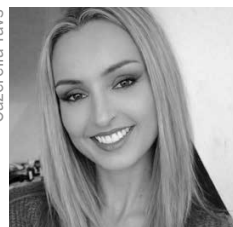
LCE



Sophia Spurgin
Photographer

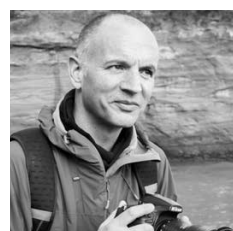
Sophia won LCE Photographer of the Year 2026 for a portrait captured on holiday. She takes us behind the scenes of the picture and how it was shot, on **page 98**

Cazerella Tavs



Cazerella Tavs
Street photographer

The first-place winner of the Pure Street Photography Awards 2025 offers her insights for capturing creative black and white street shots. Read her project on **page 54**



Benedict Brain
Photographer and writer

Benedict explores the potential of his photos through a variety of creative projects, many of which have appeared in his 100 *The Art of Seeing* columns. **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 88**

'After the Fall the Rise', by Chris Fallows



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Interview _ Award-winning fine-art wildlife photographer and conservationist Chris Fallows captured 299 different humpback whales in a day, setting a world record. He tells us how he uses photography to fund conservation work

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Apprentice _ Reader Shane Sellers was keen to improve his close-up photography, so we suggested a shoot with macro pro Tony North. See what happened when we went in search of the insect inhabitants of Manchester

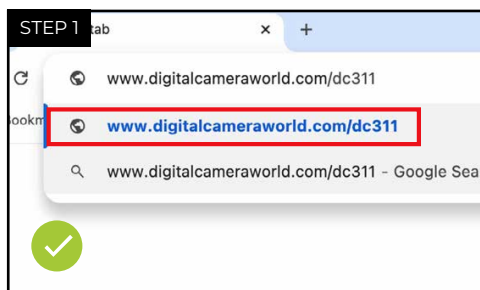
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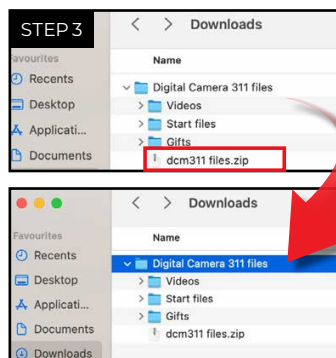
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Digital Camera APPRENTICE



The Pro

Name: Tony North

Camera: OM System OM-1

Tony is an award-winning macro and landscape photographer based in Manchester in the north of England, UK. He runs an online summer macro course, is writing a comprehensive book on macro photography and is a regular speaker at camera clubs. For more information, visit:

www.artofmacro.com

Instagram: @tnorth67

Damselflies at dawn

On the hunt for these elusive tiny insects
with top macro photographer **Tony North**

The Apprentice

Name: Shane Sellers

Camera: Canon EOS 5D Mark IV

A retired civil servant from Teesside in the north-east of England, Shane enjoys landscape photography and has joined photo tours in countries including Iceland. He has recently been getting into macro photography and is keen to develop his skills in this area.

www.egglescliffephotography.com

Instagram: @egglescliffe_photos

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 on the outskirts of Manchester in the north of England, at Reddish Vale Country Park, a favourite haunt of macro photographer Tony North. Tony helmed the 'Master the Art of Macro' feature in our August 2025 issue (297) and is a multi-award-winning photographer of close-ups. He'll be mentoring *Digital Camera* reader Shane Sellers, a recent convert to close-up photography who's looking to consolidate his new skills and move up a level.

On today's agenda is a 360° macro experience. Shane will learn how to acquire close-ups of insects, including damselflies in the field, shoot focus brackets of them, and then adjourn to Tony's studio for an editing session where Tony will explain how he creates focus stacks.

Meeting at 5am on a Monday morning and making our introductions, we take a short walk from the Reddish Vale Country Park car park to our first location, adjoining the banks of the River Tame. Conditions are overcast – had a sunrise been likely, we would have arrived half an hour earlier. Low wind and cool temperatures, as generally experienced around dawn, are ideal for macro, says Tony, giving photographers ———→



Tony gives Shane some tips for spotting suitable subjects in the field. With his experience, Tony can locate prospects in seconds.

ABOVE

THE APPRENTICE: "I took several bracketed sequences of the damselfly that Tony found nearby, while its perch was held steady by the Plamp."

THE PRO: "Excellent sharpness across the damselfly, while the subtle side-lighting and clean background give the image a polished simplicity."

a decent window to exploit when conditions are favourable. And as the morning warms, insects become increasingly active.

Gusts of wind would have made focus stacking extremely difficult, says Tony, but he feels there's more certainty in macro than one experiences when shooting landscapes.

"The weather conditions when you arrive could be different to what the forecast said, so you won't get the photos you were hoping for," he says. "But you'll always find insects."

To prove his point, Tony locates a damselfly straight away, on a stalk of tall grass. Rather

than photographing it in situ, though, Tony tells Shane how he prefers to build a 'set' instead, so he can be in full control of how the area behind the subject will appear.

"I'm looking for the background before everything else," Tony explains. "You might get a good subject, but then the background might not work. It seems like thinking backwards, but it's what works for me."

Explaining how he executes this, Tony pulls a Wimberley Plamp (literally "plant clamp") from his camera bag and shows it to Shane. Designed to stabilise subjects that might move in the wind, a Plamp has two clamps separated by interlocking plastic sections which can be bent into whatever shape is required. The clamp at the plant end is lined with spongy foam so it can grip the foliage without damaging it.

With his scissors, Tony cuts a rush and secures it in the Plamp to create the

SUPER SHOT #1

Shane Sellers



Pro technique Focus bracketing

Capturing images of tiny creatures that are sharp from front to back isn't as straightforward as it sounds. Macro photographs work best with defocused backgrounds, but only a sliver of a close-up subject photographed at a wide aperture will be in sharp focus. The solution is focus bracketing, where a series of frames are taken at different focus increments. The bracketed sequence, which could comprise as many as 30 or more frames, is then stacked in software to create an image in which the subject is sharp from front to back while the background remains softly defocused. Focus bracketing can be done manually or automatically.

Camera:	Canon EOS 5D Mark IV
Lens:	Canon EF 100mm f/2.8L Macro IS USM
Exposure:	1/80 sec at f/5, ISO 500

photographic perch. He then cuts the stalk on which the damselfly is resting and uses it to transfer the insect onto the rush. Another key part of Tony's setup is keeping tripods, Plamp and light stands separate.

"If I need to move anything, I don't want to disturb the subject at the same time," he says.

Background tasks

Shane puts up his tripod in front of the perch and attaches his camera, fine-tuning its position so the sensor is parallel to the plane of the subject. Using a 100mm macro lens, he composes his shot in Live View, zooming in for

detail. Tony asks Shane if he's happy with the background. It's a light shade of green across most of the frame, with some darker areas produced by variation in the vegetation. There are two ways to fix this, says Tony.

"If you open the aperture, there'll be less depth of field and a softer background. But doing this also means that less of the subject will be sharp. The main reason we focus bracket is to get complete subject sharpness despite having a small depth of field. The other solution, which won't cost us anything in terms of reducing the depth of field, is to move further away from the background."

Tony and Shane shift all the stands to reset position, and the background looks cleaner.

"Let's start by seeing how it looks without lighting," says Tony. He has brought two LED panels with him, which he prefers

Macro and close-up 101

Things to bear in mind when photographing tiny critters



1 Use a Plamp

An essential tool for macro photographers, the Plamp is made by Wimberley and consists of two adjustable clamps on the end of interlocking plastic sections that can be twisted into whatever position is required.



2 Light it up

Ring flashes are a popular choice for shooting close-ups of insects and critters, but Tony North prefers to use LED panels. His Neewer NL480 Bi-Color LED lights are affordable, low in weight and powered by rechargeable batteries.



3 Spray away

Another non-photographic essential is a spray bottle, for adding water droplets to scenes. Spraying these into the area around the subject can mimic precipitation – offering a different aesthetic during a close-up shoot.

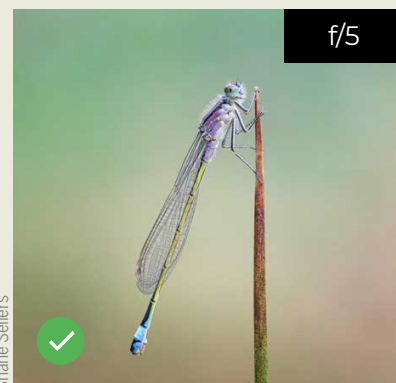
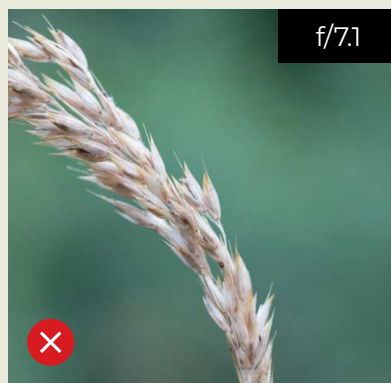
"I'm looking for the background before everything else," says Tony. "It's like thinking backwards, but it's what works for me"

SUPER SHOT #2



Pro tip **Backgrounds**

Placing the insect where you need it, fine-tuning its position and composing carefully are all important, but pay attention to backgrounds, says Tony. Even a faint blotch or dark patch behind the insect – caused by a change from one kind of vegetation to another – will be distracting behind a sharp focus-stacked image. While you can soften the background by widening the aperture (setting a smaller f/stop number), this will reduce depth of field more, so even less of the subject will be sharp. The other solution is to move the subject and the camera further away from the background.



Camera skills Cable release

Don't undermine any of your hard work when locating insects and capturing your shots by risking the introduction of camera shake. Sure, you can use a camera brand's companion app, or your camera's self-timer set to 10 seconds, but both methods are more of a faff than using a cable release. These can be purchased inexpensively – even more so when buying a third-party brand – and allow the shutter to be fired with no contact from the photographer. Also available are wireless releases, which dispense with the cable and fire the shutter electronically. See our best-buy options at: www.bit.ly/dcm267remotes



Shane tries Tony's geared tripod head for size – it allows for fine adjustments, and there's no risk of ball head slips.



Camera:	Canon EOS 5D Mark IV
Lens:	Canon EF 100mm f/2.8L Macro IS USM
Exposure:	1/125 sec at f/5, ISO 800

Shane Sellers

ABOVE

THE APPRENTICE: "The bug was relatively still, so using LED lights on a tripod to brighten the insect and moving closer to it, I captured this sequence."

THE PRO: "The diagonal pose works well, leading the eye from the dock bug's textured abdomen towards its head and extended antenna."

over strobes. "Flash is much brighter and can keep the ISO low, but LEDs allow me to see and refine exactly how the light is shaping the subject."

So Shane doesn't have to push his ISO too high – he's at 1250 – Tony uses two LEDs to brighten up the scene, one to the right of the

subject and one behind and below it. He prefers this to light from the front, "which flattens the photo and makes it look artificial."

Shane's first composition is of a damselfly at the tip of a rush. He focuses on the part of the damselfly that's closest to the lens, fires the shutter with a cable release, shifts the focus point with a tiny twist of the lens's focus ring and takes another frame. Shane shoots six or so individual frames for each of his manual brackets; in-camera focus bracketing often allows up to 999 frames, but usually a much smaller number is needed.

Picking a new perch

Before too long, Tony thinks Shane has captured enough frames for one bracketed sequence, and 15 minutes later, another – for this sequence, the damselfly's abdomen isn't as tight to the stalk as it was before.

Tony suggests switching the perch, so he takes Shane off into the long grass. —————>

Our pro's kit OM System OM-1

The last camera to feature Olympus branding, this Micro Four Thirds body has a stacked BSI Live MOS sensor with a resolution of 20.4MP. Tony pairs his OM-1 with an OM System M.Zuiko 90mm F3.5 IS Pro Macro lens, acknowledged by many to be the best MFT macro lens. explore.omsystem.com



SUPER
SHOT #3



Camera:	Canon EOS 5D Mark IV
Lens:	Canon EF 100mm f/2.8L Macro IS USM
Exposure:	1/250 sec at f/5, ISO 800



Shane goes hunting for fresh subjects in some of the long grass at Reddish Vale Country Park.



With no auto-focus bracketing on his camera, Shane adjusted the focus manually between frames.

Technique assessment

Top tips for terrific macro photos – and how to avoid missing shots



1 Keep it parallel

At macro magnifications, depth of field is extremely shallow. The camera should be positioned so its sensor is as parallel as possible to the main plane of the subject – this will help more of the subject appear sharp.



2 Aperture Priority

For quick adjustments of the lens aperture, shoot in Aperture Priority mode. The camera then selects a shutter speed that keeps the exposure value at the middle of the scale. If the shutter speed is too slow, then increase the ISO.



3 Single point AF

When establishing the starting point for automatic bracketing, having a small autofocus point is essential. When shooting focus brackets manually, as Shane is doing, a suitably magnified Live View display is more important.

LEFT

THE APPRENTICE: “Taking multiple shots with manual focus, I used my Canon RS-80N3 remote switch to avoid the possibility of camera shake.”

THE PRO: “A strong, characterful viewpoint: the dock bug appears to confront the viewer. Shane kept its extraordinary antennae within the frame.”

“Finding a good perch can be harder than finding the subject,” Tony smiles. “See this stuff here? This is called cocksfoot. It’s in its dried-up phase now, but can work well because it’s a bit more rigid.”

Tony settles on a stalk of grass with seedheads and pops it in the Plamp. He then finds two damselflies and transfers them in turn onto the stalk, one on either side.

“I’m not going to touch the insect, and I’m being very careful because too much vibration might make it drop into the undergrowth, where it would be difficult to find again.”

With some gentle twisting of the stalk, Tony manages to get the damselflies opposite each other, on the same focal plane. After a few more bracketed sequences, Tony swipes through the images on Shane’s rear screen and says there’s enough for another stack.

Bugging out

Coming up to the two-hour point of the shoot, Tony suggests a change of location. We pack up and take a short walk to the bottom of Reddish Vale Viaduct, a 17-arch structure that carries the Hope Valley railway between Manchester and Sheffield. Shane sets up next



Scissors are an essential item in Tony’s macro kit bag. If an insect is on the stem, he will cut near the hinge of the scissors to minimise vibrations.

to the river, then goes to hunt for subjects in the vegetation with Tony. They return with a dock bug – a tiny red critter with a broad torso – clinging to a Timothy grass flower head. Our new subject is very different from a damselfly.

Tony is keen to show Shane the benefits of using a geared tripod head, as opposed to the ball head preferred by Shane. His Manfrotto 405 Pro head, mounted on a Manfrotto 190 tripod, has large knobs for making micro adjustments to tilt, roll and pan.

“Too much vibration might make the insect drop into the undergrowth, where it would be difficult to find again,” says Tony”

Pro tip **How to stack focus-bracketed frames**

Tony uses Adobe Lightroom to process his bracketed captures, using the thumbnail view in the Library module to identify suitable sequences for stacking, before opening them in the Develop module. Lens corrections and basic tonal adjustments carried out on one shot can be copied and applied to the others in the sequence. Next, Tony takes the set of

images into Topaz DeNoise AI, as he prefers its noise reduction results to those in Lightroom (it also sharpens the image while denoising).

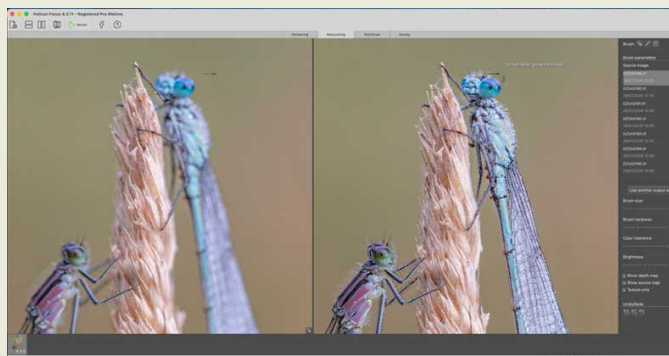
Tony normally uses Helicon Focus to align and stack the frames, turning to Photoshop only when substantial subject movement makes alignment difficult. He then uses Photoshop for further adjustments and

to repair any remaining stacking errors. Helicon Focus uses algorithms (not AI) to analyse images and identify the portions with the most contrast and detail; these are then merged together to create images with full focus. Lite, Pro and Premium versions of Helicon Focus are available.

Find out more: www.heliconsoft.com



Lightroom



Helicon Focus

When the perch, lights and camera are all in position, Shane starts bracketing again. For his first composition, the perch is positioned at a 45° angle, with the bug exploring the tip of the perch. Shane has pushed his ISO to 800 to enable a 1/250 sec shutter speed for countering any motion blur; the ISO could go even higher, says Tony, as the latest noise reduction software produces great results.

After Shane feels he has captured enough frames of the dock bug, Tony arranges the

perch vertically and encourages Shane to try shooting a mixture of different views.

"It's hard to know in the field which pose or composition will work the best," he says. "So my advice is to experiment as much as you can and take a whole variety of shots."

With no breeze disturbing the perch, and our subject moving very slowly, Shane gets another series of bracketed sequences. Tony offers feedback on his process and suggests some tweaks to compositions and camera position, to make sure the backgrounds in the shots are the cleanest possible. Pretty soon, it's 8.30am, and Tony suggests continuing the day with an editing session at his studio.

BELOW: Shane's EOS 5D Mark IV DSLR doesn't offer automatic focus bracketing, but he was able to try it on a Canon R5 mirrorless at Tony's house.



No ghosting

Half an hour later, Tony imports Shane's captures into Adobe Lightroom Classic. Working through the filmstrip view at the bottom of the Library module screen, he starts looking for bracketed sequences to work on. He's searching for image sets where the subject is in the same place; a slight movement by the insect can produce 'ghosting' or other stacking artifacts when the shots are combined.

Having found a suitable sequence, Tony shows Shane how to create focus stacks, working with sets of six to eight images (see above). When using auto focus bracketing on his OM System OM-1, however, Tony will often process larger batches of images.

So Shane can try auto focus bracketing with his own lens, your correspondent sets up his Canon EOS R5, and Tony fetches a red fuchsia from his garden and hangs it from a Plamp. Once the initial focus point is determined, brackets are captured in a few seconds. But it'll fall to Shane to stack these sequences at home, as we've been capturing critters since just after daybreak and Manchester's motorways will already be jammed with summer holiday traffic. ●

OPPOSITE

THE APPRENTICE: "Capturing two damselflies in the same picture was a challenge, but Tony's skill and knowledge ensured it was possible."

THE PRO: "Shane's strongest image: beautifully balanced, with both damselflies sharply rendered and the seedhead linking them naturally."

A macro photograph of two damselflies on a dried, brown plant stem. The damselfly on the right is light blue with translucent wings. The damselfly on the left is pink and purple with translucent wings. Both are perched on the stem, which has a fuzzy, dried flower head. The background is a soft, out-of-focus brown.

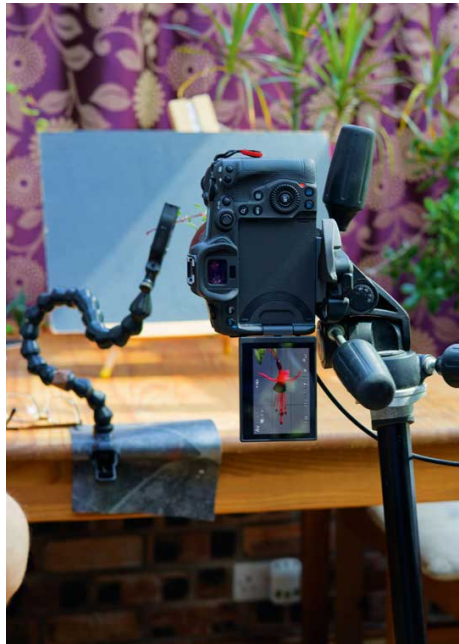
SHOT
OF THE
DAY!

Camera:	Canon EOS 5D Mark IV
Lens:	Canon EF 100mm f/2.8L Macro IS USM
Exposure:	1/125 sec at f/5, ISO 500



SUPER SHOT #4

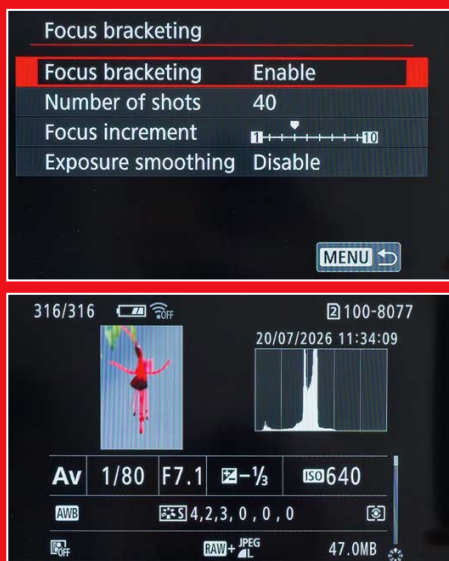
Camera:	Canon EOS R5
Lens:	Canon EF 100mm f/2.8L Macro IS USM
Exposure:	1/80 sec at f/7.1, ISO 640



Tony built a pop-up set in his conservatory so Shane could shoot his final bracketed sequence. He shows Shane the focus point to start with (left). The 40-frame sequence (right) was completed in five seconds.

Camera skills Auto bracketing

Hats off to Shane for his steady hands and patience while bracketing his shots manually. He's now considering making the switch to a Canon full-frame mirrorless that offers in-camera focus bracketing. Shane was able to experience this functionality at first hand, using your correspondent's Canon EOS R5. The process couldn't be easier: select the number of shots (Tony recommended 40) with an increment of four, focus on the nearest part of the subject, release the shutter and let the camera do the rest. The stacking process in software (page 16) is the same.



OPPOSITE

THE APPRENTICE: "I think I'll be upgrading to mirrorless, for sharper images and to reduce the time it takes to bracket when focusing manually!"

THE PRO: "Capturing 40 frames automatically allowed Shane to concentrate on composition, lighting and precise focusing. A good first effort."



Apprentice verdict

"It has been an excellent day. From Tony's knowledge and expertise, I have learned loads of new things. A big thank you to *Digital Camera*!"



Pro verdict

"Shane put my suggestions into practice remarkably quickly and developed a strong understanding of the techniques. He did really well."

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Email us at:
digitalcamera@futurenet.com

Pro portfolio Tony North

Tony North



Ringlet

"I wanted the surrounding grasses to be as important as the ringlet itself, using their out-of-focus seedheads to fill the frame with soft light, colour and gentle movement."

Tony North



Black darter

"By shooting through nearby bracken, I transformed its out-of-focus fronds into a soft frame, complementing the black darter, delicate heather perch and gently subdued background."

Tony North



Silver-studded blue

"I carefully positioned the silver-studded blue against warm grasses, while blurred heather introduced purple around the edges. Backlighting revealed fine hairs, giving the butterfly and its perch a luminous outline amid the soft colours of dawn."

InFocus

Photography news from around the globe

01	Photography news	page 20
02	Ask Matthew	page 26
03	Readers' letters	page 28
04	The Art of Seeing	page 30



1 NEW DESIGN FOR 2026
The design of the RX10 V incorporates a grip that's more like one from a Sony Alpha body, as well as a multi-select joystick.

2 TILTING TOUCHSCREEN
The electronic viewfinder has 3.69 million dots. A tilting touchscreen allows shooting from head or waist height.

3 SINGLE SD CARD SLOT
Storage duties are performed by a single UHS-I and UHS-II compatible SD card slot. This new camera is weather-sealed.

Sony launches RX10 V

Bridge camera sequel keeps the huge 24-600mm lens, but adds faster processing, AI subject recognition, improved video and better controls

While Sony hasn't launched a superzoom since the RX10 IV in 2017, the RX10 V arrives with the same 20.1MP one-inch sensor and a 24-600mm equivalent, 25x zoom lens with a maximum aperture of f/2.8-4. The new camera's evolution centres on speed and autofocus capabilities inherited from the brand's Alpha series, such as the new Bionz XR processor with an integrated AI processing unit. The RX10 V shoots burst speeds of up to 30fps with a blackout-free viewfinder, matching cameras like the A7R VI. Another key borrowed feature on the RX10 V, which pairs well with the 600mm equivalent

lens, is subject recognition autofocus. The updated processor also improves noise reduction and colours compared with the 2017 camera, says Sony, and there's a battery life boost of around 50 per cent. Video-wise, the RX10 V shoots 4K 60p using the full width of the sensor, but can also record cropped 4K 120p.

While it's not exactly compact, the RX10 V weighs 1.1kg, which is still under that of a mirrorless body with a bag full of lenses covering 24mm to 600mm. When turned off, the lens retracts slightly to give the RX10 V a ± 151.3 mm depth.

Find out more at: www.sony.co.uk; £2,200/\$2,300



4 TACTILE CONTROLS
The aperture scale is clearly marked on the lens barrel, and the multi-interface hot shoe takes microphones as well as flash units.

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LCE Photo Show 2026

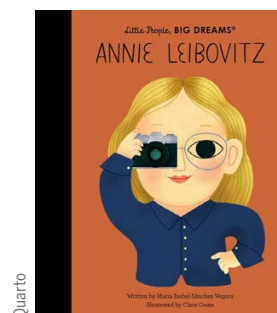
The Haynes Motor Museum in Somerset is to host the second edition of this photography event – and *Digital Camera* will be there

The LCE Photo Show, hosted by London Camera Exchange, takes place on 12 September. Photography enthusiasts, professionals, filmmakers and content creators are invited to the Haynes Motor Museum in Sparkford, near Yeovil in Somerset, for a day packed with photography seminars and product demos – and a *Digital Camera* subscriptions stand. Exclusive deals from top photography, video and optical brands will be available at the event, and the cost of your entrance ticket can be claimed against a purchase from LCE. A range of workshops, talks and seminars hosted by experts will take place, and show visitors can get hands-on with the latest cameras, lenses, video kit and accessories from leading brands. **Find out more at:** <https://photoshow.lcegroup.co.uk>; tickets from £5 (early bird)



Focal point

Rounding up what's new and exciting this month



Quarto

Annie Leibovitz children's book aims to inspire the next generation

This new addition to the *Little People, Big Dreams* series tells how the American photographer has helped define modern popular culture. With stylish illustrations and fascinating facts, the book is sure to give young readers the photography bug. **www.quarto.com; £11/\$16**



Anwen Whitehead



This year's theme is 'Focus on Nature', whether in a back garden, a local park, or a wild forest.

Scavenger Hunt Challenge open now

UK photographers aged 16 and under are invited to explore outdoors and capture nature's wonders, with 10 winners and runners-up sharing a prize pot of over £2,500

Open until midnight on 23 August, *The Week Junior Science+Nature* Scavenger Hunt Photo Contest 2026 invites photographers aged 16 and under to explore the outdoors and capture the beauty of nature. This year's grand prize winner will have their photograph featured on the front cover of *The Week Junior* magazine – reaching thousands of households nationwide. Thanks

to partnerships with Canon UK, Bloomsbury Children's Books and The Photography & Video Show (TPVS), 10 winners and runners-up will share a prize pool of more than £2,500 in camera equipment plus other goodies, such as a nature book bundle and tickets to see the winning photos at TPVS 2027.

For more info, visit: <https://sciencenature.theweekjunior.co.uk/scavengerhunt>



BenQ

New BenQ Creative Pro monitor has incredible colour space coverage

The PD2732U 27-inch 4K display has been designed for creatives and offers 99 per cent Adobe RGB coverage, making it easier to match on-screen colours to CMYK print outputs. Thunderbolt 4 delivers single-cable video, data and power. **www.benq.eu; £649/\$699**

Lomography Sprocket Rocket now available in two new colours

This fun film camera captures 18 sweeping panoramic pictures per 35mm roll, with a unique 1:3 panoramic perspective that includes the sprocket holes. It is now available in cheerful Strawberry Fusion and Mint Fusion colours. **shop.lomography.com; £45/\$69**





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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 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)

Travel
Photographer of the Year

New L-brackets from 3LT

Designed for specific Lumix, Nikon and OM System mirrorless camera bodies

Famous for its colourful finishes and quirkily named product line-up, accessories brand 3 Legged Thing has unveiled three new L-brackets. These are one of the most convenient tools for photographers, allowing quick switches between landscape and portrait orientations when shooting from a tripod. The new products are tailored to specific

cameras and are available in the brand's signature orange, as well as black. **Oscar QD** fits the OM System OM-3, **Paige QD** fits the Lumix S5 II, S5 IIX and G9 II, while **Zayne QD** is for the Nikon Z50 II. All three L-brackets offer full access to the camera's battery door and allow the rear LCD screens to fully flip out. Manufactured from strong but lightweight aerospace-grade magnesium

alloy, all three brackets each include multiple 3/8in-16 threads with 1/4in-20 adapters, which are ideal for attaching magic arms for hooking up accessories such as video lighting and monitors.

Find out more at: 3leggedthing.com; £90/\$100 (Paige QD and Zayne QD). £120/\$130 (Oscar QD)

1 3 LEGGED THING OSCAR
Fits the OM System OM-3 and is available in orange or black body finishes.



2 3 LEGGED THING PAIGE
Designed specifically for the Lumix S5 II and S5 IIX full-frame mirrorless, and the MFT G9 II.



3 3 LEGGED THING ZAYNE
For users of the Nikon Z50 II, an APS-C mirrorless pitched at enthusiasts and beginners.



Tamron 12-20mm F2.8

Competitively priced, lightweight ultra-wide zoom heralds in a new era for the brand

Available for Sony E and Nikon Z mounts, Tamron's latest full-frame lens has a new naming convention and launches a new look for the brand. The typical string of suffixes after the name of the lens has gone, replaced by the maximum aperture size, and "tactile joy" has been prioritised.

This comprises a more mechanical, robust design with a grippy aperture ring and prominently contoured focus and zoom rings. With a 12-20mm focal range and constant f/2.8 aperture, Tamron is pitching its new lens for professional astrophotography shooting. The "advanced optical design" aims to effectively suppress peripheral blurring, colour fringing and other aberrations. For astrophotography, sagittal coma flare is corrected with notable precision. Near the maximum aperture, the lens



delivers smooth, circular bokeh, says Tamron, with sharp, elegant 12-point sun stars when stopped down.

Other features include linear motor autofocus, moisture-resistant construction and a rear gel/sheet filter holder for use when shooting astrophotography and cityscapes.

Find out more at: www.tamron.eu; £1,449/\$1,699





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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 APO-MACRO ELMARIT 100MM F2.8
This new macro lens honours a classic optic that was released in 1987, and outstanding imaging performance right out to the edges is promised.

2 LEICA SUMMILUX-SL 50MM F1.4
This lens will produce distinctive image aesthetics, says Leica, thanks to its “state-of-the-art” manufacturing in Germany.

New L-Mount lenses from Leica

Two new optics for the SL series will offer greater creative freedom, says the brand

Alongside the SL3-P (launched in June and reviewed on page 112), Leica released two new L-Mount prime lenses. The Summilux-SL 50 f/1.4 ASPH is the world's most compact 50mm autofocus lens with an aperture of f/1.4, says Leica, while the APO-Macro-Elmarit-SL 100 f/2.8 honours a classic lens that was released way back in 1987.

The **Summilux-SL 50 f/1.4 ASPH** is just 75.5mm long and weighs 584g, with a diameter of 74mm. This all derives from Leica's “state-of-the-art” manufacturing processes, which deliver “exceptional image quality” and maximum portability. Two aspherical lens elements and perfectly

matched, high-quality glass types produce the lens's distinctive image aesthetics, says Leica. The large f/1.4 aperture will allow detailed images to be captured in low light levels, and 11 aperture blades will help isolate subjects precisely and capture a soft, natural bokeh. Autofocus promises to be fast and quiet, and there's a close focus distance of 50cm. Dust and water splash protection is certified to the IP54 standard, and the front element has Leica's proprietary AquaDura coating.

The **APO-Macro-Elmarit-SL 100 f/2.8** has been engineered to deliver outstanding imaging performance right to the edges, thanks to apochromatic correction. With

a close focus distance of 30cm and a maximum reproduction ratio of 1:1, this lens can reveal details invisible to the naked eye, says Leica, while the nine-blade aperture, in conjunction with the entire optical design, “ensures a harmoniously rendered background”.

Also ideal as a telephoto lens for shooting portraits, this new macro optic is 137.6mm long and weighs 862g, including the lens hood, and an AquaDura coating has been applied to protect the front element.

Find out more at: leica-camera.com;
£3,890/\$4,950 (Summilux-SL 50 f/1.4 ASPH). £2,110/\$2,700 (APO-Macro-Elmarit-SL 100 f/2.8)



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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.



Panning takes time to perfect, but with trial and error, you can capture stunning wildlife shots, such as this cheetah running over grassland.

Getty / Nicholas Dale

Living the (wild) life

Q I've always found it difficult to track wildlife on the hoof with big lenses and a monopod. Do you have any tips for better technique, or a more panning-friendly monopod?

Alan Roberts

A I feel your pain! I often find panning problematic when tracking moving subjects with a long telephoto lens

on a monopod. One thing I've tried, with some success, is to wear an empty belt bag around my waist and support the foot of a shortened monopod in the bag, rather than on the ground. This gives more freedom of movement, without the monopod foot catching on the ground or trying to drill a hole in it while you're panning. You could also try fitting a tilt-and-pan head to your monopod.

A recent revelation to me has been switching to a Benro MSD46CB Black Diamond SupaDupa Monopod. It's expensive at £180 (\$170), but is beautifully built from premium carbon fibre. One of its clever tricks is a free-spinning rubber foot pad, mounted on roller bearings. It might

not sound much of a big deal, but it enables wonderfully free and easy panning.



The Benro MSD46CB Black Diamond SupaDupa Monopod is expensive, but it has a free-spinning rubber foot pad mounted on roller bearings to enable free and easy panning. It makes shooting moving subjects, such as wildlife or sports, much easier.



The Viltrox AF 85mm f/2.0 Evo in Sony E and Nikon Z mount options is outstanding value at £265 (\$275). As shown in the image above, an f/2 aperture is sufficient for isolating subjects against a blurred background.

How much is enough?

Q I'm looking to buy an 85mm prime lens for full-frame portraiture, without over-spending. How fast an aperture do I really need to isolate subjects against a blurred background?

Sue Streeter

A Some say 'the faster the better' and lust after an ultra-fast f/1.2 aperture rating. However, these lenses tend to be big, heavy and very expensive. They're capable of such a tight depth of field that if the closer of a portrait subject's eyes is sharp, the other one probably won't be. The nose and other facial areas may also be defocused, which may not be ideal. You'd also probably need to use an ND (Neutral Density) filter under bright daylight to avoid overexposure, even at your camera's fastest shutter speed. All said, I'd go for a less pricey lens with an aperture rating of between f/1.4 and f/2.

What fakery is this?

Q I bought some brand new Nikon batteries on eBay a while ago, and they worked fine. However, they don't work in my new camera, even though they're supposed to. What's the problem?

Jeff Marlin

A I've had the same experience after buying four new, 'original' Nikon EN-EL15b batteries from a Chinese seller on eBay. They look genuine, right down to the holographic Nikon logo and work flawlessly in my Z 6II. However, they're fakes, and in newer cameras, including the Z f and Z 6III, I get a message saying 'The battery is unable to provide data to the camera and cannot be used'.

Closer inspection reveals that all four of my batteries have exactly the same serial number, a sure sign that they are fakes.



Second-hand superstar

Although the Mark II version is better in many ways, that doesn't mean there's anything wrong with considering the original

Q Much as I'd love one, I just can't afford the Sony FE 24-70mm F2.8 G Master II trinity standard zoom. Is the original version worth buying as a pre-owned option?

Shaun Davey

A **Matthew recommends...**
Sony FE 24-70mm F2.8 G Master
This flagship standard zoom was one of the brand's very first trio of G Master lenses



It's bigger, heavier and less refined than the newer Mark II version but is still a highly desirable, top-performance G Master lens

Released (year) 2016
Price new £1,535/\$1,798
'Excellent' £1,000/\$1,325
'Good' £850/\$1,000

(eXtreme Aspherical), one ED (Extra-low Dispersion) and one Super ED element, plus high-tech Nano AR coating.

G Master lenses are as good as it gets for Sony mirrorless cameras, and the FE 24-70mm was one of the original three, the other two being the 70-200mm f/2.8 zoom and the 85mm f/1.4 prime. When launched, they set new standards for image quality, all-round performance and pro-grade build quality among Sony lenses. The subsequent Mark II edition of the FE 24-70mm is smaller, lighter, sharper and has faster autofocus, along with other improvements. However, it's also very expensive, and the original lens is still a terrific performer. It's still relied upon by pro photographers all around the world.

1 Optical design
The complex optical path includes two aspherical, one XA

2 Autofocus system
The 'Direct Drive Super Sonic Wave' autofocus system is fast, accurate and whisper-quiet, and also enables smooth and precise manual focusing.

3 Handling and build
Handling benefits from an AF/MF focus mode switch, a zoom lock switch and a customisable function button, along with pro-grade weather-resistant build quality.

Elements/groups: 18/13
Aperture diaphragm: 9 blades
Optical stabilisation: None
Min focus distance: 0.38m
Max magnification: 0.24x
Filter size: 82mm
Dimensions (L x D): 136 x 87.6mm
Weight: 886g

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...

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Right: This scene was captured on a Nikon Z 7II and Nikkor Z 14-30mm zoom at 21mm. Settings: 0.6 sec at f/10, ISO 31, bracketing for the sky.

