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Nathan McGee

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Carindale, QLD

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Matthew Abbott's image of a burning property at Lake Conjola has been shared widely, and for many has come to symbolise the bushfire crisis. At the time, Abbott said he quickly reacted and raised the camera so he could compose the image as the kangaroo bounded in front of the burning property. "I remember thinking to myself, "Yeah got it, good shot," he said.

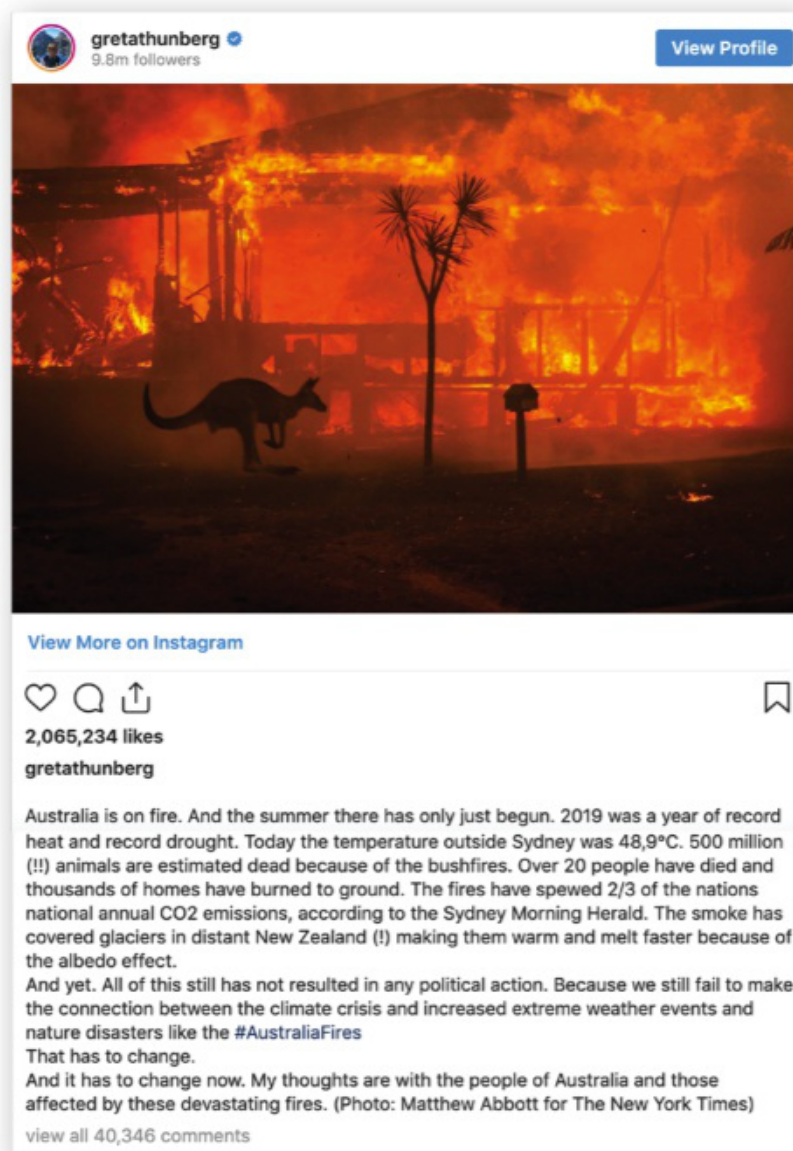
THIS SUMMER...

MIKE O'CONNOR, EDITOR

If you've ever wondered if your images are capable of making a difference, then just take a look at photo-journalist Matthew Abbott's image above. This shot, which he captured on New Year's Eve at Conjola Park, three hours south of Sydney, will most certainly be remembered as one of the images of 2019. In the days and weeks following its capture it has been shared around the world, sparked debate, drawn ire, and perhaps most significantly, come to represent the collective grief for our fair country. This is something powerful imagery can do.

How do we possibly begin to understand the scale of the devastation from this bushfire season? It has been something that has likely affected every Australian in one way or another, and yet at times it's simply felt too real, like a post-apocalyptic film come to life, and a reality we never expected to face in our lifetimes.

And yet everywhere you looked, there were photographers using their imagery to come to terms with the crisis in their own way. From our regular contributor Drew Hopper, who first began capturing the fires quite literally on his doorstep in Coffs Harbour, before launching into a project documenting the aftermath of the bushfires around small communities in Northern NSW, to photographers who tagged us and shared with us the impact fires have had on their own properties. This has been a catastrophic event that has united us in grief, but also in a hunger to share the stories emerging from the ashes.



And with this hunger has come amazing efforts to assist those who have suffered. Around the time this magazine hits the shelves, luminaries of the Queensland photographic community will gather for fotoAid, three charity events designed to raise money for bushfire-affected communities and wildlife organisations. Meanwhile, photographers from *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age* have shared many of their photos from the summer as large format prints, with all profits to be donated to the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS), Country Fire Authority (CFA) Victoria, and wildlife rescue organisation WIRES. These initiatives are in addition to hundreds of grassroots fundraising efforts from people of all walks of life on social media, in workplaces, and on our street corners.

Photography's role in all of this is without question. It has the power to shock, scare, and sadden. But at the same time, it has the ability to tap into the best parts of the human spirit – those that involve helping others, giving generously and mucking in to get the job done. And of all the things great photography can do, it's this ability that demonstrates what a difference it can make. 🌱



26 ONE FLASH MAGIC

Yes, it is possible to capture incredible wildlife images with just one flash! Wildlife photographer Greg Basco shares his advice for getting started with a simple but powerful flash setup capable of stunning results.

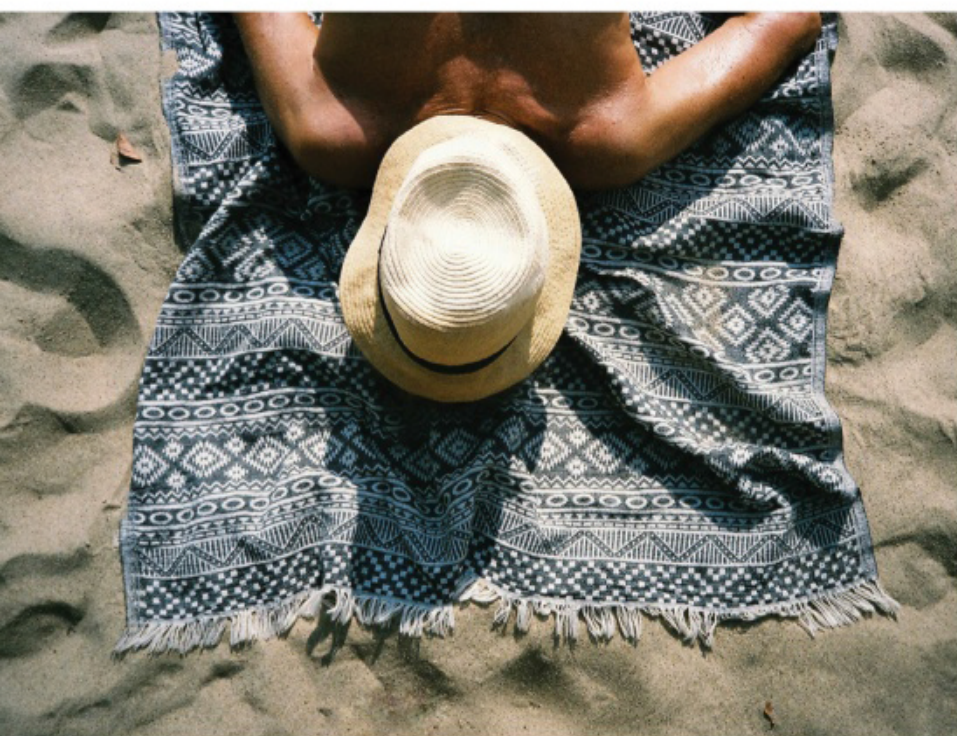


MARCH 2020

CONTENTS

Australian
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48 FILM FANATICS

We've been saying it for years - film's not dead! Self-confessed lover of all-things analogue Drew Hopper looks at some of the reasons why 2020 should be the year you add film photography to your skillset.



38 THE PORTRAIT LANDSCAPE

Shifting your view of verticals can really transform your landscape images, showcasing depth, sharpness and a unique view on the world that few people are exploring. Pro photographer Michael Snedic shows how it's done.



68: TESTED: SONY A9 II

Just in time for Tokyo 2020, Sony's new sports and wildlife powerhouse camera is here. But is this the speed demon you've been waiting for? AP Ed. Mike O'Connor finds out.



58: PROFILE: RICHARD TATTI

Mick Fletoridis meets the Victorian night sky photographer opening up the world of astrophotography to an audience of more than 40,000 YouTube followers.

DEPARTMENTS

8 BEHIND THE LENS

A unique perspective on one of the world's most striking and dangerous religious festivals led to a remarkable image for photojournalist Bryan Cassey.

12 STRAIGHT SHOOTER

Darran Leal looks at how new editing techniques have made processing easier and faster than ever.

14 QUICK SNAPS

The latest news and products from the world of photography.

20 YOUR BEST SHOT

Take a look at the best images from our 'Unusual angles' photo competition.

74 APS GALLERY AND COLUMN

News, views and images from the Australian Photographic Society.

78 FUJIFILM IMAGE DOCTOR

Saima Morel critiques a selection of readers' images, and picks the winner of the Fujifilm XP140 camera.



COVER

Greg Basco captured this month's cover of a Strawberry Poison Dart Frog on a bed of mushrooms, in the Costa Rican rainforest. Canon 7DII, Sigma 150 mm f/2.8 macro lens. 1/2000s @ f4.5, ISO 100. One Godox V860 II flash off-camera in high-speed sync mode and with small softbox.

CONTRIBUTORS



GREG BASCO

Based in Costa Rica, Greg Basco is a wildlife photographer and former BBC/Veolia Wildlife Photographer of the Year. See more at deepgreenphotography.com.



MICHAEL SNEDIC

Michael Snedic is one of Australia's most experienced and published professional wildlife and nature photographers. See more at wildnaturephotoexpeditions.com.



DREW HOPPER

Drew Hopper is a travel, documentary and editorial photographer. He is captivated by the diversity of cultures, people and environment. See more at drewhopperphotography.com.



MICK FLETORIDIS

Sydney-based freelance magazine and web editor Mick Fletoridis is also a keen photographer with a growing interest in landscape and astrophotography. See more at flickr.com/photos/mickflet.



D780

From fast-moving action to rich 4K HDR video, the new Nikon D780 helps your vision take flight. Its unique combination of autofocus systems offers the best of two different worlds. Optical viewfinder shooting gives you fast and accurate AF, with innovations including an algorithm adapted from the flagship D5. Meanwhile, live view shooting brings all the advantages of hybrid AF using focal-plane phase-detection AF technology, including eye-detection AF and wide 273-point coverage. Combined with shutter speeds from 1/8000 s to 900 s, and advanced video and time-lapse features, the D780 embodies true versatility.

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CAPTURE TOMORROW





THE MADDING CROWD

PHOTOGRAPHER: BRIAN CASSEY

In 2018 I timed a working visit to Mumbai, India to coincide with one of the subcontinent's many festivals – the ritual of Dahi Handi which is part of the Hindu festival of Janmashtami.

Krishna Janmashtami celebrates the birth anniversary of Lord Krishna, one of the most widely revered gods of Hinduism. At once a religious celebration and a sport (it was classified by the government as an adventure sport in 2014), Dahi Handi is performed the day after Lord Krishna's birthday every year.

Teams of up to a hundred young 'Govindas' form human pyramids in an attempt to reach and smash a pot, the 'Handi', which is filled with yoghurt and other ingredients and suspended tens of metres above them. The event is based on the legend that a baby Lord Krishna used creative ways to steal milky treats which were supposedly hung high out of reach.

Mumbai is a massive, manic, and sometimes maddening metropolis of twenty-three million people, so I enlisted the help of two experienced Indian photojournalists who have covered many Dahi Handi festivals. We negotiated Mumbai's insane railway system out into the suburbs to the place the Dahi Handi was at its most spectacular. The street was heaving, and the crowds and expectations grew as the first team readied to make their climb.

One local photographer gave me a tip to watch for a ritual sometimes performed before the pyramid climb where the team members gather tightly in a circle and reach out in togetherness. We climbed through the tight-knit throng to the fourth story of an adjacent building to get the best vantage point.

On my Nikon D5 I had my favourite all-purpose travel lens, the Nikkor 28-300mm f3.5-5.6 VR. It's not exactly a 'Pro' lens but is so versatile and convenient I find it on my camera more than any other.

The lens was perfect from our viewpoint. 28mm was just wide enough to get the entire human pyramid and the surrounding crowds in the frame, while the range up to 300mm meant I could easily frame smaller details like the breaking of the 'Handi' at the very top of the tower.

Almost on queue the team formed a circle and conducted their ritual before commencing their pyramid climb of eight tiers of young men to a height of about forty or fifty feet – an amazing feat of strength and balance.

Nice images were everywhere – the climb, the crowds, the breaking of the clay pot soaking the human tower, and the inevitable collapse, but the one image I keep going back to is this one of the ritual. I made many images of human pyramids, but nowhere else did I see a team perform it. Unfortunately, Dahi Handi is not without risks. I later found out two people died in 2018 and more than 150 were injured.

**NIKON D5, 28-300MM 3.5-5.6 NIKKOR LENS @ 85MM.
1/800S @ F7.1, ISO 320.**







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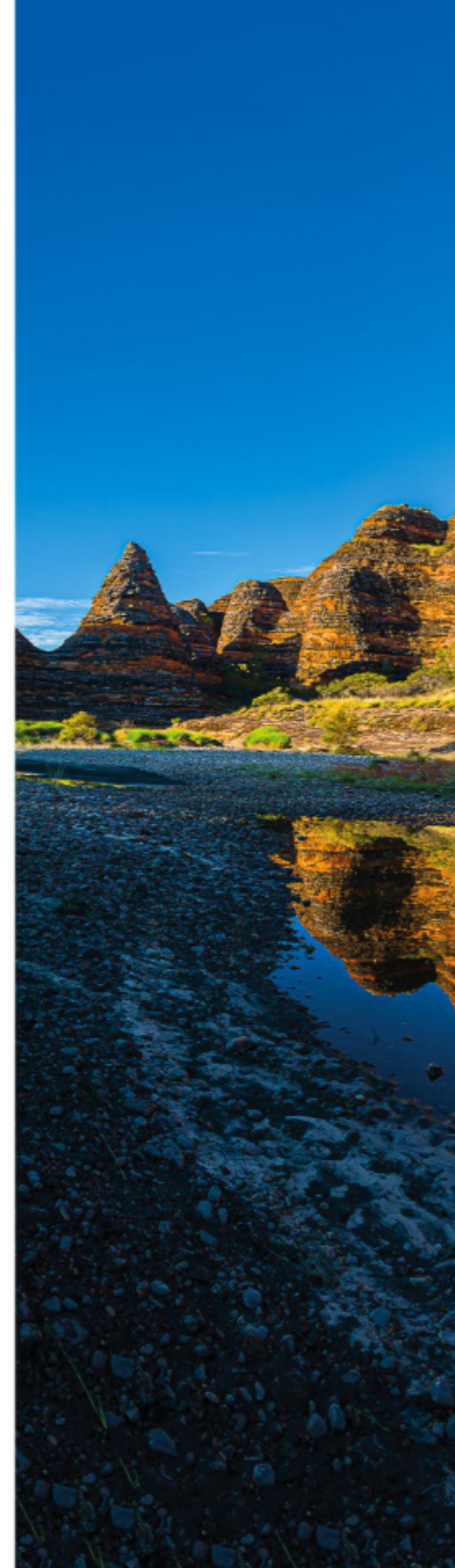
Photography Australian **[capture]**

YAFFA 11831



THE THROWBACK

Digital editing is easier and more intuitive than ever – and the simpler you keep your workflow the more you'll enjoy it, as Darran Leal explains.



I was recently reviewing a trip to the Kimberley I made in 2010, and I came across a series of images of a scene in Purnululu I shot for a panorama. Terrible but true: I had not processed the series until now!

However the great thing about waiting so long to edit this image is I was able to take advantage of new technological developments, like the 'Fill Edges' feature in Panorama mode, along with old features I've used for years like reducing the highlights. It was quick and enjoyable.