Star letter: **Better babbling brooks**

With reference to your 'Blurring a babbling brook' article in the July issue (309). I realise the article is an introduction to the topic, and a very good one at that, but I wonder whether there is scope for a longer article in a future edition, as this section of landscape photography can run very deep, if you'll forgive the pun!

I've been developing my skills with running water for a couple of years now, and realised that the shutter speed is a delicate tool in this aim. I find that shutter speeds of 1/10 sec to about 3-4 secs are plenty long enough to deliver the best results. I realise this is a personal preference, but I find that the structure, and hence movement in the water, is lost if the shutter stays open for longer than 1-2 secs. Strangely, taller waterfalls often need the shorter end of the shutter speed, whereas slower moving brooks need longer. It's not easy to predict the effect, so experimentation is required. I would also advise using a tripod with the usual anti-shake turned off and the shutter delayed or remote, but some modern cameras can cope with handheld speeds of 0.25 sec, or even more with a tree to lean on.

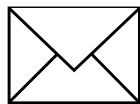


Roger Armitage

All this is great fun, and the end results can often transform an image by revealing the time dimension. I have attached an example of what I have been doing of late; I hope this helps to illustrate what I am on about.

Roger Armitage, by email

Digital Camera says: As you say, there's a lot that can be discussed in this topic, and Wendy barely scratched the surface of it in her article. The speed of the flow and the nature of the drop are all factors in what you want your shot to look like. That was the point of the piece, really, to encourage people to think about it. As for a longer article, there have been cover features on long exposures covering more water-based themes, and we dare say it will come up again.



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Adam Davis

@dada_mavis

Fantastic street photographer, with eye-catching documentary and travel-style photography, from Great Yarmouth to Bolivia, Peru, Colombia and beyond.



NEXT ISSUE: Read about Adam's fantastic capture of 'The Plunge'.

Catherine Bullen

@catbphoto

Nature photographer from Norfolk, UK, with some interesting and inspiring video blogs, following her photo journey in capturing nature and wildlife.

Sebastian Bevan

@sebastianbevanphoto

We have been enjoying Sebastian's recent selection of infrared imagery, made possible by using a Canon EOS R with a full-spectrum conversion, which allows for much faster shutter speeds when working with infrared filters.

Wayne Bulleid

@waynebulleid.motorandair

Award-winning motorsport and aviation photographer covering different subjects and showcasing great action photography.

Andy Nelson

@nlsnworks

A versatile photographer covering street, travel, abstract and landscape photography, with a visual feast of imagery from around the world on his feed.



Correction

In issue 310's woodpecker tutorial by Brett Townend, the wrong portrait was used. Apologies to Brett for the error; the photo above should have appeared.

See Brett's work at: [@townend.wildlife](https://www.bretttownend.co.uk)

Let's get botanical

I have just finished your article 'Let's get botanical' (August issue, 310) where you asked your readers to send in their photos, so here's one that I took at Kew Gardens.

I live in Kent, and I try to go to the fabulous Kew Gardens at least once a year. I've been there in all weathers and seasons, and have spent many a happy hour walking around the gardens looking for interesting photos of the glasshouses and the wide varieties of wonderful flowers. It's such a great place to visit, and I always try to come home with some different compositions of the glasshouses.



Andrew Roberts

The photo (below) was taken at the Rocky section during the summer. I walked around the glasshouse looking for a composition, and ended up getting low down with the rocks and flowers in the foreground. I also used a polarising filter to cut down on reflections off the glasshouse and to deepen the blue sky. The camera I shot it on was a Canon EOS 80D with a Tamron 10-24mm F4.5 Di II lens set at 10mm, and the settings I used were a shutter speed of 1/125 sec at f/11, ISO 200.

Andrew Roberts, by email

Photocrowd: @andrewthephotographer

Digital Camera says: Good work on packing the polariser because it's tricky avoiding undue reflections. Using a big foreground with a wide angle and narrow aperture guarantees enough depth of field.



Bad moon rising

I was fascinated by Sarah Peak's photo of the moon in your Reader Gallery in the August issue (below). I live in South Africa, and somehow, the moon looked wrong to me. I literally had to grab the magazine and turn southwards to visualise the sun in the west before it started to make sense.

In the northern hemisphere, you look southwards to see the moon, with the sun in the west for a waxing moon, and therefore it's on your right. From Cape Town, we look northwards towards the moon with the sun still in the west, but now, of course, it's on our left-hand side.



Please find a shot of the moon I took on a birding trip in the Tankwa Karoo park near Cape Town. It looks quite similar to Sarah Peak's photo, but as we see it from the southern hemisphere. The camera was a Nikon D7200 with a Nikon 200-500mm lens.

Johan Schultz, by email

Unsplash: @johanschultz

Digital Camera says: Thank you for sending your image in, Johan! It's fascinating to see the same object, but from the other hemisphere.



The art of seeing 100

As **Benedict Brain**'s column reaches triple figures, he suggests 10 ways in which readers can develop their photography artistically

W

hen I wrote the first 'Art of Seeing' column eight years ago, I never imagined I'd keep going this long.

The truth is, I've found the process an education in itself, a sort of way of thinking out loud, month after month. It has also helped me work out what photography means to me as I transitioned from life as the editor of this magazine to being an independent freelance photographer and writer. Many of you have come along for the ride, and your messages, comments and occasional gentle contradictions have played a vital part. Thank you!

So 100 seems like the right moment to pause and take stock. What have I learnt? What would I tell my younger self, the photography student of decades ago? I've been thinking about it for a while, and what follows are 10 tips I'd pass on. None of them are rules as such – I'm deeply suspicious of rules, as you may have picked up from my column. They are more like reminders.

You'll have noticed a thread running through all of them. It isn't about cameras. It's about looking, noticing and the art of paying proper attention to the world. That's the whole of it, really; everything else is fluff. Here, then, are a hundred columns distilled into a few pages. Thank you for reading.



Benedict Brain

Web: www.benedictbrain.com

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

A former editor of *Digital Camera*, Benedict's practice

spans personal projects, editorial assignments, writing about photography and teaching through workshops and enrichment programmes.





Ben's top 10 tips for being creative with your photography

1 Look, see, notice

We all look, but few of us truly see.

A photograph begins long before the shutter is pressed, in the act of paying attention. Train your eye like a muscle. Slow down and look.

Image: Persistence pays off, as our columnist discovered on a bus in Malaysia.

2 What's the story?

A picture without a story can be one-dimensional. I don't mean just writing snappy captions; I mean what your intent is. Why did this moment or this scene stop you? Think about what you're really photographing.

Image: Two tourists taking photos in the Wadi Rum desert, Jordan, 2023.

3 Slow down

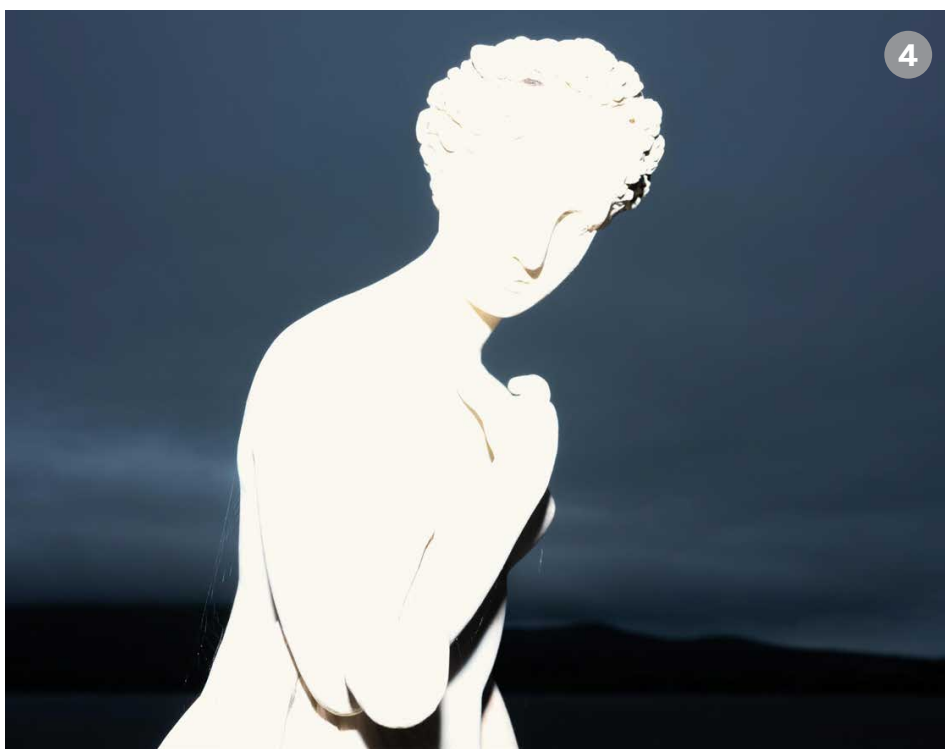
We don't experience the world through our eyes alone. Notice the smell after the rain, the sound of a place, the light's temperature. How somewhere makes you feel shapes how you photograph it. Slow down.

Image: Try using one focal length for a prolonged period – it will make you 'see' better. Guaranteed.

4 Break the rules (once you know them)

Rule of thirds, level horizons, never shoot into the sun. These rules can all be useful, until they aren't. Learn a 'rule', then break it. Convention is a fine start, but more often than not, it's a dull place to finish.

Image: Deliberately setting the flash power much higher than necessary has given this statue, seen on a visit to Portmeirion in Wales, a surreal twist.

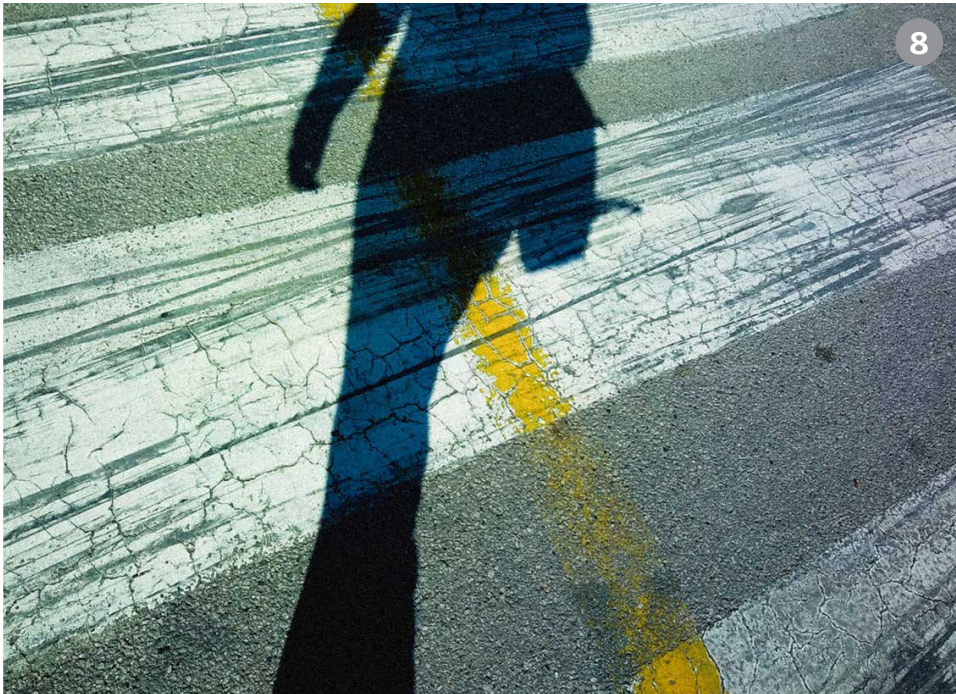


Top tip Be kind

This matters more than any technique. Be kind, above all, when you point a camera at another person. A photograph is a relationship. Ask. Smile. Learn a name. Ask yourself, 'Would I be happy if someone took this photo of me?'

Images: Ramchandrar from Goa, India (left). Female portrait, Barbados (right). Think about what type of long-form portrait project you could start.





Ben's 10 tips for being creative with your photography (cont'd)

5 Steal from everyone

None of us works in a vacuum, so study the history of photography, buy books and visit galleries. Look hard at painting, cinema, music and design. It all feeds the photography work, usually when you least expect it. Steal unabashedly.

Image: Inspired by Bernd and Hilla Becher and the work of The New Topographics

6 Anywhere will do

You don't need to book a trip to Iceland. The honeypot location is a trap, where everyone makes the same picture. Find the extraordinary in your own patch, the world you actually know. Familiarity is the secret ingredient, not the enemy.

Image: Stuck in a creative block? Open your archive and experiment. Multiple exposures and different blend modes can transform forgotten frames into something magical.

7 Little and often

Think of creativity like a muscle. Nobody runs a marathon training one day a month. Don't save your seeing for holidays. Carry a camera daily. Make a frame on the walk to work or at home on the kitchen table.

Image: Macro of a moth taken on a Sigma 70mm F2.8 DG Macro Art.

8 Kit won't save you

The most expensive gear won't make you better. It often solves problems you may not have. However, choosing the right tool does genuinely help, especially one that gets out of your way. Buy less. Use it more.

Image: Shot with a Camp Snap camera. This simple camera is fun to use, but it also drives home the message that creativity and 'seeing' are more important than kit. Taken somewhere on the Mediterranean

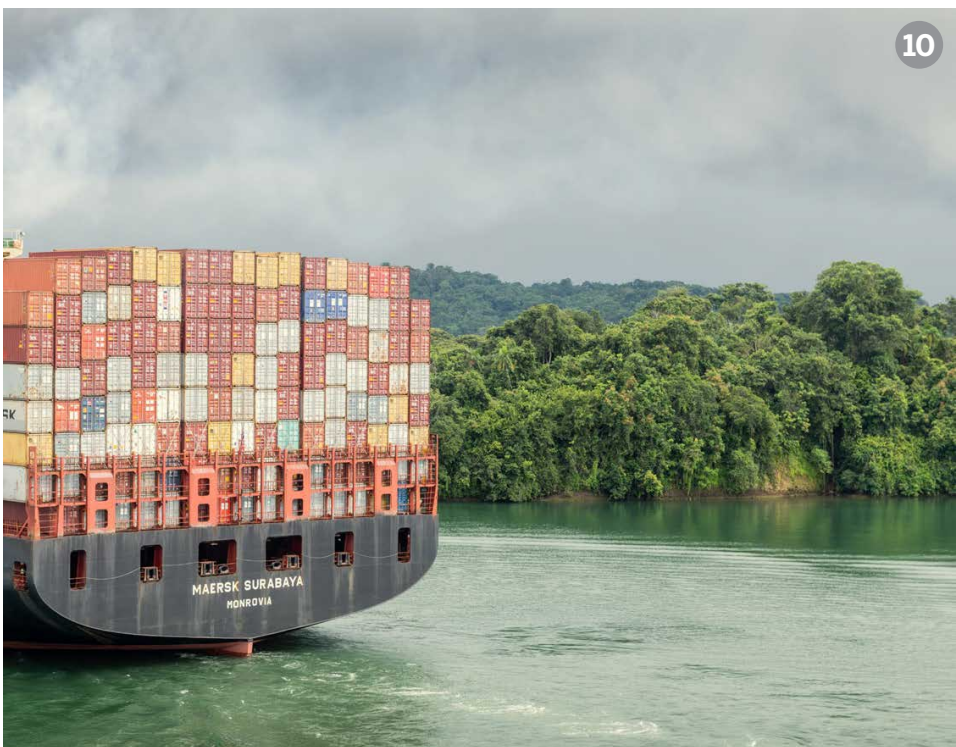
9 Find your voice

Photography has its own grammar. Light, frame, gesture, timing, colour and exposure. Learn it like a writer learns words, then say something only you can say. A voice builds slowly, picture by picture.

Image: Marty, a fellow traveller in Belfast

10 Get it out there

Work that's never shown dies on a hard drive. Print it properly. Share it beyond the social scroll. Most of all, seek honest feedback from photographers and artists you respect. While praise is pleasant, creative criticism is gold. **Image:** Panama Canal



Reader gallery

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



1 'Antarctic Penguin' by Rhiannon Lawler

"I love this iceberg glowing from within; the soft light and the Adélie penguin modelling perfectly, with its eyes matching the blue of the ice. I also love how it looks like it's surfing a wave of ice!" Settings: 1/3,200 sec at f/5, ISO 125.

Instagram: @rhiannonlawler

Digital Camera says:

There are some lovely blue tones in the ice here, but the penguin's pose really makes the image stand out.





2 'Monochrome Monk in Gerace' by Evan Morel

"I was immediately struck by the atmosphere inside Gerace Cathedral, Italy – vast, solemn and silent. While composing the photograph,

I noticed the monk approaching the two tombs. I waited until he positioned himself at the point that best conveyed the stillness of his moment of prayer, then I took the shot."

Instagram: @lumio.ph

Digital Camera says: It was definitely a good choice to go black and white as this image is all about shapes, light and darkness. It's a perfectly timed shot with steps that lead down and around towards the monk.

3 'Foraging Fox' by Clive Ingram

"This image was taken at the Hide and Squeak wildlife hides near Lichfield. I was there for woodland birds, but after just 15 minutes, this beautiful fox suddenly emerged from the undergrowth and started foraging. The afternoon sun from behind the hide helped to light up the fox." Taken on a Nikon Z 9 with a Nikon 180-600mm f/5.6-6.3 lens.
Instagram: @ingymon

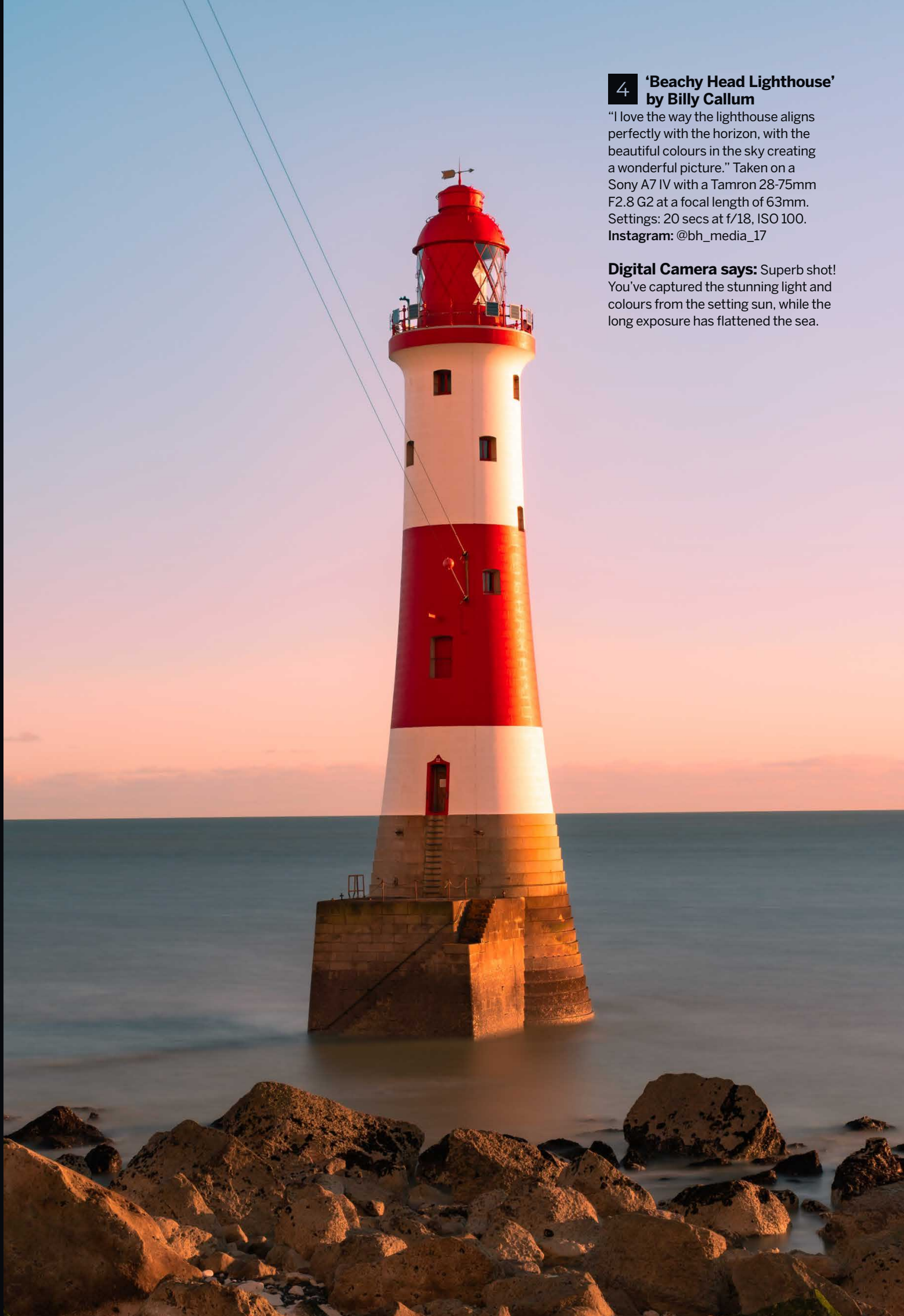
Digital Camera says: This is a charming capture. The fox is well exposed and nicely lit, and the background fades into blackness.



4 'Beachy Head Lighthouse' by Billy Callum

"I love the way the lighthouse aligns perfectly with the horizon, with the beautiful colours in the sky creating a wonderful picture." Taken on a Sony A7 IV with a Tamron 28-75mm F2.8 G2 at a focal length of 63mm. Settings: 20 secs at f/18, ISO 100. Instagram: @bh_media_17

Digital Camera says: Superb shot! You've captured the stunning light and colours from the setting sun, while the long exposure has flattened the sea.



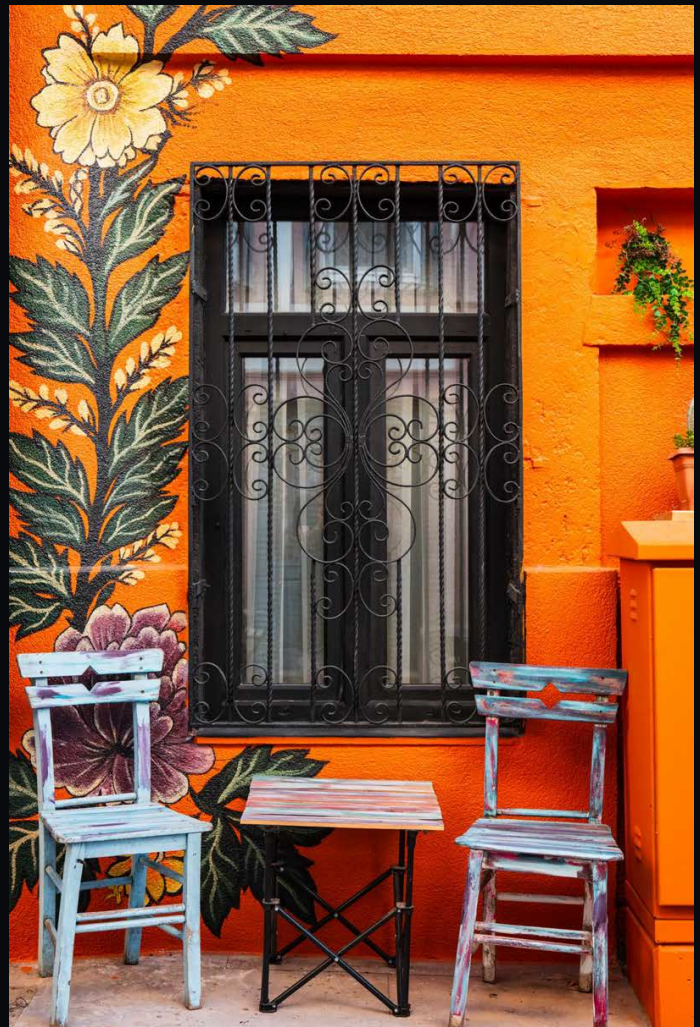


5 'It's My Fish!' by Alan Dean
 "I took this on a recent trip to the Shetland Isles. Gannets are one of my favourite birds, so to see them feeding in the mayhem was amazing." Taken on a Canon EOS 80D and 70-300mm.

Digital Camera says: With a composition that nicely frames the three fighting birds, you have certainly captured the drama of the moment.

6 'Orange House' by Anil Gedik
 "This house is located in Ayvalik, a charming and tourist-friendly seaside town on the western coast of Turkey. The vibrant colours of these walls and doors reflect the lively spirit of its locals and the town's rich cultural heritage, which has been influenced by Turkish and Greek cultures for centuries." Instagram: @anilgedik

Digital Camera says: We love the striking colours and small details in this street shot.



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Want to feature in our gallery or on our Instagram feed? Please email a high-res image (at least 10MB) marked 'Reader Images' and including a title and brief description, plus your social media handle, to:

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or share it on Instagram with the tag:

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7

**'Quiet Confidence'
by Curtis Cain**

"While its siblings lingered a little longer, this tiny owlet was already eager to explore. Curious, confident and wonderfully independent, it was the first to venture away from the safety of the nest, keen to discover the world on its own."

Instagram: @cphotography97_

Digital Camera says: Great technique and perfect focusing here with a lovely background.



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The image shows the cover of the September 2026 issue of Digital Camera magazine. The cover features a dramatic landscape with jagged rock formations under a sunset sky. Text on the cover includes: 'THE FIRST CAN-SHOOT-ANYTHING LEICA! SL3-P REVIEW & LAB TEST • PLUS: DxO PHOTOLAB 9', 'The UK's best-selling photography magazine', 'Digital Camera', 'Issue 311 September 2026', 'SHOOT EPIC MOUNTAIN LANDSCAPES', 'Elevate your outdoor photography', 'Technique • Settings • Kit tips', 'Hotshots', 'Here be damselflies', 'Interview Chris Fallows: having a whale of a time', '9 tip cards', 'Camera Clinic', and 'FREE! WITH THIS ISSUE'. To the right of the magazine is a circular badge that says 'SUBSCRIBE AND HAVE YOUR BEST-EVER PHOTO YEAR!'. Below the magazine are a smartphone and a tablet, both displaying the digital version of the magazine cover.

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10 skills for you to learn this month

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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

WILDLIFE

Hunting for birds

Wetland centres are havens for various avian species, as **Wendy Evans** discovers

If you want to photograph birds, you can head for an RSPB hide, spend all day there and come home with a few photos. Or you could go to somewhere like the Slimbridge Wetland Centre, near Gloucester, be pretty much guaranteed that you'll find something to photograph – even in the middle of yet another heatwave – and still have time to enjoy a decent lunch in the café.

As well as attracting various types of birds, such as ruffs, kingfishers, ringed plovers and swans, plus various geese and ducks, there are also flocks of flamingos to photograph if everything else is taking shelter in the bushes. You'll need to take the biggest lens you have – ideally, that would be a 600-800mm, but the good news is that, even if you only have a 300mm lens, there are plenty of birds wading around close enough for you to get a decent shot.

One of the biggest problems is direct sunlight, especially if the bird has white feathers – even if you are shooting raw files, you need to be aware of overexposure. Using Highlight metering, Spot metering or Centre-weighted metering with -0.3EV exposure compensation are all options to tackle this. The advantage of a wetland centre is that you have plenty of places to shoot from rather than just one hide, so if you can, position yourself so that the sunlight is falling onto the side of the bird facing you, rather than behind, where it would otherwise be backlit.

Camera: Nikon Z 8 and Nikkor 180-600mm f/5.6-6.3 at 460mm

Settings: 1/800 sec at f/6, ISO 200, -0.3EV

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This Pied Avocet was wading along and using its curved beak to scoop up insects.

**THANKS TO... WWT SLIMBRIDGE
WETLAND CENTRE**

Standard tickets are £19.90 for adults, £13.15 for juniors, £17.80 for concessions and £17.80 for young adults. There's a 10 per cent discount if you book by midnight of the day before your visit.

Location: WWT Slimbridge Wetland Centre, Bowditch, Slimbridge, Gloucestershire GL2 7BT.

Website: wwt.org.uk/wetland-centres/slimbridge



Wendy Evans

Step by step Keep up with the birds



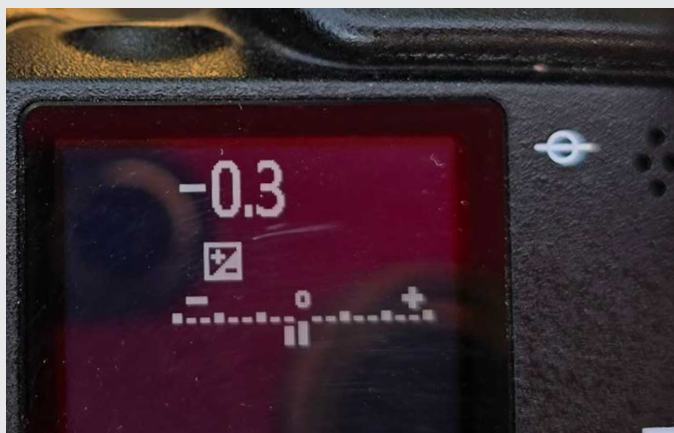
01 Set the shooting mode

There's some merit in shooting Manual and using Auto ISO, but given that the shutter requirements are quite different based on whether the bird was moving about, or if it was standing still, I preferred to use Aperture Priority mode and alter the ISO when required. If shooting in Manual, I'd have set the shutter to 1/1,000 sec and the aperture to f/6.3.



02 Increase the ISO

Some of these shots only required ISO 100 or 125, but at the long end of the 600mm telephoto, which has an f/6.3 aperture, there were times when the ISO needed increasing to 200 to enable a shutter speed of 1/800 sec, which was fine for a bird that wasn't moving around. If the bird had been landing or taking off, I would have increased this again.



03 Which metering mode?

As mentioned previously, there are several different ways to avoid losing the highlights on white feathers, which basically means underexposing the rest of the scene if it's in sunlight. In the end, I chose Centre-weighted metering to weight it to the exposure on the bird (recomposing if necessary) and some of the scene, but also dialling in -0.3EV exposure compensation.



04 Focus on this

The key thing is the focusing, even if the heat meant that most of the birds weren't in a hurry to go anywhere. The smaller they are and the further away, the harder it is to keep them in focus, which is where continuous focus and bird-specific focus tracking really makes a big difference. The exception to this is the flamingos with their tiny heads.

Burst rates

How fast can you go?

If you have birds sitting on perches before taking flight or diving into the water, you will need a fast burst rate to capture lots of photos in one go. It will fill up your memory card quickly, so best to have a spare and only use the burst mode for this particular type of shot. My camera will shoot up to 20 frames per second at high-res, but you can also set the limit on how many images to capture in a burst, so that if you hold the shutter down for more than a second, you can limit the overall capture. On the Nikon Z 8, this is configurable up to 200 for one burst. It's more practical to set it to 20 or 40, which is one or two seconds, and that should be all you need for this type of shot.



Take it further What else can you see?

Here are some of the other birds to photograph at Slimbridge



Wendy Evans

Flamingo land

Most of the time, the flamingos mill about like long-legged pink chickens at feeding time. However, when something disturbs them, they will either all start looking in the same direction or all start walking or running away together – think the opening credits to *Miami Vice* (Google it, kids) – and this will make for some of the best shots. In this one, I was trying to keep the focus on the birds at the front, as a number of them suddenly looked over to the right.



On the estuary (above)

The Slimbridge Wetland Centre is next to the River Severn, so the hides and viewing points furthest out look onto waterways and the estuary. Here was more open water with a duck taking possession of a little island of rocks. However, it was about to get a visitor. This was too far for even my 600mm lens, needing more like 800mm, so a modest crop was required.

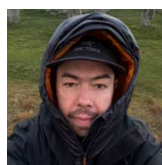
What about kingfishers?

The answer to that was no. There is a kingfisher hide with some perches overlooking a pond-like area, but it was so hot that they were all hiding. There was, however, a mighty heron. Shot at distance, the maximum aperture of f/6.3 on my lens has meant more of the background is in focus than I would have liked.



02 DRONES Stadiums at night

Learn how to safely and legally capture dramatic night-time aerial images around stadiums, with **Mike McMahon**



Manchester-based landscape and aerial photographer Mike McMahon, also known as Sky High Photography UK, specialises in creating atmospheric photographs across the UK, while also promoting safe, legal and responsible drone flying.

"Football stadiums take on a completely different character after dark. Floodlights, illuminated stands and surrounding city lights create dramatic compositions that are perfect for aerial photography. However, the planning is just as important as the flying," says Mike.

"For this shoot around Manchester United's Old Trafford ground, I photographed the stadium from legal, public locations outside the venue, while ensuring the drone never flew over the stadium, crowds or people. Night flying requires extra awareness, so I maintained visual line of sight, monitored battery levels closely and only flew in suitable weather conditions.

"Using the drone's AEB (auto exposure bracketing) camera settings helps preserve detail in both the bright floodlights and darker surroundings. A lower ISO combined with a slower shutter speed can produce cleaner images, although avoiding excessive motion blur is equally important.

"Always check for temporary flight restrictions before travelling, especially on match days or during major events. Stadiums can have additional restrictions and crowds create significant safety considerations. Good aerial photography isn't about getting as close as possible; it's about finding the right angle while operating responsibly and legally. Patience, preparation and respecting the rules will always produce better results than taking unnecessary risks."

Camera: DJI Mini 5 Pro

Settings: Seven-shot bracket, f/1.8, ISO 100

Instagram: @skyhighphotographyuk

Website: www.skyhighphotography.co.uk



Top kit
DJI Mini 5 Pro
Sub-250g and compact, it's ideal for city photography. Excellent low-light image quality, intelligent flight modes and raw capture make it perfect for photographing illuminated architecture while remaining discreet and easy to transport.
Read our full review at: www.bit.ly/dcm300_drone



Spare intelligent flight batteries
Cold evenings reduce battery performance, so carrying at least one spare provides extra flight time for multiple compositions and allows you to return safely without rushing your photography.

Mike's five tips for night drone photography

✓ **Plan before flying**
Visit the location in daylight first. Identify legal take-off points, obstacles, lighting conditions and safe emergency landing areas before returning after dark.

✓ **Shoot in raw**
Raw files retain far more image information, allowing you to recover highlights from floodlights and lift shadows during editing, without sacrificing image quality.

✓ **Use manual settings**
Keep the ISO as low as possible and avoid relying entirely on Auto mode. Manual exposure delivers more consistent images across different lighting conditions.

✓ **Respect stadium rules**
Never fly over football stadiums, spectators, players or large crowds. On match days, there may also be temporary flight restrictions. Stay outside restricted areas and capture wider environmental views instead.

✓ **Fly smoothly**
Slow, gentle movements will create sharper photographs with cinematic perspectives. Allow the drone to settle before taking each image, especially when using slower shutter speeds at night.

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 around the venue.
- Check for Temporary Flight Restrictions [TFRs] or NOTAMs [Notices to Aviation] before flying, especially on match days.



03

CREATIVE

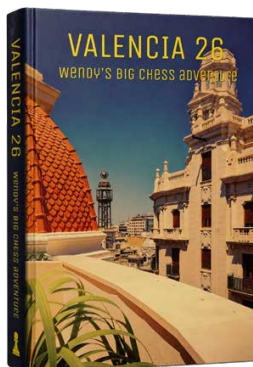
Turn your holiday snaps into a cool photobook

Don't let your photos fester on a hard drive, says **Wendy Evans**, make them into something tangible

Many people enjoy a summer holiday, and this year, I went to Valencia to take part in an international chess tournament – plus, see the sights, go to the beach, admire the architecture and drink Sangria – so, of course, I took a camera with me. But wherever you go on holiday, don't let the memories fade away – instead, why not round up your photos and turn them into a photobook that you can leave out on the coffee table the next time guests come round?

The first issue you'll come across is deciding which photos to use from the hundreds you took. Ignoring duplicates and out-of-focus shots, the main question is how you can create an overall theme or arrange them into logical chapters. In some ways, the theme is secondary – it was a holiday, after all – but if you want to use some of them to create a zine, for example, then you can make it less personal and more about the place itself.

For this project, I decided I wanted a record of my adventures, while leaving myself the option of creating a 'Streets of Valencia' zine at a later date.



Wendy Evans

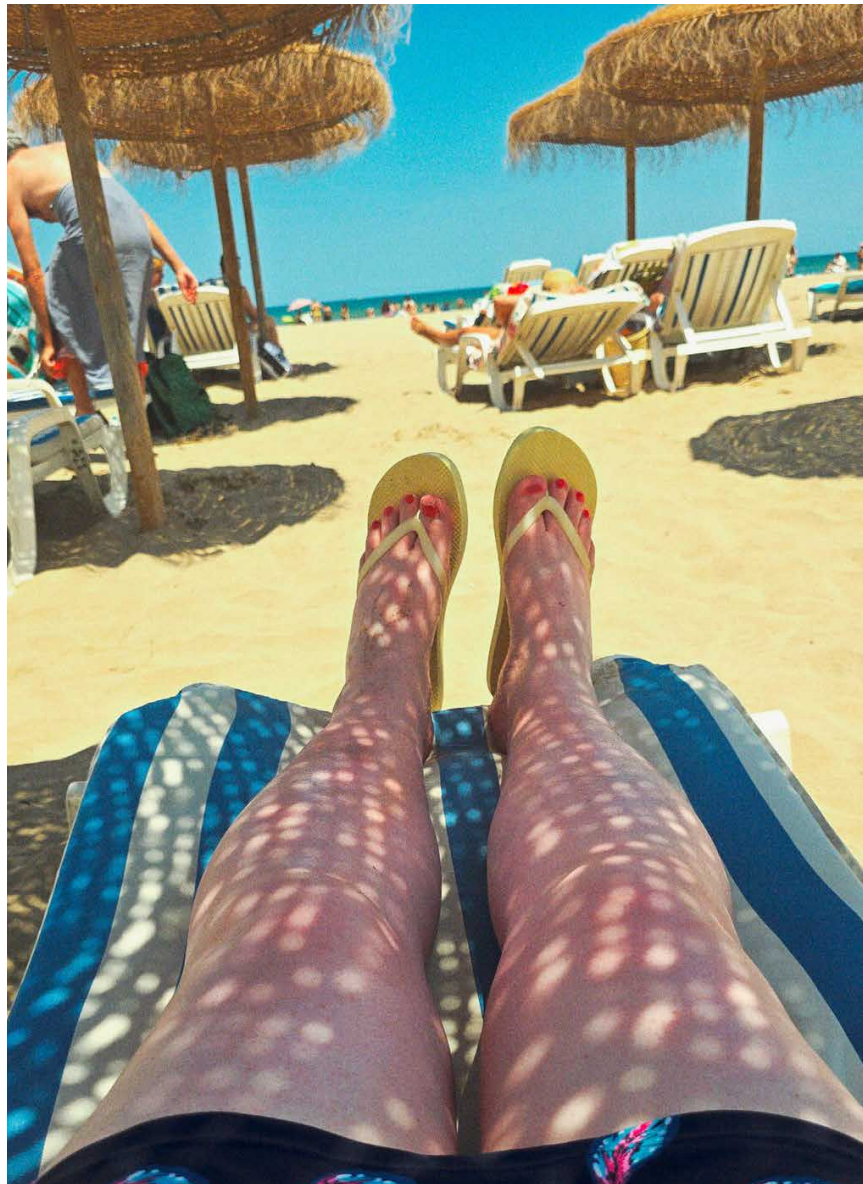
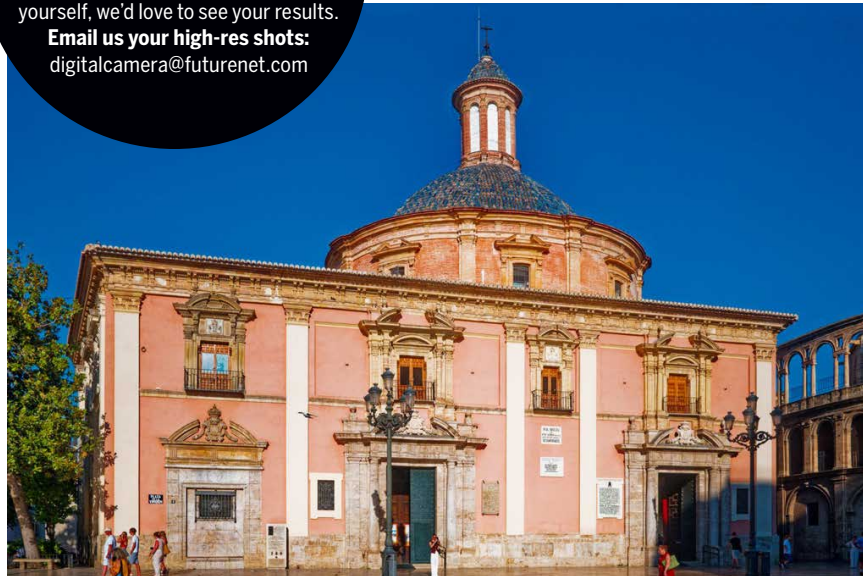
Right: A selection of images from my holiday in Valencia covering the architecture, the chess tournament, my day at the beach and food.



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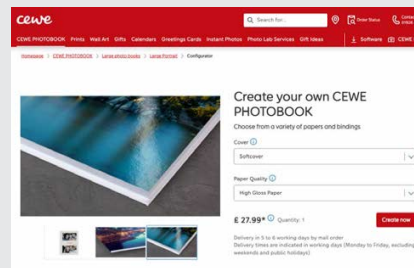
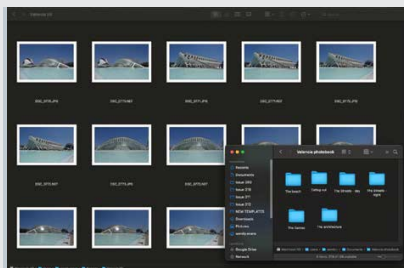
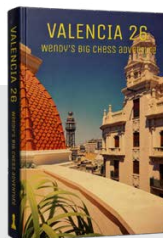
If you've been inspired by any of these projects and have attempted them yourself, we'd love to see your results.

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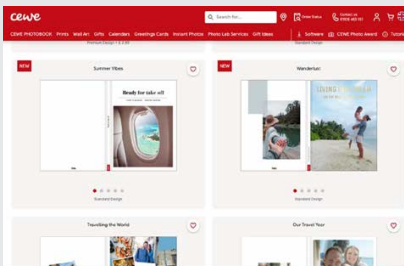
Step by step Creating your photobook

Before you register at a photo printing website, it's all about the organisation and preparation



01 Create the structure

The first thing to do is decide on chapters for the images, organised by theme. So here, I'm trawling through all the photos and picking out the best ones to go into six categories that will each have their own chapters. Once this initial selection is made, you can edit down the number of images.

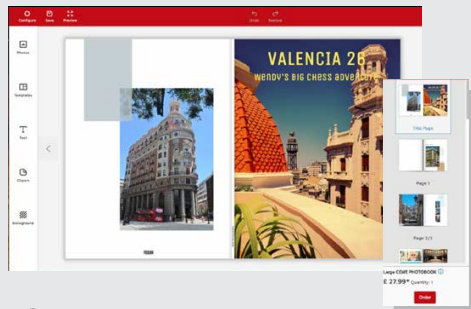


04 Pick a design

Most websites offer some basic design templates, but Cewe also has an automated feature for inputting lots of smaller photos. Here, I chose Manual and picked one of the standard templates, Wanderlust. There are also ones with masks for fancy designs.

02 Edit your photos

Having decided which images you wish to use, now you have the fun job of correcting those harsh shadows, leaning verticals and wonky horizons. Start your usual editing workflow, cleaning your images and saving them as jpegs at 10/12 or 90 per cent quality, which is what most websites require.

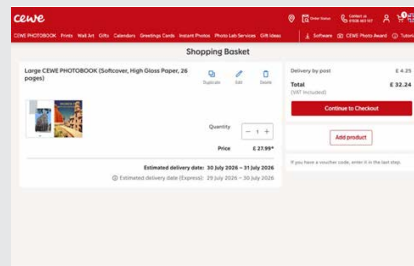


05 Add cover and photos

Now drag and drop in your cover image and edit the title text. There are icons on the left for photos, templates, text, clip art and to set the background. On the right, there are thumbnails of the photobook layout, with the total cost indicated at the bottom right.

03 Get photobooking

There are plenty of services out there, and which one you choose is up to you, but I went with Cewe. Go to www.cewe.co.uk and select Photobook to start. For the design, you can download software or use the webpage, which is what I chose. The first choice is softcover or hardback, and paper quality.



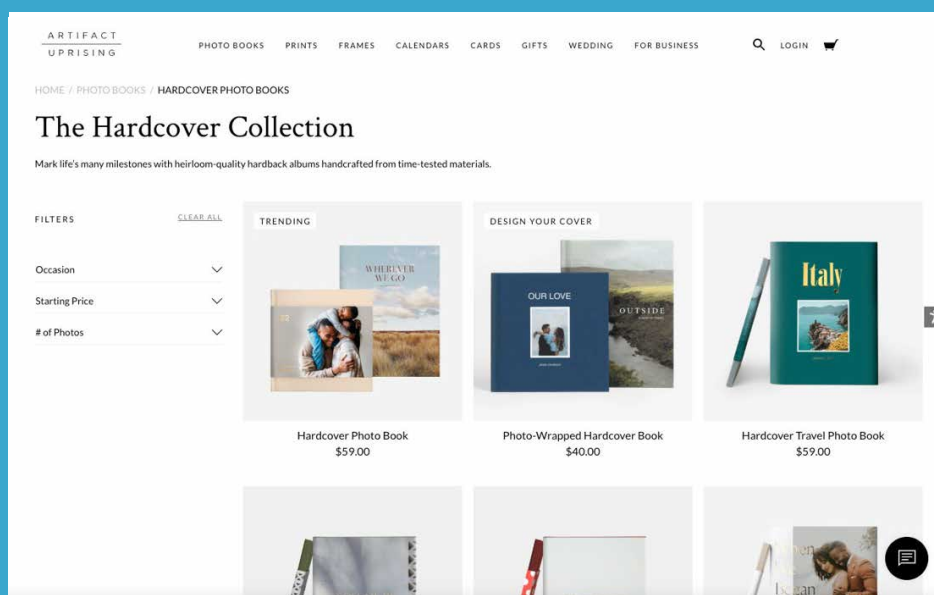
06 Finish the design

Once you've added your photos and edited the text, check the design, tweak it where necessary and click Order. This checks for missing photos and allows you to go back and make changes. Specify how many books you would like, and proceed to the checkout.

Which provider?

Here are some ideas for where to print your photobook

For this project, we used Cewe (www.cewe.co.uk), but there are plenty of other providers. In the UK, try Printerpix (www.printerpix.co.uk), Photobox (www.photobox.co.uk), Snapfish (www.snapfish.co.uk) or WhiteWall (www.whitewall.com). In the USA, try Shutterfly (www.shutterfly.com), Journi (www.journiapp.com), Mpix (www.mpix.com) or Artifact Uprising (www.artifactuprising.com) for something special like a foil-embossed cover (right).





The view from my hotel rooftop terrace. I gave it a retro makeover, using DxO FilmPack 8, then used it as the cover image.

Wendy Evans



Cazerella Tavs

04 URBAN Shoot striking perspectives

Cazerella Tavs offers insight into capturing creative black and white street images



Cazerella Tavs is an internationally published and exhibited photographer who won first place in the Pure Street Photography Awards 2025, mainly for her work in capturing black and white urban and street scenes.

"This image was taken on the Millennium Bridge, looking towards St Paul's Cathedral in London," Cazerella explains. "The distinctive lines of the bridge and the iconic dome of the cathedral create a visual relationship between modern and historic London," she adds.

"I love how the separate elements work together: the symmetry of the bridge, the reflection on the left, the architectural presence of St Paul's framed by the blurred figure crossing the image. It creates a visual tension and narrative interest. I like to see things from a different perspective, and I love how it worked. With a bit of luck and timing, it all came together.

"I tend to shoot organically as each day and scene is different. I've taken many images of St Paul's over the

years and on the day I took this, I thought something more than a postcard view of the cathedral would be great – something a little different that included a range of elements. The low viewpoint felt immersive to me, while the different elements all contributed to help draw the viewer's eye into the scene. For me, the human movement gives it that bit of energy. It was an unexpected achievement and makes the image a bit different.

"The biggest challenge in getting this capture was the timing. There was a lot of pedestrian traffic over the bridge at a busy time, and it was a dull, overcast, wet day. Shooting from such a low angle also required careful composition and focus management working around the activity on the bridge. My most important piece of kit is my little Fujifilm X100V – I also use a Canon EOS R5 Mark II and a Canon RF 24-70mm F2.8L IS USM."

Camera: Fujifilm X100V and 23mm f/2 lens (35mm equivalent)
Settings: 1/8 sec at f/4, ISO 320
Instagram: @insta_cazerella_pics
Irys app: Cazerella

Cazerella's five tips for creative black and white photography

- ✓ **Get into the mindset**
Before shooting, get yourself into the right mindset by looking for light, geometry and simple frames with contrast.
- ✓ **Find a creative vision**
We all have a creative vision, and mine is capturing monochrome moments. The more I observe the streets, the more the vision grows. My mantra is, 'My camera needs me'.
- ✓ **Revisit the location**
Black and white photography thrives on contrast, mood and changing conditions, and every visit can offer something new. Revisiting the same place can often reveal opportunities that you may have missed before.
- ✓ **Embrace imperfect conditions**
Challenging conditions, such as fog, rain and harsh light, can be creative opportunities, adding atmosphere, texture and mood. So get out there and embrace them.
- ✓ **Play with your environment**
Urban areas are full of patterns, shapes and lines, so make use of them and see what works. For me, people bring energy and emotion, so capturing a moment with human movement can elevate a simple scene into a compelling story.

05 CAMERA KNOW-HOW

Putting scenery in the frame

Wendy Evans looks at using framing devices in landscape photography

Windows, rock formations and ornamental features in country estate gardens all have the power to act as a framing device for the scene beyond. Showing that scene through a frame adds to the narrative of somewhere that you have to pass through. It also holds the scene in position and provides a rigid focus for it. The trick is to ensure that the frame itself fills the outside of the image, so that you can't see around it. If the framing device has limits, such as this archway in a country estate garden, then you need to zoom in enough so that it fills up to the edges of the frame.

The other considerations are distortion and focus. It's better to stand further back and zoom in, rather than close up to the archway with a wide-angle lens, as this will cause significant distortion of the vertical elements. However, don't go too far back, as you want a modest wide angle for the depth of field.

Arch in the way (right)

This is the view at a focal length of 24mm. It simply looks like an arch that's in the way of the gardens beyond. The composition doesn't work.

Arch as the frame (below)

This was taken from the same position, but at 35mm, which has totally enclosed the garden with the frame of the archway, which is in sharp focus.

A 30-35mm focal length should work well here. As for focusing, there are three options. One is to use a wide aperture and focus on the frame, so that the background isn't in focus. The second is to focus in the distance, which means that the frame itself may be slightly out of focus. This is the least attractive option. The third is to focus on the frame, but use a narrow

aperture so that the background is more in focus. So, at 35mm and an f/8 aperture, with the frame about 4m away, there was around 14m of depth of field behind the frame, which covered the central elements up to the first hedge. The hyperfocal distance would have been around 5m, which is actually another metre beyond the frame.



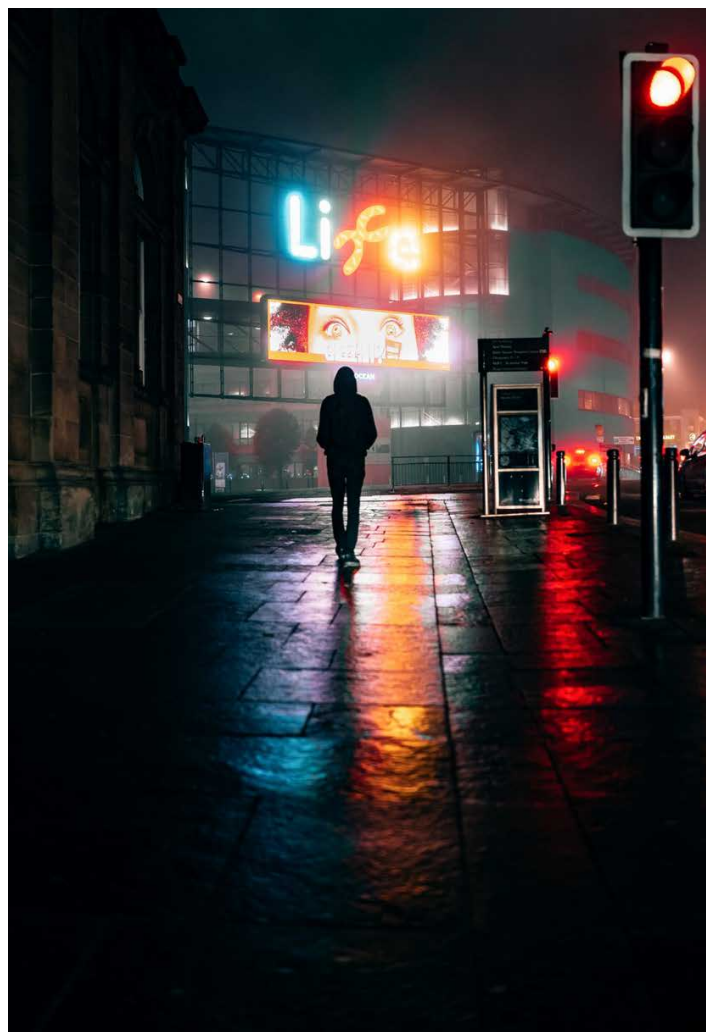
Wendy Evans



Wendy Evans



Kevin Etherington



06 STREET Nocturnal movements

Kevin Etherington captures solitude, light and urban atmosphere amongst Newcastle upon Tyne's night-time comings and goings



Kevin Etherington is a photographer based in Newcastle upon Tyne who explores solitude, light and atmosphere within the city. Drawn to quiet moments, cinematic shadows and the relationship between people and urban space, his work focuses on mood, stillness and observation, rather than documentary storytelling.

What is your photo zine about?

Nocturne is a personal exploration of Newcastle at night – a quiet study of light, solitude and atmosphere. The photographs focus on fleeting moments and isolated figures moving through the city after dark, creating a cinematic and reflective view of urban spaces.

How did you approach shooting the images in your zine?

I usually found interesting compositions first, then waited for the right person or moment to move through the frame. Most of the images were taken while walking Newcastle alone at night, responding to light, atmosphere and architecture.

Were there any challenges you had to overcome or dangers that you needed to be aware of?

Shooting the images for *Nocturne*, alone at night in the city occasionally meant dealing with drunk people or unwanted attention, especially in busy areas. Translating the darkness and atmosphere of the images accurately into print was also an important part of the process.

Were you inspired by the style of any particular photographers or were there other forms of inspiration?

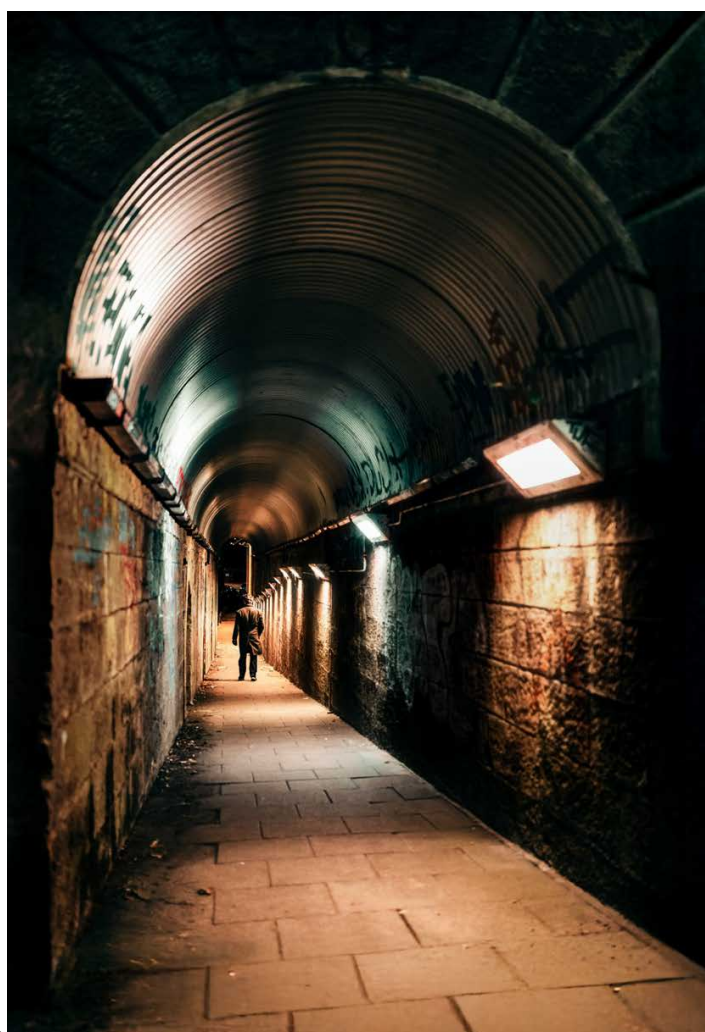
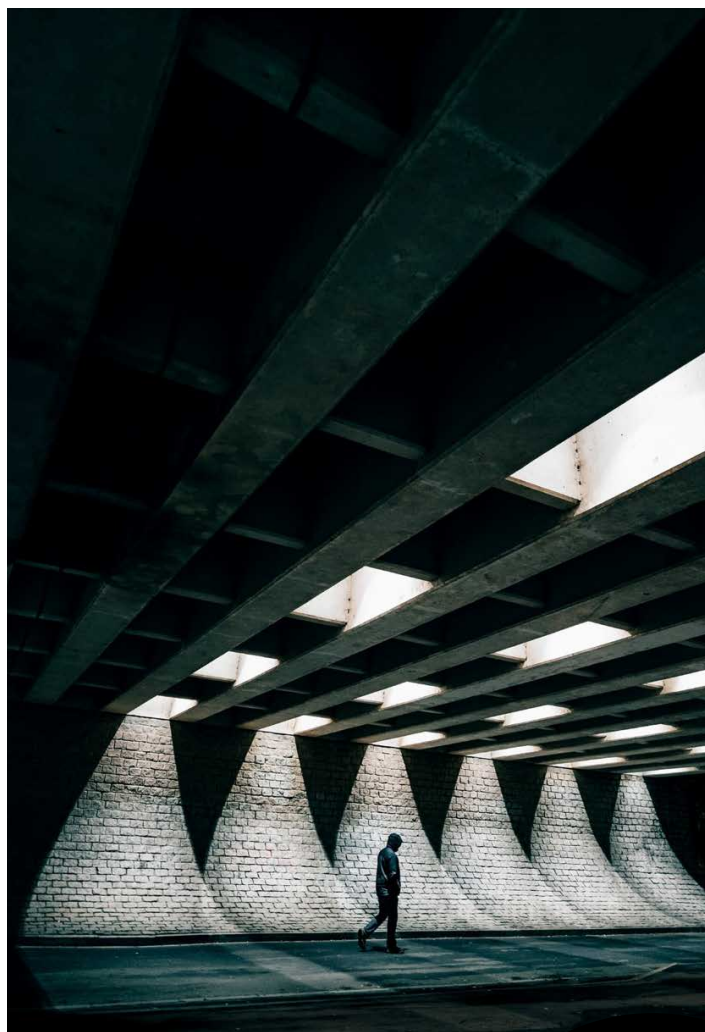
I'm inspired by photographers who use light, architecture and solitary figures in evocative ways, including Mark Fearnley and Phil Penman. Introspective, atmospheric music and walking alone at night have also strongly influenced the mood of this work.

Are there any plans for a follow-up? If not, what are you working on next?

I'm currently working on a more colourful and light-hearted project exploring humour, graphic composition and everyday British life, alongside more minimal and personal photographic work.

Instagram: @kevin__etherington

Website: www.kevin-etherington.com



Kevin's five tips for shooting city streets at night

- 1 Follow the light**
Don't feel you have to photograph famous landmarks. Some of my favourite images come from overlooked streets and ordinary places. Follow the light instead – a glowing window, reflections or a pool of illumination can transform an everyday scene into something extraordinary.
- 2 Wait for the moment**
I tend to compose the scene before anyone arrives, then wait for the right person to enter the frame. Shooting in burst mode helps capture the strongest stride, gesture or position as they pass through the light.
- 3 Expose for atmosphere**
I shoot almost everything in Aperture Priority with the lens wide open and a minimum shutter speed of 1/125 sec. As the light changes, I constantly adjust exposure compensation to preserve the mood rather than making the scene artificially brighter.

DO YOU HAVE A PHOTOBOOK OR ZINE?

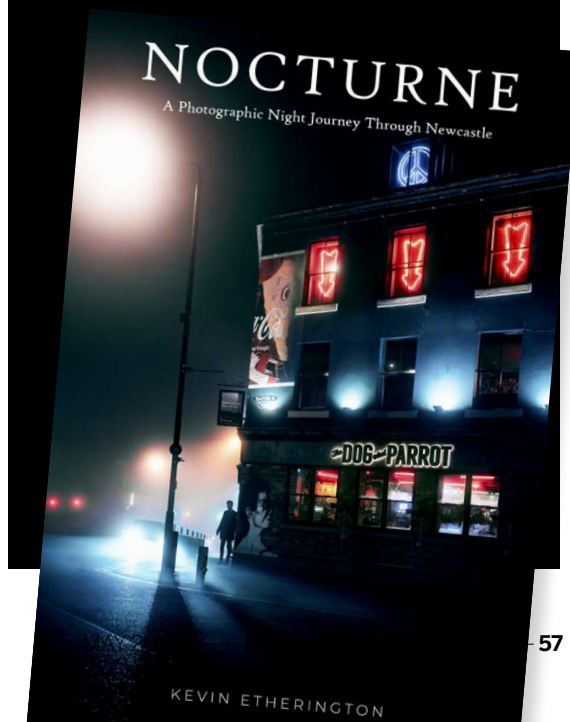
It could be featured here!

If you're looking to promote your photobook or zine, then we'd love to hear from you. Send them to: digitalcamera@futurenet.com

- 4 Welcome bad weather**
Don't let rain, fog or snow put you off. They create atmosphere, reflections and beautifully diffused light that's difficult to replicate on clear nights. I always carry a rain sleeve and prefer weather-sealed camera gear so I can keep shooting in all conditions.
- 5 Return again and again**
Some of my favourite photographs came from locations I'd visited many times before. Returning in different weather, seasons and light allows familiar places to reveal something completely new. Patience over weeks or months often produces stronger images than constantly searching for new locations.

Get the zine A photographic night journey through Newcastle

Nocturne is a 104-page hardback book, priced £20 and published by Tyne Bridge Publishing. The book can be bought directly from the publisher and from Amazon, or you can find links on Kevin's Instagram and website. *Nocturne* will be released on 7 September. www.kevin-etherington.com





07 LANDSCAPES

Rate my photo

Mick Morrison's atmospheric shot of Holy Island emerging from mist comes under scrutiny

After checking the weather the night before, I was filled with excitement as I drove to Holy Island to see a sunrise that I had imagined in my head. However, I was greeted with a soft blanket of mist rolling in from the sea. The castle had disappeared and hope was lost, but then, as if by magic, the castle slowly came into view, a piece at a time through a break in the mist. The castle looked soft, with an ethereal appearance, and then the sun became visible. It was a sunrise you could watch with the naked eye. Waiting for the right composition seemed effortless as it was a privilege to be the only photographer there. This wasn't the photo I originally had in mind, but it turned out so much better. Nature seemed to have given the castle a hug, and only a select few were given a glance of what was inside.

Over hundreds of years, the scene in front of me hadn't changed much, but here I was capturing a moment in time that has only been seen on rare occasions. Then, with only minutes to spare, I made a quick exit before the incoming tide closed the causeway and left me stranded.

Camera: Nikon D850 and Nikkor 70-200mm f/4

Settings: 1/30 sec at f/13, ISO 64

Instagram: @big.mick.photography



The atmosphere

This photo is all about the atmosphere, and it has that in abundance. It's dominated by the sun spreading an orange glow into misty, murky conditions, bringing out the buildings on Holy Island. You can just make out the base of the island; there's a suggestion of the sea at the base, but it isn't really clear. The whole scene implies mystery.



The exposure

This is a tough one and no mistake. The sun is right above the island, which protrudes into the sky, so there's no chance of balancing it between the sky and the ground. Consequently, what you have here, with the island being a silhouette, is the best option. It would have been easy for this to be completely overexposed and unusable, so getting this result is an excellent outcome.

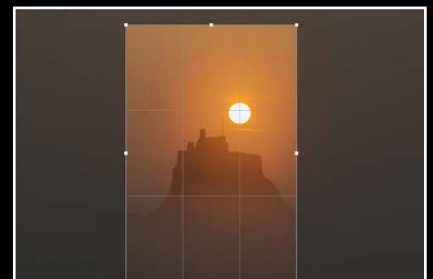


What about sharpness?

On the one hand, the image doesn't rely on sharpness to effectively enhance its mood, but on the other, it would have been better if the silhouette was a little sharper. However, as it's surrounded in mist, there's a limit to the level of sharpness you could achieve anyway. But we would question the selection of an f/13 aperture, because that's not a sharp aperture for any lens. There's no need for any depth of field here because it's a silhouette, so it could have been shot with f/5.6-f/8 and would have been a little sharper, but this is not a major criticism.

Landscape or portrait?

Mick shot this image in landscape orientation, even though all the interest is right down the middle. So let's see whether it could have been shot in portrait orientation instead. Shooting in portrait mode would have left a lot of sky, so by cropping the frame, it is possible to place the sun on a key intersection. However, the problem now is that you lose the fact that this is an island. The frame feels crowded with an awkward top half, showing that a centrally placed, landscape orientation was actually the better choice.



Composition

As Mick explained, he was limited by the fact that this is an island and the incoming tide was about to close the causeway, so could he have shot it any other way? Not really. It's a photo you take because that's how it was when you were there and the success here is getting any kind of shot, never mind such a striking one, in those circumstances. Unless you had access to a boat so you could move around to try to separate the sun from the castle, getting a different perspective was impossible.

08

ASTRO

Shoot for the sun

Wendy Evans uses filters to safely take photos of our host star

The main lesson I learnt while writing this tutorial is that taking photos of the sun is difficult, but it is achievable without investing in additional, expensive equipment. So what do you need? First and foremost, a super-dense ND filter or sun filter that's capable of blocking out most of the light produced by the sun.

If you want to photograph the sun or solar eclipses on a regular basis, it's worth investing in a dedicated sun filter with ISO 12312-2 solar certification for blocking out UV and IR radiation. Either way, you need to be looking at a filter that reduces light by at least 15 stops (ND32,000) or 16.67 stops (ND1,000,000) for the solar filter.

The only lens I had that was actually compatible with the filter system was a 70-200mm zoom, which gave a reach of 300mm on my Nikon Z fc. I had to crop the image significantly, so a longer lens would definitely be better.

Settings: 1/4000 sec at f/8, ISO 100.



Check that the sunspots aren't dirt on the sensor by shooting from different angles and comparing their location.

Wendy Evans

Top kit

NiSi JetMag Pro FS ND32000 filter

For this project, I used NiSi's ND32000 filter.

Before you point it anywhere near the sun, check that there are no scratches or holes in it, then fix it securely to the front of the lens. If you are a DSLR user, rather than mirrorless, you

should never look through the optical finder – instead, use Live View on the LCD screen while you are composing and focusing. In terms of what lens to use, ideally, you want as long a telephoto lens as possible; something with a reach of 600-1200mm would be best.

Find out more at: www.nisioptics.co.uk; **Price:** £125 (\$175).



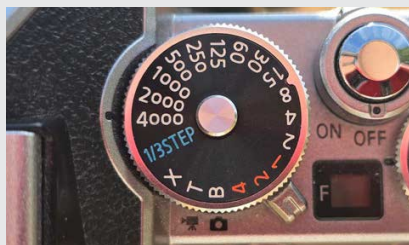
Step by step Setting up the shot

Put your safety first and don't look at the sun directly



01 Fit and mount

The first step is to securely fit the filter to the camera, then mount the camera on a tripod, which is preferable as it will make the shooting easier. Set the focusing to manual rather than autofocus, as it's better to focus manually using the LCD screen.



02 Enter the settings

Put the camera into Manual mode and set the Shutter Speed to something fast, such as 1/4,000 sec, the aperture to f/8 and set the ISO to the lowest value possible. Start with these settings – you're aiming to capture some detail, so don't overexpose the image.



03 Find the sun

Now point the camera towards the sun, but use the LCD screen, not the viewfinder, to get it in the frame. Use the manual focus ring to get the edge of the sun into focus, then start shooting. You will probably need to adjust your settings to get the right exposure.

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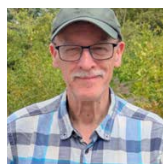
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09

SPORT

Capture the drama

Dave Mangan won last month's Sports challenge with this reportage shot



This image of McCartney Kessler was taken from the stands on Centre Court at the Lexus Nottingham Open in June this year. I wanted my tennis photos to show the pressure that the players are under to improve their ranking and the tension that exists within a game. The light was harsh at times, so I was photographing the players and their shadows, which made for some dynamic images. During this session, I noticed that the strings of Kessler's racquet cast a shadow across her face just as the ball was at its peak height. The image seemed to capture the strain that the player was under and the tension in the game.

When editing, I cropped the image and darkened the background in Lightroom, then converted the image to black and white using Nik Silver Efex. I increased the contrast to produce a much more graphic image.

Camera: Canon EOS R6 Mark II and RF 70-200mm F2.8 IS USM

Settings: 1/200 sec at f/4, ISO 200

Instagram: @dave_mangan



Dave Mangan



Top software

Nik Silver Efex

This dedicated black and white photo-editing plug-in from DxO is part of the Nik Collection suite. If you want to convert to monochrome or enhance your mono captures with authentic grain structures and profiles modelled on classic B&W films from Kodak and Ilford, this is a great program to use.

Find out more at: www.dxo.com

Nik Collection suite: £150/\$180

Exclusive DxO discount: see page 109

IMAGE ANALYSIS

1 DYNAMIC COMPOSITION

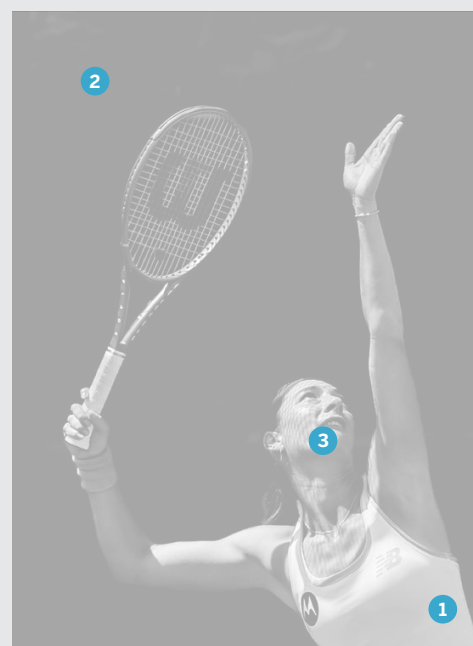
Look at the angle of this composition, leading from bottom right to top left and right, thanks to the outstretched arm. It's a dynamic image, and with the crop, it now fills the frame.

2 ALL ABOUT THE PLAYER

By reducing the background to near black and converting to mono, all the distracting elements have been removed, leaving the viewer to focus on McCartney herself.

3 EXTRA DETAILS

Finding the angle at which the sun created that lattice network of shadows on McCartney's face, which is showing some strain and tension, all adds to the impact of the image.





**SEND
US YOUR
SHOTS**

Email us your high-res photos:
digitalcamera@futurenet.com

Future

10 PORTRAITS Portraits challenge

Send us your best people shots that capture the spectrum of human expression

Welcome to our monthly reader photo challenge, where the winning image will feature in the magazine. For September, the theme is 'Portraits'. This is a people challenge, and so you can shoot them in your home, the studio or on location. It can be casual or formal, but in all cases, you must have a connection to the subject or subjects, which means no street or sports

photography; however, group shots are permitted. We want to see emotion, style, expression, drama, contemplation, sorrow and joy. Get your thinking hats on and let's see your best portrait shots.

Enter via email

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

format, rather than links) and include a description of how you came to take the image. Remember to list your social handles or website so that we can give you due credit if you win. Enter by 10 September and remember, only one image per reader, please.

The winner will be announced in the November 2026 issue (313) of *Digital Camera*, on sale from Thursday 8 October.

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

HOPE AND HOMES FOR CHILDREN



URGENT APPEAL



Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine is not just a humanitarian crisis for the Ukrainian people; it's a child protection emergency.

Up to 100,000 children warehoused in Ukraine's vast orphanage system – a network of over 700 buildings – risk being forgotten. Left to face the dangers of war alone as staff flee. As families are torn apart or forced from their homes, many more children are at risk of being separated from the love and protection they desperately need. Worse still, they are at risk of trafficking, or being placed in overcrowded, understaffed and poorly resourced orphanages in border countries.

We must act now.

Born out of the Balkans conflict 30 years ago, we've championed the vital importance of family and community-based care of children and our teams are on the ground in Ukraine, Moldova and Romania to ensure this war does not rob children of the love and protection they need now more than ever. Across all three countries, we're directly supporting displaced families and unaccompanied children with material and emotional

support. We're working closely with authorities to keep families together when they are at their most vulnerable and to fight for the safe tracking, monitoring and care for children without parental care. And we won't stop when the fighting stops.

Will you help us by donating?

With your help, we can avert a child protection crisis of epic proportions and ensure children are protected and kept in families. Never orphanages.

To help protect vulnerable children, donate online at:

www.hopeandhomes.org/donate. Or call **01722 790 111**

Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm.

Please quote **FP22 - P&D** when making your donation.

In the event that funds raised exceed what is needed to deliver Hope and Homes for Children immediate and longer-term response to this crisis, we will use donations where the need is greatest.

**HOPE AND HOMES
FOR CHILDREN** 



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SHOOT MAGICAL MOUNTAINS

10 ways to scale the heights with your outdoor photography, with advice from top pro **Jeremy Flint**

M

ountains are an incredible subject to photograph and a favourite amongst outdoor photographers. From the wild, rugged and remote landscapes of the Scottish Highlands to the dramatic and

imposing peaks of Snowdonia, the UK's plethora of magnificent mountains is difficult to beat. The mighty and commanding summits of Mount Snowdon in Wales, Ben Nevis in the Scottish Highlands and the Old Man of Storr on the Isle of Skye are a magnet for photographers, offering endless inspiration and breathtaking views.