When I started photography, processing was in the hands of experts only.

Then with digital it became accessible, giving us tricks and gimmicks like the HDR trend and presets. We still have these of course, but I think today is an era of good processing and more focus on photographic skills and emphasising the capture.

I love to use filters, control shutter speeds for different looks, apply processing techniques, and occasionally I have some creative fun using Photoshop. However, for the vast majority of my photography, I am keen to use a tool that is easy to learn, is intuitive and allows me to have a fast and accurate workflow.

For me, Adobe Lightroom is best. But whatever software you use, the key is that it should do the job for you. I believe that after you get help with the base setup, you should be able to teach yourself the programme you settle on.

Many photographers ask me about my workflow, and it remains very simple. This is one of the key reasons for my liking of Lightroom Classic. I often only use the following features in the Basic Panel of Lightroom Classic. These global adjustments offer me a clean good-looking starting point to then be more creative with my DNG image.





1. CONTRAST – This varies to each camera and individual, but generally I like to go +20. This is personal and some images may not need any contrast adjustment.

2. VIBRANCE – Again this varies from person to person. Like the film days, if you are a lover of Kodak colours you might go +40. If you are a FujiFilm lover +55.

3. SHADOWS – I love to increase these a little to bring out detail. +25 is a good starting point.

4. BLACKS – If required, I move the Black slider to minus for a stronger looking result.

5. WHITES – I often apply this last in the Basic panel with ‘light bright to the right’ my rule. I move the White slider as far right as is needed, (which is easy to see via the Histogram) before clipping occurs. This is a key feature to great looking images and for top prints.

6. SHARPEN – Finally, in the separate Detail panel, I might sharpen the file a little.

The great thing is all these can be saved as presets. A Preset allows you to save a group of changes, and then apply them all in one go and with one click to any image. I have a handful of presets, including ones for monochrome photography and ones suited to high contrast scenes. My standard Preset based on the above is called ‘Vibrance Base’. I’ll often apply this, and then make a few final tweaks until I like what I see on screen - easy! 🌟



DARRAN LEAL

Darran has been teaching photography since 1981. His company World Photo Adventures takes small groups of photographers on professionally guided photo tours around the world, including a once-a-year trip with AP in 2020.
More info: worldphotoadventures.com.au

LEFT TOP: I love the logical layout of Adobe Lightroom Classic. I can look at my images, find images and then process them quickly and efficiently. But wait, there’s more! From there I can create slideshows, tag images for maps and create books. Using your images is so important!

LEFT BOTTOM: The six images I merged for the panorama as seen above. Although I don’t do them much these days, I shoot vertical panoramas when I want more foreground detail. In recent years, Lightroom has improved greatly at correcting things like distortion and artefacts from overlapping the individual images. Thanks to Content Aware Fill and Fill Edges, panoramas are also now very quick to produce.

QUICK SNAPS

TAMRON LAUNCHES NEW 20MM F/2.8 LENS FOR SONY E-MOUNT

TAMRON have announced the newest addition to the Japanese company's Sony E-mount lens line-up, with the announcement of the Tamron 20mm f/2.8 Di III OSD M1:2 lens.

Built with 10 elements in nine groups, the lens includes one glass moulded aspherical element and three low dispersion elements. It's also moisture resistant, and features a fluorine coating that repels dust and fingerprints. A BBAR (Broad-Band Anti-Reflection) coating should also suppress reflections on the lens element surfaces to help manage unwanted flare and ghosting.

There's a minimum focus distance of 0.11m, giving the lens a maximum magnification ratio of 1:2 (hence the name).

Inside is an OSD (Optimised Silent Drive) DC motor to help with quiet autofocus-ing, and it's also compatible with many Sony autofocus features, including Hybrid AF and Eye AF.

The lens is available now for AU\$549 with a hood and lens cap.



LEICA ANNOUNCES M10 MONOCHROM

LEICA has added a new variant to the Leica M10 range - the M10 Monochrom.

The \$13,500 black and white only camera isn't just the result of Leica turning off the ability to take colour photos either, instead it features a new sensor developed 'from the ground up' to handle black and white photography.

The fact that no colour filter arrays are required means that there are fewer glass and filter layers to 'impede the transmission of light' or cause deflections. According to Leica, this results in decreased, finer-grained image noise.

The new sensor also features a lower base ISO (from 320 to 160), and an improvement in dynamic range.

The Leica M10 Monochrom is 'the epitome of discretion' (according to Leica, that is) with the omission of the familiar red dot. The "Leica M10 Monochrom" inscription on the top plate is also considerably more subtle. The camera shutter is also quieter, according to the company.

Otherwise, there's few changes over the M10-P, with the M10 Monochrom featuring the same 40-megapixel resolution. The camera is also capable of transmitting images via Wi-Fi and Leica's Fotos app.

The M10 Monochrom is available now for \$13,500 from leica-store.com.au.

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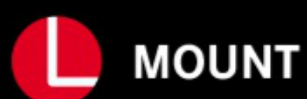


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35mm F/2.8 Di III OSD M1:2 (Model F053)

For Sony E-mount.
Di III: For mirrorless interchangeable-lens cameras.

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PHOTOGRAPHER RICHARD BENNETT AWARDED ORDER OF AUSTRALIA MEDAL

PHOTOGRAPHER Richard Bennett, known for his iconic images of the Sydney to Hobart yacht race, has been announced as a recipient of the Order of Australia (OAM), for services to photography.

The Tasmanian-native has been photographing the Sydney to Hobart since 1974. As he writes on his website, a love of wild places was the spark that sent him down the path of photographing the now iconic race:

“I took a scenic flight to Tasman Island where I photographed a few of the Sydney – Hobart yachts,” he writes.

“After reviewing the prints, I began to plan how I could do better the following year. That led to a career niche, and a passion that I love just as much today as I did nearly half a century ago.

The things that appeal to me about photographing the Sydney-Hobart from the air are: the

many moods of the sea, the sense of participation in a great adventure, sensing the proximity of the elements, the wildness of the sea, the gales, the different light and the dramatic coastline.”

In 1999 he won the Nikon-Kodak Australian Press Photographer of the year award for the best sports photograph with his images of the 1998 Sydney-Hobart race tragedy, and in 2006 he was awarded the Photo Imaging Council of Australia’s highest award, the Gold tripod.

Speaking about the award, Bennett said he was “humbled”.

“Photographers really do contribute greatly to society, and [for me], it’s great to see photography recognised in this way,” he said.

Bennett continues to shoot the Sydney to Hobart, and in 2019 he published his most recent book, *Across Five Decades*, that compiled his best Sydney to Hobart images.

You can see more of Richard Bennett’s work at richardbennett.com.au/.

FUJIFILM ANNOUNCES X-T200

FUJIFILM has announced the X-T200, the successor to the 24MP X-T100.

Although the new camera shares the same 24MP Bayer sensor as on the T100, Fujifilm says it will be faster and will offer an improvement to high ISO performance.

The autofocus should get a boost too, with more phase-detect pixels across the whole sensor (compared to 25% on its predecessor), more selectable AF points and enhanced face/eye detection AF. The camera’s drive speed also gets a bump from 6fps to 8.

Physically, the X-T200 is lighter than the X-T100, and gains a more substantial grip and marginally larger rear-LCD.

Finally, video features also get a boost with un-cropped 4K at 29.97 and 24p, and 1080/120p.

The Fujifilm X-T200 ships in a kit with a XC15-45mmF3.5-5.6 OIS PZ lens for \$1,379 and is available now. You can find out more at fujifilm.com.au.



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FINALISTS IN \$50,000 NATIONAL PORTRAIT PRIZE ANNOUNCED

THE National Portrait Gallery has announced the 48 finalists of the National Photography Portrait Prize (NPPP).

Now in its 13th year, the NPPP offers over \$50,000 in prize money, spread across the Winner, Highly Commended, the Art Handlers Award and People's Choice Award.

According to the Gallery, the works selected for the exhibition reflect 'the distinctive vision of Australia's aspiring and professional portrait photographers, and the unique nature of their subjects.'

NPG Director Karen Quinlan said, "The Photographic Portrait Prize (the NPPP) is one of our most popular exhibitions, offering equal billing for amateur and professional photographers



and an incredible opportunity for entrants to not only win prizes...but to have their work shown in this great national cultural institution."

The selected portraits will be on display from 6 March until 10 May 2020, with the winner announced at the launch of the exhibition on 13 March.

You can see the finalists at nppp.portrait.gov.au.

CAMERAPRO EXPLORER'S GRANT RECIPIENTS ANNOUNCED

THREE Australian photographers will share in a \$25,000 grant to support and promote change-making projects, thanks to Australian camera retailer CameraPro.

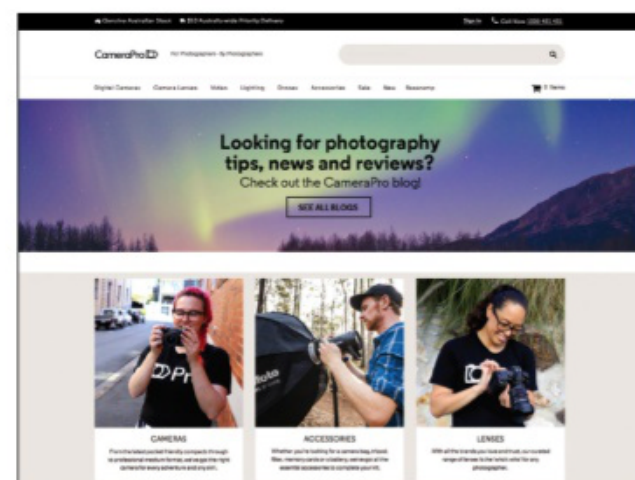
CameraPro's 2019 Explorer's Grant was founded to help address and raise awareness of worthy causes through photography/film.

Sydney photographer, writer and audio-visual producer Natalia Mroz; Brisbane documentary photographer and photojournalist, Sarah Osborn; and Melbourne photographer and filmmaker Martin Stringer were selected for the 2019 edition of the grant, following a call for applications last year.

The initiatives are: Natalia Mroz - Samburu Tribe and the Grevy's Zebra Trust, A project engaging indigenous African communities to maximise conservation outcomes for endangered species; Sarah Osborn - 'What Remains Here Now?', a project documenting the stories of 'Forgotten Australians': survivors of Australia's

lian institutional childcare systems that operated in the first half of the 20th century and Martin Stringer - Replanting a Rainforest, a project about Rainforest Rescue, aimed at raising awareness, funds and seedlings to help restore, protect and buy back the Daintree Rainforest.

You can find out more about the initiatives at camerapro.com.au. 🌐



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YOUR BEST SHOT

UNUSUAL ANGLES

The challenge for this month's Your Best Shot was to bring something new to your imagery by going high, going low, or shifting your perspective entirely. These are our favourite images captured from unusual angles.

THIS
MONTH'S
WINNER





TONY BARBOUR

Power pole

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

While shooting straight up can bring a different perspective, sometimes a twist to the angle at the same time will bring even more dynamism to a frame. Tony Barbour's image of power poles in South Australia uses this to great effect. Shooting against the sky has created emphasis between the shadow and highlight areas, and there's also plenty of repeating patterns and features that keep the frame interesting. Well done.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Sony A7R III, Sony FE 70-300mm F4.5-5.6 G OSS lens @ 70mm. 1/50s @ f7.1, ISO 50.



KATHY WALLACE

Jingle bells

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Shooting from an unusual angle is a great technique for transforming an ordinary subject into something unique. Case in point Kathy Wallace's image Jingle Bells, which shows her local shopping centre's Christmas display. "When viewed from directly below the main Christmas bell shape, it looked like a unique golden cogwheel," she explains. It's an eye-catching image that is also really nicely processed, with the cool blue tones contrasting with the warm yellow ones, and a nice use of vignette too. It was certainly worth Kathy's neck-cracking experience to capture the decorations from this perspective.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Nikon D5100, Nikkor 18-55mm lens. 1/250s @ f7.1, ISO 250.

Thanks to the team at Blonde Robot, Kathy Wallace has won a Black or Ash Everyday Sling 10L v2 valued at \$289.95. The smallest, lightest bag in the Peak Design Everyday Line, the Everyday Sling 10L v2 is ideal for organisation, transport, and quick-access of essentials, whether you're carrying a camera, drone, or everyday gear.

MORE INFO: [PEAKDESIGN.COM](https://peakdesign.com)





MERYL KEMP

Desolate

HOW I DID IT

When the dust settles and the ashes are cold there is nothing left but shadows on the ground. Fires on the mid north coast destroyed bush, national parks and the homes of many native animals, leaving a barren wasteland of dead and damaged trees waiting for rain to bring them back to life.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

DJI Mavic Pro. 1/1400s @ f2.2, ISO 100.

BLANE COULCHER

Opera House

HOW I DID IT

I challenged myself with finding an unusual angle to the thousands of photos of the Opera House, and used a new wide angle lens to do so. I converted in Lightroom to B&W to make the image more striking and accentuate the bright blue sky and wispy cloud, with some cropping and minor adjustments.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Olympus EM1 Mk II, Olympus Pro 7-14mm lens. 1/320s @ f8, ISO 200.





YOUR BEST SHOT



NEIL VINCENT

Hot air balloon

HOW I DID IT

There are plenty of subjects at the Canowindra Hot Air Balloon Festival, and this was one image I had imagined in my mind before going. Running around, looking up through a lens, and trying to be directly under a balloon, proved to be more interesting than I had thought, but the result was good. I did very little in post production. I was using a polariser so the saturation was already in the RAW image.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Nikon D700, Nikkor 24-120mm lens
@ 98mm. 1/250s @ f10, ISO 640.



LEO 2.0 THE SEQUEL



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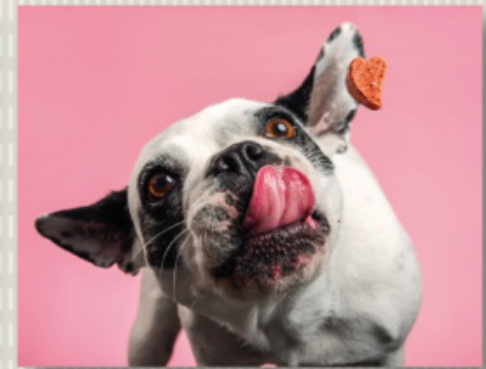
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COLOUR
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1. Email your entry to yourbestshot@australianphotography.com with the name of the competition theme in the email subject line, for example: Weather, Abstract, Landscape, etc.
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3.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



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Canon 5D Mark III, Sigma 150mm
f/2.8 macro lens. 1/200s @ f14,
ISO 200. One Godox V860 II flash
off-camera with small softbox.



ONE FLASH MAGIC

BY GREG BASCO

Introducing flash into your wildlife photography isn't as hard as you think. Here's a simple, one flash technique that will give great results.

Many photographers, even professionals, are reluctant to use flash in their nature photography. They often give three reasons – flash looks artificial, flash is complicated, flash harms our subjects.

None of these statements is true and, together, they belie a lack of understanding of flash as one of the photographer's most important tools. Employed well, flash can create beautiful light. Using flash is not that hard. And, while we should take care using flash in certain situations such as nesting birds, flash, as is the case for humans, has no harmful physiological effect on animals.

In this article, I will share a few of my favorite techniques for using just one flash to take great nature photos of subjects ranging from birds to frogs to insects to landscapes. Using flash will quickly open up new creative avenues for you, will allow you to shoot in sub-optimal conditions, and will help you to capture images that stand out from the crowd.