If you can afford to travel further afield, iconic mountains around the world that are also good to capture include Mount Everest, the Dolomites and the USA's mountainous summits, such as Yosemite's El Capitan. However, the prospect of scaling them can be daunting, particularly when laden with a heavy kitbag. Instead, finding accessible peaks and learning how to photograph them can lead to epic photographs. Over the next few pages, I'm going to share some tips and techniques for mastering mountain photography.

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PRO SHOT Glenfinnan, Scotland

With epic mountain vistas, the Scottish Highlands are one of the best locations to capture mountain scenery in the UK.
Settings: 1/2,500 sec at f/1.8, ISO 200





JEREMY FLINT

Based in Oxford in the UK, Jeremy Flint gave up his previous career as an accountant nine years ago to become a professional travel photographer.

He has since received numerous prestigious awards, including one from *National Geographic Traveller*, and has been a six-time finalist in the Travel Photographer of the Year competition.

Instagram: @jeremyflintphotography

Jeremy Flint

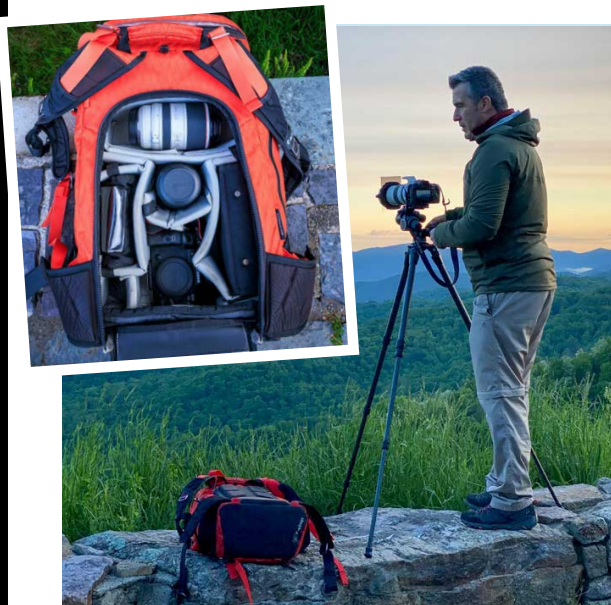
TIP 1

ALWAYS BE PREPARED

When shooting outdoors, always put safety first by making sure you prepare for all weather eventualities

Always check the forecast for changing weather before heading out, and pack smart. I recommend travelling lightly by bringing a camera and a few chosen lenses. In addition, pack food and drink, a map, compass and first aid kit, a raincoat and rain cover for your bag, as well as extra clothing, a hat and gloves for colder weather.

Using a waterproof sleeve is a practical way to protect your camera and keep you shooting through every season. Above all, put your safety first, be vigilant of your surroundings and fitness abilities and always tell people where you are going.

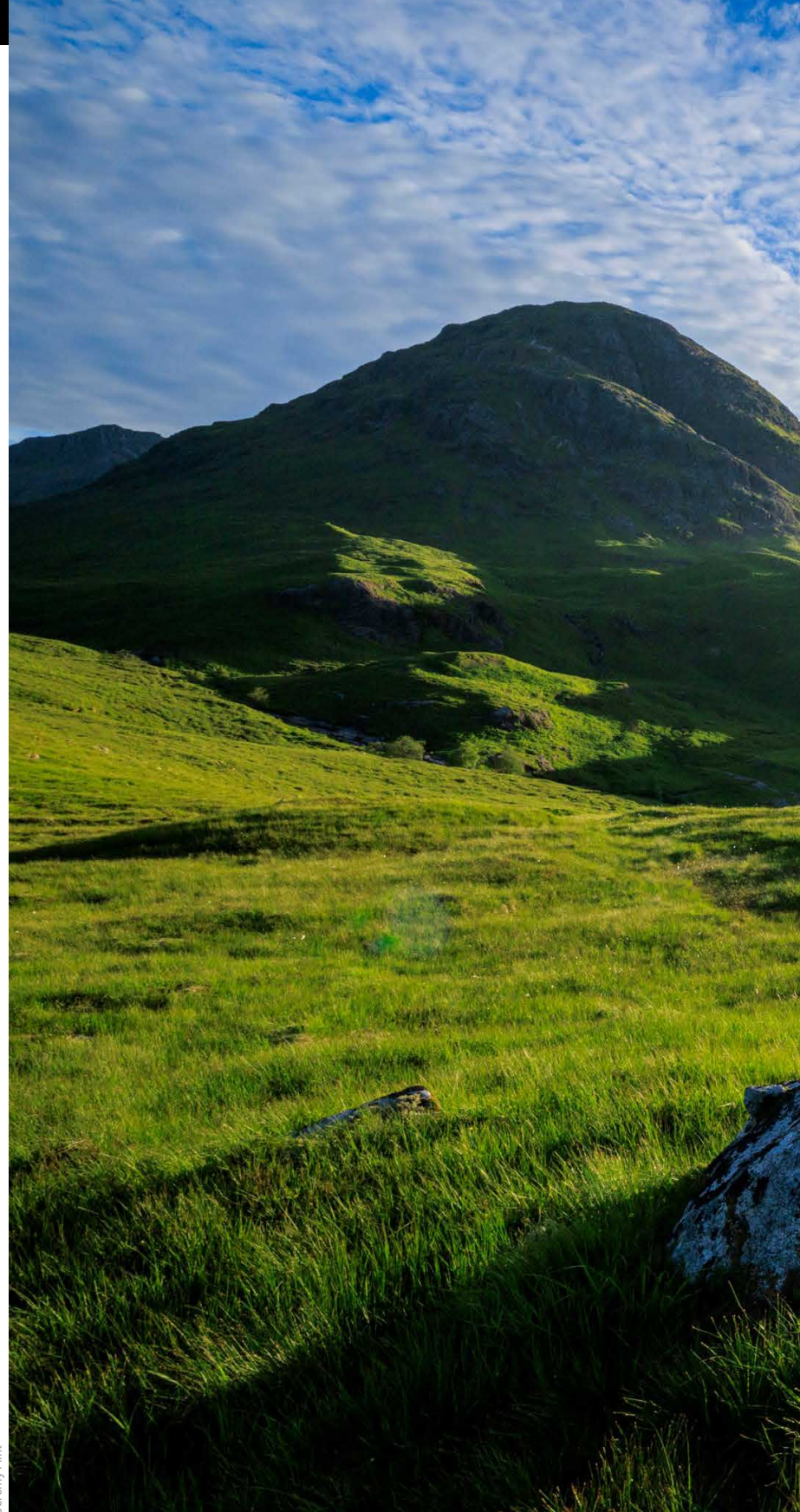


PRO KIT Fotopro X-go Max E 2 tripod

A good tripod is essential for stability and sharp shots

A lightweight and sturdy tripod will help support your camera and maintain stability, especially when shooting in low light or needing longer shutter speeds. Carrying less weight in the field is always advised.

Find out more at:
www.fotopro.com



Jeremy Flint

TIP 2 SHOOT A PEAK THAT'S ACCESSIBLE

Photos taken from a 30-minute radius of a mountain will be sufficiently dramatic



PRO SHOT

Glen Coe, Scotland

Even a fairly short walk can open up incredible views of this spectacular glacial-carved valley and impressive rock formations, such as the Three Sisters. Settings: 1/100 sec at f/22, ISO 200

Fortunately, you don't need to be in peak physical shape to photograph mountains; observing mountains from a distance or on a short stroll can be just as rewarding.

Capturing great scenes of mountain landscapes can be achieved by walking to easily accessible peaks or nearby viewpoints within a 30-minute radius,

rather than actually having to scale mountains, and it will be more enjoyable, too. Long, gruelling treks pose physical challenges with lung-busting ascents and the weight of your camera gear, besides potential risks of adverse weather conditions, such as getting lost or injured.

All you need is a love of the outdoors, a thirst for adventure, a healthy dose of wanderlust and your camera.

RECCE THE AREA

Planning makes perfect

Maps are a must, and Ordnance Survey maps have always been my go-to choice. Reliable map apps to identify locations include OS maps, Maps.me and what3words.com.



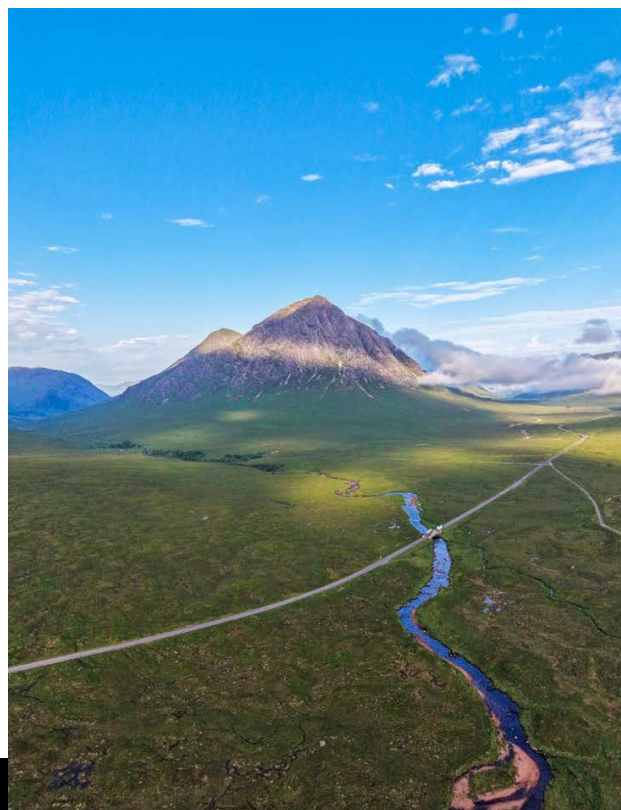
PRO SHOT**Snowdonia, Wales**

Arriving early or staying out late can lead to unexpected drama. Taking to the sky with my camera drone, I was rewarded with this wonderful scene. Settings: 1/25 sec at f/1.8, ISO 200

TIP 3 USE A CAMERA IN THE SKY

Switch up your aesthetic with a camera drone, but make sure to observe the local regulations

F or a bird's-eye view, capture mountains from above with a camera drone. Seeing from the sky provides an enjoyable way to photograph from a higher angle, rather than ground level, with minimum effort required. This is a great way to capture a familiar mountain scene from a different perspective. In the UK, drones must be flown at a maximum altitude of 120m (400ft), although I'd recommend flying lower in high winds to avoid the risk of losing your drone. Use natural rivers, ridges, and valleys as leading lines to guide the viewer's eye towards the peaks and look out for colourful skies to add depth and visual impact to your compositions. Also consider shooting portrait orientation for deep sweeping vistas (right).





Jeremy Flint

TIP 4 SHOOT ON A SCENIC MOUNTAIN DRIVE

Shoot epic photos of peaks from the side of the road – no climbing required

Accessing breathtaking valleys and peaks can be enjoyed from the comfort of your vehicle. Glen Coe in Scotland provides the backdrop for an incredibly picturesque drive through a verdant green valley flanked by towering mountains. There are plenty of parking places along the

route to pull over (pictured, right) and capture the majestic landscape from multiple locations. The view of the Three Sisters from the main parking area on the A82 is a real highlight. Using a polariser is a great way to add contrast and enhance blue skies during the daytime. A wide-angle lens will help to capture the entire scene.



TOP KIT DJI MINI 5 PRO

The only drone you could ever need

This brilliant flagship ultra-light drone defies physics to cram a 10-bit video 4K camera with a 1-inch sensor into a drone weighing under the 250g threshold. Two combo options are available – these add extra batteries or a dedicated controller with a built-in screen. **Read our full review at:** www.bit.ly/dcm300_drone



TOP TIP OBSERVE DRONE REGULATIONS

Know the rules before you attempt to fly a camera drone

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. To get an Operator ID, you must be over 18. Drone regulations vary from country to country; in the USA, drone registration is carried out by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). **Find out more at:** www.caa.co.uk/drones



TIP 5

MASTER YOUR WORKFLOW

A step-by-step guide for achieving peak performance on your next mountain shoot

Captivating compositions often feel right before they can be logically explained, yet this intuition can be refined through understanding. One useful concept is the idea of compositional weight: that every element carries a visual 'mass' based on size, detail, contrast and prominence.

Just as in physics, where balance depends on torque, photographic balance emerges when these visual weights

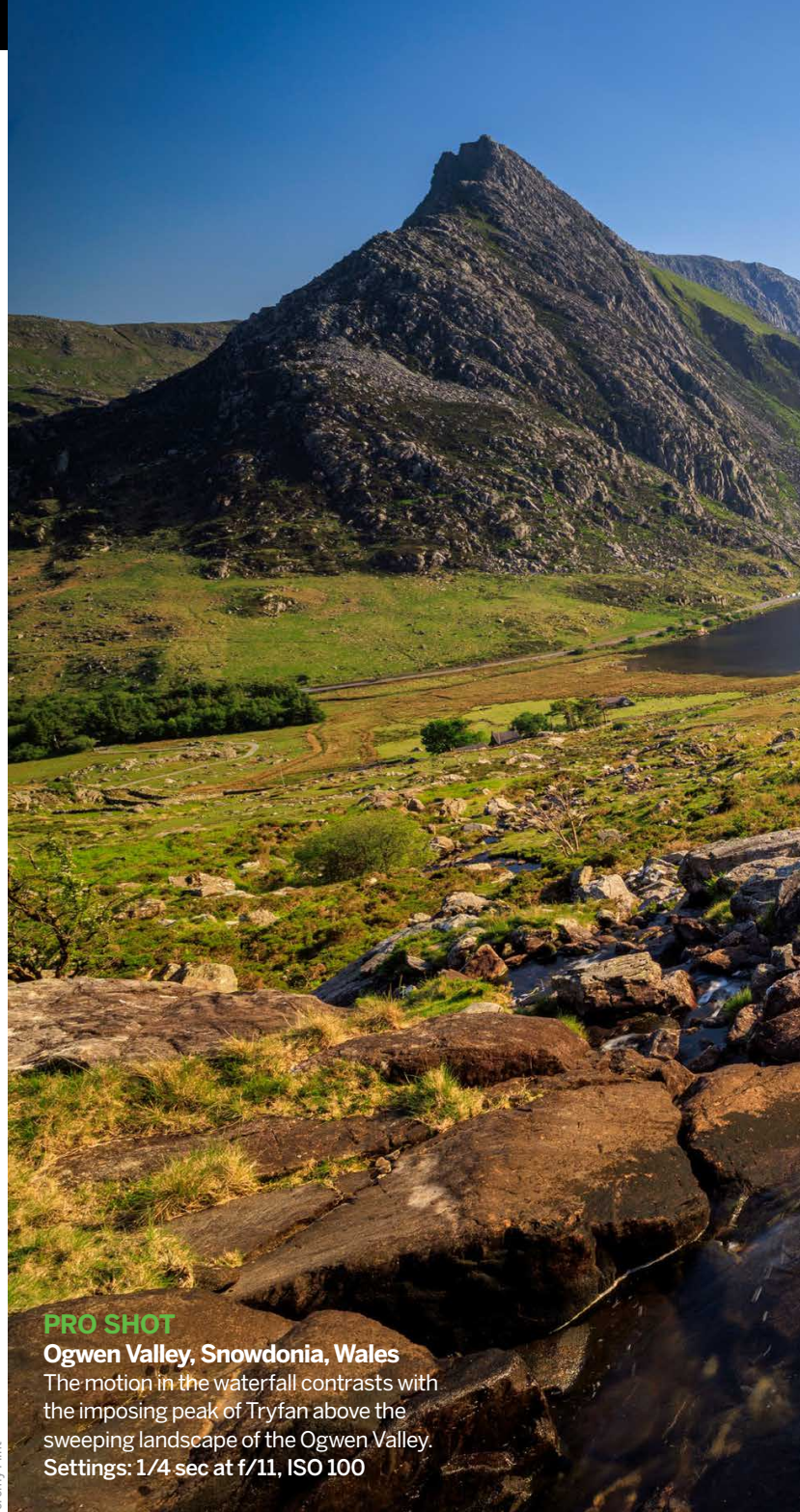
are harmoniously distributed within the frame. A large or highly detailed object can be counterbalanced by smaller elements placed further away from the centre, maintaining the equilibrium around an invisible axis.

Although this is subjective, it offers a structured way to interpret what makes a successful photograph. Over time, this almost mathematical awareness becomes instinctive, allowing you to sense balance rather than having to calculate it.

GEAR ADVICE

INVEST IN FILTERS

Any serious landscape photographer needs a set of neutral density (ND) filters in their camera bag to tame bright skies without altering the landscape. Available in different strengths, filters reduce the light reaching the sensor. Graduated ND filters transition from opaque to clear, in either a 'hard' or 'soft' transition. Leading filter brands include Lee Filters, Cokin, NiSi and more.



PRO SHOT

Ogwen Valley, Snowdonia, Wales

The motion in the waterfall contrasts with the imposing peak of Tryfan above the sweeping landscape of the Ogwen Valley.

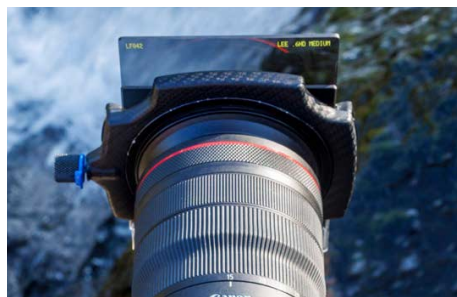
Settings: 1/4 sec at f/11, ISO 100

Jeremy Flint

STABILISE YOUR SHOT

1 I used a tripod and built-in level to ensure the camera was fixed. As an ambassador for Fotopro, their lightweight Fotopro X-go Max E 2 tripod (£140/\$189) is perfect for mountain photography and comes highly recommended. Paired with their QAL-2L L-shaped bracket, it gives even sturdier shots.





ADD YOUR FILTERS

2 I secured a 3-stop Lee neutral density filter and a 0.6 medium grad to the mount holder, attached to the lens ring, to extend the exposure time. These can be worked out using the Lee Filters app.



CAMERA SETTINGS

3 To generate front-to-back sharpness through the frame and less noise in the image, it's a good idea to opt for a narrow aperture (eg. f/11) and a low ISO value – on a tripod, 100 will be ideal.



USE THE REAR SCREEN

4 With the camera perched on a ledge, I viewed the scene through the rear screen's Live View display before taking the shot to prevent accidentally knocking the camera into the water.

PRO SHOT

Lagangarbh Hut

I found a pool at the foot of Buachaille Etive Mòr. The calm conditions enabled me to capture the mountain's reflection while the cottage added mid-ground interest. Settings: 1/8 sec at f/11, ISO 500



TIP 6 CAPTURE MOUNTAIN REFLECTIONS FOR IMPACT

Learn how to work with water to create more impact in your mountain vistas

Some of the best places to capture mountains are from the foot rather than at the top. Combine this with a river or lake on a still, windless day, and there is a great opportunity for reflections. Capturing mountain views with foreground reflections transforms standard

landscape photos into striking images because reflections create more impact through symmetry and balance while also adding a sense of calm to the scene.

Small tarns (a mountain pond, pool or lake, formed by glaciers melting and shrinking), flooded fields and even puddles can all produce striking mountain

reflections from unique perspectives. These smaller bodies of water often remain calmer than larger lakes.

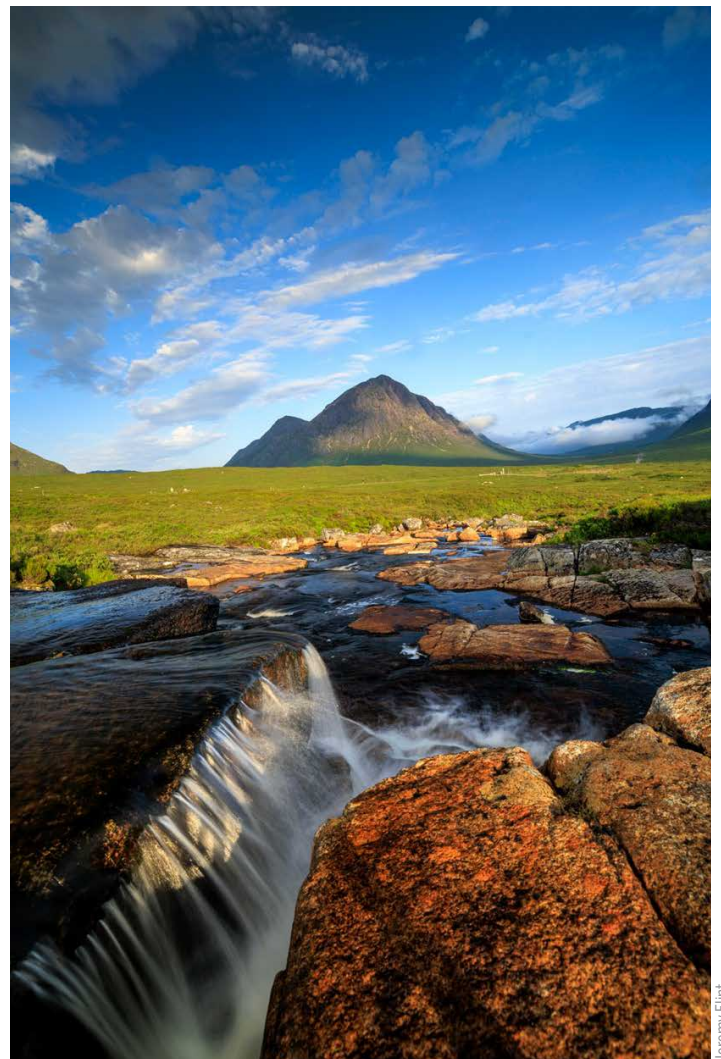
Try combining calm water, thoughtful composition and favourable light in your image to create reflections that emphasise both the grandeur of the mountain and the tranquillity of the landscape surrounding it.

TIP 7

ADD SOME FOREGROUND

Elements closer to you in the scene are just as important as those farther away

Different shapes and subjects can work in harmony with mountain scenery to create compelling compositions. Including an interesting foreground such as a rock, flowers or a waterfall adds context, prevents distant peaks from appearing flat and transforms a simple mountain vista into a dynamic image with layers and a clear focal point. The extra dimension helps create depth and provides scale. It also complements the background and elevates the scene. Get close to the subject and shoot with a wide-angle lens to convey a more dramatic and detailed effect, whilst extending the shutter speed and blurring the water creates motion.



Jeremy Flint

PRO SHOT Buachaille Etive Mòr, Scotland

This iconic peak in Scotland is my favourite mountain to photograph, especially when combined with an interesting foreground such as this. Settings: 0.4 sec at f/11, ISO 100



Jeremy Flint



PRO TIP USE A POLARISING FILTER

A polariser is one of the most useful filters you can buy and is a must for landscape photographers. It can enhance the colour of your shots, make blue skies bluer, cut through haze and even remove reflections from water. See our best-buy polarising filter options at: www.bit.ly/dcm311_polarisers



TIP 8 GO WIDE OR ZOOM IN

Vary your perspective and keep your photos fresh by choosing optics carefully

The best way to approach lens choice depends on the story you want to tell. Go wide-angle for sweeping vistas of expansive foregrounds and majestic, towering peaks. Alternatively, select a telephoto lens to home in on an interesting part of the mountain. Zoom into the landscape and capture elements of the

mountains that most impress you. Filling the frame with details of the structure of a mountain can look great and be more visually pleasing than a zoomed-out image, especially with low mist. Zooming in with a telephoto lens allows you to isolate individual peaks with the advantage that it compresses the perspective and makes the mountain range appear more layered and

dramatic. My go-to lenses are a 15-35mm and 70-200mm to achieve these different perspectives. Choosing your lens carefully when capturing mountains can result in greater compositions. The other advantage of a telephoto lens is that you can crop in on the mountain scenery with your lens rather than in post-production, preserving pixels and image quality.

**PRO SHOT****Buachaille Etive Mòr, Scotland**

Shot with a wide-angle lens, this captures a more expansive scene that emphasises the foreground through to the background.

Settings: 1 sec at f/11, ISO 200

Jeremy Flint

**PRO SHOT****Glen Coe Valley, Scotland**

With the mist swirling around the Glen Coe Valley, I decided to zoom in with a telephoto lens to capture the detail in the distant peaks.

Settings: 1/100 sec at f/11, ISO 100

TOP KIT Canon RF 15-35mm F2.8L IS USM

Get a new perspective

An ultra-wide zoom lens opens up a whole new world of creative shooting opportunities and should be in every landscape photographer's camera bag. See our best-buy options across the popular camera systems at: www.bit.ly/dcm311_widezooms



TOP KIT Canon RF 70-200mm F2.8L IS USM

A kitbag essential

The constant aperture on this workhorse lens helps subjects stand out from backgrounds. See our best-buy options for the popular systems at: www.bit.ly/dcm311_telephotos



TIP 9

EMBRACE THE WEATHER

Conditions in the field can change quickly, so it's always worth persisting with your shoot

Mountain weather is unpredictable and can change in minutes. When the weather turns, keep your camera out and learn to shoot in all weathers. Embrace changing conditions, as storms can deliver dramatic skies and sunshine after rain provides great light and atmosphere that aren't visible on a bright, cloudless day. Capture the changing light sweeping across distant summits and enjoy the photographic opportunities that the varied weather brings. Time your visit well, and you may even encounter the holy grail of landscape photography – mountains with mist swirling around the summit. Misty mountains can evoke a sense of wonder and awe.

PRO TIP CLOUD DRAMA

Clouds can really help to lift a mountain scene. Their structure can add drama and impact, transforming a static sky into one with texture and detail. They can also act as natural filters and shift the light, almost painting the landscape. The presence of interesting clouds can create impact through contrast between shadows and highlights, and visually compelling shapes that complement the overall composition.



TOP KIT WATERPROOF CAMERA COVER

Protect your precious kit

When shooting in rain or snow, a waterproof cover is an essential item. See our best-buy rain cover options at: www.bit.ly/dcm311_raincovers



PRO SHOT

The Three Sisters, Scotland

Arriving at this scene in overcast conditions, my luck finally turned and the sun peeked through gaps in the clouds to light up the landscape.

Settings: 0.6 sec at f/16, ISO 100



Jeremy Flint



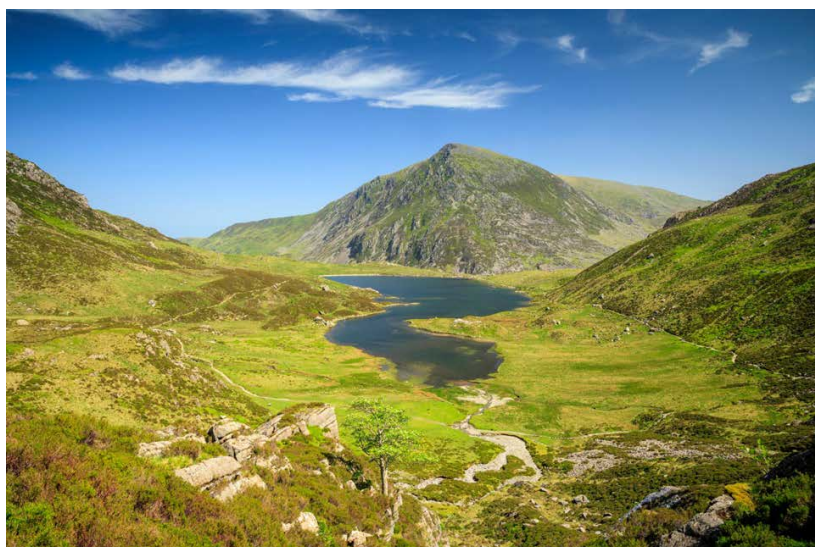
TIP 10

SHOOT AT DIFFERENT TIMES

Four options for creating completely different aesthetics of your view

T

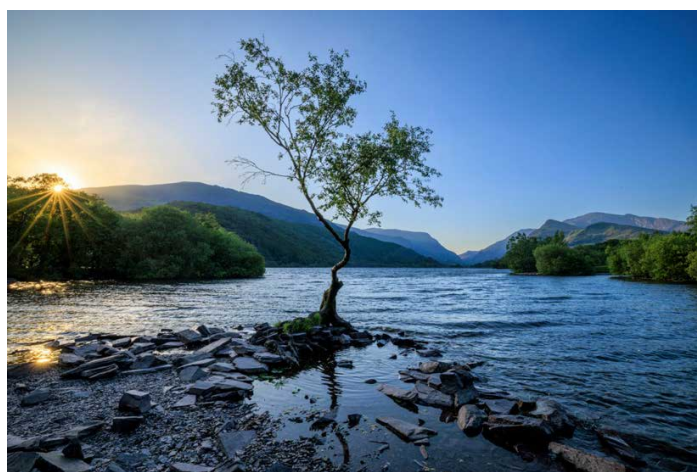
he time of day has a huge influence on the outcome of your mountain photographs. Time your shoot to capture the changing light and transform your images into something truly memorable.



Jeremy Flint

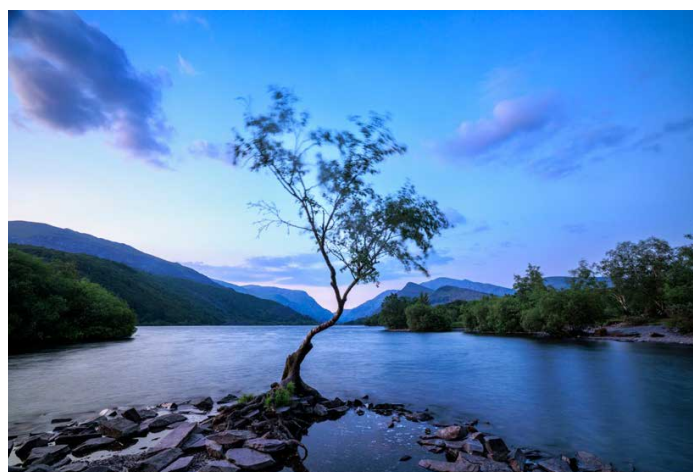
CAPTURE MOUNTAINS IN DAYLIGHT

1 You can produce striking mountain photographs at any time during the day with plenty of illumination. Use the differences in the light to transition viewers through the frame and connect the foreground to the background. Capturing the interplay of light and shade from moving clouds can really elevate an image.



CAPTURE A SUNSET OR SUNRISE

2 The golden hour light will add a warm tone to your image. Calculate the sunrise and sunset times using a photography app such as PhotoPills, Sun Surveyor or The Photographer's Ephemeris and arrive in plenty of time to set up your shot.



Jeremy Flint

SHOOT AFTER SUNSET

3 After the sun dips below the horizon, capture the afterglow as the sky soaks up a range of interesting blue, orange and purple colours. The long exposure here has smoothed out the water and added motion from the movement of the tree leaves.

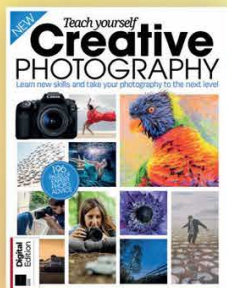
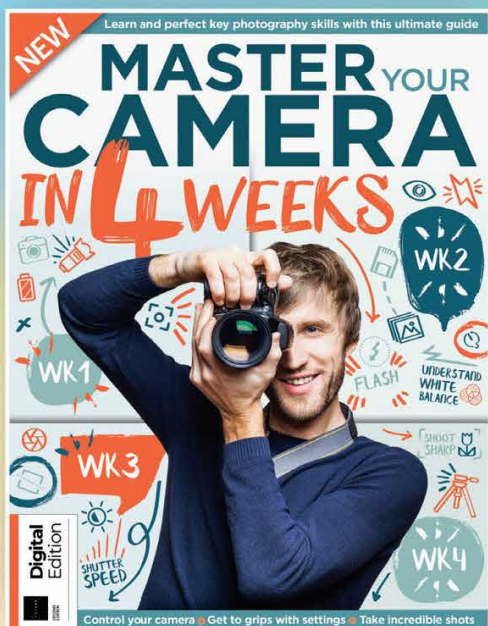
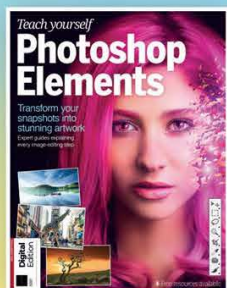
PRO TIP

SHOOT YOUR SCENES IN DIFFERENT SEASONS

4 Capture the changing core elements at different times of the year, from seasonal blooms to snow-capped peaks. The image on the left was taken in October; on the right, in June.

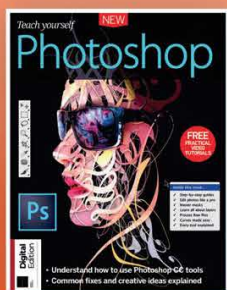
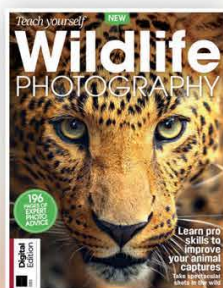


To retrace your steps to the same shooting location, use what3words.com. A website with a companion smartphone app, what3words assigns a unique three-word identifier to every 3-metre square on the planet – no need to tap in a string of numerical GPS coordinates.



MASTER YOUR CAMERA WITH OUR BOOKAZINES

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Hotshots

Winning entries from the Hasselblad Masters 2026 competition

WINNER, LANDSCAPE 'Ephemeral Visions' Rohan Reilly (Ireland)

Rooted in the discipline of a composer, Rohan Reilly's images strip away complexity to reveal the essentials, which are texture, tone and stillness. His signature long-exposure technique transforms moving water and shifting skies into silk-like surfaces, while vast negative space and low saturation give his work a poetic, meditative quality that transcends documentation. The process is one of patience and preparation:

studying weather patterns, returning season after season and waiting for the precise conditions that cannot be engineered. This series captures a row of poplar trees planted along the banks of the River Po in Italy. Natural guardians against flooding, they stand immersed in still water beneath soft, diffused light. What was once a purely functional landscape transforms into something surreal and dreamlike. In this quietly breathtaking scene, the photographer's vision finds its fullest expression: nature distilled to its core and time momentarily held still.

"A forest of birch trees could be a monotonous subject. But these photographs are hypnotic objects of meditation, creating something expansive through repetition and ostensible sameness," says Zack Hatfield, managing editor at *Aperture* magazine.



About the competition

Widely regarded as one of the world's most prestigious professional photography competitions, the Hasselblad Masters was created to celebrate creative excellence and bring together established and emerging talent from around the world. This year, the competition received more than 108,000 image submissions from photographers in 160 countries and regions across seven categories:

Landscape, Architecture, Portrait, Art, Street, Wildlife and Project//21.

Find out more at: www.hasselblad.com



© Kevin Boyle / Hasselblad Masters 2026



WINNER, ARCHITECTURE 'DaySleeper/Movieland' Kevin Boyle (Canada)

Kevin Boyle was shaped by the open skies and close-knit communities of the Canadian prairies. After the loss of his father, he returned to find the places he once knew hollowed out and silent, their gathering spaces boarded up and left to disappear. For over 10 years, his photographic journey has been a tribute to the abandoned architecture of North America's local communities. This series is comprised of montages, with each part of the building lit with flashlights and blended to create an ethereal 'portrait' of once important places. Through his lens, these forgotten spaces become vibrant, glowing symbols of community heritage and shared human connection.

"The composition, and the fact that the images are empty of people, triggers our imaginations, taking us back to a time when these buildings would have thrived with the whole community meeting for evening entertainment. By making this series, the photographer invites us to consider the myriad of small venues that make up the social fabric of small communities," says Sonia Jeunet, photography consultant and education at Magnum Photos.



WINNER, PORTRAIT
'Otherness'

Svetlana Jovanovic (The Netherlands)

With a psychology background, Svetlana Jovanovic's portraiture is driven by a deep curiosity about identity – how we experience the world, construct our sense of self and see ourselves through the eyes of others. Her style brings together fine-art portraiture and a commitment to visual beauty. Here, the conceptual and the aesthetic are inseparable: each gives the other meaning. These images are part of 'Otherness', a long-term project exploring identical twins and the tension between shared identity and individual presence. While twins share so much, small differences emerge over time. In subtle ways, each person's character becomes visible within the shared image. Each portrait is a collaboration, shaped as much by the relationship between the twins as by the photographer's own vision, inviting viewers to reflect on how we define ourselves both apart from and through one another.

"Through precise use of light and composition, this portrait series explores the themes of mirroring and duality. Whether capturing two sides of the same face or the closeness of two kindred souls, the images reveal subtle layers of emotion with quiet precision," says RongRong, co-founder and artistic director at the Three Shadows Photography Art Centre.



© Gosse Bouma / Hasselblad Masters 2026

WINNER, STREET

'Morning Ritual'

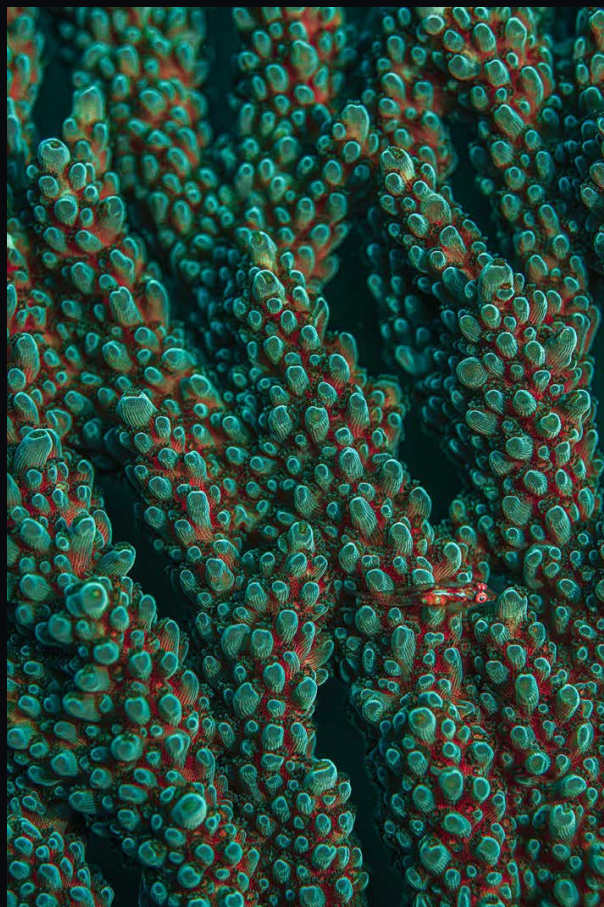
Gosse Bouma (The Netherlands)

Gosse Bouma is a photographer whose work is driven by a quiet pursuit: to offer moments of tranquillity in a world that rarely slows down. His distinct style lies at the intersection of urban geometry and natural elements, pairing the hard lines of architecture with the soft, unpredictable textures of weather. Each photograph is infused with the intention of invoking serenity amidst the chaos of everyday life, creating visual experiences that invite stillness and reflection, even if only for a fleeting moment. His winning series, taken across the Netherlands, turns to the street market as its subject, a space where people of all ages and backgrounds meet, exchange a few words, share warmth and move on. In capturing these small, unhurried encounters, Bouma preserves something increasingly rare in contemporary life: a genuine sense of togetherness.

"The photographer understands atmosphere, scale and timing. The small lit kiosks within the vast blue urban emptiness create images that feel both intimate and monumental. Here, genuine photographic tension emerges. The series uses colour structurally, not decoratively. Mist, artificial light and architecture form one coherent world," says Aya Musa, senior curator at Foam.



© Alfred Minnaar / Hasselblad Masters 2026

**WINNER, WILDLIFE****'The Forest/Roam'****Alfred Minnaar (South Africa)**

Alfred Minnaar's creative process often begins with observation and patience. Rather than simply documenting his subjects, he seeks to understand their behaviour, environment and relationship with the surrounding ecosystem. Over a decade of global exploration, his fine-art philosophy has evolved from a traveller's passion into a powerful voice for conservation, capturing fleeting deep-sea and wildlife narratives to inspire the preservation of our planet. These images of a tiny goby living amongst coral were created to challenge our perception of scale and encourage viewers to look closer. Rather than focusing solely on the fish, the photographer wanted to use it as a point of reference within a much larger world. By placing the goby within its environment, the reef itself becomes the subject, inviting viewers to imagine its vastness from the perspective of one of its smallest inhabitants.

"The vibrancy of the palette immediately draws you in, and the way the small fish are framed against their environments creates a sense of scale that almost reads as landscape. There's a balance here between detail and composition, with the micro subjects holding their own within a larger, almost abstracted environment," says Alex Pollack, director of photography at *National Geographic*.



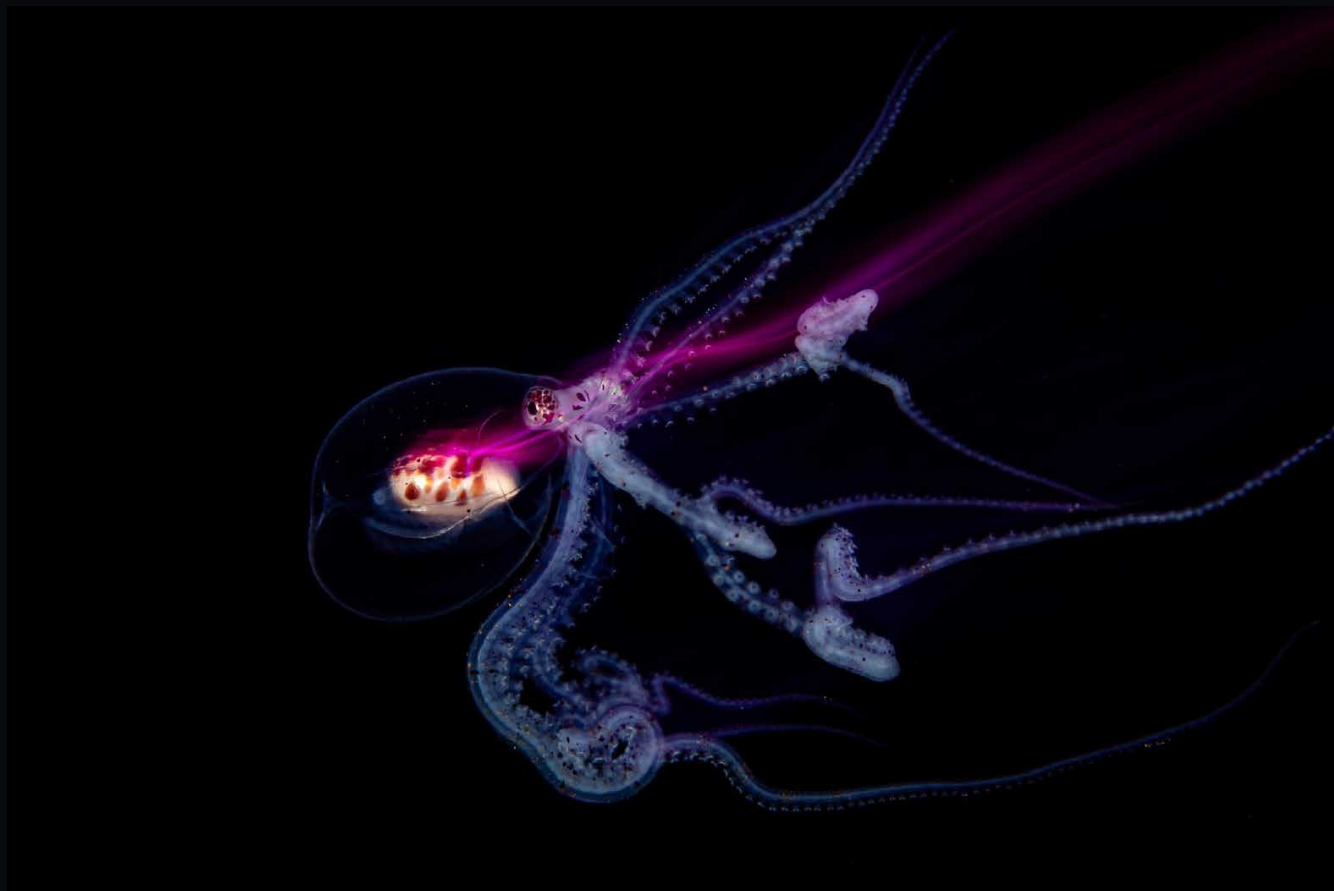
© Yudha Kusuma Putera / Hasselblad Masters 2026



WINNER, ART 'Waste Colonialism (Sapi-Sapi Piyungan)' Yudha Kusuma Putera (Indonesia)

Rooted in everyday life and inspired by its complexity, Yudha Kusuma Putera turns a keen eye toward the social issues that hide in plain sight, exploring the tensions between humans, nature and the systems we build around us. These images are part of a project examining how developed nations export their waste to developing countries, where labour and costs are lower. This logic repeats on a smaller scale within cities: landfills are built on the outskirts, kept out of sight and out of mind. At the Piyungan landfill in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, a city's waste is sorted by scavengers and consumed by cows, quietly piling up into a second hill. Yudha Kusuma Putera photographed the backs of these cows stacked together, with their forms mirroring the landscape of trash around them. The work does not seek to assign blame, but to invite collective reflection on the waste we produce, and the futures we are building from it.

"On the surface, the images appear direct and unambiguous, yet they resist easy reading, generating a sense of uncertainty that keeps the viewer engaged and questioning. The images do not announce themselves loudly, but reward sustained attention with a sense of strangeness that is both intellectually stimulating and visually striking," says Kalle Sanner, executive director at the Hasselblad Foundation.



© Panitbhand Paribatra Na Ayudhya / Hasselblad Masters 2026

WINNER, PROJECT//21 'Dwellers of the Night' Panitbhand Paribatra Na Ayudhya (Thailand)

Panitbhand Paribatra Na Ayudhya is a young underwater photographer and scuba diver from Thailand. His work is rooted in a quiet dedication to the ocean, documenting its life, its fragility and the ecosystems that sustain it, in the hope that what is seen through his lens will not be forgotten. His winning series was captured in the waters of Anilao, Philippines, where pelagic and larval marine life migrate from the depths each night to feed under the cover of darkness. Using slow shutter speeds to capture the elegant motion of his subjects and carefully chosen coloured lighting to reveal their form and beauty, he illuminates a world rarely seen. For the ribbon eel (above, right), a diffused warm light conjures a subtle sunset behind the subject – crowning it as a master of the night. Some of these creatures spend their entire lives in the open ocean, making the pelagic ecosystem as fragile as it is extraordinary.

"I'm drawn to the quiet whimsy of these sea creatures. Set against black, the creatures feel almost otherworldly – strange, delicate and entirely captivating. There's a simplicity to the presentation that allows their inherent oddness to shine, reminding us how unfamiliar and compelling the natural world can be when seen without distraction," says Alex Pollack, director of photography at *National Geographic*.

CAMERA CLINIC

Master the art of modern photography

This month: Depth of field

Three words that often make newcomers break out in a cold sweat



Depth of field has an important part to play in most photographs.

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

Photography is full of jargon, and there's no way to avoid it. Turn on the camera and make an exposure using aperture, shutter speed and ISO. Fine-tune exposure with compensation or autoexposure lock – all of that is jargon. Tech-speak is inevitable because photography is a technical process, but you can enjoy it without understanding all the gobbledegook, of course.

While lots of these new terms and acronyms cover the latest technology and processes, many expressions are long-established – depth of field is one of them. Put simply, depth of field is the amount of acceptable front-to-back sharpness within a scene. So, with a subject 10m from the camera, if the final image is sharp from 2m to infinity, that is a deep or extensive depth of field. On the other extreme, if in the same scene, the image is sharp from 9m to 11m, that is a shallow or slim depth of field.

If depth of field was that straightforward, this feature could end right here, but it isn't. There are a great many variables that come into play, including the focal length of the lens, camera-to-subject distance, choice of f/stop, the distance from the subject to the background, where the lens is focused and image format.

This is where a little understanding of what depth of field is and how it can be applied to produce the image you want is a good thing. For example, landscapes need full front-to-back sharpness while portraits require a sharp subject against a smooth, out-of-focus background, so knowing how such results are achieved is important.

Depth of field is an essential creative skill that's up there with accurate exposure and focusing. So, if you're baffled, befuddled and bemused by depth of field and how to use it to improve your shots, you're in the right place.

Get the knowledge

Balance the exposure trinity for the best depth of field

When you're framing up a photo, you should be thinking about exposure, focusing and composition. Another item for your pre-shoot checklist – if it isn't there already – is depth of field. The decisions you make at the time of shooting all play a part in the outcome of your photo, and how you balance aperture, shutter speed and ISO, plus lens choice and subject distance all play key roles in how much

depth of field you get. But why is depth of field so important? What's sharp and what isn't is fundamental to a photo's success, and while its impact can be subliminal compared with poor exposure or focusing, it's still vital. So next time you prepare to take a picture, take a pause and think about depth of field and how it will impact your efforts.

Three lens options

A trio of optics to help exploit depth of field



GO WIDE

Wide-angle lenses give the same depth of field as telephotos, provided the subject size is the same in the picture frame. That's the theory, but wide-angle and telephoto lenses are used differently, so if you want to enjoy lots of depth of field in your photos, invest in a wide-angle lens. The 24mm is a deservedly popular focal length and useful for most photography genres.

AIM FOR SPEED

Wide aperture or 'fast' lenses are generally more expensive than their more modest aperture cousins, but cost depends on the lens specification as well as the brand. More expensive fast lenses are generally top-level performers, even when used at their maximum apertures. However, there are plenty of more affordable fast lenses around if you shop among independent brands and consider manual-focus lenses.



GO RETRO

Manual-focus lenses, legacy and current, are worth a look because many are blessed with a depth of field scale that's perfect if you use the hyperfocal focusing technique. Another plus point is cost, with legacy lenses and current manual focus optics often selling at attractive prices, particularly for the decent optical performance. Adapters for a wide range of camera and lens mounts are available to fit legacy lenses to current cameras.



A trio of accessories

Kit that will help you enjoy your depth of field journey

STABLE FRIENDS

Tripods are frequently mentioned in these pages, and they are a useful accessory. In respect of depth of field, having the camera fixed to a stable support means you have the freedom to choose any aperture you want without having to worry about what's happening with the shutter speed. For keen photographers, a carbon fibre travel tripod would be ideal, offering stability, portability and useful working height.



APP-LY YOURSELF

For a greater understanding of depth of field, get an app. While many are free, some are paid for, including one of the best and most versatile apps around. PhotoPills costs £11 and is available from the App Store and Google Play. It has an extensive array of features that include depth of field, where you can check what you get for the camera, lens and focusing distance.



ONE-LEGGED WONDER

Many tripods have a detachable leg that transforms into a monopod so if you are in the market for a tripod, check whether that option is available. If not, invest in a dedicated monopod. Made from aluminium alloy or carbon fibre, monopods provide stability, especially with telephoto lenses, without compromising portability. Quick to set up, some monopods offer a set of fold-out feet at their base.



Perfect examples of depth of field control

The success of your photos depends on the decisions you make, so learn to get it right



PELICAN PERFECTION

Dalmatian pelicans are expressive birds and make for wonderful portrait subjects. This one was captured on a photo holiday at Lake Kerkini in northern Greece with a 70-200mm telezoom at 184mm. I shot it in upright format, which seemed to make sense at the time, but once back home, I thought it would look better cropped to a horizontal format image, with the bird's eye on the top right third for a powerful composition. Of course, the ideal is to get it right at the time of taking the image, but photography is rarely straightforward, and cropping is a potent tool that should never be underestimated.



1/1000 sec at f/4, ISO 800

Will Cheung



GLISTENING SILVERS

It was shortly after dawn and the sun was high enough to light up this pair of dew-covered silver-studded blue butterflies on a grass stem. It was damp underfoot, but luckily, I was wearing waterproof overtrousers, so I knelt for a better viewpoint. My first shot had a half-ground, half-sky background that made the insects stand out well. Getting even lower, though, meant I had a completely blue sky backdrop, and that was my preferred effort. Using f/11 made sure the insects were fully sharp, and being so close meant that the background was nicely blurred, with a little flash making the dew drops glisten nicely.



1/250 sec at f/11, ISO 800

Will Cheung



ICELANDIC GEMS

The Stokksnes Peninsula in south-east Iceland is an incredible location, famous for the Vestrahorn mountain. I was on a group tour and the daylight was fading. I loved the patterns of black sand on the ice, so I chose a 14-30mm wide-angle and a tripod.

Both images were shot at 14mm at f/11, which gave depth of field from around 30cm to infinity. Getting decent shots in poor light and under time pressure wasn't easy, but I was happy with my efforts. The obvious composition was looking straight at Vestrahorn with the lines of black sand leading the viewer into the image, but I preferred the less conventional photo.



1/20 sec at f/11, ISO 200

Will Cheung



Getting creative with depth of field

Lens aperture does more than play a part in getting correct exposures

How much depth of field you choose has a profound impact on the success of your photos, so it's not a matter to be taken lightly. However, there are guidelines depending on what you are photographing. For landscapes, the general approach is to use a small f/stop so everything from a metre or two to infinity is lovely and

sharp. With people, the question of depth of field is not so cut and dried. At one extreme, you could shoot close-up portraits and use the lens's widest f/stop, but for shooting large groups, f/8 or f/11 are better because of the need to have everyone sharp. Make a judgement when you're framing up your shot.

Nine ways to hone your eye for depth of field



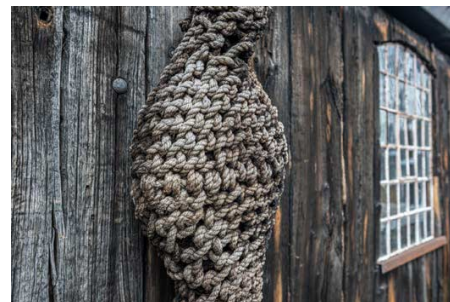
TAKE THE WIDE ROAD

With an ultra-wide-angle lens, you get deep depth of field, even at mid apertures. In this scene, captured using a 14mm lens on full frame with an f/stop of f/7.1, everything from around 1m to infinity is acceptably sharp – ideal for broad, sweeping views.



LOOK UP FOR INSPIRATION

Tall buildings and wide-angle lenses are a good combination. Use a small aperture for plenty of depth of field so everything is sharp. Here, a 20mm lens on a full-frame camera was used at f/11 with the focus point aimed at the first stairway light.



GOING WIDE FOR BLUR

Wide-angles give more depth of field compared with longer lenses at the same subject-to-camera distance, making them ideal for landscapes and interiors, but blurred backgrounds are still possible. Just move in closer and shoot with a wide aperture.



GET INTIMATE WITH INSECTS

If you have a macro lens or a zoom with close focusing, try getting close for bug portraits. It takes patience, but it is worthwhile. Focusing is tricky, so try autofocus, but have manual override enabled so you can tweak focus if you or the subject move.



BLURRING THE BACKGROUND

One way of blurring backgrounds in people shots is to position the subject far from the background and use a wide aperture. The effect is enhanced by using a telephoto lens, and for people shots, a focal length of around 85-100mm in full-frame is perfect.



ALL THE WAY SHARPNESS

Aperture choice, focal length and where to focus all play a part in getting extensive depth of field in scenic photography. Here, a 24mm lens and f/16 meant front-to-back sharpness. The camera was mounted on a tripod for greater aperture options.



TRY FOCUS BRACKETING

Many mirrorless cameras have focus bracketing, which lets you control depth of field – although you need a static subject, a tripod and an app to merge images. With in-body focus stacking, it is possible to shoot handheld with slow-moving subjects.



BOKEH POWER

Bokeh refers to the aesthetic quality of blur in a photo, which depends on the lens. Smooth, creamy backgrounds and out-of-focus highlight circles give your photos a fascinating look. Check out the quality of your lens by shooting at maximum aperture.



PEOPLE BY NATURAL LIGHT

Fast aperture lenses have advantages, such as faster shutter speeds and lower ISOs, but there are pictorial plus points too. Shooting portraits at the widest aperture gives a shallow depth of field for selective focusing, but make sure the eyes are sharp.

Pros and cons Control that zone of sharpness

Aperture choice and focal point affect your shots

Your photography won't get far without accurate focusing and exposure, but how you handle depth of field is just as crucial. If depth of field is new to you, its impact may not be obvious initially, but you will appreciate its importance. Too much and the composition looks cluttered; too little and the subject is not as sharp as it should be. Depth of field control is about getting it right, which demands practice.

✓ Preview the image

Most cameras have a depth of field preview. In DSLRs, this closes the lens down to the set aperture, so the viewfinder image gets darker (if the lens isn't set to its widest value), and you get a visual indication of the depth of field available. With mirrorless cameras, with exposure simulation enabled, there is a constant depth of field preview.

✓ Blurry is nice

For portraits with a nicely blurred background, give yourself a chance by positioning the subject where the backdrop is physically some way behind. This means you can use an aperture of $f/5.6$, so the person is nice and sharp but the background remains indistinct.

✓ Use an app

In some situations, it pays to get geeky about depth of field. If your subject is, say, 10m from the camera position, and you only want a

30cm zone of sharpness, an app such as PhotoPills can determine which focal length and f /stop to use.

✓ Lock focus

Every autofocus camera has an AF lock, AF-L, but partially depressing the shutter release can do the same job, depending on how the camera is set up. AF-L can be dedicated to other function buttons, and it's great for off-centre compositions as well as depth of field control. Aim the focus point, activate the AF-L, recompose and take the shot.

✗ Take control

By default, cameras are set to a wide or full-frame autofocus zone. Instead, select a small AF zone and, in the case of landscapes, aim it at a point a third of the way into the scene for maximum depth of field for the set aperture.

✗ Be careful out there

Shooting at wide apertures gives beautiful results, but make sure focus is at the right place. For example, with head-and-shoulders portraits, the eyes must be sharp, so check that the camera hasn't focused on the eyebrows or spectacles by mistake. Using a small AF point will help.

✗ Static subjects

For focus bracketing/stacking technique, the ideal is a completely static subject with the camera on a tripod, although some cameras can cope with a little movement and be used handheld.

Control DoF

Getting it just right will require some practice.



Lens know-how

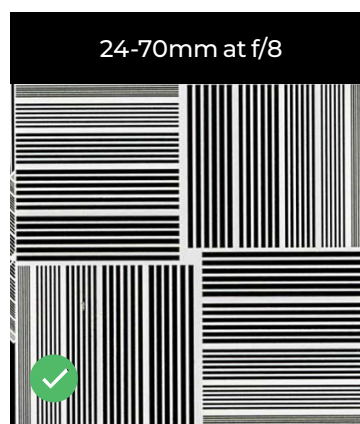
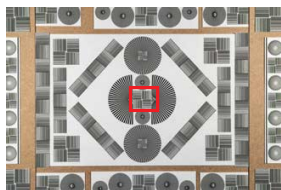
Avoiding diffraction and why you need to

Don't use the smallest f /stop of a lens because image quality will be disappointing

When you want maximum depth of field, you might think that using the lens's smallest f /stop is the way forward. That sounds sensible, but lenses suffer from diffraction where light waves passing through a tiny opening, such as a small f /stop, bend, scatter and interfere with each other, resulting in softer images. For extensive depth of field, use the next f /stop up from the smallest, such as $f/16$ instead of $f/22$.

Options for maximum depth of field without venturing into small f /stops are focusing hyperfocally (see panel, right) or, if you have a tripod and the scene is static, try focus bracketing using $f/8$ or $f/11$.

The two comparison images of a homemade lens test chart shown here were taken with a 24-70mm zoom lens at $f/8$ and $f/22$. Viewed at high magnification, the $f/22$ shot is softer and fine detail is poorly resolved.





CAMERA
CLINIC

All-over sharpness

Here, an aperture of f/16 was used to keep everything sharp.



Use camera aids

Your DSLR or mirrorless can preview or simulate DoF.

Lens tech Hyperfocal focusing

It's a powerful technique for good depth of field without impacting image quality

Hyperfocal focusing is often mentioned whenever depth of field is discussed, so it's worth knowing about. The hyperfocal distance is the distance at which the lens should be focused to give the maximum depth of field at any given aperture. To use hyperfocal focusing

with autofocus lenses, switch to manual focus and use a depth of field app such as PhotoPills (£/\$11) or Hyperfocal Pro (free, Android only). Input camera/format, focal length, f/stop and subject distance to give the hyperfocal distance. With no focusing scale on AF lenses, you need to

make an educated guess or use the details provided by the camera in manual focus mode.

Many manual focus lenses have a depth of field scale, and the accompanying images show how a lens can be focused hyperfocally at f/16 for maximum front-to-back sharpness.

Focused normally



Hyperfocally focused at f/16



Shoot photos like a pro

With a little practice, you'll soon be exploiting depth of field like an expert

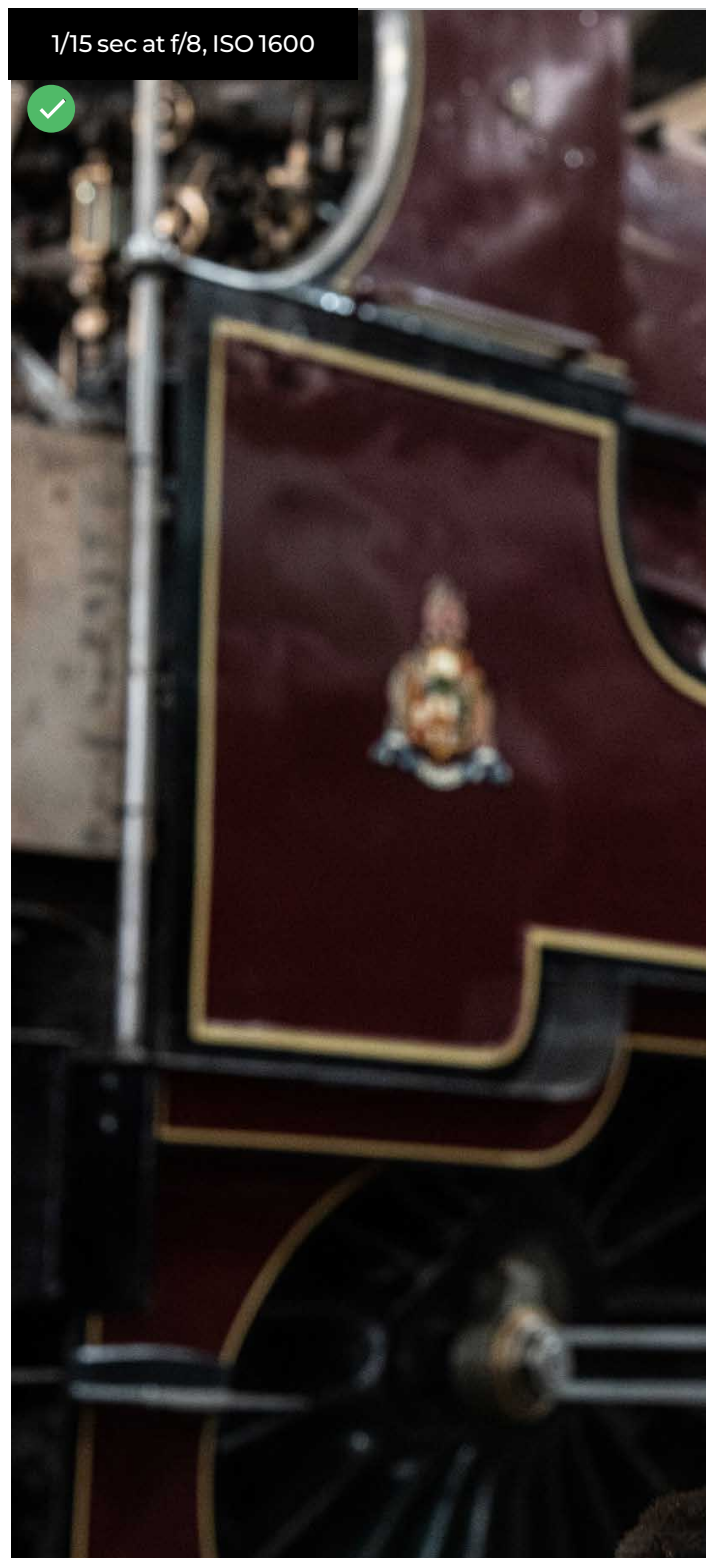
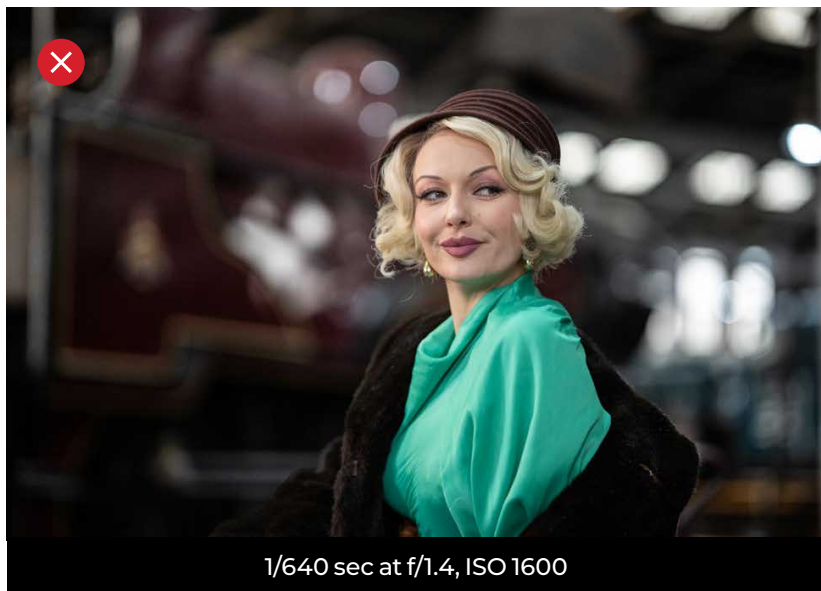
How you use depth of field in your photos is up to you, and often there is no right or wrong. That said, landscape photos usually work best if they are sharp from front to back, and in macro work, photographers often strive to make sure the subject is entirely sharp. Small apertures are standard for those genres,

which can mean a faster ISO, slower shutter speed or the use of a tripod.

The point to always bear in mind is the importance of getting it right in-camera because the post-shoot solutions are limited and might take a great deal of effort. Learn to get it right in-camera with a suitable lens, viewpoint and aperture.

Reveal the environment

Blurring the background by shooting at a wide lens aperture is a powerful and effective technique. However, there are occasions when the background adds narrative to the photo, and that's when stopping down to a smaller aperture is the way to go. Using a smaller aperture means you can set a slower shutter speed, although you may need to use a camera support or increase the ISO, which can impact image quality.

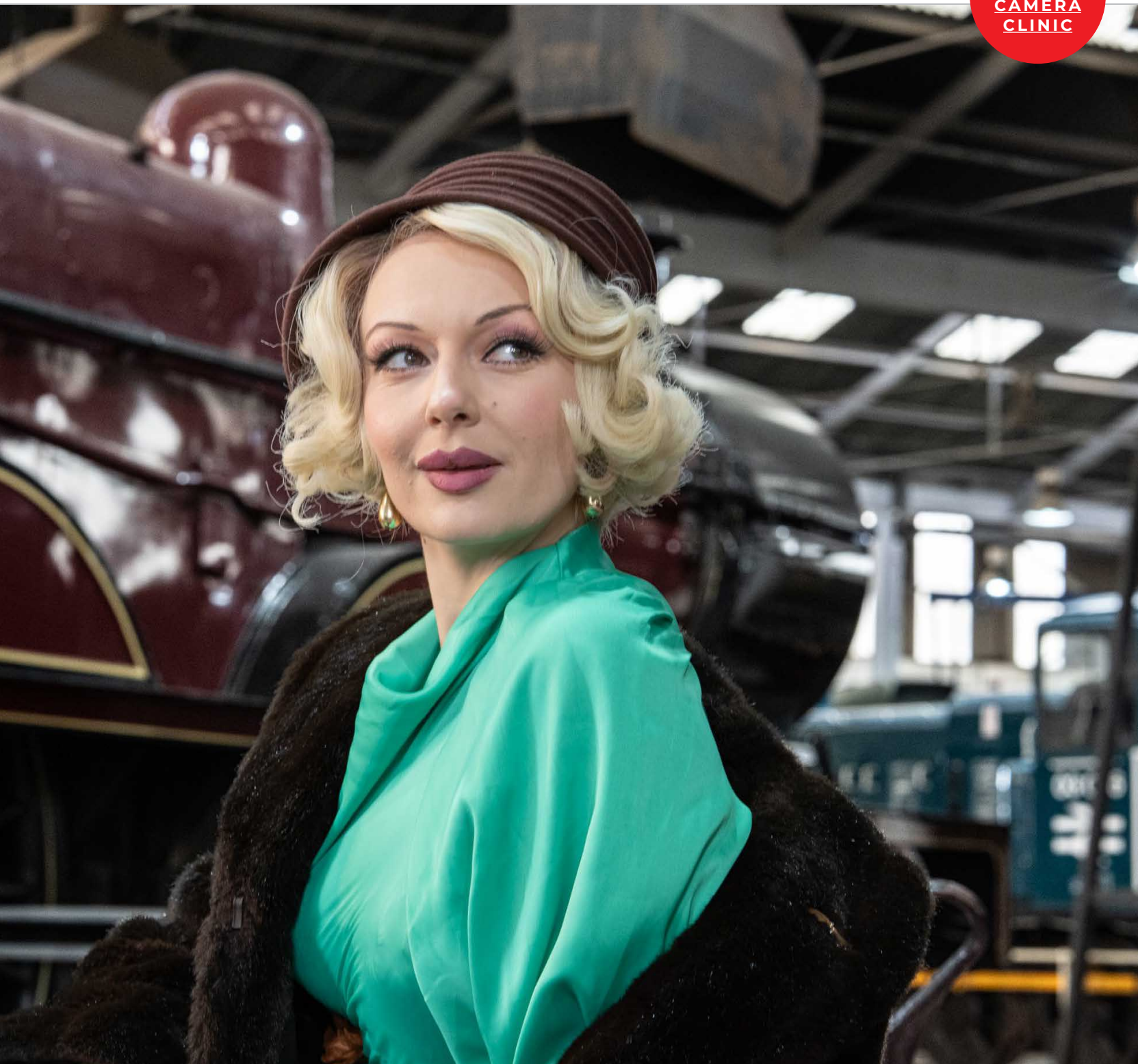


The lion in context

The South Bank Lion stands proudly on London's Westminster Bridge, and the morning sun did a great job of highlighting its texture and detail. I could have shot it against the sky, but there was no cloud detail, so that would be bland. I took the other option, crossed the road and had the lion with the London Eye in the background. I set f/16 so the Eye was more defined and sharper than the wider aperture photo.



Will Cheung



1/200 sec at f/11, ISO 200



1/2000 sec at f/4, ISO 200

Will Cheung

Stand-out flowers

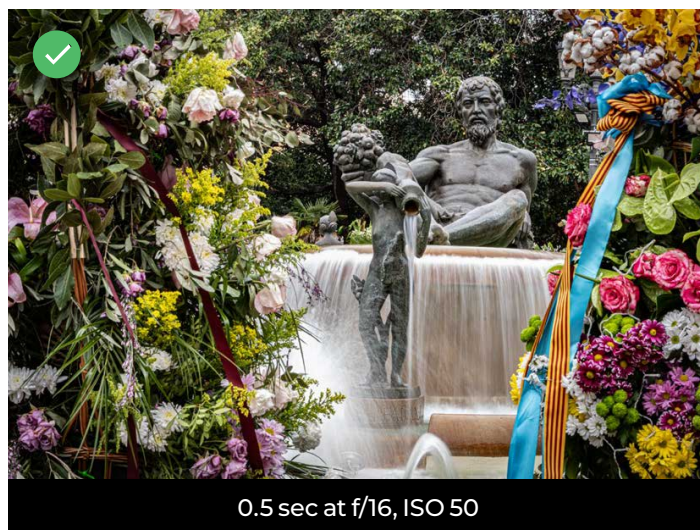
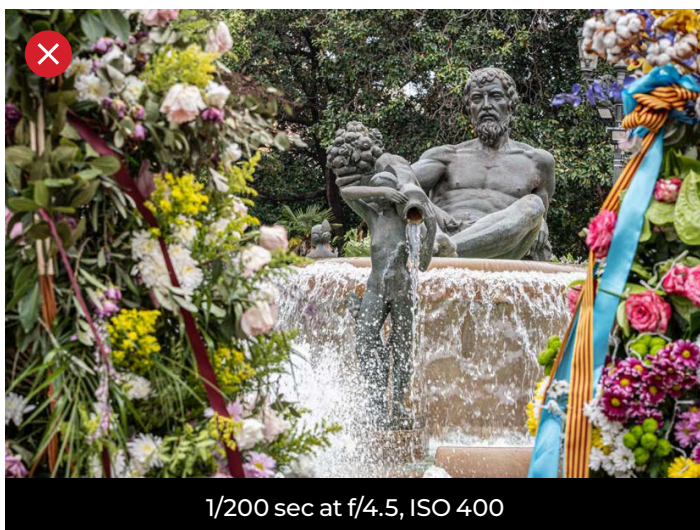
Whether flower studies or people pictures, a blurred background helps the subject stand out and gives a more three-dimensional feel. The challenge, though, is to use a wide enough f/stop to blur the background while ensuring there is enough depth of field to keep the subject sharp. It's easier if the subject is in a single plane, so try different f/stops and check the preview images to see which works best.



Will Cheung

Window on the world

Shoot at wide apertures and the focus must be spot on because there's no latitude for error. However, when stopping down to a smaller aperture, the greater depth of field can cover for any focusing errors. I spotted this crown glass window and thought using f/2.8 would give the best look. But I wasn't sure so I stopped down to f/11 for greater depth of field and took an insurance shot, which is the one I preferred.



Will Cheung

Depth and blur

My first shot of this fountain framed by a flower display was taken at f/4.5. Checking the preview, I could see the foreground flowers weren't sharp enough, so I needed a smaller f/stop. To achieve this, I needed a longer shutter speed or higher ISO, so I went the other way and set a much slower ISO. This gave me f/16 for plenty of depth of field, but the 0.5 sec shutter speed blurred the fountain nicely. I shot handheld with the camera's image stabiliser switched on to achieve a pin-sharp shot.

Pro tip Format decisions

If you want to seriously exploit depth of field, try changing your camera

It might sound like using a sledgehammer to crack a nut, but if you are currently shooting full-frame and struggling to get sufficient depth of field, one option is to choose a camera that shoots Micro Four Thirds (MFT) format instead. Of course, this is extreme and expensive, but the smaller format with its 2x crop factor gives twice as much depth of field, with equivalent focal length lenses and assuming aperture for aperture.