PHOTO TIPS: WILDLIFE

USING FLASH, IN A NUTSHELL

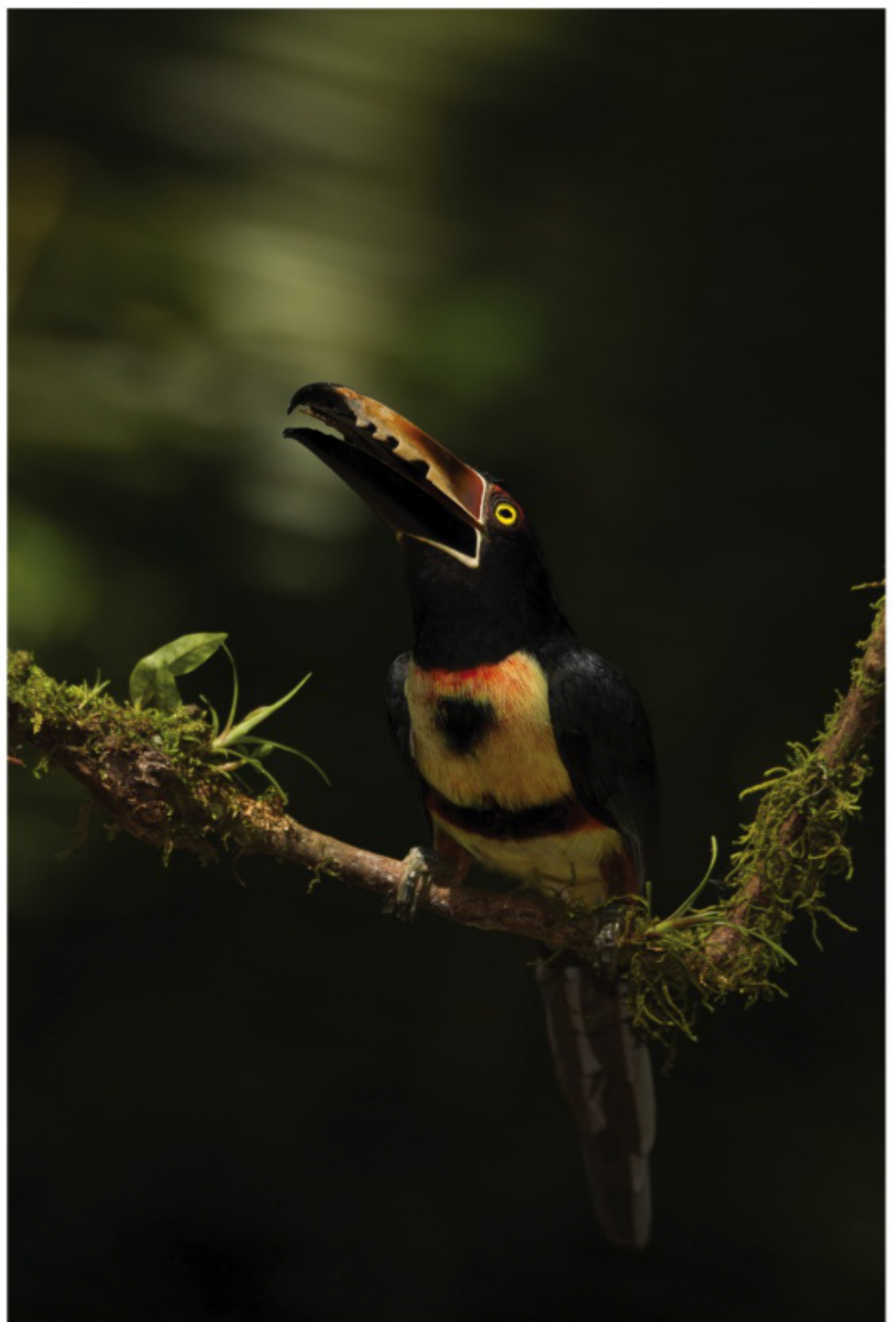
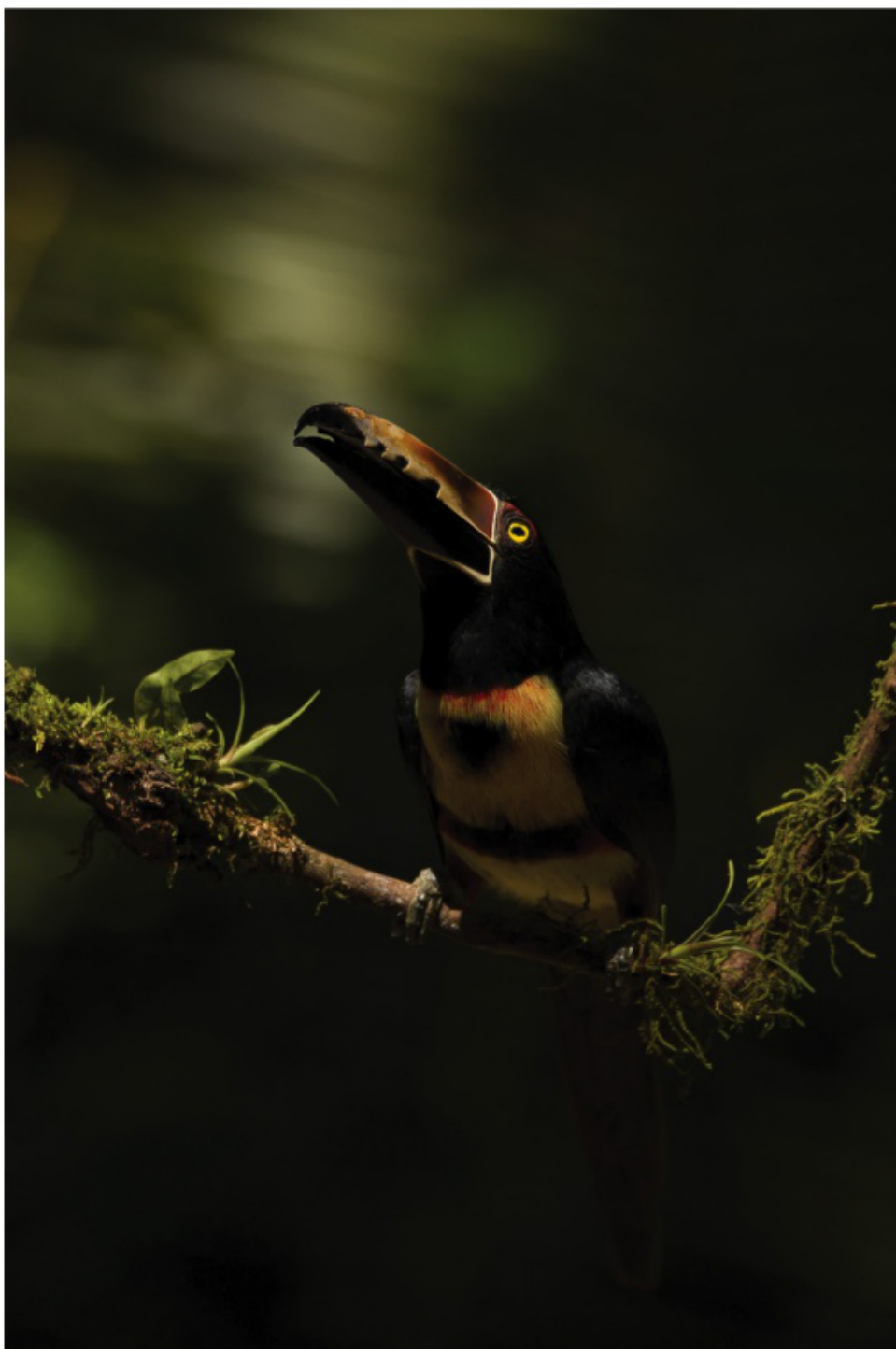
Photographers use flash in two basic ways, as main light or as fill light. We can use flash in this way with any type of flash. Though I prefer to keep my camera in manual exposure mode for my photography, these basic flash concepts also apply for any shooting mode.

FILL FLASH

Fill flash aims to balance natural light with light from our flash. Our goal with this type of photography is to use flash to fill in the shadows while maintaining direction from the natural light. Importantly, we are letting the natural light do most of the work in exposing our subject; the flash is only adding auxiliary light to reveal details in darker areas.

In nature, we most often use fill-flash by placing a flash in the hotshoe or on a telephoto flash bracket to photograph birds or wildlife. Our flash works to fill in shadows while the natural light mandates our base exposure for the brightest parts of the image. This is the simplest use of flash for nature photography. Start in TTL flash mode and dial in flash exposure compensation between -1 and -3 stops. Fill flash is very easy to learn, and it can quickly improve your nature photos by allowing you to photograph in less than perfect light.

Take these photos of a Collared Aracari taken in the lowlands of Costa Rica below. In the first image without flash on the left, the shadow areas are quite dark. In the second image, subtle fill-flash has helped to reveal detail in the shadows without affecting the background or killing the sense of natural direction of the light.



ABOVE: Collared Aracari without (Left) and with flash (Right). Canon 1D X, 150-600mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM lens @ 370mm. 1/2500s @ f6.3, ISO 1000. Godox V860 II flash on a telephoto flash bracket, with TTL flash exposure compensation set to -2.



MAIN FLASH

We employ flash as main light when we set our flash unit to do most or all of the work on our subject. Main light flash is useful in the absence of natural light (e.g., at night), in extreme backlit situations, and when backgrounds are in sun and our subject is in deep shade. It's not hard at all to properly expose any subject using flash as main light. Simply turn on your flash and let TTL exposure take over. Making main light flash look good, however, takes some practice and an artistic eye.

Look, for example, at the photo of a Red-headed Barbet I took in Ecuador on the right. The background was lit by very bright mid-day sun, and the bird and branch were in the shade. I used my flash on a telephoto flash bracket to illuminate the bird, and it is properly exposed. But, it looks absolutely horrible!



Why does this photo look so bad if it is in fact well exposed? When using flash as the main light it's essential to get the flash off-axis. When using flash as fill as described above, we can use the flash in the hotshoe or on a simple bracket with good results. This is because we can leave natural highlights and shadows from the ambient exposure. Our picture will have depth and will look natural.

When the flash does all of the work on our subject, however, it becomes impossible to create any shadows if the flash is fired straight at the subject. Direct flash – whether in the hotshoe or on a telephoto flash bracket – as main light on the subject is a recipe for failure in nature photography. When I have to use flash as main light, I move my flash off-camera and often try to diffuse it in some fashion.

A few years ago, I wanted to photograph a tiny Strawberry Poison Frog hopping around some small cup fungi in a lowland rainforest forest in Costa Rica (left). As with the aforementioned Red-headed Barbet, I was faced with a shaded subject against a bright sunlit background. I set my camera to expose the background properly. That left me with a very underexposed frog. I used one flash held off-camera and fitted with a small softbox to illuminate my subject. In contrast to the direct flash work on the barbet above, the flash work on the frog photo looks completely natural. Coupled with the use of a wide open aperture on my macro lens, this lends the photo a dreamy look that is much different from most frog photos we see.

ABOVE: Red-headed Barbet. Canon 7D Mark II, 150-600mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM lens @ 600mm. 1/160s @ f6.3, ISO 1600. Godox V860 II flash on a telephoto flash bracket and with TTL flash exposure compensation set to 0.

LEFT: Use of flash makes a huge difference to the end result in this image of a Strawberry Poison Frog. For the photo with flash, I used one Godox V860 II flash off-camera with a small softbox. I set the flash to high-speed sync and used TTL flash at -.7EV. Canon 7D Mark II, Sigma 150 mm f/2.8 macro lens. 1/2000s @ f4, ISO 100.

Poison frog. Canon 5D Mark III, Sigma
150mm f/2.8 macro lens. 1/200s @
f2.8, ISO 100. One Godox V860 II flash
off-camera with small softbox.

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PHOTO TIPS: WILDLIFE

**“THINKING LIKE A LANDSCAPE PAINTER AND PAYING
ATTENTION TO LIGHT SOURCE, DIRECTION AND
TEMPERATURE IS KEY TO USING FLASH WELL...”**





EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD

With some practice and experimentation, it's not hard to start incorporating flash into your nature photography. With digital, all you can waste is time! Here are some examples of how I've used just one standard hotshoe flash to take photos in the rainforests of Latin America.

1 I used a variation of the simple fill-flash technique to produce this unique portrait of a flying Scarlet Macaw in Costa Rica. With a flash in the camera hotshoe, I set up for a standard flight shot but with a couple of twists. A slow shutter speed (1/50th) allowed me to blur the background as I panned along with the bird as it flew. A brief pop of flash produced added sharpness and brighter color on the bird.

BELOW: Scarlet Macaw, Costa Rica. Canon 1D Mark IV, Canon EF300mm f/2.8L IS USM lens. 1/50s @ f5.6, ISO 100. Canon flash on-camera in manual mode at 1/2 power.

2 For this portrait of a bullet ant gathering nectar on rainforest poinsettia flowers in the Peruvian Amazon, I employed flash as main light. Even though I took this shot during the middle of the day, I completely underexposed the image so that I could use flash as the only light. This allowed me to stop down to f14 for added depth of field. I held one flash, fitted with a softbox, off-camera with a TTL flash cord. Careful flash placement and good diffusion helped to create light that looks completely natural.

RIGHT: Bullet Ant, Peruvian Amazon. Canon 5DS R, Canon EF100mm f/2.8L Macro IS USM lens. 1/200s @ f14, ISO 400. One Godox V860 II flash off-camera with small softbox.



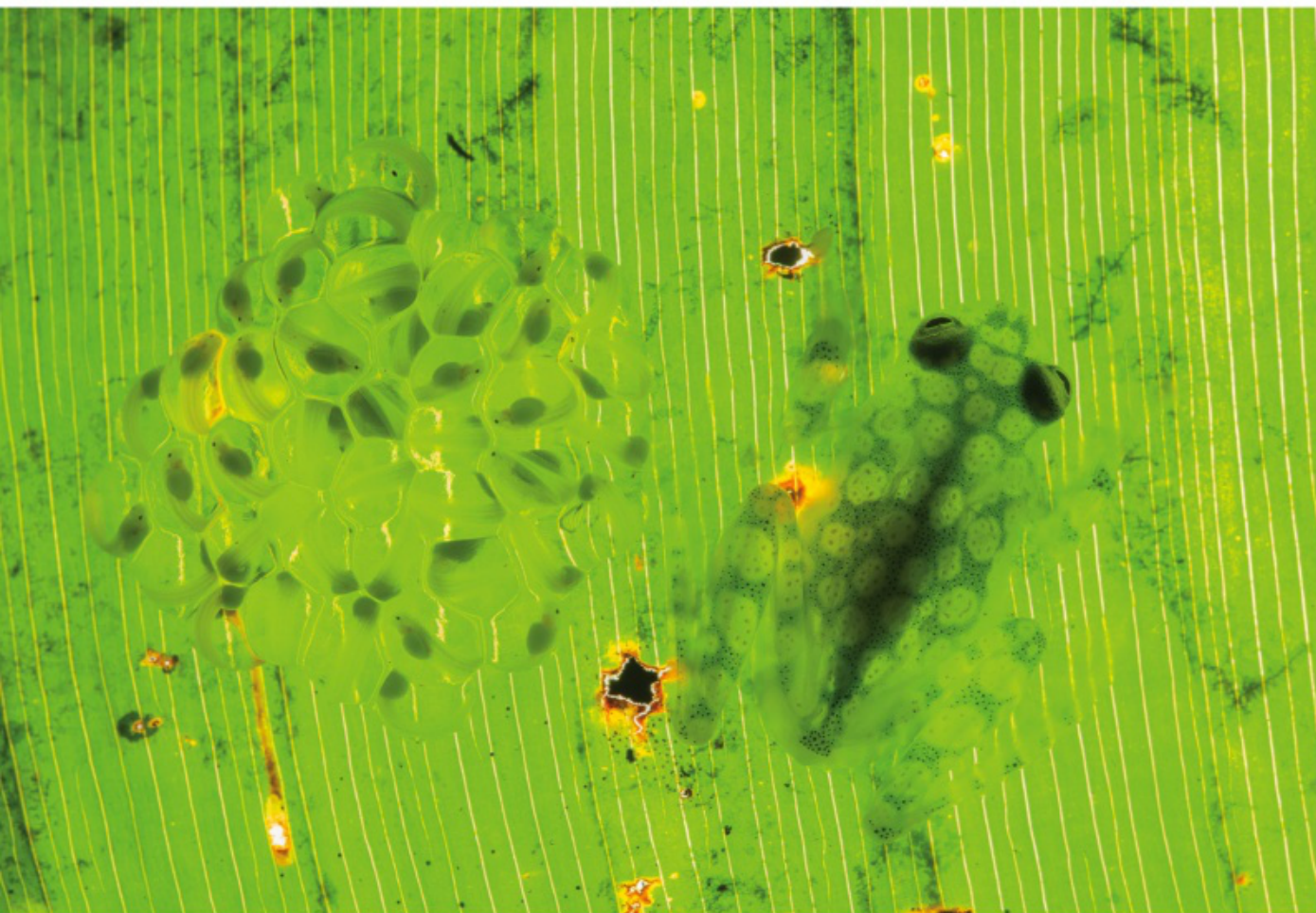


3

I used the exact same technique as in image two for this very tight composition of the eye of a Dwarf Iguana in a cloud forest in Ecuador. Here I was using the Canon MP-E 65 mm macro lens for extreme magnification. Using flash as the only light allowed me to gain valuable depth of field even while handholding.