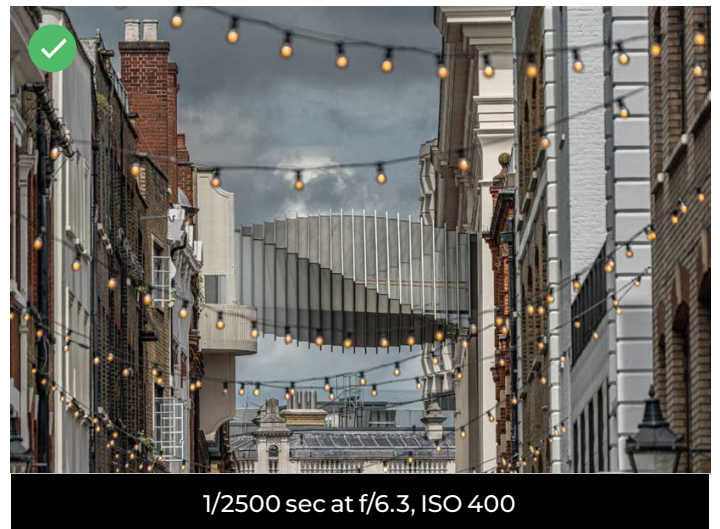
Keen macro photographers have much to gain here. Conversely, for portrait photographers currently using MFT and looking for a shallow depth of field, moving up to full-frame or even medium-format has great potential, budget permitting.





Floral conflict

Having enough depth of field by using a small f/stop to render the foreground sharp is important for landscapes, but less critical in street photography. I took shots at f/2.8, the lens's widest f/stop, and then stopped down to f/9 for a sharper foreground. However, the blurred foreground shot was more successful because the subject stood out more, with no visual conflict from the flowers in the f/9 image.



Opera architecture

I love using telephoto focal lengths to isolate architectural details. For this shot of the Bridge of Aspiration, which connects the Royal Ballet School and the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden, London, I used a 50-400mm zoom at 326mm. Rather than stand below the bridge and aim my lens upwards, I retreated some distance to get a side-on view, but still from street level. I tried f/16 for fairly sharp light bulbs, but I preferred the f/6.3 shot where the bulbs were more diffused.

Camera skills Which exposure mode to use?

Make life easier by using the modes that have you thinking about aperture

Action photographers often use Shutter Priority AE because controlling the fast shutter speeds that are required is essential. Here, with the emphasis on the best aperture to achieve the desired zone of sharpness in a photo, it makes sense to set Aperture Priority AE or even Manual, so that you have total control over the settings.

For focusing, going manual is an option, but autofocus works well enough, provided that a small focus zone is active. This lets you focus where you want to, so when you need a large depth of field, this means focusing about one-third into the scene. The focal point of the photograph might be in the far distance, but depth of field with a suitable aperture ensures that it will come out sharp.



"As I took the photo, I knew it would be an amusing image, but I didn't imagine it could do well in a national competition," says Sophia.



Sophia Spurgin

Shot of the month

Sophia Spurgin wins LCE Photographer of the Year 2026 for a playful boat portrait in Vietnam



LCE

Sophia Spurgin
Photographer

Title: 'Fish Eyes'

Location: Hoi An, Vietnam

Camera: Canon EOS R5 Mark II and
Canon RF 24-105mm F4L IS USM

Exposure: 1/320 sec at f/5.6, ISO 640

Instagram: @daughteruptree

S

ymmetry, humour and storytelling... these three qualities impressed the LCE Photographer of the Year judges, including *Digital Camera's* own

Chris George. Captured on a Canon EOS R5 Mark II by enthusiast photographer Sophia Spurgin, her image beat those submitted by 14,500 other entrants.

Having used cameras for a long time, Sophia started her creative journey around 10 years ago, joining a camera club and going on photo workshops. She enjoys shooting a wide variety of genres, including macro, landscapes, creative, portraits, architecture and travel. And it was during a family holiday in Vietnam that this image was captured.

"Travel photography is about responding to situations as they present themselves, so I only had my camera with me, and no additional equipment," Sophia recalls.

"The guide of our paid photoshoot had hired the fisherman and the boat that I was on. The only decisions I had to make were my camera settings and composition.

"Through my guide, I was able to ask the fisherman for different poses and, at the end of the session, I asked if he could come aboard so I could take a portrait.

"The pose in the photo was spontaneous. I believe it is one that the fisherman often does for photographers – his 'party piece', I guess. As I took the photo, I knew it would be an amusing image. I thought it would be a good photo to use in competitions for my

camera club, but I didn't ever imagine it could do well in a national competition!"

Partly funded by the prize money, Sophia bought a Canon RF 400mm F2.8L IS USM, a top-of-the-range professional prime that costs over £13,000 (\$13,400). Calling it a "beautiful lens", Sophia uses it for her wildlife photography whenever possible.

"I am often to be found lying in a field with my new lens, waiting for hares," she says. "See my Instagram for some of the photos of foxes and hares I have taken with it so far."

"We're thrilled that Sophia has been able to acquire her dream lens," says Lee Harasyn, managing director of LCE. "We hope she'll inspire others to enter 2027's competition." ●

View the LCE Photographer of the Year 2026 winners at: poty.lcegroup.co.uk

Digital Darkroom

Transform your photos with our easy, effective guides



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Photoshop

Give your shots a mono treatment with these black and white effects.

PAGE 102

Lightroom

Editing tips that will make your moon shots look out of this world.

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Photoshop

Harsh drama ahoy with these Actions to make scenes more gritty.

PAGE 106

Affinity

Spruce up your holiday photos then have fun with lookup tables.

PAGE 108

DxO PhotoLab

In part four of our series, we show how to edit a raw file from scratch.

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.



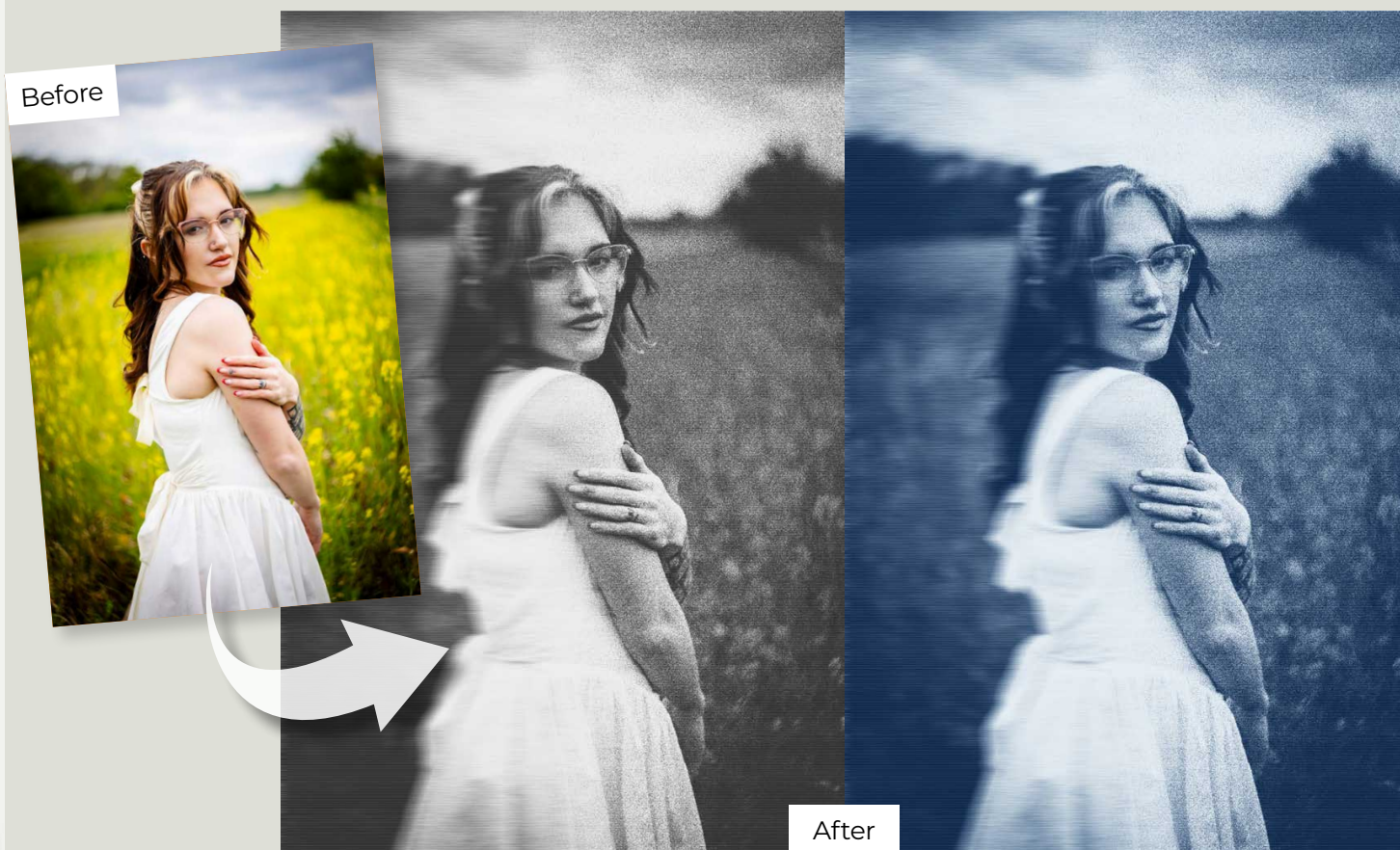
Sean McCormack

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.



Lights, camera, Actions!

Create your own Photoshop Actions with **Dan Mold** and download our free pack with 30 different black & white effects for your shots

With a classic appeal dating back to the inception of the medium, black and white photography lends itself to a variety of genres, and a monochromatic treatment can be an option for everything from portraits to landscapes, wildlife and product shots.

You might assume that, because there is no colour information to process, editing black and white shots is easier. But there are many ways to edit your photos, from a low- or ultra-high-contrast treatment, high key, low key, cyanotype, sepia or old school film vibe. Perhaps you want to add a halftone pattern or mimic the style of infrared film – the possibilities are endless, and it can take a while to try out different looks.

So this month we're giving away a batch of 30 Photoshop Actions for you to experiment with distinctive B&W treatments in a single click. Download our Start.jpg image, or follow along using one of your own files. Once you've applied an Action, go to Image > Flatten Image to merge the layers, before running another Action to build up the effect. Don't forget, if you want to return to the original image, go to File > Revert.

Make your own actions

Head to Window > Actions to bring up the Actions panel. When you're ready to begin recording your edits, click the Create new action button, and you'll see a prompt with a panel allowing you to give the action a name and choose where you'd like to save it. Hit Record to start, and you will see the record icon turn red to show that it is recording. Run through the edits you want to save and hit the square Stop button to finish. Now you can run the action through other pictures to quickly apply your edits.

Download your files

www.digitalcameraworld.com/dc311
Download your files and video tutorial from the folder titled 'Photoshop_B&W Actions'.



30 Black & White effect actions

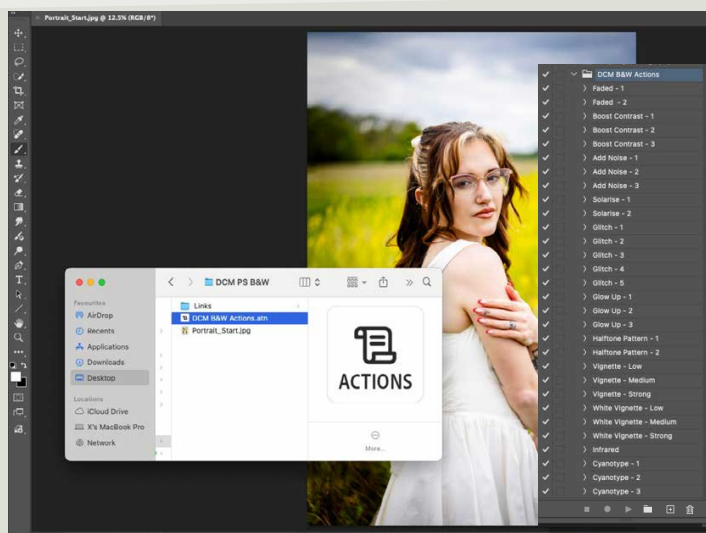


6-minute video tutorial



Project files and instructions





1

Load the actions

In Photoshop, go to File > Open and navigate to the image you would like to work on. If you'd prefer to experiment with the actions before trying them out on your own pictures, download the Start.jpg image supplied and use that instead. Next, you need to load in the Actions. To do this, locate the file 'B&W Actions.atn' with your free software download and drag it into Photoshop. Alternatively, go to Window > Actions, click on the fly-out menu in the top right of the Actions panel, then choose Load Actions. Locate the 'B&W Actions.atn' file and open it up.



2

Choose an action

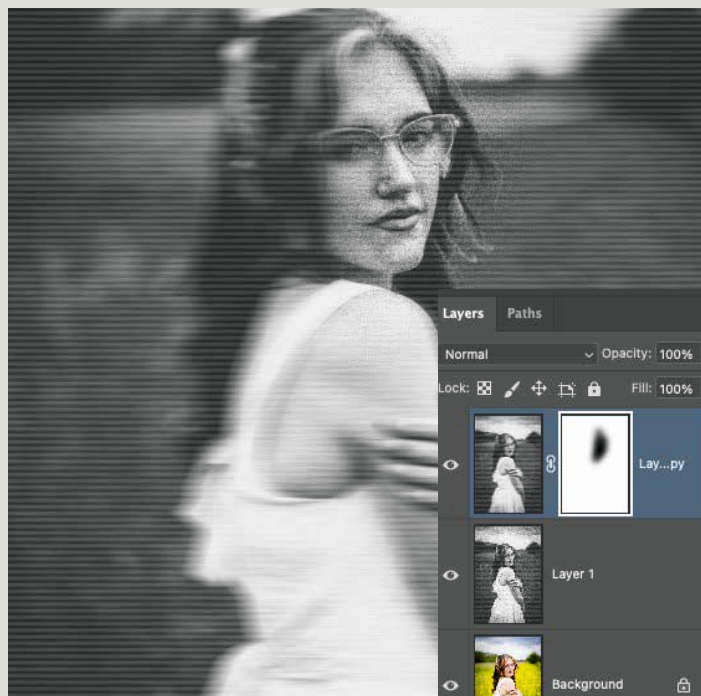
In the Actions panel, you should now see that a folder called 'B&W Actions' has appeared. Click on it to expand the folder and reveal all of the actions within it. Select one of the actions that you like the sound of, then click on it to select it and click the play button at the bottom of the actions panel to run it. Some of these actions, including Glitch 1-5, require your foreground colour to be set to black and your background colour to be set to white, so hit D on the keyboard to reset these before running these actions.



3

Tweaking the adjustment layers

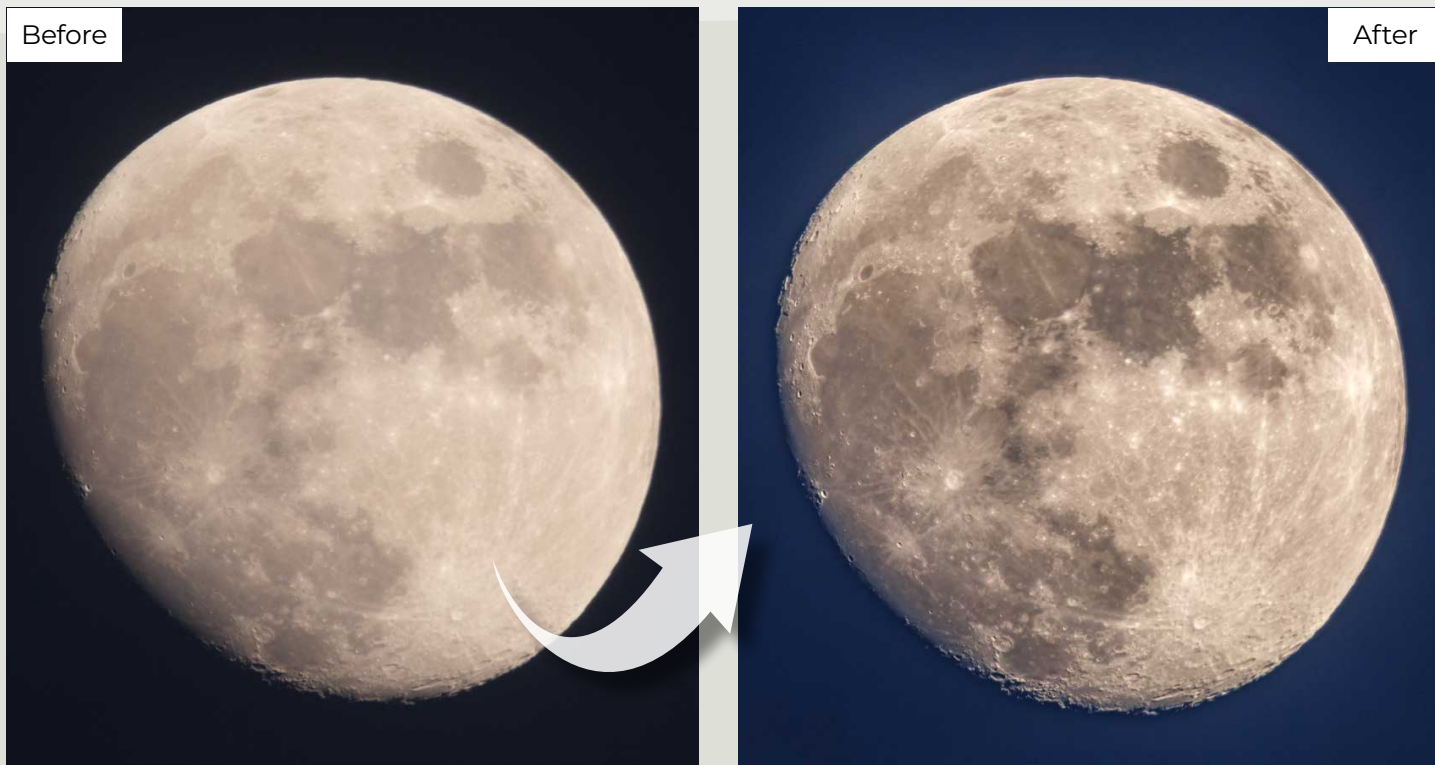
Many of these Actions will create new Adjustment Layers to apply the quick mono effects, and you will see these appear in your Layers panel (Window > Layers). For example, run Infrared Action and you'll see a Channel Mixer adjustment layer; double-click this to bring up the Channel Mixer menu, where you can now tweak the infrared look even further. You can also reduce the strength of the effect by lowering the Opacity of the layer.



4

Use Layer Masks

Some of the Adjustment Layers that are generated when you press play on certain Actions will come with a Layer Mask. However, if yours doesn't, simply click the layer you would like to mask to make it the active layer, then click on the Add Layer Mask icon at the bottom of the Layers Panel. Now paint over these layer masks with a black brush tool to mask off any parts of your image where you don't want the adjustment layer to take effect and reveal the layer beneath.



Make edits of moon shots that are out of this world

Use Lightroom Classic to bring out the best in telephoto shots of our nearest extraterrestrial neighbour, says **Sean McCormack**

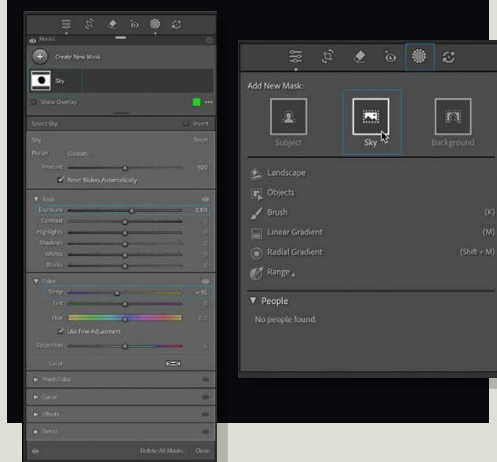
Like many kids, I loved astronomy and longed to have a telescope of my own. I'm still fascinated by it, and although I have a telescope, it's not a particularly useful one.

The ZWO Seestar S50 is amazing for looking at the moon and deep sky objects, but doesn't do the sort of raw files a photographer is used to. In fact, when it's not in Mosaic mode, the files are only 2MP in size. That said, I also have a long lens and a teleconverter, making our nearest neighbour, Luna, accessible to photograph.

My favourite time to shoot is when the moon is waxing gibbous – more than half full on the way to being a full moon. I like to shoot while there's still some light in the evening sky, so the moon isn't sitting in a pool of black, and I often capture the terminator line, which acts as side lighting to the craters, giving them more definition than you get with a full moon. No matter what aperture you use, it's hard to get the whole moon in focus, but even harder to focus stack. This shot was taken on a Fujifilm X-T5 with an XF150-600mm lens on a monopod with stabilisation enabled, and a minimum aperture of f/16. Here's how to fix the contrast and sharpen the details.

Blue Hour

Shoot at blue hour, and because there is colour and light in the sky, you can change it. Click Masking in the Toolstrip under the Histogram, and choose Select Sky. Boost the Exposure to 0.50 to lighten the sky and change the colour using Temperature. Negative settings, such as -15 here, add blue, while positive settings warm the sky.



Download your files

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



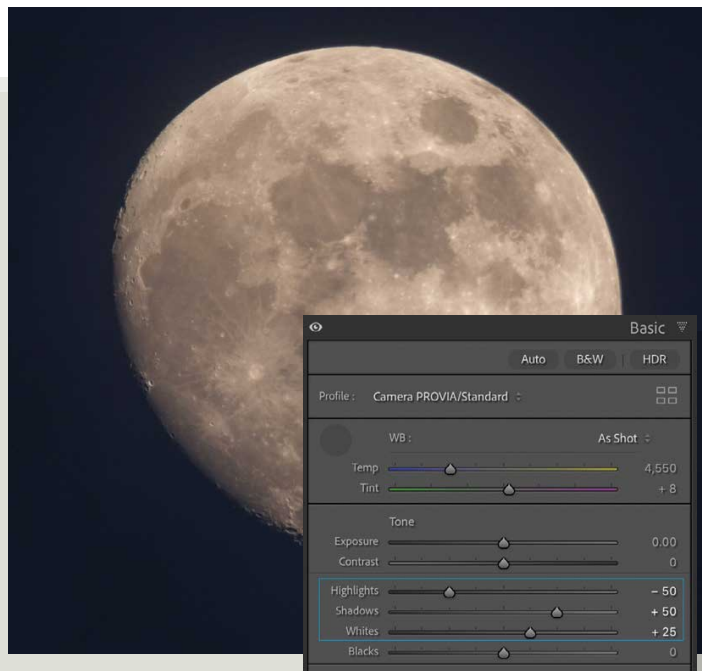
Two
Lightroom
presets



10-minute
video
tutorial



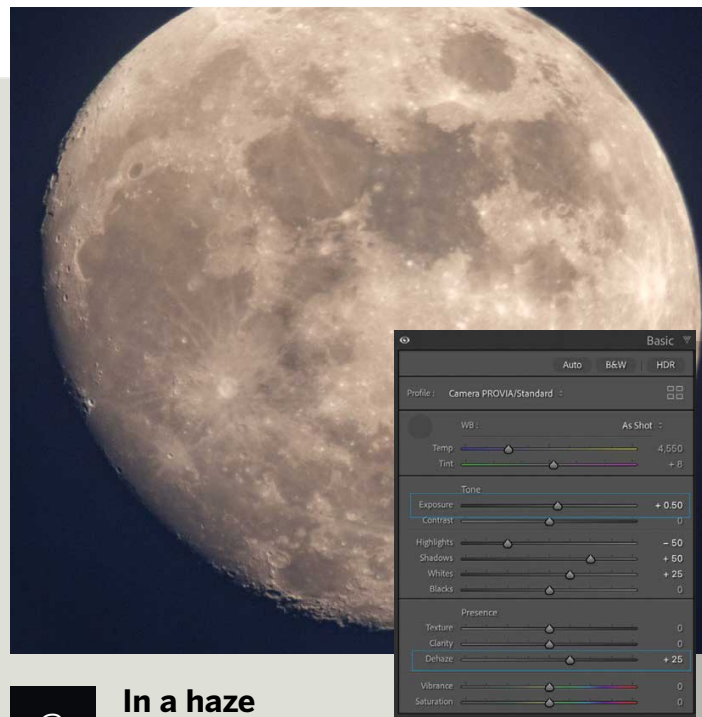
Project
files and
instructions



1

Moonlight shadow

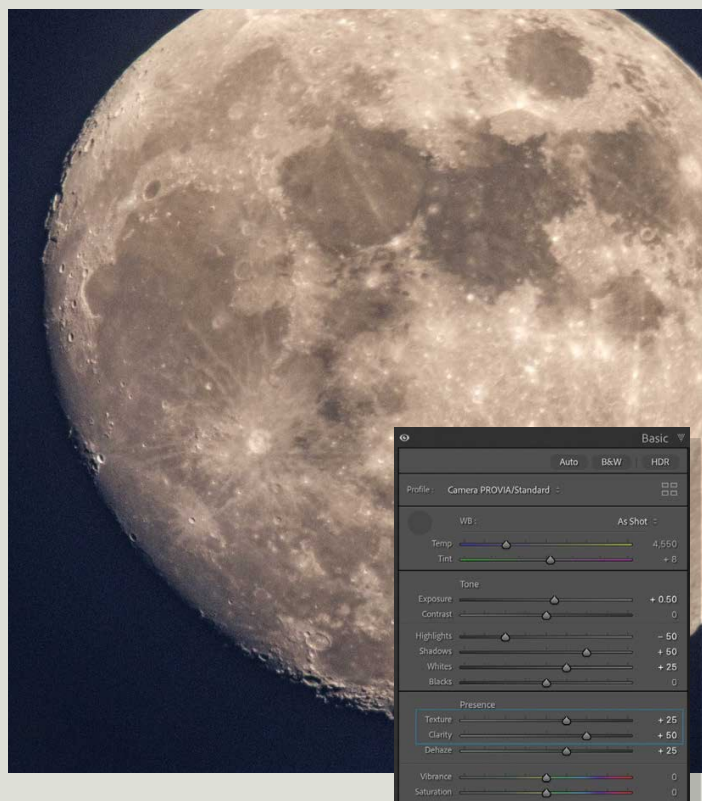
To get the widest range, I slightly overexposed the original shot. Nothing has been blown out, but there is a distinct lack of contrast. There's no true black in the scene, but you will need deeper shadows to define the mares (seas) and the crater edges. Set Highlights to -50 and Shadows to +50. There's no true white in the photo, but increasing the Whites to 25 will draw attention to the lighter craters.



2

In a haze

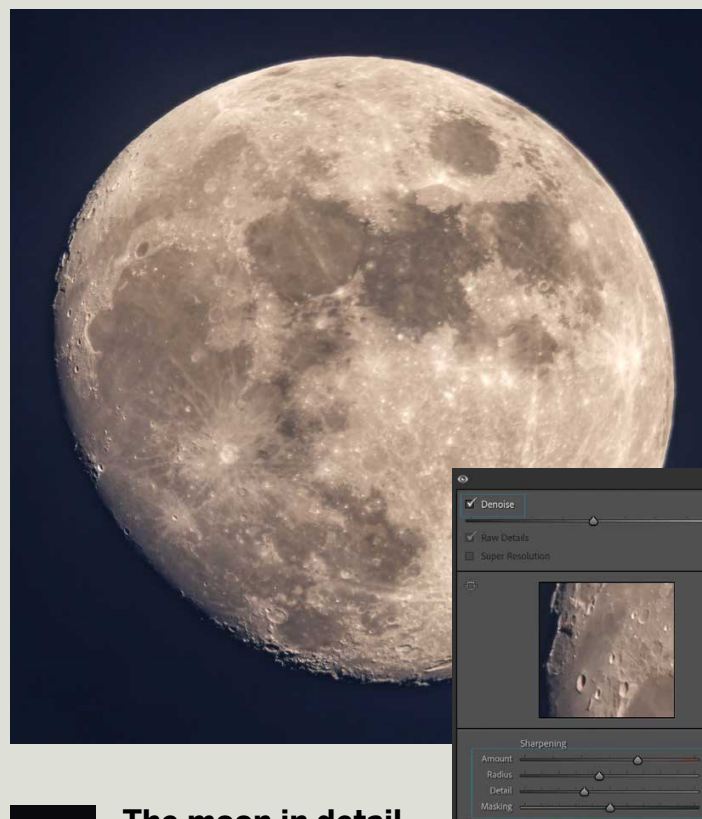
Although it was a clear evening, there were a few clouds about, and a thin layer of mist veiling the moon created a slight ring around the lunar edge. Moving the Dehaze slider helps, but go too far and the ring will look too dark. Setting it to 25 adds more contrast, but beyond that, it starts to look a bit strange. To compensate for the darkening, set Exposure to 0.50.



3

Texture boost

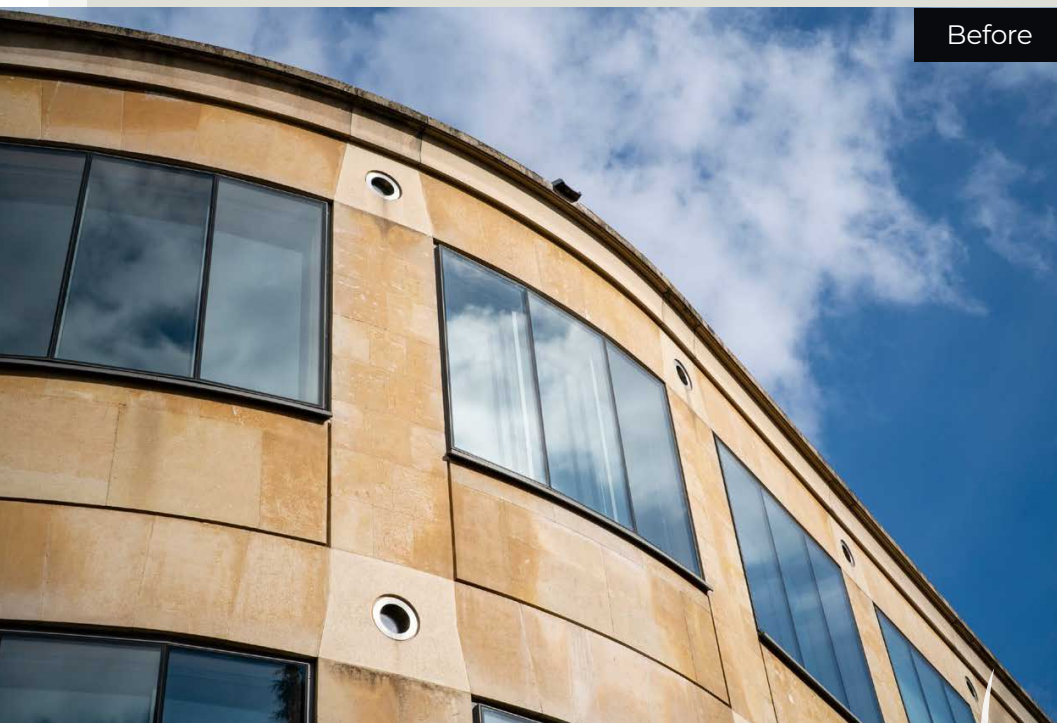
Now add punch to the image using a combination of Texture and Clarity. Boosting the Clarity slider will darken the mares and add general punch to the lunar surface – try 50 and adjust it to your taste from there. Now set the Texture to 25. This won't add detail, but it does bring a sense of focus to the image. One side effect is that the digital noise from shooting at ISO 1000 is more obvious.



4

The moon in detail

Tick the Denoise box in the Detail panel (this also checks Raw Details) and adjust the amount using the slider. This no longer generates a new file, so continue editing in this window. In the Sharpening panel, set Amount to 100 and Masking to 50 to restrict it to the edges. Enhance details by setting Radius to 1.6 to affect further from the edge. Finally, set Detail to 35 so you can see the craters better.



Before

Inject some drama into your shots

You spend a fortune on top-quality lenses, only for **James Abbott** to rough up your shots with some grungy Photoshop effects

As photographers, it's easy to get carried away with perfection – perfect sharpness, the perfect composition or the perfect light, for example. However, like most things, perfection is a matter of perception and personal opinion. Despite splashing out on the best gear you can afford to achieve the best image quality possible, don't be afraid to push your shots in editing to achieve the desired results. Grunge, moodiness and drama are all popular approaches to editing. In this tutorial, we're going to focus on adding harsh drama.

The four techniques we're looking at are all different, but as is often the case, they can be applied together. To push things even further and create unique results, you can take elements of each and mix and match them to create new techniques of your own. You just have to be willing to experiment and spend a few minutes seeing what works and what doesn't. We assure you that the results will be worth it.

Download your files

www.digitalcameraworld.com/dc311
Download your files and video tutorial from the folder titled 'Photoshop_Harsh Drama'.



Four
Actions for
Photoshop



7-minute
video
tutorial



Project
files and
instructions



1

Harsh colour

Click on the Create new fill or adjustment layer icon at the bottom of the Layers panel and select Levels. When the dialog opens, drag the black point below the histogram to 30 and the white point to 225 to create a contrast boost. Close the dialog and change the Blending mode from Normal to Luminosity to maintain natural saturation. Create a Black & White Adjustment Layer, close the dialog immediately, set Opacity to 20 per cent and the Blending mode to Linear Burn.



2

Red Filter mono

Click on the Create new fill or adjustment layer icon at the bottom of the Layers panel and select Black & White. Click on the dropdown menu that's set to Default and select the Red Filter preset to mimic a red filter placed over the lens when shooting black and white film. Next, create a Levels Adjustment Layer and set the black point to 40 and the white point to 250. This will dramatically deepen blacks and make blue skies turn black for maximum high-contrast mono drama.

3

Grungy saturation

Create a Clarity & Dehaze Adjustment Layer, and when the dialog opens, set Clarity to 60. Close the dialog and immediately create a Hue/Saturation Adjustment Layer. Now, drag the Saturation slider to +25 to increase saturation globally, affecting all colours. Using such high clarity is often paired with desaturation techniques, but it also works well with the opposite to create an unexpected, but equally successful, result that's subtle and bold at the same time.

4

Add texture

With the Background Layer active, press Ctrl/Cmd+J to make a copy. Now press D on the keyboard to set the Palette colours to the default black and white. Now go to Filter > Render > Clouds. Once rendered, change the Blending mode from Normal to Overlay. Press Ctrl+J/Cmd+J to copy this Layer, then press Ctrl/Cmd+T to transform, holding down Shift and Alt/Option while dragging out slightly. Now reduce the Opacity of the two Layers to 35 per cent to apply the texture lightly.



Wendy Evans

Making masks for editing raw files

Wendy Evans cleans up her holiday photos with help from new functionality in Affinity

Download your files

www.digitalcameraworld.com/dc311
Download your project files and LUTs from the folder titled 'Affinity_Masking Features'.



Four LUTs to apply to your images



4-minute video tutorial

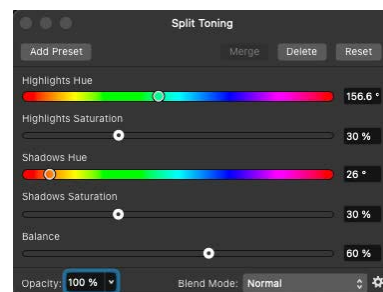


Project files to follow along

The trouble with visiting beautiful historic cities with old buildings and narrow streets is that half the scene will be an impenetrable Stygian gloom. But this is one area where a new feature in Affinity can help. The software now gives you the ability to use masks with local adjustments in the Raw developing module, before you get into the weeds of editing. You don't have to do all your editing here; you can do that in the main Pixel screen with layers and masks, but for initial adjustments, there's some merit to tackling the major problems straight away. Consider it a first step along the way, rather than the last one.

Toning and colour

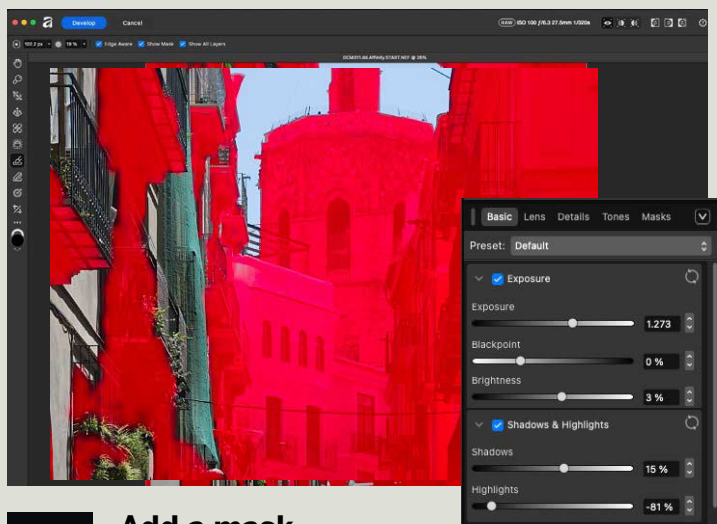
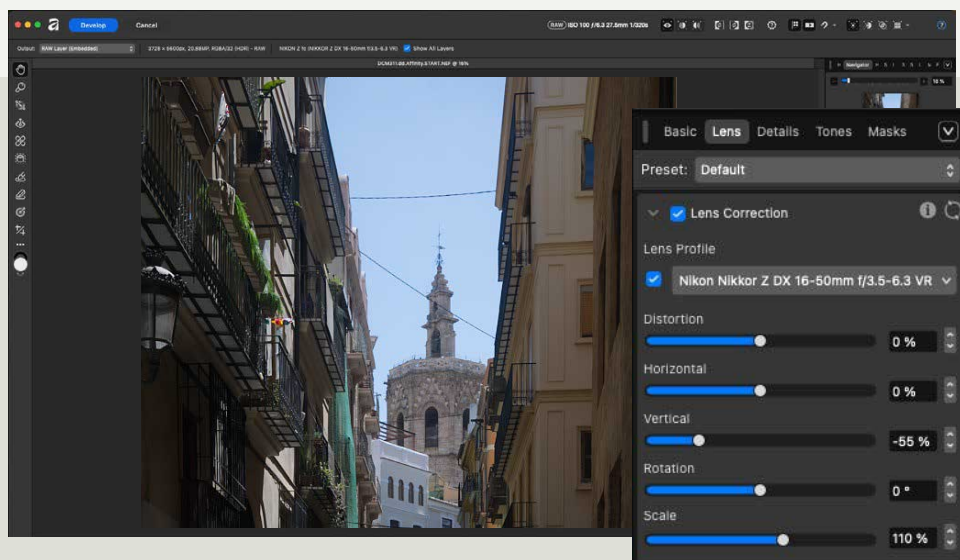
The tutorial covers adjusting the lighting in this high-contrast street scene, but what it needs now is some retro colouring. So add a Split Toning Adjustment Layer. Set the Highlights Hue to around 156° for cyan-green and Saturation to 30 per cent. Then, set Shadows Hue to orange at 26° and 30 per cent Saturation. Balance: 60 per cent. Based on this, I have created four LUTs for you to download and use with your summer holiday photos.