RIGHT: Dwarf Iguana, Ecuador. Canon 5DS R, Canon MP-E65mm f/2.8 1-5x Macro lens. 1/200s @ f16, ISO 200. One Godox V860 II flash off-camera with small softbox.





4 For this photo of a Reticulated Glass Frog protecting its egg clutch in a lowland rain-forest in Costa Rica, the flash is again doing all of the work. I completely underexposed the natural light and used one-flash held off-camera and fitted with a softbox. I used a radio flash transmitter on the camera and a receiver on the flash as this allowed me to hold the flash behind the leaf to create the backlit look I wanted. The awkward location of the leaf and a slight breeze meant using a tripod for a natural light exposure was out of the question. By using flash as the main light and going handheld, I was able to quickly get my shot and then leave the frog alone.

LEFT: Reticulated Glass Frog, Costa Rica. Canon 5D Mark II, Sigma 150mm f/2.8 macro lens. 1/200s @ f16, ISO 320. One Godox V860 II flash off-camera with small softbox.





5

Landscapes can benefit from flash too, particularly when they have a strong foreground element. One of my favorite techniques is to slightly underexpose a landscape scene and then use flash to draw attention to an important element, such as this giant liana in a rainforest in Costa Rica. I light painted the liana using multiple flash pops during a 13-second exposure.

LEFT: Liana, Costa Rica. Canon 5D Mark II, Canon 17-40mm f/4L USM lens @ 17mm. 13s @ f22, ISO 400. Polarising filter. One Canon 430 EX flash held off-camera and fired multiple times in manual mode.

6

Incorporating flash into landscape can open the door to eye-catching wildlife in the environment images. For this photo of a boa constrictor in a tree on the shores of Lake Arenal in Costa Rica, I set the camera to properly expose the sunrise sky. This left my subject a complete silhouette. I worked handheld and had a friend hold a flash with softbox and warming gel off-camera to illuminate the boa and the branch. Thinking like a landscape painter and paying attention to light source, direction, and temperature is key to using flash well for this type of scenario.

ABOVE: Boa Constrictor, Costa Rica. Canon 5DS R, Canon 16-35mm f/4L IS USM lens @ 16mm. 1/60s @ f14, ISO 400. One Godox V860 II flash off-camera with small softbox.



MY RECOMMENDED GEAR FOR WORKING WITH ONE FLASH



GODOX V860 II

I love the Godox flash system as it's full-featured and smoothly integrated from their largest studio strobes to their tiny bluetooth flash for smartphones. This V860 II model is the same as a Canon or Nikon flagship flash and offers TTL, high-speed sync, and radio master and slave capabilities for a fraction of the price.

GODOX XPRO FLASH TRANSMITTER

Another great feature of the Godox V860II flash is that it will work with all of its features no matter what camera system you use. Simply buy the X Pro flash transmitter for your camera system(s) of choice and fire your Godox flash off-camera, even in TTL and high-speed sync. Transmission is via 2.4 GHz radio frequency so you don't need line of sight between your camera and flash. The range is about 100 meters.



VELLO OFF-CAMERA TTL FLASH CORD

An off-camera cord is the cheapest and easiest way to move your flash off-camera for macro work while maintaining rock-solid communication with your camera. This Vello model works well at a good price. I like the 3 foot long version to make it a bit easier to place the flash where you want it.

LUMIQUEST SOFTBOX III

This is a great softbox for providing soft light due to the size and the translucent plastic material used. It is a bit large, however, and the mounting process is slow and a bit awkward. It does give great results, though, and I use it often for frogs and reptiles.

WESTCOTT MICRO APOLLO SOFTBOX

A smaller alternative that mounts much more easily is the Westcott Micro Apollo. The light it provides is not quite as soft as the Lumiquiest Softbox III, but it still gives very good results. I use this product a lot for frogs, flowers, and even for my multiple-flash setups for hummingbirds.

PHOTOFLEX REFLECTORS

Small collapsible 12" reflectors are easy to carry and can provide nice fill light when working with one flash. I prefer the silver/white variety. In a pinch, aluminum foil, a piece of white paper, or even the palm of your hand can work as a reflector! ☺

Want to join Greg on a workshop in Latin America? Check out fotoverdetours.com or his website deepgreenphotography.com.

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WORLD
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This image was composed in such a way that it draws the viewer's eyes along the line of the trees, straight towards the two main features, Mt Gower and Mt Lidgebird. I also used the rule of thirds when composing this image, splitting the sky into one third and the landscape into two thirds. Nikon D800, Nikon 24-70mm f/2.8 lens. 1s @ f16, ISO 100. -1.3 EV.





THE PORTRAIT LANDSCAPE

BY MICHAEL SNEDIC

When most photographers think landscapes, they tend to think horizontal. But that's just one perspective, and shifting your framing from left to right to up and down can really transform your work. Here are some ideas for changing your view of verticals.

ABOVE: A peak in the Mount Barney region, Queensland. I wasn't planning to shoot with my 200mm prime lens, but the rush to get my camera out as the light changed left me with little choice. In the end, it was the perfect lens to compress the distance between the peak and foreground, while still emphasising the dead trees and mist. Nikon D700, 200mm f/4 lens. 0.4s @ f16, ISO 100.

As someone who presents audio-visuals at photography clubs, I regularly add portrait orientation landscape images into my presentations, and I am surprised at how often photographers come up to me and say they have never thought of taking landscape images as verticals! I think this is because landscapes are usually seen left-to-right, so that's how many photographers subconsciously compose their shots. But by honing in on one particular section of a landscape and composing in portrait orientation, it can open up your creativity and give you much more dynamic images.

Here are some tips for achieving great landscape images in portrait orientation.



PHOTO TIPS: VERTICAL LANDSCAPES



LEFT: Antarctica has without doubt some of the most breathtaking landscapes on earth. By zooming in on this section of melting blue ice, I was able to obscure any 'dirty' ice around it. This has the effect of focusing all attention onto the main feature – the shape, texture and contrast of the stunning blue ice. Thankfully, the light was just perfect, allowing a view into the melting ice cave. Nikon D810, Nikon 70-200mm lens @ 200mm. 1/1600s @ f5.6, ISO 250.

RIGHT: Deadvlei – Namibia, Africa. I lay on the ground, resting my ultra-wide lens and camera on my elbows. By focusing about a third of the way into this scene and using a small aperture, the cracked earth back towards me was in focus, as were the tree and sand dunes. The image was composed so that the tree was off-centre. Also, timing was of the essence. This image was taken at sunrise, just as the shadow of the sun was at the very bottom of the sand dunes. Nikon D800, 14-24mm f/2.8 lens @ 14mm. 1/400s @ f8, ISO 200. +0.33EV.

1 GIVE IT A GO

Although your initial approach when considering a shot may be to compose it in landscape orientation, it's always worth considering whether portrait orientation could bring something different to the image. Some scenes won't work in portrait orientation, but those that do can really have a 'wow' factor. The key is to first pick out a prominent feature in the foreground of the landscape, such as a rock, plant, or a tree, and make that the focal point of the image. By building your frame from that point, the viewer of the image will settle first at the focal point before their eyes continue to the rest of the landscape.

Another example is the use of leading lines to direct the gaze of the viewer, such as a path in a rainforest. By composing your image so that the path starts at the bottom of your image and continues to the top, it can create a sense of mystery. People may think "I wonder where the path leads to?"

2 EMPHASISING DEPTH

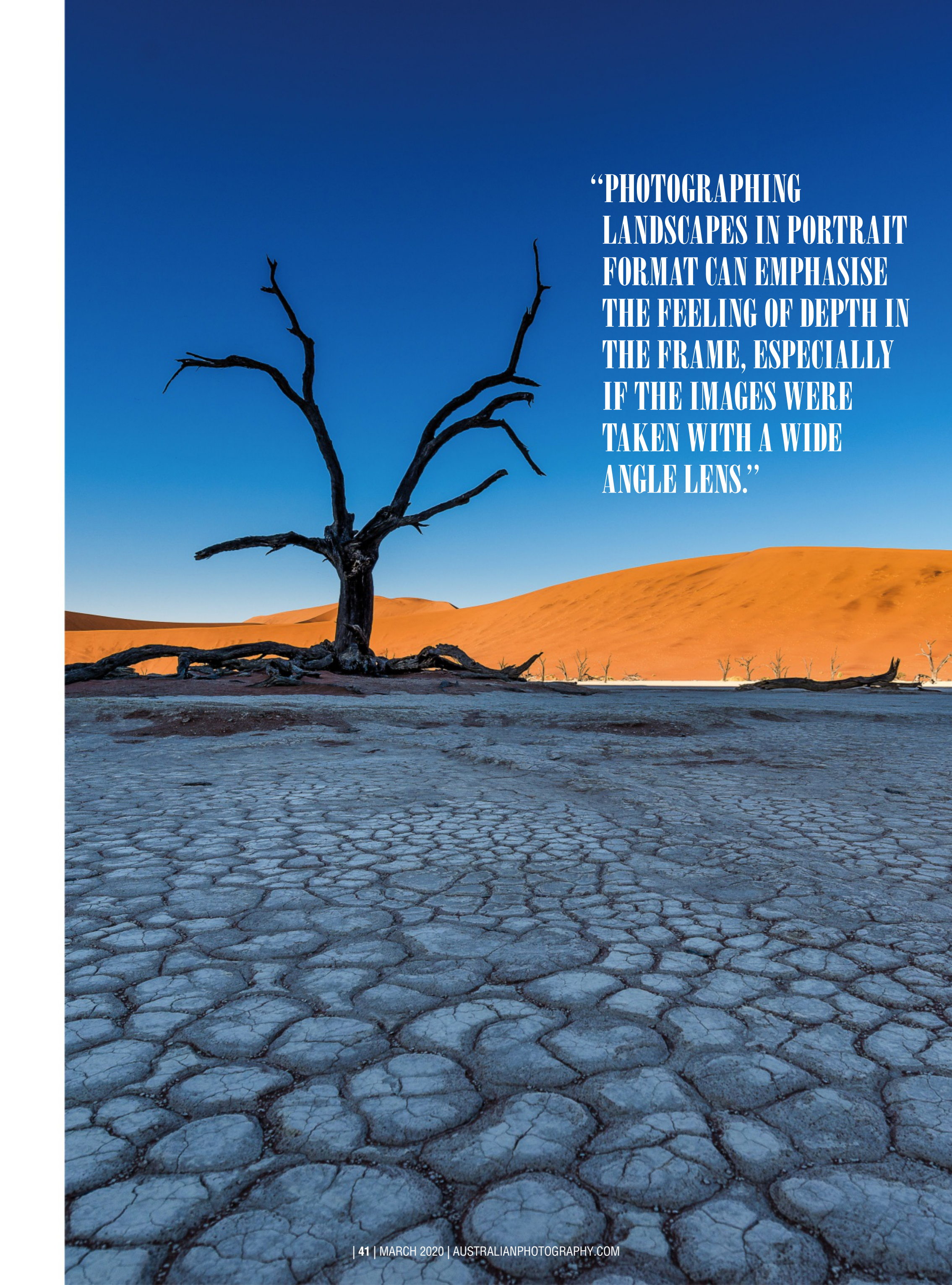
Photographing landscapes in portrait format can emphasise the feeling of depth in the frame, especially if the images were taken with a wide angle lens. You can get quite close to a foreground feature, while at the same time allowing space for the rest of the scene to unfold. Just be careful with your focusing, as you will need to focus part of the way into the scene, using a small aperture (such as f11 or f16) in order to achieve sharpness throughout the whole image, or consider identifying your lens' hyperfocal distance, which is the distance beyond which all objects can be brought into an "acceptable" focus. (see the table on page 45).

The other thing to consider is scenes with a lot of vertical height like mountain ranges. By shooting these in portrait orientation you can emphasise the difference in height between the top and bottom, and create an image with much greater impact.

3 WORK THE ANGLES

If possible, move around and take images at various angles. This could be getting low to the ground, perched high on a rock or from a vantage point that most photographers may never think of.

By getting down low and close, it really helps increase the visual emphasis on your foreground subject. This is especially prevalent when using an ultra-wide lens. Get down as low as you can and tilt the lens, and you'll create an image with a distorted view of the foreground, which makes it more prominent. Doing this can turn a tiny pebble into a rock, or a small wildflower into a beautiful large focal point.

A wide-angle landscape photograph of a dead, gnarled tree in a desert. The tree is dark and stands on a cracked, dry lake bed. In the background, there are large, smooth sand dunes under a clear blue sky. The foreground is filled with the intricate patterns of the cracked earth.

**“PHOTOGRAPHING
LANDSCAPES IN PORTRAIT
FORMAT CAN EMPHASISE
THE FEELING OF DEPTH IN
THE FRAME, ESPECIALLY
IF THE IMAGES WERE
TAKEN WITH A WIDE
ANGLE LENS.”**



ABOVE, FROM LEFT: Campbell island. Campbell island is known for its rare megafauna, and I wanted to show this unique yellow *Bulbinella Rossii*, as well as the grass and water. Portrait orientation was the perfect choice. Nikon D810, Nikon 14-24mm @ 14mm. 1/250s @ f8, ISO 100, tripod.

Sunrise at Bowra Sanctuary lagoon, Queensland. The portrait composition here helped capture the tree, moody clouds and the water in the foreground all in the same shot. Nikon D700, 24-70mm f/2.8 lens @ 34mm. 1/8s @ f16, ISO 800. -0.33EV.



4

COMPOSE WITH INTENT

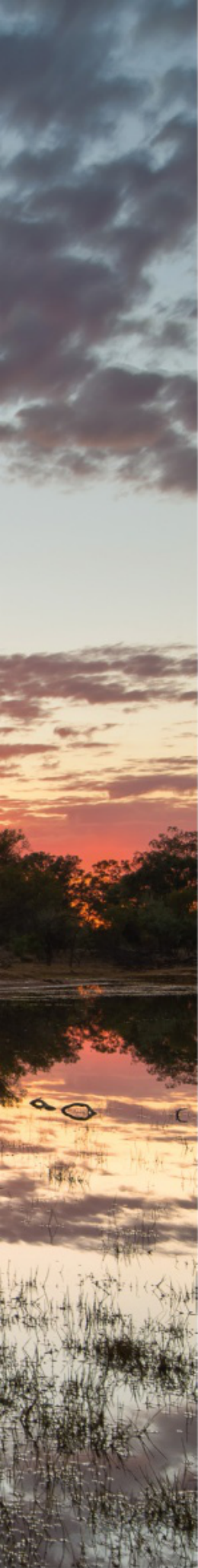
Landscape images take on a very different look when they are taken in portrait orientation. Images shot vertically lend themselves well to structured compositions – deliberately placing subjects in certain areas will help your portrait landscapes ‘pop’ visually. As the photographer, look for the best way to emphasise the contrast between the foreground and the background elements.

Like in landscape orientation images, the rule of thirds works well in portrait format too. Try identifying three different points of interest - the foreground, midground and background, with each point occupying a third of your frame. With horizons, try to place these in the third nearest the top or bottom.

Often you will know when a composition feels right at the time of shooting. There’s no harm in ‘giving it a go’ and seeing what eventuates.



“AS THE PHOTOGRAPHER, LOOK FOR THE BEST WAY TO EMPHASISE THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE FOREGROUND AND BACKGROUND ELEMENTS...”



5

AVOIDING 'MESSY' SCENES EITHER SIDE OF YOUR IMAGE

By shooting in portrait mode you can eliminate distractions in your landscape by composing in a way that removes things like dead leaves on branches, muddy patches or footprints on sand, or snow on either side of the landscape. The reason for doing this is simple: the more prominent the main focal point is, the more the viewer's eyes will be drawn to it.

6

USE DIFFERENT FOCAL LENGTHS

Many photographers are surprised when I suggest zooming in and out with their wide-angled lens, taking lots of shots at different focal lengths. Images will take on a completely different look when you do this. By shooting at the widest focal length, the whole of the landscape may be visible. But by zooming in closer to a landscape scene using a longer focal length telephoto or zoom lens, you can really emphasise height and compress the perceived distance between subjects. You may want to consider a zoom or telephoto lens with a long focal length to capture a distant scene that may be impossible to venture closer to.

WATERFALLS

Waterfalls are a great example of where shooting the same scene in both portrait and landscape orientation can totally change the feel of the end result. In landscape format you should try to emphasise the waterfall in its environment, revealing some of the landscape either side of the flow. In portrait format, the aim is to accentuate the waterfall itself.

Importantly, for both styles, make sure you don't cut the top of the waterfall off, and leave room at the bottom of the waterfall so that the water has somewhere to go.





PHOTO TIPS: VERTICAL LANDSCAPES



ABOVE: Bichenough Blowhole, Tasmania. The clouds were a stunning peach colour and a beautiful ray of light was flaring up from the ocean. I wanted to include the rays, colour of the clouds and the rock, so a vertical composition was perfect in this instance. Nikon D810, Nikon 24-70mm lens @ 24mm. 30s @ f16, ISO 100, tripod.

RIGHT: Uluru, NT. There have been loads of images taken of Uluru at sunset in landscape orientation. Here, I positioned the camera in front of the grass and driftwood, making for the perfect foreground detail to a very colourful Uluru at sunset. By using a portrait orientation, it allowed for more of the interesting foreground elements to be featured. Nikon D700, 16-35mm f/4 lens @ 24mm. 1/5s @ f16, ISO 200.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Devil's Marbles at night, NT. Rather than composing all of the Devil's Marbles, I chose to pick out one section and zoom in. This image was taken at night, using a sturdy tripod and cable release, to minimise any movement. Nikon D800, 24-70mm f/2.8 lens @ 24mm. 30s @ f7.1, ISO 2500.

7

PARALLEL LINES

Sometimes you will come across a landscape that has distinct, parallel lines throughout it. These lines could be horizontal or vertical and lend themselves really well to portrait images. If there are lots of sections with lines, or the lines cover a large area, choose one specific area where the lines are the most interesting. A forest with lots of straight, tall trees is a perfect example, as is a seascape, which may have lots of parallel lines created by the surf.

8

CONSIDER A PANO

Vertical panoramas are a great way to capture 'more' in your image, both detail and information. It is important to use a sturdy tripod, preferably one with a specific pano head attached, and make sure you include some overlap between your frames. As well as increasing the size of the image, panoramas allow for more flexibility when printing and cropping.

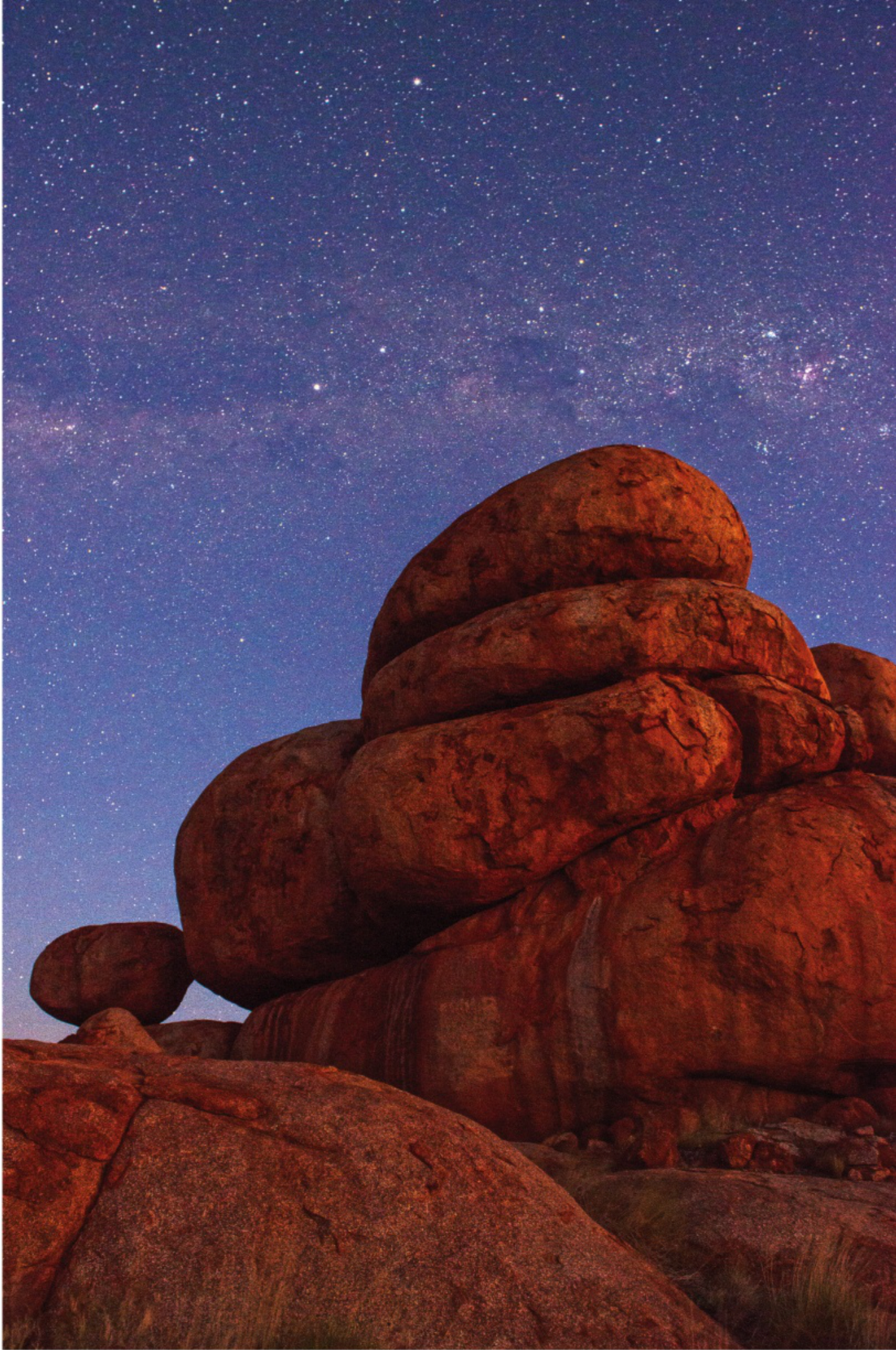


9

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

For landscape photography, I wouldn't consider using my SLR without an L-bracket. These brackets can be purchased to suit the exact camera make and model you own and once screwed in place, should be permanently left on the camera. The benefits of an L-bracket are that they are exceptionally secure when mounted to your tripod head. They work with all Arca Swiss style heads and when positioned, create a very secure 'lock' for your camera. Rather than flopping the ball head of your tripod (with camera attached) on its side, you turn the camera to a vertical orientation and slide it into the bevelled plate on the tripod head.

When it comes to a tripod, I recommend one that is sturdy, yet not overly heavy. That's why I'm a fan of carbon fibre tripods – solid and easier to cart around. If you are using a tripod for the first time, I strongly suggest spending time practising how everything works. There's nothing more frustrating than seeing an incredible sunrise or sunset happen in front of your eye, yet you are missing the best parts of it due to your fumbling with the tripod legs and ball head. Tripods with removable centre columns are great for getting down much lower than regular tripods, too.



LENS HYPERFOCAL DISTANCE TABLE							
meters	16 mm	24 mm	35 mm	50 mm	85 mm	135 mm	200 mm
f/2.8	5.7 m	12.9 m	27.3 m	55.8 m	161.3 m	406.8 m	892.9 m
f/4.0	4 m	9 m	19.1 m	39.1 m	112.9 m	284.8 mm	625 m
f/5.6	2.9 m	6.4 m	13.7 m	27.9 m	80.6 m	203.4 m	446.4 m
f/8.0	2 m	4.5 m	9.6 m	19.5 m	56.4 m	142.4 m	312.5 m
f/11	1.5 m	3.3 m	7 m	14.2 m	41.1 m	103.6 m	227.3 m
f/16	1 m	2.3 m	4.8 m	9.8 m	28.2 m	71.2 m	156.3 m
f/22	0.7 m	1.6 m	3.5 m	7.1 m	20.5 m	51.8 m	113.6 m
f/32	0.5 m	1.1 m	2.4 m	4.9 m	14.1 m	35.6 m	78.1 m



PHOTO TIPS: VERTICAL LANDSCAPES



10

SHOOTING FOR SPECIFIC COMMERCIAL PROJECTS

Another reason to shoot landscapes in portrait mode is that you need portrait images for specific publishing purposes. It could be a front cover of a magazine like this, or images for an article where the editor requires both landscape and portrait orientated images for layout purposes.

The more images you have, in different formats, the more choice an editor or designer has to work with. Finally, shooting landscapes in portrait orientation also gives you a point of difference, as the majority of photographers shoot landscapes in landscape orientation. ☼

ABOVE: Ronny Creek, Cradle Mountain, Tasmania. In this instance, this scene wouldn't have worked as well in landscape orientation, due to the fact that the Pandanus trees were quite tall. Careful composition was needed so that the trees were in the foreground, whilst the creek and background mist were also visible. Nikon D700, 24-70mm f/2.8 lens @ 32mm. 1/40s @ f16, ISO 200. -0.67EV.

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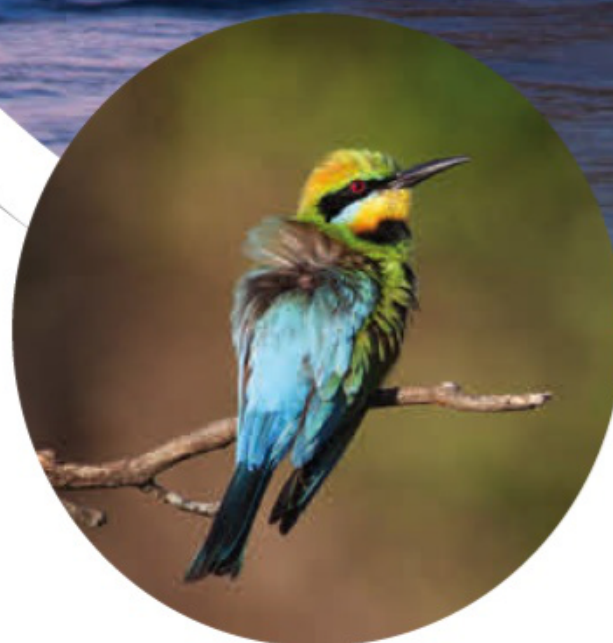
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FILM FANATICS

BY DREW HOPPER

Film sales are soaring, and more and more shooters are dabbling in the dark arts of film photography once again. But is it worth all the hassle in this era of easy shooting and sharing? Diehard film-fan Drew Hopper explains why film is worth your time in 2020.

In an age where images are predominantly taken with digital cameras, there are still a large number of photographers shooting film or moving back to the good old days embracing the quality formats of the past.

Yet you are probably asking yourself why would anyone be interested in ‘wasting’ money on buying film when digital cameras are accessible and considerably cheaper in the long run? Well, there are a number of reasons for photographers to shoot film. To better understand the advantages of film vs digital, I thought I’d highlight the advantages of shooting film over megapixels. This is an article for anyone who has been considering switching to film, or any photographers who would like to add film to their image-making arsenal.

FILM HAS ITS OWN QUALITY

First and foremost, digital gives you an impression; film gives you the real thing. When it comes to both digital and analog formats, most photographers will strive for the highest possible resolution, resulting in





Surfer drops into a right-hander at Emerald Beach, NSW. I shot this while swimming with my Nikonos V underwater camera with 35mm f/2.5 lens, Ilford Delta 400. Negative scanned with an Epson v550 flatbed scanner using Lomography Digitaliza scanning mask, which allowed me to include the sprocket holes and film rebate in the final image.



“THERE IS SOMETHING ‘REAL’ ABOUT FILM GRAIN THAT IS FAR MORE CHERISHED AMONG PHOTOGRAPHERS THAN HIGH-ISO DIGITAL NOISE.”

clearer and sharper photographs. Digital sensors determine the resolution by the given number of pixels within a certain area. Obviously, film doesn't work in pixels, instead works through angular resolution. Most 35mm film cameras won't be able to outperform the latest digital cameras, however, medium format will definitely surpass the same resolution as the high-end digital medium format cameras, giving film a quality of its own.

The texture that film gives is what attracts most film photographers, as it isn't quite as simple to replicate on digital. Then there is saturation, contrast, and depth, that all add to the quality of film in a way digital doesn't render as purely. This visual difference of film is what inspired and fuelled the digital photography world that consumes us today.

BEAUTIFUL GRAIN

There is something 'real' about film grain that is far more cherished among photographers than high-ISO digital noise. Film is made of textures, chemical particles called grain, that are yet to be exposed to light.

Digital grain (noise) is very contrasty with different coloured fragments scattered across the image. The grain created by film has certain soft qualities to it, resulting in a more subdued and realistic representation of a scene or subject, which makes film photographs feel alive. A lot of photographers who shoot digital will tell you to keep a low ISO (also called ASA) setting, usually below 400 ISO for pleasing results to avoid those noisy pixels. This is because higher ISOs produce digital noise, often creating a muddier, less attractive image. Film on the other hand is more forgiving, especially black and white film. These qualities bring a timeless characteristic that digital does not reveal.

IMAGE QUALITY ISN'T EVERYTHING

There is no real debate regarding dynamic range when it comes to shooting digital or film. Digital takes the cake in terms of technical image quality due to the complex process of what the sensor renders and image compression among all other technical factors. It's easier to achieve better results with digital cameras, however I still prefer film. There are



PHOTO TIPS: FILM PHOTOGRAPHY



ABOVE: This image is from the first ever roll of film I shot. Unfortunately the roll was water damaged before it was developed, but the results were still pretty interesting. Yashica Minister-D @ 35mm, 1/125s @ f4, ISO 100. Ilford PAN 100 (expired). Developed and scanned by Rewind Photo Lab.

OPPOSITE: Tourists take a break by the waterfront in Hoi An Ancient Town, Vietnam. The Summaron 35mm f/2 was the perfect lens for this scene, allowing me to frame the couple without getting too close and disturbing them. Leica M4, Summaron 35 f/2. 1/250s @ f8, ISO 400. Kodak T-MAX 400. Developed with Kodak HC-110 dilution B, scanned with Plustek Optic 8100.



PHOTO TIPS: FILM PHOTOGRAPHY

RIGHT: I had no idea how this roll of expired Fujifilm Superia 400 would turn out, but the results were great. Playing with expired film can give you some pretty cool results, very retro. Olympus MJU II ZOOM 115 @ at 35mm, settings unknown. Expired Fujifilm Superia 400. Scanned by Rewind Photo Lab.

BELOW: Temple interior, Chiang Mai, Thailand. I used the Olympus XA3 which is fully automatic so I knew the shutter would be slow. Instead of taking a static image, I panned the camera during the exposure to create something a little different. Olympus XA3 @ fixed 35mm, settings unknown. Agfa Vista 400. Developed and scanned by Rewind Photo Lab.

OPPOSITE: Park in Bangkok, Thailand. This image has been flipped upside down. Sometimes the most ordinary subjects can make for great photos when you play with perspective to create something more unusual. Olympus XA3 @ fixed 35mm, settings unknown, Kodak C200.



“FILM FORCES YOU TO WORK SLOWLY AND GIVES YOU TIME TO THINK BEFORE YOU PRESS THE SHUTTER...”

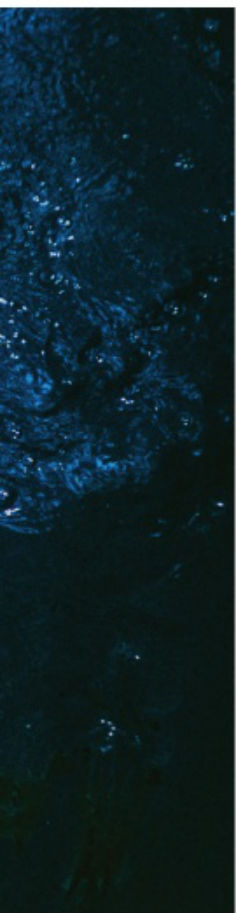
far more important aspects to a photograph than just image quality, and either you like the film look or you don't. At the end of the day, film is the result of over 100 years of refinement, whereas digital is really only beginning.