1

Correct your geometry

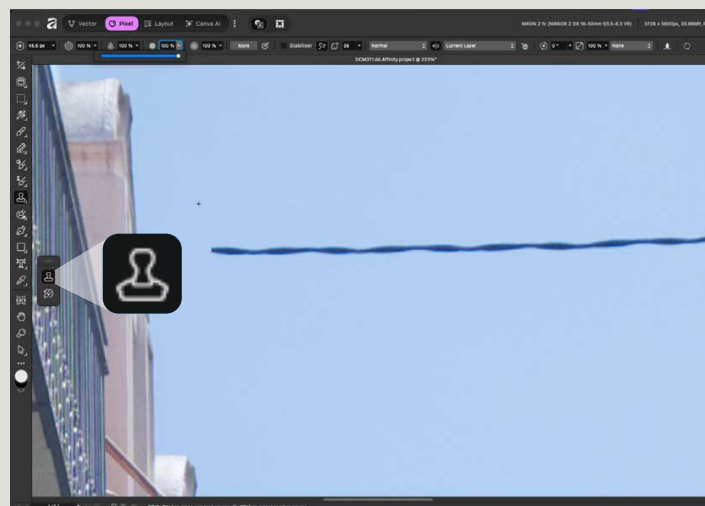
Before making any further adjustments, let's sort out the leaning verticals. Load the image and click on the Lens tab. Move the Vertical slider to -55 per cent, then use the Scale function to zoom in by sliding to the right, and remove the redundant areas at the bottom left and right. Around 110 per cent should be sufficient here.



2

Add a mask

Now click on the Masks tab and, at the bottom of this palette, click on the Add Mask icon for a Pixel mask. Put a tick in the Show Mask option and zoom in – the idea is to paint the dark areas that you want to lighten up. It's worth ticking the Edge Aware box for parts of this. With the mask layer selected, go to Basic and adjust things like Exposure and Brightness, then click on Develop.



3

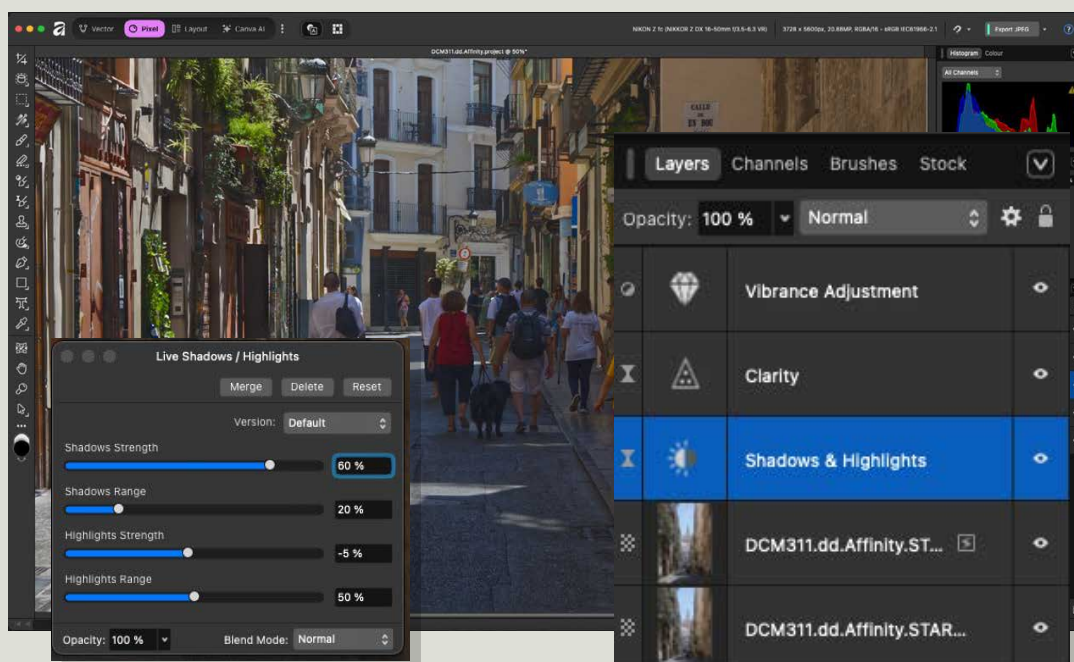
Clean up some elements

It's time to clean up the image, including those cables running across the sky. Go into the main Pixel editing screen, and use the Clone Brush Tool (S) to remove the lines. Where the cable meets the buildings, increase the brush hardness to 90-100 per cent to get a clean edge. I'm going to leave the cables that are at building level.

4

Let's get retro

In the Layers palette, go to Filters > Shadows & Highlights. Move Shadow Strength to 50 per cent and drop Shadow Range to 20 per cent so the adjustment focuses on the street. Add a Filters > Clarity layer at 50 per cent to add definition to the buildings. Add a Vibrance Adjustment layer with 35 per cent Vibrance and 25 per cent Saturation.



MISSED A PREVIOUS PART?

Access digital back issues when you subscribe.
Page 40



Before



After

Edit a raw file from scratch

Wendy Evans concludes her four-part series about editing in PhotoLab 9, DxO's flagship software application

The process that you follow for editing raw files will either suit your own workflow or the image in question, based on what changes you're making. For me, I tend to work my way across the section icons, starting with Light, Color, Detail, Geometry and Watermark & Effects. At some point, I'll drop into the Local Adjustments menu as well, if required.

However, if you're going to use the Presets at the top right to start your editing, it makes sense to begin here first, then make your light and colour adjustments afterwards. Otherwise, you will end up repeating some of the steps. The same applies if you're using the optional Nik Collection plugins.

For this tutorial, we're going to look at a typical workflow that will help improve the raw file of a seascape image of Devon, which despite being taken in summer, was rather cloudy and gloomy.

Keep correcting

You might find that after using the Force Parallel tool, it doesn't quite look right. In that case, select the tool again and adjust, clicking on Close to apply. After this, tidy up the image by clicking on the Crop tool. This will automatically fit to the bottom corners of the straightened image, but you can customise the crop if needed. Again, click on Close to apply it.

Download your files

www.digitalcameraworld.com/dc311
Download your files and video tutorial from the folder titled 'PhotoLab_Editing Raw Files'.



No software extras this time



4-minute video tutorial



Project files to follow along



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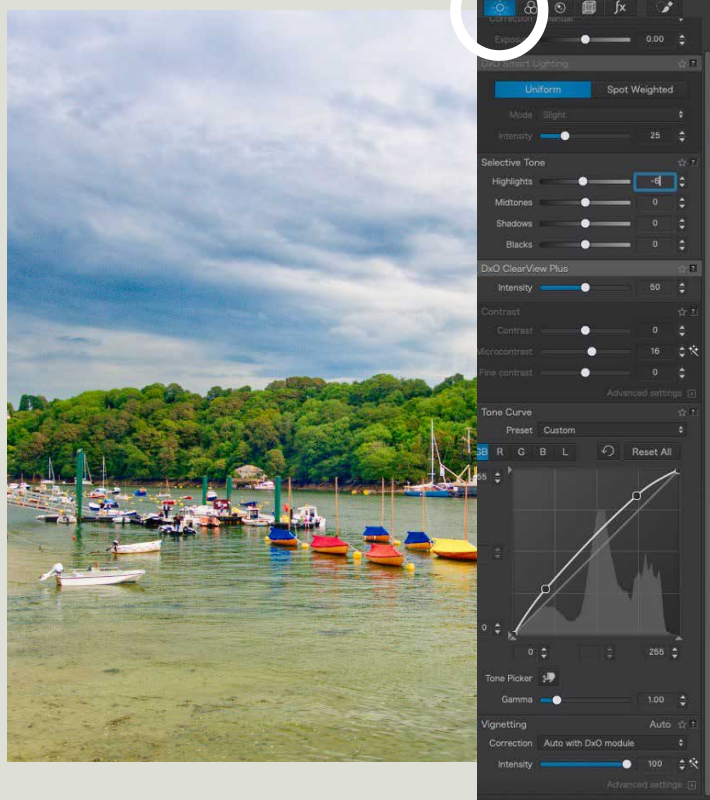
www.dxo.com
and use the code:
DCW15



1

Find a preset

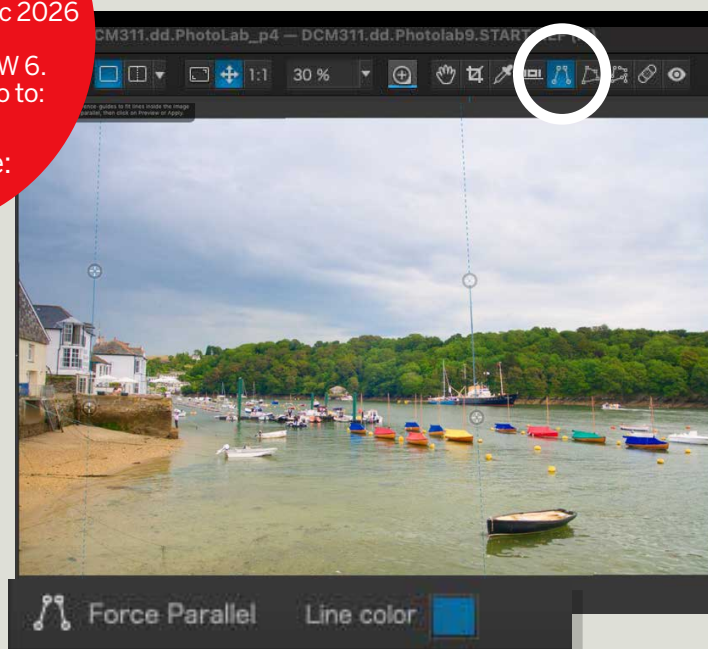
Select the image in the PhotoLibrary tab and switch to Customize. Now, click on the Presets tab on the top right and consider all the options. I've decided to start things off with the preset called '2000 - O'Rear' so click on that. This has improved the colour and contrast, though it's still a little flat.



3

Adjust the lighting

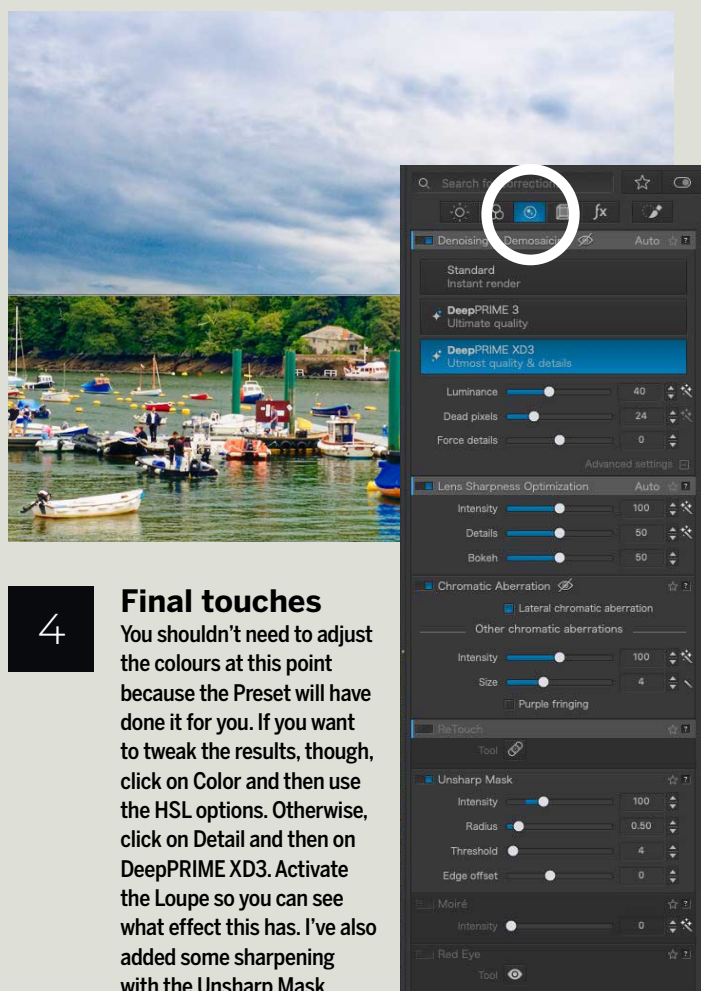
Now, let's make some adjustments based on the basic edit. Go to the Light icon and activate DxO ClearView Plus. This brightens the image and adds plenty of contrast. However, the sky looks a little overexposed, so go to Selective Tone and reduce the Highlights by -6. Vignetting correction is automatically applied, but leave it on.



2

Correct the verticals

Click on the Force Parallel (E) tool at the top of the screen. The two guides will now appear. Move the cursor over the middle of the guide to pick it up and move it. Then click and hold on the two control icons to line it up along the edge of an element that should be vertical, for example, the ship mast and the side of the building. Click on Close to apply.



4

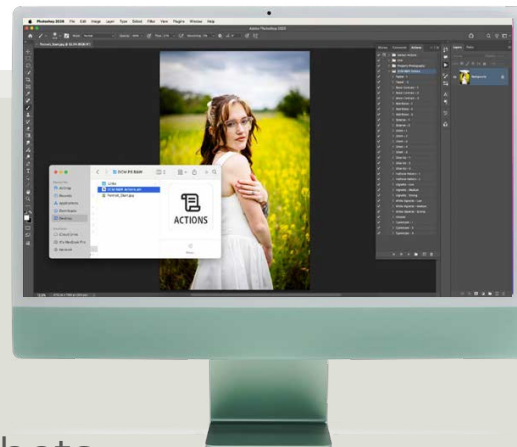
Final touches

You shouldn't need to adjust the colours at this point because the Preset will have done it for you. If you want to tweak the results, though, click on Color and then use the HSL options. Otherwise, click on Detail and then on DeepPRIME XD3. Activate the Loupe so you can see what effect this has. I've also added some sharpening with the Unsharp Mask.

THIS MONTH'S SOFTWARE EXTRAS

40 Actions, presets, LUTs and effects

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

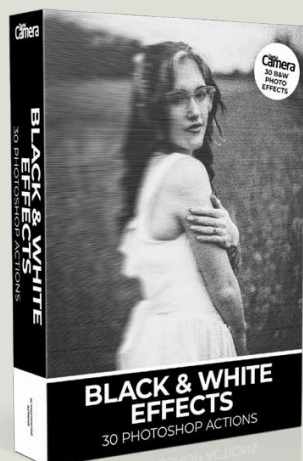


This month, we are giving away 40 software extras with our Digital Darkroom tutorials. Once installed in Adobe Photoshop, Lightroom or Affinity, these Actions, presets and lookup tables can give your photos a whole new look in just a few clicks. We have 30 black and white Photoshop actions that convert your image to mono and

then apply various effects. There are also two masking presets for Lightroom for enhancing your photos of the moon. Then we have four more Actions for Photoshop, which add harsh drama to your image – three in colour and one mono. Finally, if you've been wondering how to style your holiday photos, then wonder no longer; these four LUTs will do the job for you.

How to use your software extras

Once you have downloaded the 'dcm311-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.



30 B&W EFFECT ACTIONS

Software: Photoshop
(Version 25.5 or higher)

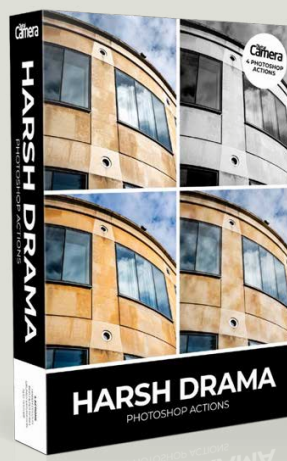
These 30 Photoshop Actions will turn your photos into glorious monochrome and give them interesting finishes and effects. The Actions create layers and masks, so they can be edited for opacity and effectiveness.



2 MOON EDITING PRESETS

Software: Lightroom

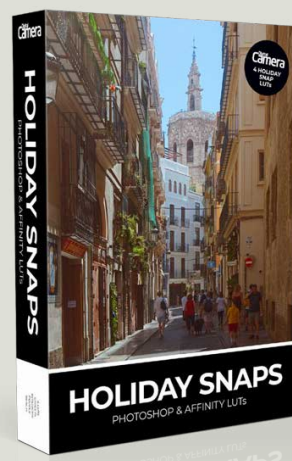
Boost your moon shots with these Lightroom presets. One applies everything from the tutorial: contrast, haze removal, sharpening, noise removal and AI sky selection. The other does the same, but without selecting the sky.



4 HARSH DRAMA ACTIONS

Software: Photoshop
(Version 25.5 or higher)

These four Actions for Photoshop can be used to give your photos a harsh, dramatic effect. There are three colour Actions and a mono one; the gritty, grungy style will suit building and architecture images.



4 HOLIDAY SNAPS LUTs

Software: Photoshop/ Affinity

Give your holiday photos an extra dash of style with this collection of retro-inspired LUTs. These are standard .cube files, so they work with any software that supports LUTs. The themes covered include streets, interiors, people and the beach.

Download all four packs from: www.digitalcameraworld.com/dc311

Kit Zone

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



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Leica SL3-P _ A new addition to the storied brand's full-frame SL-series



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Canon RF 7-14mm F2.8-3.5L Fisheye STM _ Creative lens is two optics in one



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Lumix S 40mm F2 _ Compact and low-weight L-Mount standard prime



120

DxO PhotoLab 9 Elite _ Flagship image editor gets its annual refresh



Having recently celebrated its centenary, the iconic German brand and pioneer of 35mm film photography hosted a launch event at its base in Wetzlar, Germany. Being unveiled were the third SL3 camera body and two new lenses (see page 24). Unlike the rangefinders it's famous for, the Leica SL-series is a line-up of full-frame mirrorless cameras built around the L-Mount, so compatible lenses from any L-Mount Alliance member can be used. The SL3-P slots in between the SL3 and SL3-S. Turn over to see what the SL3-P excels at.

Also on test this month is a new creative lens from Canon. The RF 7-15mm is the first native fisheye for EOS R series cameras and allows users to capture unique images, and virtual reality content via a software utility.

Less of a niche lens but still important to L-Mount users is the Lumix S 40mm F2, a compact and affordable prime ideal for street photography and everyday shooting.

We wrap up this month's Kit Zone by reviewing PhotoLab 9 Elite, DxO's flagship image editor. If it's pure image quality you're after from your editing software, then turn to page 120 for our verdict. **Niall Hampton**



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

The awards bestowed by the Digital Camera lab...



Given to the top product in a group test



For products that receive five stars overall



Given to products that offer superb value for money

Ratings explained

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

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

Mirrorless Leica SL3-P



1 The Leica SL3-P shares the sturdy, pared-back design of its siblings in the SL3 series.

2 There's no red dot, but 'Leica' in white makes the SL3-P stand out more than the SL3-S.

3 A wide range of Panasonic and Sigma L-Mount lenses can be used alongside Leica's.

Leica SL3-P

£5,150/\$6,690 (body only)

The highest-performance Leica camera ever. But how good is it?

www.leica-camera.com

Specifications

Lens mount: L-Mount
Sensor: Full-frame BSI CMOS, 45.8 MP (44.9MP effective)
Image processor: Maestro IV
ISO range: 50-200,000. Dual Basis Low 50-360. Dual Basis High 400-200,000
Image stabilisation: 5-axis, 5 stops
Max burst: 40fps with AF (electronic shutter), 7fps with AF (mechanical shutter)
Viewfinder: Electronic, 5.76 million dots, 60fps or 120fps refresh
LCD: 3.2-inch, 2.33 million dots
Autofocus: Hybrid: 315 contrast-AF points. 819 phase detection AF points
Max image size: 8144 x 5424px
Max video resolution: 8K 24p open gate, 10-bit, 4:2:0
Storage: 1x CFexpress Type B, 1x SD UHS-II
Battery/ shots: BP-SCL6/ 383
Connectivity: Wi-Fi, USB-C, Bluetooth 5.0, HDMI, 3.5mm headphone jack, 3.5mm microphone jack, timecode
Dimensions (W x H x D): 151.45 x 108.05 x 84.6mm
Weight: 768g (body only)

The Leica SL3-P is the third full-frame mirrorless camera in the SL3 range – so what does it offer that its relatively recently launched siblings don't? In short, it tries to outperform both of them, with a set of specifications that make it the first can-shoot-anything camera that Leica has ever produced.

It comes with a new speed of AI-assisted autofocus and burst rate that puts it right up there in contention with the likes of Canon, Nikon and Sony. It is also the most video-centric camera that Leica has ever produced, with the headline feature being the 8K RAW open gate video shooting that outguns some of its better-known hybrid rivals.

In terms of resolution, it takes a middle ground between the existing Leica SL3 and SL3-S – offering a BSI sensor with a 44MP resolution (compared to the 60MP and 24MP of its siblings). It is a sensor that we believe has been used on the Panasonic S1R II, which offers a similar specification, but

with some significant differences. But what does this camera actually deliver? We have extensively field tested it and put it through our lab to find out.

Build and handling

Curiously, the Leica SL3-P makes do without the iconic red dot Leica logo on its front – giving it a visual distinction from the SL3 and SL3-S, which, from the outside, look almost exactly the same as the new model.

The three all-metal bodies share the same size, weight, LCD screen, viewfinder, monochrome status panel, twin card slots, battery and more – so having this as a distinguishing mark for this new poster boy of the Leica range makes some sort of sense. However, the "P" designation has historically been used for stealth, less-branded versions of existing models (such as the M11-P). However, the SL3-P is much more than a minor cosmetic update of an existing model.

The minimalism continues on the camera itself. Only four of the buttons

Leica SL3-P Mirrorless



4

The SL3-P's 5.76m-dot EVF has 0.78x magnification and can refresh at 60 or 120fps.

5

The rear LCD display tilts, but it can't be flipped forward to be used as a video monitor.

6

Only four buttons on the rear of the body get labels: Play, Function, Power and Menu.

7

A pair of control wheels with satisfying tactile actions flank the SL3-P's top plate.

8

A big mechanical dial for the dioptre control makes eyesight adjustments easy.

9

There are two card storage slots, one for CFexpress Type B and one for UHS-II SD.

or dials on the SL3-P have any type of label to suggest their purpose – and that's the Play, Function, Power and Menu buttons on the rear. However, this is exactly the same as found on the SL3 and SL3-S.

The simplicity, of course, means you are given the ability to customise practically every button and input to the way you want to use the camera – although these choices do come with the risk that you will end up with your camera being harder to use rather than easier, if you don't know what you are

doing – and also harder to pass to someone else to use. However, Leica has worked hard on the user experience of the camera, and the menu system takes a subtle, monochrome approach to the layout, which keeps everything looking impressively clean as you scroll through the options.

There are some clever implementations – such as being able to toggle quickly between video and photo options. Also, as you toggle between video settings, for instance, it gives you a headline number of options

Chris George



This high-contrast scene shows the level of detail in the architectural shadows, which is best seen in the Corinthian columns on the right.

Chris George



Taken in harsh, high-contrast lighting from the summer sun, this portrait shows the impressive 14-stop dynamic range of the Leica SL3-P.

you have with that setting – so as you select 8K settings, the unavailable options aren't shown. Again, this is a boon when you know what you are doing and what is available, but not necessarily helpful for the first-time user.

One thing I love is the big dioptre control for the electronic viewfinder – its mechanical dial isn't fiddly to use in the way that eyesight adjustment is on other models, and you can even see where it is set, so you can quickly set it to where you need it if you lend —>

Mirrorless Leica SL3-P

Chris George



Even in low light, eye tracking works well, as shown by this studio portrait. Leica SL3-P and Vario-Elmarit-SL 24-90mm f/2.8-4. Settings: 1/200 sec at f/8, ISO 64.

your camera to someone else. Another big plus point is the companion smartphone app. Personally, I'm getting tired of camera apps that are difficult to use and unreliable. But here, Leica has obviously spent a lot of time developing Fotos so that it looks good and works without any fuss.

I was impressed at the speed at which I was able to set up the SL3-P with the app, download images that I had taken, and review the settings I had used.

Performance

During testing, I took around 3,500 photos with the SL3-P, in a range of different shooting scenarios, including street portraits, studio fashion, garden flowers, travel and motorsport. It gave me a thorough chance to put the camera through its paces.

I was impressed with the improvements to the autofocus system, with portraits and motorsports, in particular, providing strong proof that the AI detection options work well.

Eyes were reliably in focus, and 150mph racing cars looked sharp in every frame.

There are only six AF detection modes to choose from, two each for people, cars and animals. That's fewer options than you'll find on some rival cameras – there are no options for planes or insects, for instance.

I was also able to test out the camera's remarkable 40fps burst mode on the Nurburgring track in Germany. This worked well, but was perhaps overkill for the subject in hand, as the movement through the frame is not as great as the track speeds suggest.

Part of the issue here is with the buffer. The maximum frames it can shoot at 40fps is just 70 raw files – or just over 1.5 seconds' worth of shots, which isn't sufficient time for the vehicles to enter the frame and pass you. In this instance, a 15fps setting would have been more appropriate, but even then, I would still have only got 70 frames before the buffer filled up.

The most impressive part of the camera is the quality of the images. It could be the colour science, or a secret sauce created between the way the DNG raw files are handled and the SL lenses – but images straight out of the camera looked much better than I would have expected. That's a quality that we should all be willing to invest more money in than most of us actually do.

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



Lumix S1R II
£2,999/\$3,299

Everything Lumix fans want in a flagship camera – smaller body, faster sensor, improved AF and towering video specs.

www.bit.ly/dcm310_slrii



Leica SL3-S
£4,500/\$5,295

Delivers some of the best image quality seen from a 24MP body – blistering 30fps bursts and 6K open gate recording.

Reviewed: issue 293





Part of a sequence captured at the Nürburgring racetrack in Germany using the SL3-P's 40fps burst mode – the AI-aided focusing was surprisingly accurate. Settings: 1/2500 sec at f/4, ISO 1000.



The SL3-P gives great natural colours straight out of the camera, as seen in this image of wild lupins. Captured with the Leica SL 90-280mm lens at f/3.5. Settings: 1/800 sec at f/3.5, ISO 400.

Although this review doesn't do a deep dive into the video performance of the SL3-P, the video clips we recorded during testing showed that it has an impressive performance. In particular, the camera provides excellent stabilisation when using heavy zoom lenses with it, such as the SL 24-90mm and 90-280mm.

It is worth noting that the SL3-P combines two seemingly incompatible features – open gate and weatherproofing. The IP54 water protection rating is unusual for system cameras (of its rivals, only OM System offers this). But shooting 8K open gate means that

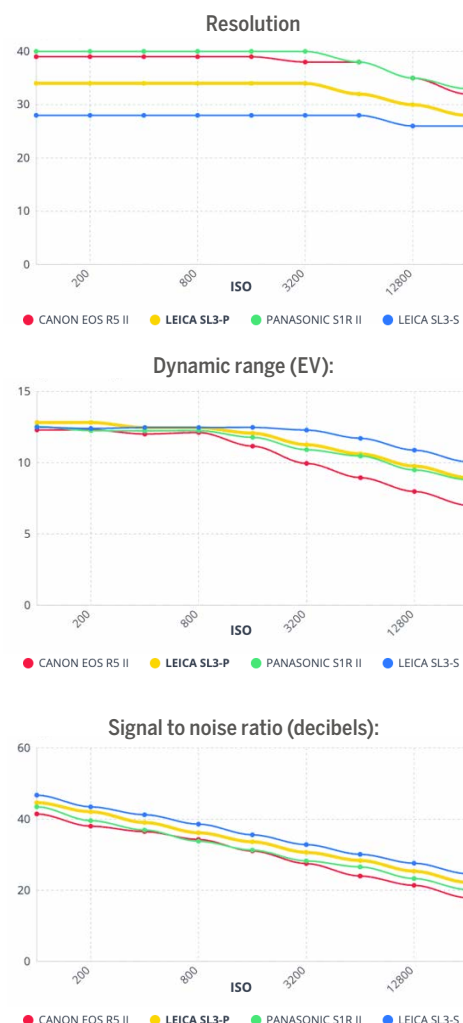
the camera is more likely to overheat, and the standard solution for this would be big vents to help the cooling.

It is extremely impressive that we get both in the same camera. Leica quotes typical recording times at 25C for 8K/30fps as approximately 20 minutes (25min for 6K/30fps, and 30min with 4K/30fps).

Although open gate recording is impressive, it is limited to shooting at 24p – to shoot raw open gate, you will need an external recorder. Nonetheless, the specs are impressive for a manufacturer that has always been photo-first. **Chris George**

“Images straight out of the camera looked better than expected – a quality we should all be willing to invest more money in”

Leica SL3-P Mirrorless



The SL3-P performs better in terms of dynamic range and signal-to-noise ratio when compared with the other two 45MP cameras, but can't quite compete with the SL3-S with its larger photosites. Despite the new Leica performing better than its Lumix S1R II rival in these tests, the Panasonic offers a higher resolution across the ISO range.

Digital Camera verdict



There is a lot to like about the Leica SL3-P, and part of its appeal is the way that Leica has simply upgraded major internal components of the SL3 family. The L-Mount Alliance means there are plenty of lenses available for the camera, even if the SL range is relatively small. As Leica's latest C2PA camera, you can add content credentials to your files to prove they aren't created with AI, and it supports Frame.io for cloud collaboration. What I particularly love about the camera is the photos it delivers. There are three ways to fall in love with a camera: specs and looks; the way it feels in your hands and ergonomics; and the results that it delivers. The last of these is the most persuasive argument for picking the SL3-P.

Zoom lens Canon RF 7-14mm F2.8-3.5L Fisheye STM



Canon RF 7-14mm F2.8-3.5L Fisheye STM

£1,719/\$1,899

An all-in-one circular and diagonal fisheye

[canon.co.uk](https://www.canon.co.uk)

After a decade and a half, the Canon RF 7-14mm F2.8-3.5L Fisheye STM is here – the long-awaited upgrade to the cult classic Canon EF 8-15mm f/4L Fisheye USM DSLR lens from 2011. Just like the old EF version, the Canon RF 7-14mm F2.8-3.5L Fisheye STM is uniquely creative – a zoom that goes from circular fisheye ('proper' fisheye) at 7mm to a diagonal fisheye ('full-frame' fisheye, which stretches the image across the entire frame) at 14mm.

But far from just the old lens with an RF mount, this new version offers significant upgrades over its predecessor: better image quality, faster aperture, more extreme field of view, lighter weight and the ability to convert imagery to 180° 2D VR content.

The Canon RF 7-14mm F2.8-3.5L Fisheye STM might be the most niche lens on the market but, if you're someone whose work demands or rewards its unique properties, this might be a genuine dream optic.

Build and handling

After years of handling the old EF 8-15mm, picking up the RF 7-14mm felt like coming back home. The lenses feel familiar, though the RF version is lighter at just 476g (compared to 540g), but it's also longer, at 109.4mm (versus 83mm). That extra length accommodates some welcome new features on the exterior, such as a function button and RF control ring (clicked), though you lose the old focusing scale. But it's how that space is used inside that provides the biggest benefit.

The Canon RF 7-14mm F2.8-3.5L Fisheye STM has a more complex optical formula than its predecessor, now boasting 16 elements (over 14 in the EF version) including five ultra-low dispersion elements (instead of two) to offer even better control of chromatic aberrations and colour fringing. On top of that, there is a pair of aspheric elements to offer improved distortion compensation and better correction for



A slot for drop-in filters allows neutral density and polarising filters to be added to the optical path.

spherical aberration – the latter being particularly important, as the new lens has a faster maximum aperture of f/2.8 than the previous version at f/4.

The front element is a rather bulbous affair, so conventional filters won't work here, but the RF lens carries over the EF version's old trick of accepting filters at the rear. However, instead of old-school gel filters, the RF 7-14mm accepts drop-in filters designed for Canon's EF-EOS R mount adapter, including the specialist Variable ND Filter A and Circular Polarising Filter A.

And where the EF lens had a Limit switch, the RF version improves the formula by not only enabling you to lock the position but also to lock it in the 'C' position for diagonal coverage on an APS-C camera, where due to the crop factor, it starts to achieve full-frame coverage at 8.7mm (13.92mm equivalent), rather than at "full lock" on the long end.

As you'd expect of an L-series lens, the build quality is excellent, and there are rubber seals to provide full weather-sealing along with a fluorine coating to protect the front element. Another similarity with the older EF lens is that the zoom and focus mechanisms are fully internal, so the overall physical length of the lens remains fixed at all settings.

One unusual feature for a fisheye lens is that it comes with a detachable hood. Due to the extreme viewing angle of circular fisheye lenses, they generally don't have a hood, but rather a two-stage front cap that slides over the front of the lens. Diagonal fisheye lenses normally come with a fixed, integral hood that gives protection to the bulbous front element, as well as reducing the risk of ghosting and flare. But this lens comes with a hood that you can fit and remove at will.

Performance

If you're upgrading from the old EF 8-15mm, you'll be pleased to hear that the Canon RF 7-14mm F2.8-3.5L Fisheye STM delivers superior image quality – particularly around the edges. Canon says that it performs better than the RF 15-35mm F2.8L in this respect, a claim that is backed up by my own experience of both lenses.

While you're clearly still going to bump into aberrations as you examine the extreme

1
The lens hood detaches for circular fisheye shooting; the lens cap attaches to the hood.

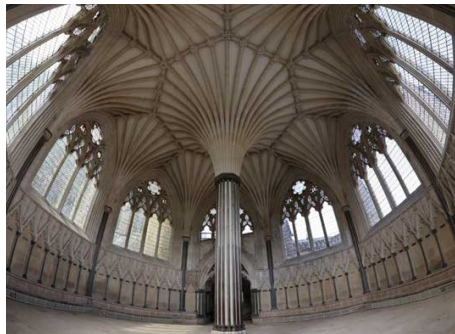
2
The zooming and focusing action is internal – the length of the lens never changes.

3
The optical formula is more complex than the one in Canon's EF 8-15mm f/4L fisheye.





Wells Cathedral in Somerset, captured at 14mm. Canon says the RF 7-14mm F2.8-3.5L Fisheye STM delivers superior image quality, particularly around the edges. Settings: 1/60 sec at f/8, ISO 2000.



A pair of images captured at either end of the focal range. This is the circular fisheye view at 7mm (above left), where the lens captures a 190° angle of view, and at 14mm (right), where the diagonal view is 180°.

warp at the frame edge, especially in circular fisheye mode, given the optical gymnastics that this lens is performing, they are very well controlled. With these aberrations also being easy to correct in software such as Photoshop, they become a non-issue.

If you're wondering what the difference is between the circular and diagonal images, and how a photo compares when shot at the opposite zoom extremes, I tested the lens out at Wells Cathedral in Somerset, taking a couple of shots of the interior of this magnificent building to illustrate (above). If this is your first time seeing what a difference in perspective there really is between circular and diagonal fisheye effects, as well as just how different both effects are to using a regular 'rectilinear' ultra-wide-angle lens, maybe you're also wondering exactly what the applications for this lens might be.

Given their unique ability to capture the whole sky, circular fisheyes were originally employed to document atmospheric conditions. This means they're great for astrophotography, along with stars and skies. In circular or diagonal format, this lens is also great for landscapes and architecture – and, especially if you're a 1990s kid, it's also perfect for action sports.

As someone who grew up watching far too many skateboarding videos, my first instinct

was to use the Canon RF 7-14mm F2.8-3.5L Fisheye STM for skateboarding photos and videos – aping the Super8 style popular in the skate culture of that era. But the real untapped potential for this lens is its application for virtual reality content. Equirectangular conversion is possible using Canon's EOS VR Utility, enabling you to turn your 190° circular fisheye stills or video into 2D VR content for viewing on headsets.

This is currently supported for photos captured on the Canon EOS R5, R5 Mark II, R5 C, R6 Mark II and R6 Mark III. Conversion is also supported for open gate video recorded on the R6 Mark III. An update will likely extend support to the EOS C50.

The potential of VR is hugely exciting, and the Canon RF 7-14mm F2.8-3.5L Fisheye STM might just be the breakthrough tool for the company's EOS VR technology. People ask what EOS VR does, who it's for and who is supposed to be creating with it. This tech could be a springboard to take VR content in a new direction – and to a new audience – in ways that are as groundbreaking as those skateboarding videos were 30 years ago.