YOU LEARN TO SLOW DOWN

Shooting film will make you more aware of the process of image making. There is no such thing as instant gratification with film like what you get with digital cameras. You can't 'chimp' and look at your LCD on the camera after you've taken a shot, because there is no LCD to review your pictures. Film forces you to work slowly and gives you time to think before you press the shutter, which is a fantastic learning curve and will help improve your compositions. This allows you to pre-visualise your images and will help you with anticipating the moment. In time, you'll be shooting less images but nailing every shot.

SHARPNESS GOES OUT THE WINDOW

Ansel Adams once said "There is nothing worse than a sharp image with a fuzzy concept", which



is very true. It may be controversial, but I strongly believe that sharpness is not something that we as photographers should obsess over. Sharpness doesn't make a poorly executed image a better image. In most cases a sharp image in my eyes looks and feels very clinical, often lacking the essence and/or connection to the moment captured. With film, sharpness goes out the window and becomes irrelevant. We are humans, not computers, which is why we should shoot from our hearts, capturing the emotion of the moments in a way that best represents what it is we want to communicate with our viewer. Not many people will view an image and say 'Wow, that is sharp'. People appreciate and connect with an image if they feel some sort of connection to the subject, lighting or location etc. Focus on nailing the shot, not 'sharpening' it!

UNDERSTAND LIGHT BETTER

Some film cameras have built-in light meters, however a lot of the earlier film cameras are 100% manual without an in-built meter. Before I started getting into film I didn't think I'd be able to achieve

correctly exposed images without an in-built light meter. I felt overwhelmed and it turned me off dabbling in film photography. How was I supposed to get decent shots if I was confused about what settings to shoot, let alone how to obtain a correctly exposed image?

Since spending more time behind my film cameras I've become accustomed to shooting with my beautiful Leica M4. I don't care that there is no light meter. When you start shooting without a meter, you will learn to read different lighting scenarios to get a correct exposure.

It helps if you have an external meter as backup for those tricky situations, or a digital camera that you can check the exposure reading on, but after a while you'll be able to read the light just from observing it.

GREAT STARTER FILM CAMERAS

- Minolta X-700
- Holga 120N
- Nikonos V (35mm underwater)
- Canon AE-1
- Olympus OM1
- Nikon FE2
- Olympus MJU Zoom 115
- Pentax K1000



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Jacob and Ashkii pose for a portrait for my new series 'Permanent Reverie'. Film gives this image a timeless feel which digital can't replicate. I used Ilford Delta 3200 as an experiment to see how it would fare for daylight use – it turned out better than I expected. Leica M4, Voigtlander 35/2.5 @ 35mm, 1/500s @ f8, ISO 400. Ilford Delta 3200. All images this page developed with Kodak HC-110 dilution B, scanned with Plustek Optic 8100.

Cleaning tailor-shop mannequins after floods in Hoi An, Vietnam, 2017. The lighting was consistent in the shade where the man was working so I was able to meter the scene for the mid-tones without my external light meter. Leica M4, Summacron 35 f/2 @ 35mm, 1/500s @ f8, ISO 400. Kodak T-MAX 400.

Cyclo operators take a break in the shade, Hoi An Ancient Town, Vietnam. The 35mm focal length was great for this scene, allowing me to include the two men in the foreground and frame the distant man behind. An easy scene to meter because the men were all evenly lit in the shade. Leica M4, Summacron 35 f/2 @ 35mm, 1/250s @ f8, ISO 400. Kodak T-MAX 400.

Sunshine and the beach make for great photos especially on film. Olympus XA3 @ fixed 35mm, ISO 400, settings unknown, Kodak C200.





“A LOT OF THE EARLY FILM CAMERAS ARE MADE OF SOLID METAL. THEY’RE TOUGH AS NAILS AND WORK AS WELL TODAY AS THEY DID WHEN THEY WERE MADE.”



LESS PROCESSING

With digital, we spend way too much time importing, editing and tweaking until we’re satisfied with the final image. The beautiful thing about shooting film is that you will spend less time in front of a computer processing your images. Film does not require much post-processing. This may not be a concern to some, but I definitely prefer the film approach. Film may still command some tweaking but it’s usually only the basics (exposure/contrast/saturation) that need adjusting.

Of course, you can still make the adjustments as you would to digital files to the scanned negatives, or in the darkroom with an enlarger to dodge and burn. With digital, we spend way too much time importing, editing and tweaking until we’re satisfied with the final image. Film gives you that final image without the hassle of spending the time sitting in front of a computer screen transforming it into something that it may or may not be.

LESS WEIGHT

Now, this may not be the case if you decide to shoot medium format film, because these cameras are usually bulkier and heavier than say 35mm. I only shoot 35mm on digital so I figured I’d stick to 35mm film. My bag is a lot lighter since I started shooting film, as there are only really three things that I carry (my Leica M4, Voigtlander 35/2 and a few rolls of film). No longer is my back sore from lugging around heavy gear, which also helps me to be freer when I’m out wandering the streets shooting. When you carry less gear, you will notice a shift in your vision by not feeling weighed down to go that extra mile to grab the perfect picture. Less is more.

TOUGH AND CHEAP

Film has its own characteristic which digital cannot replicate to the same quality. This is most evident in black and white film with images that give a sense of stepping back to another era when life was simple and cameras were just light sealed boxes built tough to handle being thrown around.

A lot of the early film cameras are made of solid metal. They’re tough as nails and work as well today as they did when they were made. You don’t have to spend a lot either, with the secondhand market flooded with great, cheap film cameras.





Sarah and Ashkii take a dip at a swimming hole in Bellingen, NSW. The image turned out very grainy which was to be expected for a high-speed film of 3200. Leica M4, Voigtlander 35/2.5 @ 35mm, 1/250s @ f11, ISO 400. Ilford Delta 3200. Developed with Kodak HC-110 dilution B, scanned with Plustek Optic 8100.

PHOTO TIPS: FILM PHOTOGRAPHY

LEARN FROM YOUR MISTAKES

You'll make plenty of mistakes along the way when you start shooting with film and film cameras. The key is to keep practising and experimenting. It's all part of the learning curve and will help improve your eye as a photographer.

No one learns from perfection, instead it's those hiccups and hurdles that make us better photographers. Just like digital, the more you shoot, the more you'll grow and hone your skills behind the camera.

For me, I believe film helps speed up this growth process by challenging you from the get-go. Embrace the difficulties of shooting film by shooting more of it and perfecting your vision. 🌀



ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHER

Drew Hopper is an Australia-based travel, documentary and editorial photographer. He is captivated by the diversity of cultures, people and environment, and aims to take pictures that will impact and inspire in a way that is individual to each viewer.

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PROFILE: RICHARD TATTI

THE SOCIAL NETWORK

BY MICK FLETORIDIS

Night photography might not be seen as a social activity, but one Victorian photographer is doing his bit to change that, as *AP* discovers.

For this image, my intention was to focus on the trike and deliberately and artistically throw the stars out of focus: much more akin to a portrait style of image. A little backlighting was used to highlight the fog which was hovering around the scene. Nikon D750, Sigma art 35mm f1.4 lens. 10s @ f1.4, ISO 2000.



A silhouette of a vintage bicycle is positioned in the lower-left foreground. The background is a dark night sky filled with numerous stars and light trails, suggesting long-exposure astrophotography. The overall mood is serene and artistic.

While magazines are still a great place to learn photography, for better or worse, online learning has changed how many of us pick up and refine new skills. Photography is no different and in 2020 we are spoiled for choice, with thousands of resources on new techniques, or a range of opinions about the latest camera gear available on websites such as YouTube, where enthusiasts take the time to produce informative videos for public consumption.

One such content creator is Victorian based pro photographer Richard Tatti. Born and bred in Bendigo, Tatti has worked for many years in videography as well as wedding and corporate photography, but as he recently told *Australian Photography*, his real passion is shooting photos of the night sky.

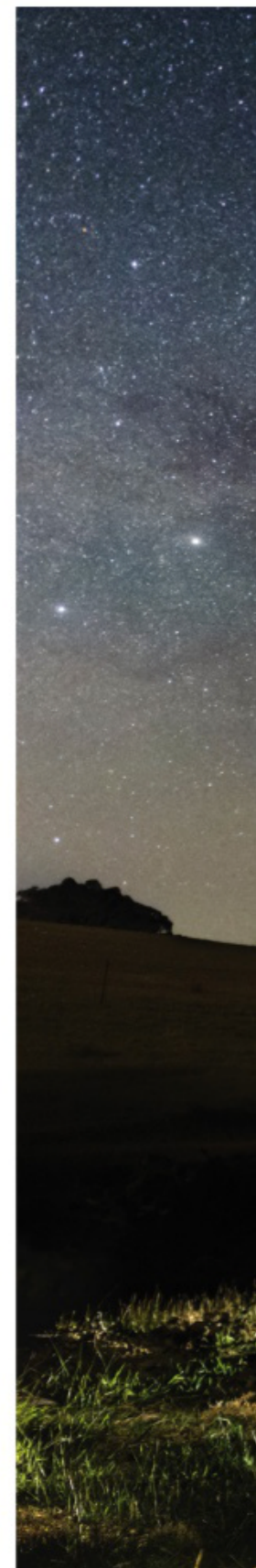
Having produced an impressive portfolio of astrophotography images and calendars he sells via his website and various exhibitions, Tatti is now showing many

others how to do the same, via online videos and his highly popular practical workshops.

I first came across Richard Tatti's work via a search on YouTube for how-to videos on astrophotography, an area I've dabbled in over the last couple of years with varying success. The thing that struck me when watching Tatti's videos for the first time was his likable "everyman" presentation style and obvious enthusiasm for the subject matter. I was also taken by his images that often feature old rusty cars, trucks and derelict farm machinery artificially lit to show detail and make them "pop" from the frame. Having taken night images myself where I've tried to incorporate similar manmade metal objects, trees and the like (often with disappointing results) I was blown away and inspired by the Tatti photos and wanted to know more about how the talented photographer produces them.



PROFILE: RICHARD TATTI



Richard Tatti recently told *AP* he was interested in photography from an early age, largely thanks to his mother who, “was a very keen photographer, certainly not professional in any way, but she always had a camera in her hand way back when I was growing up.”

Tatti has always been interested in “technical and creative things” and he sees photography as a perfect mix of both. Surprisingly, he took to shooting the night sky at a young age, borrowing his mother’s old Box Brownie film camera and experimenting.

“I used to get up on the shed roof and try and take long exposures of the night sky. The quality was terrible, but I was able to get a few star trails...” he explains.

Impressively, this took place well before the internet or astrophotography were things. Tatti was 12 or 13 at the time.

“Everything I knew about anything back then I learned from a magazine or a book,” he adds.

“I’ve never been to any formal education on photography but I’ve done a lot of work with other photographers over the years and you pick up a lot of things, you learn a lot just being in an environment where they’re doing things and you’re helping them by assisting or being part of a team, whatever it may be.”

STAR STRUCK

While he took to the stars early on, it wasn’t until much more recently that Tatti turned to night photography in a more serious way.

“Everything I do with my night photography is because I have a passion for night photography, so first

and foremost it’s not something I thought I’d do just to make money, it came the other way ... I’ve got a real passion for it and I realised that there’s not that many people that do it and there’s not that much information about how to do it out there, especially not locally in Australia.”

While he was perfecting his craft, he was finding other photographers were starting to take notice.

“I had a lot of people asking me ‘how do you do that?’ and then I realised I’ve also got a passion for sharing time with people talking about what I love. So, I realised I enjoy that as well and everything just sort of came together.”

That was about four years ago when Tatti first started conducting workshops in Bendigo. They’ve become so popular he has had people travelling from all over Australia to attend. Students range from photographers with little experience, to others who just want to try new techniques.

“The most common comment I have is from people who come along to my workshops is ‘I’ll be happy if I go home with one decent image,’” he laughs.

More often than not those expectations are quickly exceeded during a shoot as stunning night sky images regularly pop up on LCD screens, often surprising students with what they’ve achieved in a short time.

CLICK IN THE NIGHT

Tatti says experienced photographers need to be open to a new way of working if they want to achieve consistent good results with astrophotography.



PROFILE: RICHARD TATTI

“I CALL IT PHOTOGRAPHY IN SLOW MOTION. EVERYTHING TAKES A LOT LONGER, EVERYTHING IS SLOWED DOWN, IT’S MORE DIFFICULT BECAUSE OF THE LOW LIGHT AND IT’S HARD TO FOCUS...”



ABOVE: This image is made up of one high ISO shot of the background sky and eight foreground shots at a lower ISO to capture the fine detail in the ute. This is a location I would never have found without the help of the local farmer who drove me out to this spot to show it to me. He even pulled this ute out of a ditch and sat it upright so I could get the shot. Nikon D750, Nikon 20mm f1.8 lens. Sky: One exposure, 15s @ f2.8, ISO 5000. Foreground: Eight images light painted, 15s @ f5, ISO 500.

OPPOSITE PAGE: This shot emphasises my shooting technique as the Milky Way is a combination of 10 images taken with the exact same settings, and then stacked to reduce the high ISO noise associated with these images. The foreground is a combination of four light painted images shot at a much lower ISO to get more detail and sharp focus. Nikon Z6, Nikon 20mm f1.8 lens. Sky: 10s @ f2.8, ISO 10,000. Foreground: 10s @ f5.6, ISO 500.



PROFILE: RICHARD TATTI

“I call it photography in slow motion. Everything takes a lot longer, everything is slowed down, it’s more difficult because of the low light and it’s hard to focus, all of the things that go with it ... people are waiting a long time and suddenly the picture comes up on the screen and it’s just amazing. You’re all sitting around in the dark and you hear these people going ‘wow!’. It makes me feel good to hear that from other people.”

As he explains, there are many obstacles to taking photos in the dark and for many they have to learn a whole new way of shooting.

“Night photography is a lot harder than day photography. Everything’s manual and a lot of people (that come to workshops) have never used their camera in full manual mode, everything: white balance, focus, the whole lot... most people dabble with manual to some degree but usually there’s something that’s automatic, whether it’s aperture priority but they’re certainly using autofocus and these sorts of things which tends to be unreliable and not used in the type of photography we do so it’s a real education process for people.”

For night photographers there are many uncontrollable variables that help to make the technique interesting and, for many, quite addictive.

“Sometimes you’re not sure (how the image will turn out) because maybe a car has driven past and it’s added light in there or maybe there’s a shooting star streaking through the sky and you think ‘Oh, I hope I catch that’... these sorts of things.”

POST PROCESSING

The successful execution of night photography is very reliant on post processing that can often transform a

good image of the night sky into something outstanding. As night images are generally shot in RAW to ensure maximum detail is captured it allows leeway for post “tweaking” to produce the desired result.

“Often times the wow moment comes after you’ve spent a little bit of time in Lightroom or Photoshop bringing out the actual tone, colour, contrast and everything else which is actually there but you can’t see (it),” explains Tatti.

He says he feels he’s “wired” to be more creative out in the field on a shoot than back at home on the computer in post processing mode.

“I don’t want to spend hours and hours and hours on (processing) images.”

To that end, over the last few years Tatti has developed a system of workflow that minimises the amount of time required to produce completed images.

“If you shoot in the field knowing how you will edit (your images) later makes it a whole lot easier to do.”

SEEING THE LIGHT

As well as the technical hurdles to overcome to shoot successful night sky images, there are natural obstacles that can make a shoot difficult. Astrophotography in the southern hemisphere is best done in the cooler months of the year when the Milky Way is higher in the sky (generally around May to October) and depending on the location in Australia, conditions can be quite challenging. But as Tatti explains, any hardships involved just make the end result more satisfying.

“It’s the middle of the night, no one’s out there, it’s freezing cold, your lens is fogging up because there’s dew all over the place (laughs) ... you’re freezing yourself,





PROFILE: RICHARD TATTI



TOOLS OF THE TRADE

PHOTOGRAPHY

- Nikon Z6
- Nikon D750
- Nikon 14-24 f2.8
- Nikon 20mm f1.8
- Sigma art 35mm f1.4
- Nikon 50mm f1.8
- Nikon 85mm f1.8
- Sirui W2204 tripod
- LED Lenser P7.2 torch
- Z96 video light

VIDEO GEAR

- Panasonic G9
- Panasonic 12-35 f2.8
- Panasonic 14-140 f3.5-5.6
- Panasonic 20mm f1.7
- Panasonic 25mm f1.7
- Sennheiser wireless mic
- Mavic 2 Pro Drone
- Z96 video lights
- Godox 300 LED panels

LEFT: This image literally took about three minutes to shoot as I was hearing strange noises around me in the paddock. I remember seeing evidence of cows and didn't want to hang around in case there were bulls close by! Nikon D750, Sigma Art 35mm f1.4 lens. Four images, 10s @ f2.2, ISO 2500.