All of which is to say that I'm going to need to try out this lens for significantly longer than I was able to in my hands-on review, because there is a mountain of potential here. **James Artaius and Matthew Richards**

Zoom lens

Specifications

Mount: Canon RF

Full-frame: Yes

Equivalent focal lengths: APS-C: 11.2-22.4mm

Focus: Auto/ manual

Image stabilisation: No

Lens construction: 16 elements in 11 groups (5x ultra-low dispersion, 2x aspheric), Super Spectra coating, Air Sphere coating, fluorine coating

Angle of view: 190°

Max aperture: f/2.8

Min aperture: f/22 at 7mm, f/29 at 14mm

Diaphragm blades: Nine

Min focus distance: 0.15m

Max magnification ratio: 0.35x

Filter size: Drop-in rear filters

Dimensions (L x D): 109.4 x 76.5mm (131.7 x 87.6mm with hood)

Weight: 476g

Digital Camera verdict

4.5 ★★★★★ Outstanding



When I say that the Canon RF 7-14mm F2.8-3.5L Fisheye STM is a niche optic, I'm not exaggerating. After all, the RF mount is now eight years old, and it's only now getting this lens – which tells you what the demand has (or rather, hasn't) been.

However, if you're one of the many enthusiasts and professionals who have been clinging on to your old EF 8-15mm f/4L Fisheye, your day has finally come – and this new RF version is definitely worthy of your attention. It's physically lighter, its focal range is wider, its aperture is faster, its image quality is better, it has a control ring, it has a function button, it supports Canon's drop-in filters and it can be used for VR content.

While it will likely continue to be a boutique choice for astro, architectural, landscape and sports action shooters, it could open up a whole world of potential for content creators, VR enthusiasts and anyone looking to add genuinely creative flourishes to their photo and video arsenal.

The Canon RF 7-14mm F2.8-3.5L Fisheye STM certainly isn't a lens for everybody, but it's a lens that can do things no other lens can do. If you've read this far into the review without wondering 'what's the point of it?', then you probably could take advantage of its unique features.

Prime lens Lumix S 40mm F2



Lumix S 40mm F2

£349/\$399

Slightly wider than a classic 'nifty fifty' with a downsized, ultra-lightweight build

www.panasonic.com

Panasonic S-series full-frame mirrorless cameras and lenses date back to 2019. The first models were well received on the technical front, but were rather big and hefty. The early cameras felt more like chunky DSLRs than slimline mirrorless models, and the same applied to the lenses. Since then, Panasonic has been on a downsizing mission, designing some refreshingly lightweight lenses and more compact bodies, typified by the surprisingly small Lumix S9 and its kit 18-40mm zoom lens.

Further evidence that things are getting smaller and more easily manageable is provided by this ultra-lightweight 40mm f/2 prime, which is downsized and reasonably inexpensive. It's the perfect prime partner to the Panasonic S 18-40mm F4.5-6.3 zoom, and aims to be one of the best standard prime lenses if you're on a tight budget.

Build and handling

The first thing that strikes you about the Lumix S 40mm f/2 is just how small it is. You'd be forgiven for thinking that this is maybe a lens for Panasonic's Micro Four Thirds system, but this is a full-frame S-series optic. Remarkably, it's only 69 x 41mm and weighs in at a mere 144g. As I said, it's super-small and a real featherweight. And what you see is what you get because, unlike a number of skinny zoom lenses, this prime number isn't retractable. As such, it's fully ready for action, despite only measuring about 4cm in length, almost qualifying as a pancake prime.

Before we get carried away, the ultra-lightweight 40mm f/2 prime category isn't exactly revolutionary. I tested the Nikkor Z 40mm f/2 lens a while ago, and bought one. The Nikkor is only slightly larger and a few grams heavier, but has relatively basic handling characteristics and build, with a plastic rather than metal mounting plate.

1

Lumix doesn't make a hood for this lens, so you'll have to find one from another brand.

2

The manual focus ring takes up about half the length of the lens, and can be customised.

3

An AF/MF switch is located on the side of the barrel for quick focus mode switches.



Matthew Richards

The function button falls fairly naturally under the thumb in both landscape and portrait shooting.

I'm impressed that, despite the lightweight build, the lens feels solid, robust and well made. It features Panasonic's usual dust, splash and freeze-resistant construction and even has a fluorine coating on the front optical element to repel moisture and grease, and to aid easy cleaning.

While we're on the front of the lens, there is no hood supplied as part of the package. I was expecting it to be sold separately as an optional extra, following suit with budget lenses from a few other manufacturers. As it turns out, Panasonic doesn't make a hood for this lens at all, either bundled or available to buy separately. So, if you want to use a hood with this lens, you'll have to buy one that's independently manufactured and screws into the filter thread.

The most noticeable item in terms of handling is the manual focus ring, which takes up about half the length of the lens. As such, it's large enough to use comfortably and operates with a smooth and precise feel. Moreover, you can assign other functions to the control ring when in autofocus mode, including 'Crop Zoom', when using compatible Lumix cameras.

Typical of most modern lenses designed for mirrorless cameras, this one features a stepping motor system to drive autofocus (and manual focus, come to that). True to type, autofocus is quick and near-silent in operation, and the manual focus ring that I mentioned is electronically coupled to the motor to drive the relevant optical elements when focusing manually. I'm glad that despite the downsized design, Panasonic has made room for an AF/MF focus mode switch. Even if you're an ardent fan of autofocus, you might want to focus manually on occasion, and it's good to have a simple, quick-action switch to make the change.

More surprising, especially on such a compact and reasonably priced lens, is the addition of a 'Focus Button'. Like the manual focus ring, the button is customisable so you can apply different functions to it. AF-Lock and AF-On are two of the favourites, but other options are available, depending on camera menu options.

There are no specialist ED (Extra-low Dispersion) or UHR (Ultra High Refractive Index) optical elements claimed for this lens.



Distortion and colour fringing are well controlled in this lens. Exposure: 1/100 sec at f/8, ISO 200.

The optical path is also quite spartan in terms of total elements, equating to seven arranged in six groups. Even so, the layout includes no less than three aspherical elements, aiming to optimise image quality while keeping size and weight to a minimum. As I'd expect, the lens comes complete with both front and rear lens caps.

Performance

Autofocus worked as expected throughout testing, delivering quick-action performance for tracking moving subjects, along with consistent accuracy. Manual focusing is smooth and precise, and everything you'd hope for in a lens that features a linear stepping motor.

Sharpness, clarity, contrast and colour rendition are all of a high standard, despite the lens not featuring specialist glass, apart from the three aspherical elements. Extreme edge and corner-sharpness is a bit lacklustre when shooting wide-open at f/2, picking up at f/2.8 and coming on song at f/4. For sharpness across the frame, it pays to stick to apertures of f/4 through to f/11.

Naturally, there's a lot more to image quality than sharpness, especially when you're talking about fast prime lenses, or at least those faster than your average zoom. The f/2 aperture enables a tight depth of field when shooting close-ups, so you can isolate the main subject in a scene by blurring the background. The quality of bokeh is good and soft, which is often more important than sharpness at the edges and corners when shooting wide-open at f/2.

The aperture is controlled by a seven-blade diaphragm, which isn't particularly well rounded, so bokeh disks caused by defocused lights and specular highlights take on a noticeable seven-sided appearance. Even so, the overall quality



Captured wide-open at f/2, where extreme edge and corner sharpness can be a little lacklustre.



For sharpness across the frame, it pays to stick to apertures of f/4 through to f/11 – this is at f/5.6.

of bokeh remains pretty good when stopping down. The lens is also impressively resistant to ghosting and flare, which is important, given that a hood is neither supplied nor sold separately as an optional extra.

There's a large and growing rank of compact lenses designed for mirrorless cameras that rely heavily on automatic in-camera corrections for distortion. This Lumix isn't one of them. It controls optical distortion well in its own right, with just a hint of pincushion distortion being discernible. Colour fringing is also kept to a minimum, even out at the edges and corners of the image frame. All in all, the little Lumix S 40mm is an impressive performer.

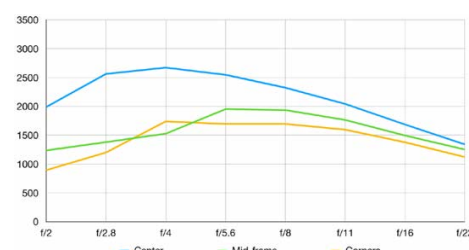
Matthew Richards

Prime lens

Specifications

Mount: L-Mount
Full-frame: Yes
Autofocus: Yes
Stabilisation: No
Lens construction: 7 elements in 6 groups
Angle of view: 57°
Max aperture: f/2
Min aperture: f/22
Diaphragm blades: 7
Min focus distance: 0.3m
Max magnification ratio: 0.17x
Filter size: 62mm
Dimensions (L x D): 69 x 41mm
Weight: 144g

Sharpness



Sharpness

Centre-sharpness is good wide-open at f/2 and excellent between f/2.8 and f/11. After that, diffraction takes a toll at narrow apertures. Edge and corner-sharpness is comparatively disappointing at f/2, but good at f/2.8 and great between f/4 and f/11.

Fringing

0.30

Colour fringing is well controlled. Unusually, it's worse in the centre than at the edges, but it's difficult to spot in images, even with in-camera correction disabled.

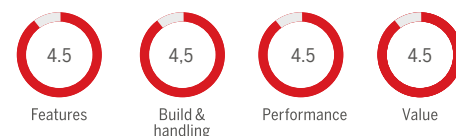
Distortion

0.46

There's a subtle amount of pincushion distortion, but it generally goes unnoticed. Automatic in-camera correction is available, but you're unlikely to need it.

Digital Camera verdict

4.5 ★★★★★ Outstanding



For those who aren't keen on carrying around a big, heavy backpack of extra lenses, the Lumix S 40mm presents a good case. It delivers something that a compact zoom lens can't, namely a relatively fast aperture that freezes motion under dull lighting, and a tight depth of field for isolating subjects against a blurred background for creative effect. I really like the focal length of 40mm, which is great for street photography and everyday shooting. Best of all, the lens is compact and lightweight, yet delivers pleasing image quality and impressive all-round performance at an affordable price. I reckon this Panasonic is a keeper.

Software DxO PhotoLab 9 Elite

1 With star ratings, flags and keywording, the PhotoLibrary window helps organise images.

2 All the main editing work in PhotoLab 9 is carried out through the Customize window.

3 DxO's lens correction combinations for cameras and lenses apply automatically.

Rod Lawton



4 The sidebar on the right side is where you'll find the editing and local adjustment tools.

5 Tools are organised into tabs for ease of use, including Light, Color, Detail and Geometry.

6 DeepPRIME XD3 processing now handles X-Trans raw files as well as Bayer sensor raws.

DxO PhotoLab 9 Elite

£220/\$240 (new); £110/\$120 (upgrade)

Top-notch lens correction and noise-reduction software

www.dxo.com

System requirements

macOS

DxO PhotoLab 9 is compatible with macOS 14.7 (Sonoma) and macOS 15 (Sequoia). macOS 26 (Tahoe) is recommended.

Windows

DxO PhotoLab 9 is compatible with Microsoft Windows 10 version 22H2 (64-bit). Microsoft Windows 11 version 24H2 (64-bit) is recommended.

For full system requirements, go to this link: www.bit.ly/dcm311_photolab9

DxO PhotoLab 9 is a powerful photo-editing application with a focus firmly on image quality. DxO's bespoke lens correction profiles are applied automatically while browsing your images, then DeepPRIME XD3 noise reduction, which can achieve near-miraculous results with high-ISO files. You also get extremely powerful global and local adjustment tools for enhancing your images, and these now include Lightroom-style AI masking tools. The new AI masks can be used alongside DxO's regular mask types, including Control Points and Control Lines, which are unique to DxO and extremely fast and effective once learned.

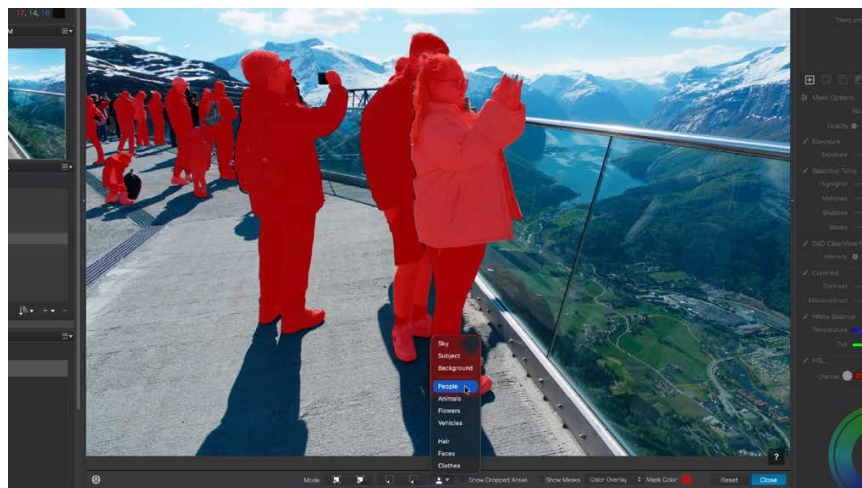
Another change has profound practical benefits. You can now save your images as part-processed 'High Fidelity' Linear DNG files up to four times smaller than before, and often smaller than the original raw file. This

means you can export a DNG raw file with DxO's lens corrections and DeepPrime denoising applied, which can be opened and edited just like a regular raw file in other programs.

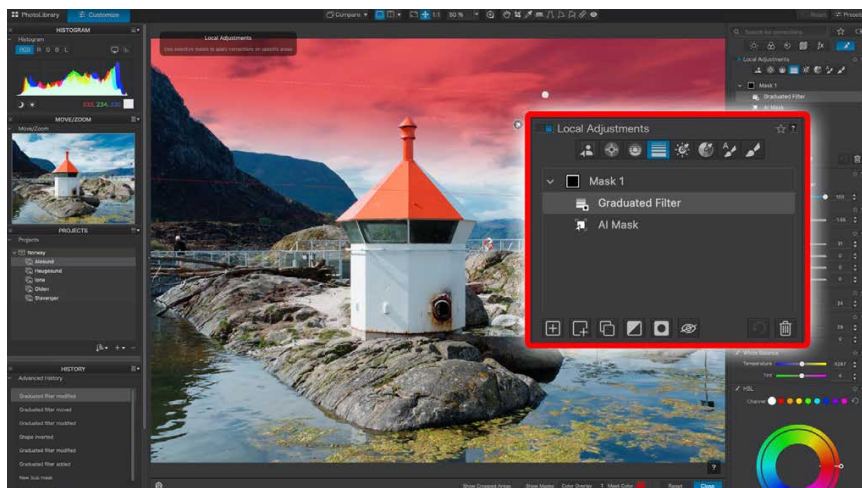
PhotoLab 9 Elite (reviewed here) costs £220 (\$240) for a new licence or £110 (\$120) to upgrade. This makes it a similar price to a year's subscription to the Adobe Photography Plan. PhotoLab 9 is certainly not cheap, but it isn't the most expensive 'serious' photo editor on the market either. DxO's FilmPack analog simulation and ViewPoint perspective control tools can be purchased separately and integrated into PhotoLab's non-destructive workflow.

Design and interface

The PhotoLab 9 interface comes in two parts or windows. The PhotoLibrary panel is where you do all your large-scale photo browsing, organising and searching. There is also a Projects panel, where you can create a nested hierarchy



DxO PhotoLab 9 introduces AI masking tools, though they aren't quite as accurate or advanced as those in Lightroom or Capture One. This is its 'People' subject recognition masking at work.



You can combine AI and regular masks for more subtle effects. Here, an AI mask has been used for the sky adjustment and a linear gradient mask to blend it in more subtly.

of projects (albums, in other words) for organising images 'virtually' by theme or subject, even when they are stored in different locations on your hard drive.

There's a search box at the top of the left sidebar of the PhotoLibrary, which is both clever and rather odd. As soon as you start typing, it tries to match your search with image filenames, EXIF data and keywords, but appears to draw on an index built automatically from folders you visit, which isn't under your control.

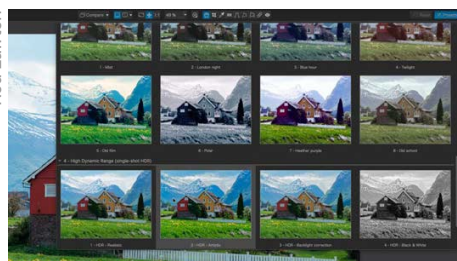
While the PhotoLibrary panel is fine for organising, the main editing work is done in the Customize panel. Here, the editing tools are organised into tabs for Light, Color, Detail, Geometry and FX, though what's in the last two will depend on whether you have DxO ViewPoint and FilmPack installed. The new AI masking tools are found in a separate tab for local

adjustments. You can select areas using an eyedropper, a marquee or choosing a named subject type from a menu.

DxO's Control Points work around a circular mask that targets the tones in the centre, while Control Lines are gradient masks with an eyedropper for more selective adjustments – great for darkening skies in outdoor shots without also darkening your subjects. Masks can be combined to add, subtract and intersect mask selections. Given that the masks can be adjusted for sensitivity and diffusion, it can get complicated, but the control is there if you need it.

The DeepPRIME XD3 denoising is highly effective, but also intensive. It takes a few seconds, even on a fast computer, so previewing the effect as you work isn't easy. As PhotoLab is non-destructive, all your adjustments

DxO PhotoLab 9 Elite Software



PhotoLab 9 comes with a modest selection of presets and it's simple to create your own, though it isn't really a photographic effects tool as such.

exist only within the software. To produce a version to share, you will need to Export it.

Performance

For its quality of results, PhotoLab 9 is about as good as it gets. DxO's lens corrections don't just tackle the usual suspects, such as chromatic aberration, vignetting and distortion, but they also apply lens-specific global sharpness and edge softness corrections. PhotoLab finds matching profiles automatically and, if they're not yet installed, downloads them in seconds.

DxO's DeepPRIME XD3 processing is remarkable, and it now handles both regular Bayer sensor raw files and X-Trans images. Though there's little obvious difference between this and the previous DeepPRIME version, I've yet to see a rival denoising tool that can match DxO's combination of denoising effectiveness and fine detail recovery. You may not see a huge difference with the latest and best camera gear, but older models, smaller sensors and cheaper lenses get a whole new lease of life.

I'm less convinced about the AI masking, though. Quite apart from the strange sky masking issues in my tests, I'm not sure DxO's AI masking is quite as quick as Lightroom's or Capture One's. **Rod Lawton**

Digital Camera verdict

4.0 ★★★★★ Excellent



PhotoLab 9 is for the image quality purist who is unfazed by technical processes and who simply wants the best possible output from their raw files. It's not Photoshop, so you can't produce layered composites, and it doesn't do one-click effects like the Nik Collection or ON1 Photo RAW. It's an image editor in the truest, most traditional sense. It's probably not ideal for a busy, high-volume professional workflow, but perfect for fine-art photographers, print makers and exhibitors.

"I've yet to see a rival tool that can match DxO's combination of denoising effectiveness and fine detail recovery"



Chris Fallows

The award-winning wildlife photographer captured 299 different humpback whales in a day – a world record. **Niall Hampton** finds out more

South African photographer Chris Fallows became interested in wildlife as a youngster and started taking photographs of marine life when he was a teenager. Best known for his photographs of great white sharks and marine animals, which are captured with a fine-art aesthetic, Chris was the runner-up in the General – Black & White category in the Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum International Photography Award (HIPA) competition in 2025. His low-angle black-and-white shot of a herd of elephants in Kenya's Amboseli National Park certainly chimed with the 'Power' theme of the awards.

However, Chris's breakthrough photo was taken at sea, where he spends most of his time. 'Air Jaws', a great white shark breaching the waves at South Africa's Seal Island, was captured in 1996 and set him on the



Chris Fallows

Left: 'Defiance'. "Defiance applies to every obstacle – from nature, climate change and humanity – that is thrown at this herd. This matriarch's disposition towards my camera only reinforces this survival-at-all-costs mentality."

whites in particular, as well as other marine species. I first took an interest as a young boy watching my dad take photographs, as he was a keen amateur wildlife photographer. My lucky break came in 1996, when I was fortunate to discover and document the breaching great whites of South Africa. This fortuitous discovery created a niche for me, which then allowed me to pursue photography as a career. Initially, my work was heavily action-oriented, but over time I began to see the art in nature, and today this is what I have refined my style towards.

Where is your favourite place to photograph marine life, and how much time would you tend to spend on location in a given year?

South Africa is a pretty good place, because you have two major ocean currents – one warm and one cold – flanking its coasts, and this attracts a huge cross-section of diversity, sometimes in huge numbers. Outside of South Africa, I would have to say the island of South Georgia just for the sheer abundance of wildlife that adorns an island dripping in spectacular scenery. With regards to time, sometimes I spend tranches of three to four months, working with a subject – for example, the super groups of humpback whales – where I may be at sea with my wife Monique for 20 or more days a month during that stint.

You capture your photos with an artistic eye. How does this apply to marine animals, where you're looking to go beyond 'record' shots, and which techniques do you employ?

My intention is always to create work that evokes a strong sense of artistry. With this in mind, every single trip I go on involves a high degree of planning. I go with an image in mind and, first, I choose a location that may offer a chance to create a certain look and feel to my work. Such backgrounds are really important to me, and so I choose them carefully. When combined with moody elements, such as clouds, dust, exhaled breath or ruffled sea state, it can take the image to a different level.

Finally, I need huge amounts of time for my subject to perform in the canvas I have selected. This is always the tricky part, as all my subjects are completely wild. On both land and in the ocean, I like to shoot from low down, creating a sense of engagement that enhances the stature of my subjects. In addition to this, I often shoot with a shallow depth of field to create a soft feel and mood around my subject matter and a certain sense of being.

path towards global recognition. He prizes a minimalistic look and feel, and the work he produces lends itself to being displayed at scale – public spaces where you can view Chris's photography include Times Square in New York City and Dubai International Airport.

Chris sells large prints of his pictures and invests the proceeds in conservation projects. We spoke to him following a spell working off the South African coast, where he photographed 299 humpback whales in one day – setting a world record in the process.

You were runner-up in the General – Black & White category in the fourteenth season of HIPA, with a picture of elephants, but you're best known for photographing great white sharks and marine animals. How did you get started in photography? I am lucky to photograph iconic species on both land and sea, but I spent over 30 years working with great

INTERVIEW



HIP A

**Chris Fallows
Wildlife photographer**

Born and raised in South Africa, Chris Fallows became interested in wildlife during childhood and started photographing marine life when he was a teenager.

His breakthrough photo was 'Air Jaws', captured in 1996, and he was fortunate to have learned from some of the biggest wildlife and nature photographers.

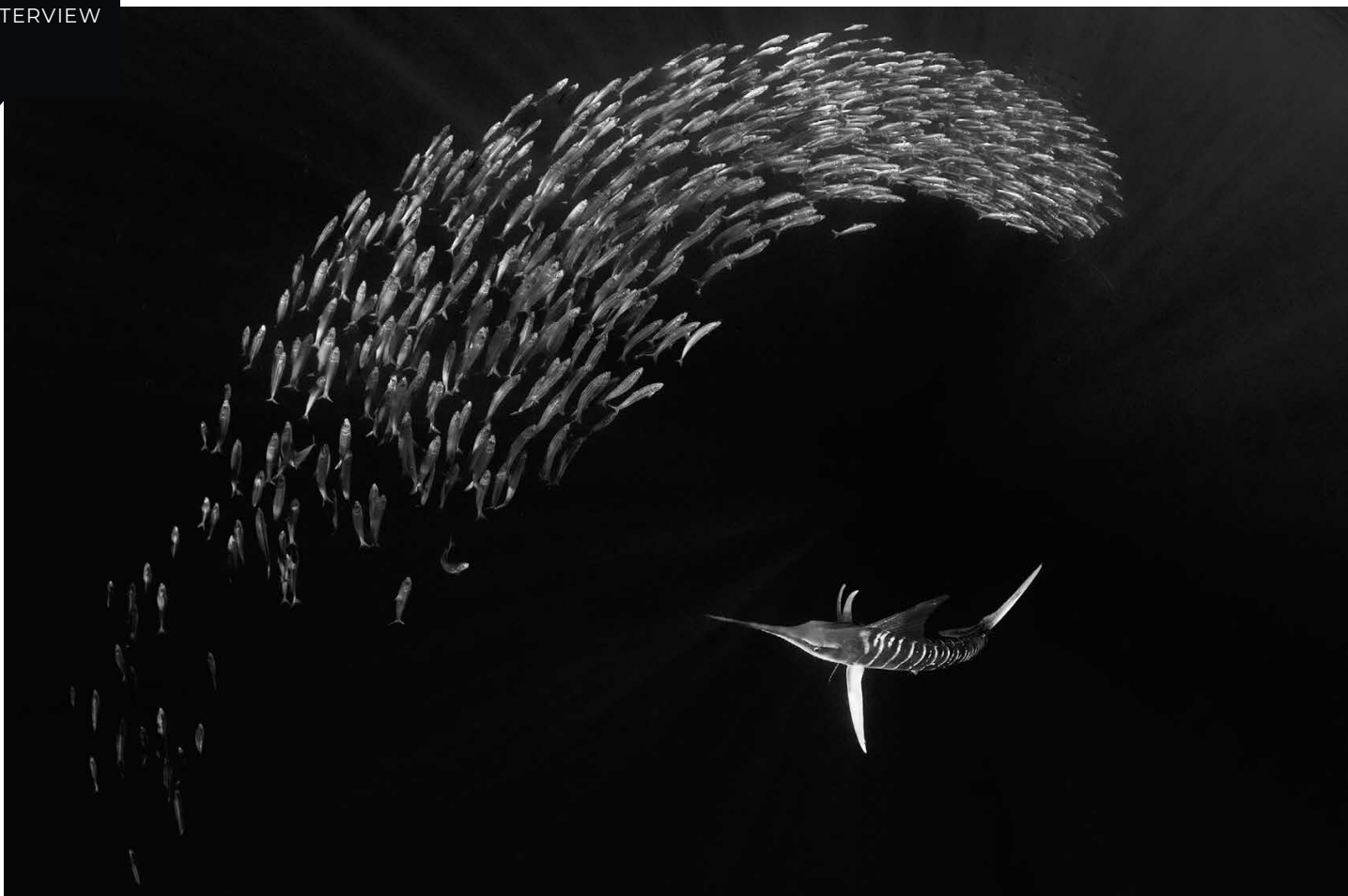
Chris travels extensively to photograph the great white sharks and marine animals that he is best known for, and sells large prints of his photographs.

He has appeared in various documentaries, for broadcasters including the BBC and the Discovery Channel, and is also a Canon ambassador.

These reflect his social engagement and interest in portraying life through images of people and their environments.

Instagram: @chrisfallowsphotography

Website: chrisfallows.com



Above: 'Sword of Santiago'. "Having had the privilege of seeing this magnificent gamefish brandishing its sword, I thought of Santiago, whose defiance led him into a sea of adversity. He, and the marlin, are both stubbornly resolute that feast and famine sit on different sides of the sword, and it helps not to question tomorrow, but rather wield your sword like tomorrow may never come."

How close can you get to the action, and which lenses do you favour?

While I would consider myself adequately technically proficient, my greatest strength is my knowledge of the subjects, which has taken a lifetime to develop. This knowledge allows me on occasion to get very close to these magnificent creatures I work with, having earned their trust. I am also very lucky to have an incredible partner in my wife Monique, who not only shares my passion, but is also an excellent set of eyes watching my back. When I have a choice, I prefer to use shorter and often wide-angle lenses to bring in the greater canvas. I would say that for around 90 per cent of my work at sea, I shoot with a Canon RF 70-200mm F2.8L IS USM Z lens. It is super-sharp, fast and light enough that I can work with it on seas that are sometimes rough.

Occasionally, I also shoot with a Canon RF 400mm F2.8L IS USM when conditions allow. It can create that lovely soft bokeh in my work, which is especially pleasing when one shoots through long swells.

How do you stay safe when working with formidable subjects, such as sharks and whales, which are much bigger than you are?

Firstly, I absolutely love them, so I yearn for intimate experiences with the fastest, strongest and biggest creatures on earth; it is what drives me to spend my life in their company. In this endeavour, I have learned through experience that they are not out there to get me. Provided I treat them with respect, they will obligingly tolerate me within their spaces.

You're working off the south-west coast of Africa, far out at sea, on an open-deck boat. It sounds like hard work in tough conditions...

It can be intimidating to be caught in a big, angry sea off the Cape of Storms, and likewise, when we are in the bush, it is more often than not just my wife and I living out of our tent, needing to be completely self-sufficient in remote areas. Being seasick, sunburnt, dusty, flooded and sometimes scared are all part of it, but on the flip side, these red letter days are so incredible that any hardship is quickly forgotten. I would also say that, when you look back at many of the most memorable moments or images, it is sometimes the hardship that you reflect on most fondly.

Over the course of your career, which works, or series of works, stand out most?

Naturally, the flying great whites are up there, as we spent three decades having 'once in a lifetime experiences' day after day. Tragically, those incredible sharks are no longer around, and this body of work serves as a visual reminder of how easily we can lose our natural icons. On a more positive note, I like to think my work with the humpback whales is strong and shows off the artistic style with which I now engage my subjects. The fact that the numbers of these animals are increasing adds a positive spin on this work as well.

On land, perhaps my minimalistic work with the black-maned lions of Botswana's Central Kalahari, or big herds of elephants crossing Lake Amboseli, are good examples of the feeling I wish to convey.



Chris Fallows

You're also a conservationist, and your photo trips contribute to science. Is this where happywhale.com comes in – is it where you logged your new record of 299 great whales photographed and accurately identified in a day, last December?

Yes, over my life, I have experienced what very few people have, and this has all been thanks to the incredible animals that I have been so privileged to work with. It is now my turn to give something back through the sale of my fine-art work. All of the profits that are accrued are used to buy land to create wildlife corridors and protect habitat, with the idea of making these landscapes more climate-change resilient and offering a chance for them to be re-wilded. In this endeavour, we have just completed the purchase of a 10,700 hectare property in southern Namibia, and we currently have an offer on a second farm that will allow us to connect two significant conservation areas.

We also like to contribute to other meaningful projects, either through our images giving a 'why' to other conservation efforts, such as our current exhibition at Dubai International Airport. This exhibition highlights that this major aviation hub is a signatory to the Buckingham Palace Declaration that has pledged to stop the trafficking of endangered species.

Another way of contributing is by using our images to gain a better understanding of what certain species are doing. One good example of this is our work with Mdu Seakamela from South Africa's Forests and Fisheries branch, to whom we donate our images. They are then uploaded onto HappyWhale, a global whale database,

and from the unique whale tail patterns, we can then see where these whales are moving to.

Incredibly, on 30 December 2025, we photographed 299 different humpback whales in a day, which is a world record for the largest number accurately recorded. It's a great example of how photography and citizens can also contribute to furthering our knowledge of a species.

What is the status of whales in 2026? Are some whale species still under threat even though most countries have given up whaling?

It's mostly good news, with some species such as humpbacks doing really well in general, although isolated populations like Arabian humpback whales, where less than 100 remain, are struggling due to localised threats in that region. Other iconic species, like blue whales and sperm whales, are recovering, although not at quite the same rate as humpbacks. While a few countries still sadly see fit to kill what we have learnt are intelligent, social and sentient creatures, new threats have manifested themselves, such as entanglement in discarded fishing gear and ship strikes, both of which are increasing. —→

Above: 'Enlightened'. "A humpback whale flukes in the languid seas near a lighthouse that gave signal to whalers seeking the last of the great mammals. Today, I'm one of a new breed of hunter, but I come with a camera instead of a harpoon and leave with a smile instead of a carcass."

"Looking back at memorable images, it is sometimes the hardship that you reflect on most fondly"



Chris Fallows

Above: 'The Final Act'.

"I stare transfixed at this fish performing – a moment filled with power, wonder and awe. Seal Island is a theatre of nature, a place where the most super of predators exhibits the most spectacular behaviour."

Right: 'Leopard and Baobab'.

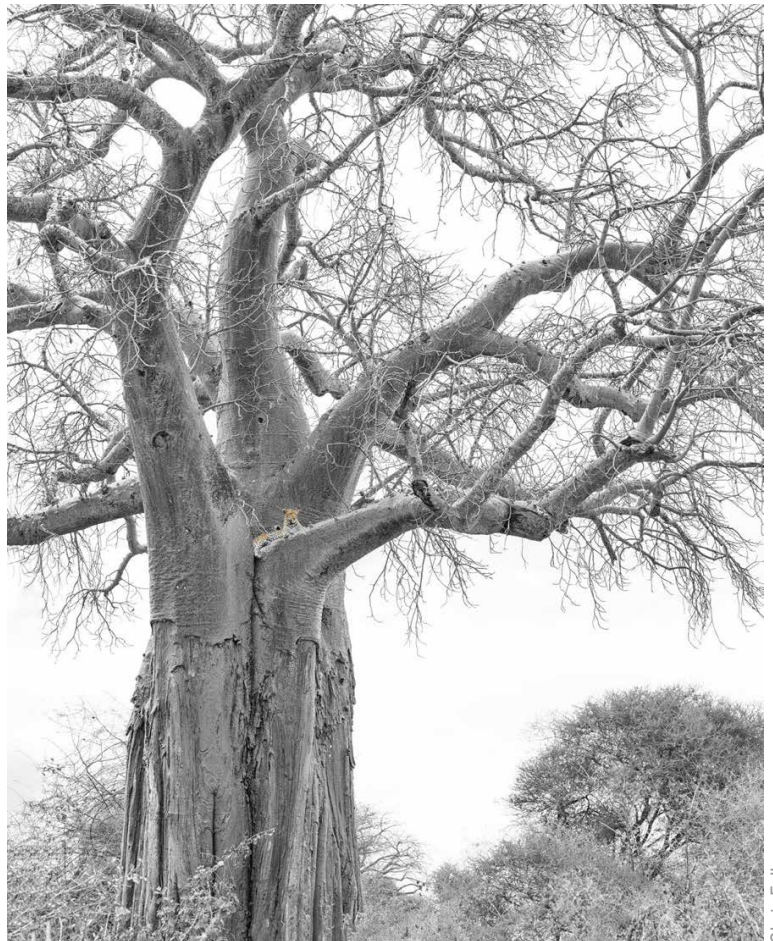
"This 1,000-year-old baobab tree has endured the fall of empires, survived drought and stood tall during floods. Today, a golden jewel sits within this botanical crown that defines the African landscape."

What's coming up for you for the rest of the year – do you have any more trips planned?

A big part of what we do is to find new places where we can be alone with the wildlife and explore new opportunities. In this regard, we headed off on an exploratory trip into the West Indian Ocean last February to look for rare cetaceans and sharks in a promising location.

On our return, we were rehabilitating a massive area in southern Namibia to incorporate it into a nature reserve, and between April and July, we have been working with dolphin super pods in South Africa. We also have exhibitions with leading galleries in New York and Miami in the coming months, and we also had an excerpt on *60 Minutes* with Anderson Cooper that highlighted our work [*visit www.bit.ly/dcm311_fallows to watch it on YouTube*]. It is encouraging that audiences increasingly identify with meaningful photography relating to our planet's most iconic species. ●

Discover more about Chris and Monique's art and conservation work or find ways to collaborate with them, go to www.chrisfallows.com or follow Chris on Instagram at [@chrisfallowsphotography](https://www.instagram.com/chrisfallowsphotography)



Chris Fallows

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12 pages of expert insights for capturing seasonal colour like a pro!

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Belfast	03.09.26
Glasgow	11 & 12.09.26



with Chris George

What the f-stop?

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



Don Arnold/WireImage/Getty

7 What was Canon's first APS-C mirrorless camera?

- ☐ A EOS R
- ☐ B EOS M
- ☐ C EOS R7
- ☐ D EOS D30

8 Which film is about a photojournalist covering the Nicaraguan revolution?

- ☐ A Under Fire
- ☐ B Salvador
- ☐ C Civil War
- ☐ D The Killing Fields

9 What is this?

- ☐ A Sprocket hole
- ☐ B Densitometer
- ☐ C Film leader retriever
- ☐ D 35mm cassette opener



Alamy/JIPEN

1 Who is the photographer and wildlife presenter standing next to his Madame Tussauds waxwork?

- ☐ A Cam Whitnall
- ☐ B Nick Baker
- ☐ C Robert Irwin
- ☐ D Chris Packham

2 Which of these film formats is 30 years old this year?

- ☐ A 110
- ☐ B Half frame
- ☐ C 126
- ☐ D APS

3 What does the G stand for in the editing program GIMP?

- ☐ A Graphic
- ☐ B Generative
- ☐ C Global
- ☐ D GNU

4 Which range of cameras has Sony just brought back from the dead?

- ☐ A RX0 action cameras
- ☐ B RX10 bridge cameras
- ☐ C A-mount cameras
- ☐ D Mavica cameras

5 Which lens manufacturer launched an unusual 35-100mm f/2.8 full-frame zoom this year?

- ☐ A Viltrox
- ☐ B Nikon
- ☐ C Sigma
- ☐ D Tamron

6 Which rival photo editing software company has Adobe just bought?

- ☐ A Skylum
- ☐ B Imagen
- ☐ C Topaz Labs
- ☐ D Darktable

10 Which of these Sony cameras does not offer open gate video?

- ☐ A Venice 2
- ☐ B Burano
- ☐ C FX5
- ☐ D A7 V

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

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