OPPOSITE: Eddystone Lighthouse, Bay of Fires, Tasmania. This was a difficult shot to get as there was significant cloud cover. The rotating light from the lighthouse also made it hard to control exposure as it was the only light source. Nikon Z6, Nikon 20mm f1.8 lens. Sky: Six images, 15s @ f2.8, ISO 640. Foreground: three images, 30s @ f2.8, ISO 6400.

**“LIGHT PAINTING IS
ACTUALLY AN ARTFORM.
IT’S NOT AS EASY AS
PEOPLE THINK...”**

ABOVE: It was an amazing time spent on Hollow Mountain in the Grampians National Park. Well known for its rugged landscape and caves, not to mention the amazing view. This is a single exposure. Nikon D750, Nikon 20mm f1.8 lens. 15s @ f2.2, ISO 3200.

OPPOSITE: Milky Way Shack. Another example of my classic “Fine Art Light Painting” method. This gorgeous old shack located in the Wimmera region of Australia comes alive during a cold June evening under a brilliant Milky Way with lighting both inside and outside the building. I used an LED Video panel inside whilst utilising a standard LED torch for the outside sections. Nikon D750, Nikon 20mm f1.8 lens. Sky: One image, 15s @ f2.8 ISO 6400. Foreground: eight images, 15s @ f5, ISO 500.

you’ve got to keep your hands warm, I’ve got gloves on and can’t feel the camera properly but these are the things you do when you’re passionate about something.”

A large part of the creative process for this photographer involves light painting, a technique he covers in detail in his online videos and regular workshops. As Tatti tells AP, the importance of using artificial lighting to illuminate foreground and in some instances backgrounds, can’t be overstated. His style of images too have been mistaken for paintings, a testament to the effectiveness of his light painting technique.

“I place just as much emphasis on lighting foreground subjects as I do with capturing the stars in the background,” he explains.

“Lighting’s a big part of what I do. I’ve done a lot of trial and error and a lot of investigation into various (lighting) devices out there. Light painting is actually an artform. It’s not as easy as people might think. People often ask me how much light do you put in? Every time I do it it’s different, so it’s really hard to say (specifically).”

Tatti also usually shoots separate images exposed for the foreground and the sky and blends them in post. This process ensures that the foreground subject highlights as much detail as possible and importantly everything in the final image is in sharp focus. While it is possible to capture a good image of the night sky and subject in one shoot, it can also be fairly hit and miss, as anyone who has tried will attest to, this writer included...

Tatti says it is definitely possible to achieve a good result with one image, but not always.

“You can always just get away with a single image, and I’m also very mindful that not everybody wants to go through any great processing work to get a decent image but the reason I do my multi-layer images is to get a higher quality image, and it certainly does do that.”

This multiple layer technique is largely used for “smaller” foreground objects such as cars, farm machinery and the like with the aim of emphasising them within the completed image. Sometimes Tatti says he finds blending just two images achieves the desired effect. A major benefit of the blending technique too is that it overcomes any soft focus occurring on foreground subjects that can easily arise when the main focus can commonly just be on capturing stars.

“When you blend the two elements together the picture to me becomes more interesting and tells more of a story and it connects to the landscape rather than just the sky itself,” Tatti concludes.

MEET THE NEIGHBOURS

Where Richard Tatti lives in Bendigo he’s blessed with any number of potential locations for pointing his camera at the night sky. To find suitable spots he spends hours driving around farm areas looking into paddocks for derelict farm machinery, rusty cars, tractors, trucks, old buildings, bridges – anything that can help



PROFILE: RICHARD TATTI

make an image stand out. During these scouting missions he often has to locate property owners to garner permission to enter their land. Tatti is appreciative of the many people he meets that enthusiastically relate details about their properties and many hidden gems found on them.

“I’ve got to chat to a lot of people: landholders, farmers, people who own old machinery and things like that, and I love that.”

He’s also explained to property owners about the photography he does, and they are often very interested in the process and only too happy to point out areas he might like to explore for future shoots. The photographer likes to repay farmers and landowners for their generosity.

“I make a point of going back and giving them a small print of the picture I took.”

He says he’s constantly delighted by the inquisitive responses he receives from property owners.

“Recently the owner of the property was very keen to see what I did and in fact his wife and daughter, the three of them came down while I was there, and we just had a chat. I showed them what I was doing, and they were very interested in the process of how I was lighting up this old building.”

These sorts of connections have proven invaluable as in some cases farmers have gone out of their way to reveal locations of old cars, dead trees and more ideal subject material that generally can’t be seen from the road. In some cases, landholders have driven Tatti

QUICK TIPS FOR BETTER NIGHT SHOTS

1. Nightscape photography is like photography in slow motion. Everything takes longer: Learning, planning and execution are all time consuming, but very rewarding, so enjoy every aspect of the journey.
2. Spend as much time as you need establishing good infinity focus to get sharp stars. It may take longer but it’s always worth it in the end.
3. Learn the basics well but never limit your creativity. This form of photography, more than any other, is an intricate mix of technical photographic principles and creative expression.

directly to sites. This sort of social connection is another facet of night photography he relishes.

“I don’t ever want to lose that personal connection with people. I love the interaction I have with people.”

PLANNING

When asked for tips for budding astro photographers, Tatti says good planning is the “number one” key to success, closely followed by knowing your camera equipment so it can be used easily in the dark. To help in planning a shoot Tatti prefers to use the Stellarium app on his home desktop computer as it provides information about moon phases and star constellations and has a compass feature which he finds especially handy.





PROFILE: RICHARD TATTI



LEFT: Glowing Star Trails. The fire has been out for quite some time at this forgotten little spot in the country. But in the dead of night the faint glow of a spark can be seen as the stars circle overhead. Nikon D750, Nikon 20mm f1.8 lens. Star trails: three 10 minute exposures @ f3.2, ISO 100. Foreground: five 20s exposures @ f3.2, ISO 500.

On location, he also finds PhotoPills useful for lining up the Milky Way behind foreground subjects.

Another app the photographer recommends for astro photography planning is Clear Outside, a program designed by astronomers for forecasting cloud cover percentages. While Tatti says the forecasts aren't always 100 per cent accurate (but, what is?) Clear Outside can provide week-long forecasts as well as wind direction and speed, dew point, moon phases and more.

NIGHT GEAR

A long time Nikon shooter, Tatti currently uses a full frame D750 and is excited about the new Z6 mirrorless camera he has on pre-order. While he uses wide angle lenses of "generally between 14 and 35mm" his favourite focal length is around 20mm for night photography. He also sometimes likes to shoot tighter on subjects with lesser wide angle, often with a 35mm lens.

"I've got a Sigma 35mm 1.4 Art Series which I love. It's a fantastic lens for night photography," he enthuses.

While well versed in Nikon camera use, Tatti has discovered he also needs to be proficient in negotiating the menus of other camera brands.

"I've dealt with every camera brand you could imagine, because people come to the workshops with every brand under the sun – a lot of Canons, Sonys, Olympus, Fuji, - and I use Panasonic cameras for my videos. The G9 is the newest camera I've got, and I love that little camera. It's essentially a stills camera ... and it's got very, very good video quality and of course, great image quality."

ONLINE SUCCESS

Of his growing catalogue of YouTube videos on the Nightscape Images channel Tatti tells AP "The response has been very good."

He currently has more than 40,000 subscribers. As well as local viewers, feedback is regularly posted from watchers overseas who often comically remark about the presenter's tendency to drive on the wrong side of the road, or they ask about Australia's dangerous wildlife.

While he's been involved in video production for many years, Richard Tatti has found the experience of being in front of the camera quite challenging, but something he's warming to. If you watch any of his videos you might be surprised to learn that he's a one-man crew, a fact not highlighted by the obvious high-quality production value.

"There are a lot of elements against you with night photography," Tatti says in summing up.

"It's like the saying, anything that's worth getting requires a lot of effort and persistence..."

Thankfully for his growing number of online followers and workshop attendees, he's providing many helpful shortcuts to astrophotography greatness. 🌌

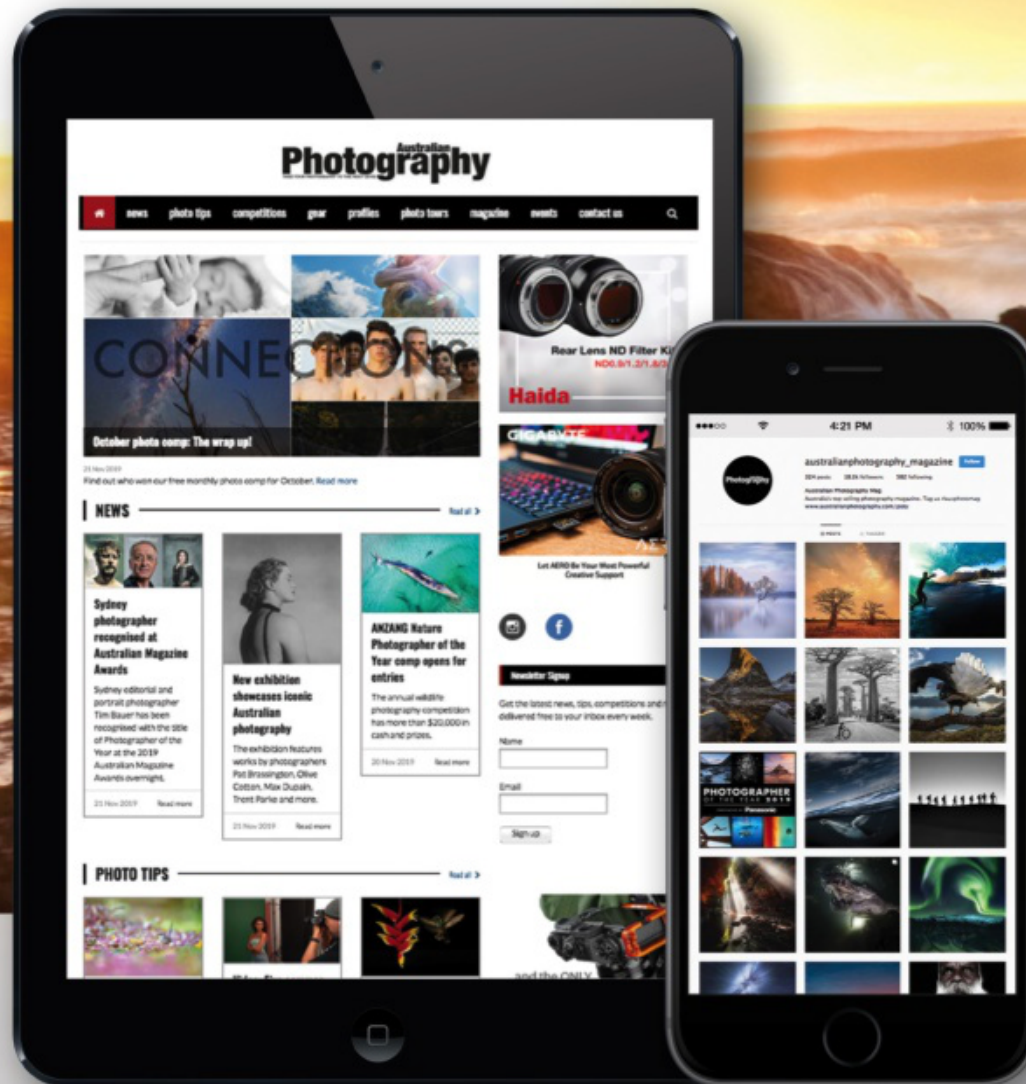


FIND OUT MORE

See more of Richard Tatti's work at nightscapeimages.com.au and on YouTube via the Nightscape Images channel.

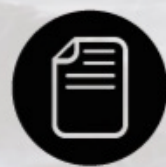
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TESTED: CAMERA NAME



ABOVE: Playful seals near Moeraki, NZ. The silent shutter came in very handy here as the seals were very sensitive to noise and movement. With the excellent autofocus and fast 20fps drive speed of the A9 II, it's easy to forget about the technicalities of photography and just watch the moment unfold while you pick the best moment to capture. Sony A9 II, 100-400mm f4.5-5.6 lens @ 400mm. 1/640s @ f5.6, ISO 400.



TESTED: SONY A9 MARK II



TESTED: SONY A9 MARK II

Released in 2017, Sony's original A9 was the first camera to really show that mirrorless could compete with DSLRs when it came to fast autofocus, and it remains a mightily impressive camera to use if your subjects are on the go. Yet while the A9 II initially appears to offer just a few minor tweaks to a winning formula, as Mike O'Connor discovers, that's not quite the case.



You know that saying, 'You always remember your first time?' For me, I'll always remember the first time I shot Sony's A9 back at a Sydney media event in 2017. Our subjects were MMA fighters and parkour athletes, perfect subjects for a camera trying to prove its autofocus chops. And prove them it did, with that revolutionary no-blackout EVF and 20fps drive speed, it was simply a revelation to use.

But as any tech reviewer will tell you, three years is a long time in the world of technology. Today we're spoiled for choice with mirrorless cameras with great autofocus and fast drive modes. Which leads us to the A9 II, announced in late 2019 seemingly in time for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Sony says there are a whopping 43 improvements over the original model in total, but just how much difference do they make?

I spent a month with the A9 II to find out, testing it with portraiture, landscapes, adventure photography and wildlife while on holiday in New Zealand.

THE BODY

Although at first glance the external control layout and body look much the

same as before, there are some subtle differences on the A9 II. Like with the A7RIV, there's now a larger and deeper handgrip and a more prominent AF-ON button, and the A9 II also inherits the handy multi selector textured joystick from that camera too, as well as gaining an exposure compensation dial lock.

You get two dedicated UHS-II card slots (compared to one on the A9), but I can understand some of you might have been holding out for the faster CFExpress format, which both the newly announced Canon 1 DX Mark III and upcoming Nikon D6 will use. But otherwise, things are pretty similar to the A9 which means that most A-series users will feel right at home with the A9 II.

A note on the weather sealing. Sony have upgraded the doors for the battery compartment and memory card slots, and these now use a sealed sliding mechanism as opposed to the latch type on the A9. I always do my best to avoid torture testing expensive things that don't belong to me, but I have to admit the A9 II was put through its paces for this review, experiencing heavy

rain and hail while strapped to my pack in the alpine areas of the South island, and salt spray while at a windy seal colony on the East coast. Throughout, it performed admirably.

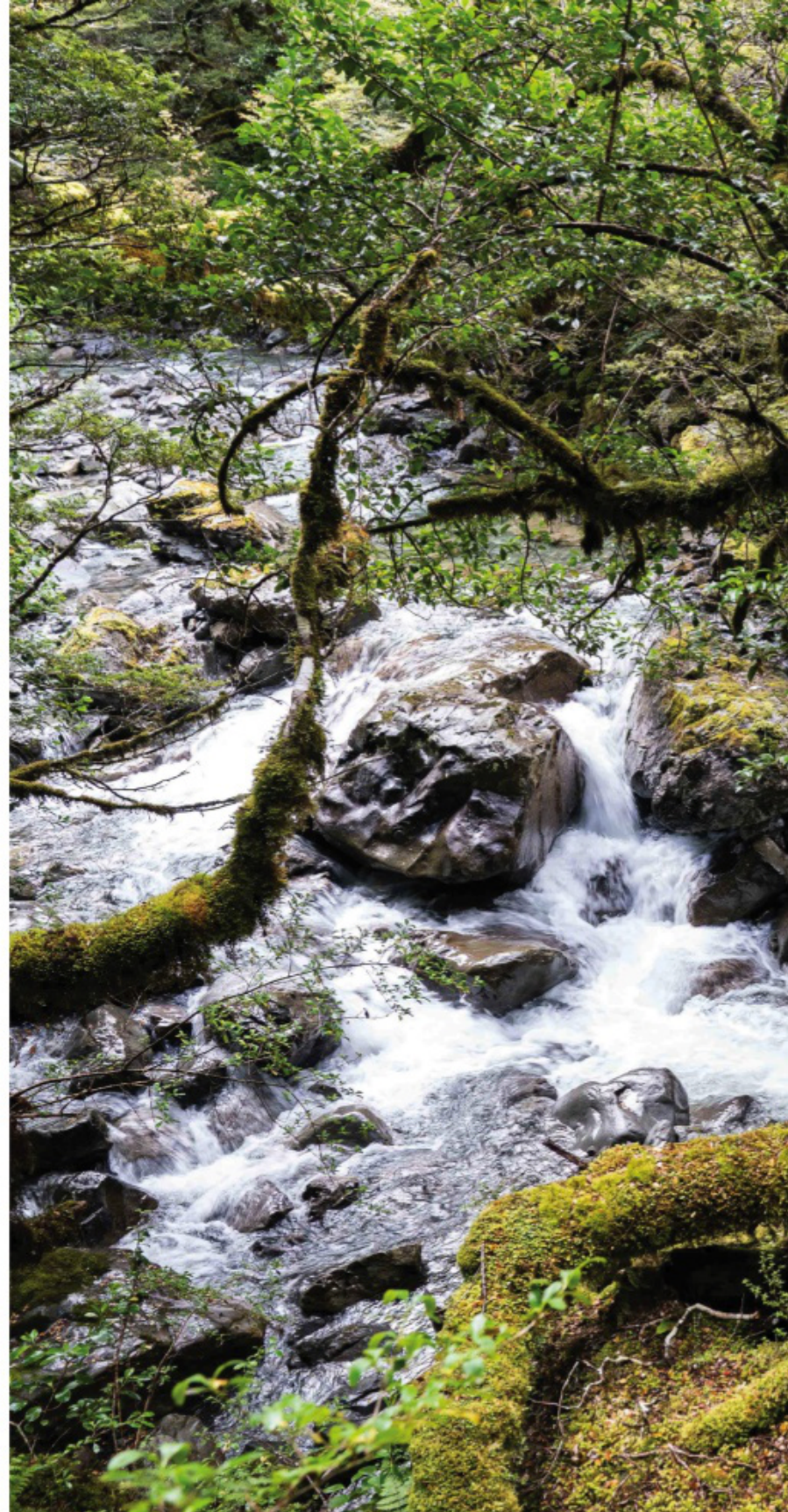
AUTOFOCUS

It's under the hood where the biggest changes have been made. Despite the camera using the same 24.2MP sensor and Bionz X processor as the original Sony A9, the processor has been tweaked to improve the autofocus algorithms.

So although the A9 II offers the same 20fps for up to 241 RAW or 362 JPEGs with no blackout, and the same 693 focal plane phase detection AF points that cover approximately 93% of the frame,



TESTED: SONY A9 MARK II



there's now Sony's Real-time AF tracking in a system Sony says makes up to 60 AF calculations per second.

The mechanical shutter, now rated to an impressive 500,000 cycles, is twice as fast when compared to the A9, now shooting at 10 fps. It might not sound like much, but this can make a big difference to photography shot in indoor venues under LED lighting, just the kind of conditions many photographers will find themselves in Tokyo later this year. Speaking of which, the mechanical shutter also gains the benefits of a new anti-flicker mode that detects fluorescent lighting and adjusts exposure accordingly, although this is unfortunately exclusive to the mechanical shutter only.

So how does all this tech perform? In a word, brilliantly. I shot fast moving terns at 12fps with every shot in focus, and this was in light that was dropping quickly and while panning with a 100-

400mm lens at full extension. Animal Eye AF also worked a treat shooting a pair of playful seals fighting in a rock-pool, tenaciously tracking the eyes of the most dominant seal.

IMAGE QUALITY

It may be a three-year-old sensor, but image quality is still excellent. Images are sharp, full of detail and have good dynamic range even in darker areas.

With ISO sensitivity of 50 to 204,800, noise performance is also respectable. I found I could shoot comfortably up to ISO 6400 before noise became noticeable, but even then, detail loss was marginal.

MOVING PICTURES

For most users, the additions of new features like a faster ethernet port (it's now 10 times faster and supports 1000BASE-T for gigabit transfer), 5ghz WiFi, 3.2 Gen 1 USB and

the ability to voice tag images would probably not be the top of their must-have lists for a camera. But the A9 II isn't for most users. It's targeted at professional photographers who require a lightning-fast and efficient workflow post-capture, and this camera does it better than just about anything we've used.

Just imagine how useful it could be for a professional sports shooter to capture an image, voice tag it, and then transmit the image and tag via FTP to an agency, all in-camera. Better still, the agency could then use the Transfer & Tagging function on the smartphone app to automatically convert up to 50 seconds of speech into a text caption. In a game where getting images to publish first can be the difference between getting paid or not, this is a big deal. In use, I found transfers direct via USB-C to be lightning fast, and the voice tagging system worked well.



LEFT: A thermal river near the Lewis Pass, NZ. Although everything about the Sony A9 II is optimised for fast moving subjects, it's still a handy camera to use when your subject is relatively static, something it's easy to forget when you look at those impressive specs. Sony A9 II, 24-70mm f/2.8 lens @ 24mm. 1/30s @ f5.6, ISO 500.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Shooting a running toddler isn't quite Usain Bolt at the Olympics, but there's still something reassuring about knowing your camera will nail focus with just about any moving subject. Sony A9 II, 24-70mm f/2.8 GM lens @ 32mm. 1/3200s @ f5.6, ISO 100.

VIDEO

The A9 II's video feature set is almost identical to that of the A9, which means UHD 4K (3840 x 2160) up to 30p with 60 to 100 Mb/s bitrate and Full HD (1920 x 1080) up to 120p with 50 to 100 Mb/s bitrate. The major addition is Sony's real-time tracking is now available in video, which works very effectively.

THE WRAP UP

At first glance, the new Sony A9 II doesn't appear to offer much over its predecessor, but when you move past the sensor and look under the hood, you'll find a camera that is faster, more refined and arguably much more versatile than the camera it succeeds. Combine this with the number of professional level lenses Sony have released since 2017, and the A9 II is a very compelling package for a photographer who demands speed and efficiency above all else. 🌟

RESULTS

HANDLING ★ ★ ★ ★

Although diehard SLR users may find the body too small, the deeper grip and refined buttons are great additions.

FEATURES ★ ★ ★ ★

There's plenty, but if we were to nitpick, XQD/CFexpress would be nice to have.

AUTOFOCUS ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

No arguments here, this is the best autofocus system we've used bar none.

IMAGE QUALITY ★ ★ ★ ★

Excellent, although you may miss some of the great high ISO performance you get from Sony's A7 III and R IV.

VALUE FOR MONEY ★ ★ ★ ★

The Sony A9 II is cutting-edge and comes with a pricetag to match. But it's also considerably more expensive than the A9 it replaces.

FINAL WORD

We may be spoiled for choice when it comes to fast mirrorless cameras, but the A9 II stands alone as the ultimate choice for action and wildlife photographers.

SPECS

Sensor	Full-frame Exmor RS BSI CMOS
Resolution	24.2MP
Lens mount	Sony FE
Dimensions	129 x 96 x 78mm
Weight	678g
EVF	3,686,400 dots (1,228,800 pixels)
Autofocus	Fast Hybrid AF: Wide (693 points (phase-detection AF), 425 points (contrast-detection AF).
ISO	100-51200
Video	3840x2160 (30p/25p/24p) 1920x1080 (120p/100p/60p/60i/50p/50i/30p/25p/24p)
Memory	Dual slots. SD / SDHC / SDXC, UHS-II
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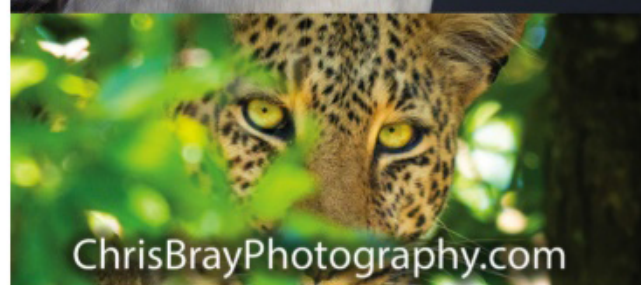
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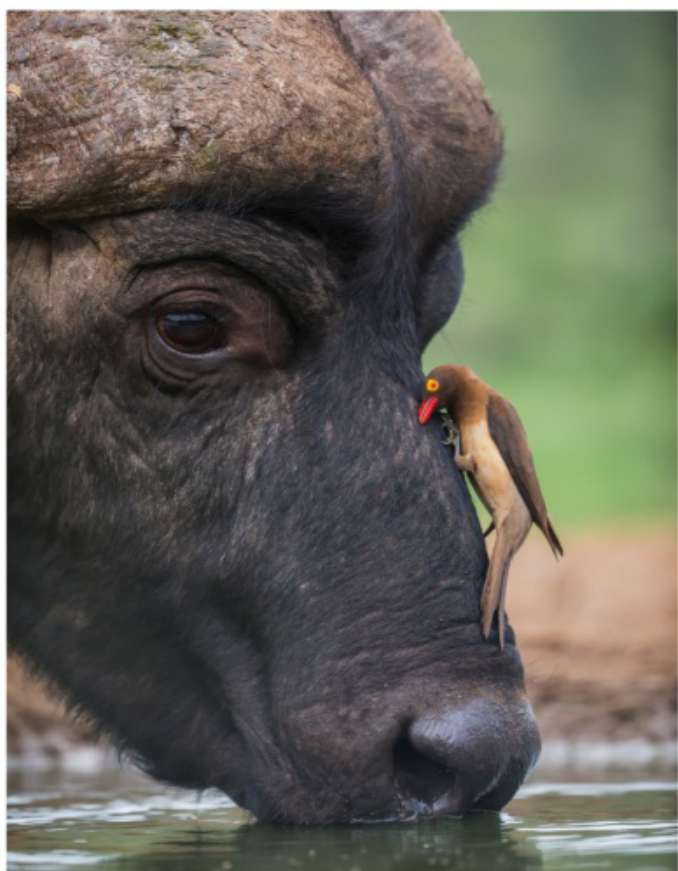
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CAMERAS TAKE PHOTOGRAPHS, PHOTOGRAPHERS MAKE IMAGES

Gear is just one part of the equation for great images.

WITH CRAIG PARKER



For as long as I can remember I have wanted to capture moments through photography, but my journey was very, very slow for a long time.

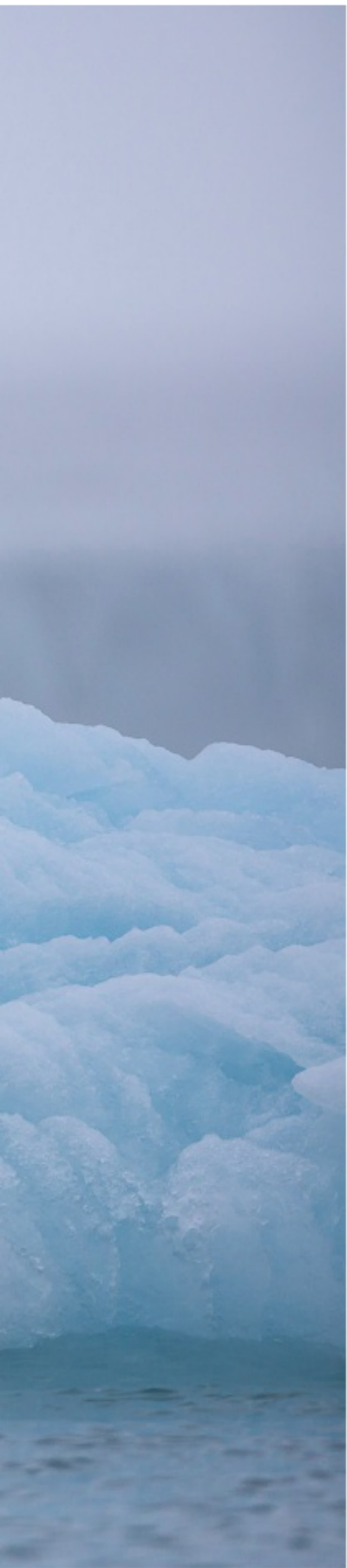
Back in 1978, nearing the end of my teenage years, I purchased a film SLR and took snapshots with very little understanding of what I was doing. I was not particularly attracted to having my own darkroom, and other things dominated my life for many years. That camera did not get a lot of work!

The first thing to impact on my development as a photographer was the advent of digital photography and the ability to edit in comfort on a computer. I purchased my first digital camera in 1998 while on a business trip to San Francisco – I remember thinking ‘wow - I could take snapshots and email them home while still overseas – digital postcards!’

The next big step in my photographic development was joining a camera club in 2008. I competed with some success and was encouraged to enter Nationals and then Internationals, to join Australian Photographic Society (APS) and Photographic Society of America (PSA) and to pursue Photographic Honours through both Societies.

Around the same time, I got hooked on travelling for photography and have been fortunate to travel regularly to concentrate on Nature and wildlife photography.

At home my photography covers many topics including sports, events and nature, but currently my favorite project is photographing our grandchildren and practicing with lighting. Apart from my own photography I also dedicated part of my photography time to supporting others, and I am an APS Verifying Officer,



CLOCKWISE FROM
BOTTOM LEFT: The 'loving'
relationship between an
Oxpecker and water buffalo;
High in the cold and remote
Arctic a walrus lazes on an
isolated iceberg; A group of
King Penguin seem to have
their path to water blocked
by sleeping seals; Baboon
social behaviours.



PSA Photojournalism Division Star Ratings
Director and judge.

In the twenty plus years since I purchased
that first digital camera there have been many
more purchases of digital cameras and acces-
sories, but while I enjoy using good gear, in-
creasingly I have become less concerned about
gear upgrades and more concerned about
creating and sharing images. Cameras take
photographs, photographers make images. 📷



ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHER

Craig Parker currently holds
APSEM EFIAP/b MPSA and
BPSA honours.

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Find out more about the APS at www.a-p-s.org.au.



PRINT, PRINT, PRINT!

Printing photos should be considered just as important as editing, as the APS' Jenny Davidson explains.

WITH JENNY DAVIDSON



Today, we take it for granted how easy it is to capture great images and share them widely. At Christmas this year our family photos were shot,

shared and commented on, all with the same device and all within minutes. Soon after, our family members who were celebrating in a different location posted their smiling group at the dinner table on social media too. Without a doubt, shooting and sharing technology has revolutionised photography. But in adopting it I wonder if we've lost an important step in the image-making process. In most instances, social media is where our work ends up; on a Facebook post, Instagram, or sent digitally to a friend in a message or email.

I asked one of the photographers if they ever print their work, and their reply was "I will get around to it one day." But shouldn't we be focussing more on the printed form of our photography?

Although museums and archives will likely update file formats as the decades

pass and technology changes, most families won't have the time or means to do this. Our files are at the mercy of manufacturers who may decide to not support legacy formats into the future.

Have a look at this image above. It was taken over 70 years ago and shows me as a baby with my parents and was scanned from a 3 x 2 negative. Unless you're lucky enough to become a famous photographer, family images like this one are probably the only ones we leave behind that will be of interest to anyone in seventy years' time. Keeping your family images in a physical format is so important for our children, and their children.

Today, many manufacturers make cheap, compact printers that can print over Bluetooth from devices like smart-

phones and take up no more room than an external HDD. So, when it comes to your shooting workflow, why not consider introducing another step after your editing and online sharing is finished - printing a few favourites at the end?

Don't let your baby's first steps be recorded to just a file format. It's as simple as carrying one of these little printers with you in a camera bag and you will have a record that can then be stowed away safely. Of course if you're lucky enough to have a 'big' printer at home, then make sure you use this too.

Photography today may be easier than ever, but the printed form of what we do is a record that can be interpreted in the future no matter how technology changes. My challenge to you is to print, print, print for future generations! 📷



ABOVE: Family images like this one are so important to keep. After all, when we're gone, it's these images people will use to remember us!

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IMAGE DOCTOR

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BY SAIMA MOREL

IMAGINATION AND ARTISTRY

This image was created by Susan Shanta, using a simple object, light and water. She said that she placed a few dandelion seeds on a rippled glass table, then focused on one dandelion seed, allowing the others to be its frame. She said: “The sunlight and water work well together to create refraction and reflection. Add in a little bokeh for a whimsical bonus.”

This is a fantastical and pretty image with a nice range of light and dark patterns, and the rainbow colours are lovely. Since the main interest is centre, the seed on the left edge of the frame is surplus and its absence would be no great loss. Framing without it when shooting or, at this stage, cropping plus cloning out the left-over tendrils that jut into the frame, are options. I also think that the centre of the frame is a little busy

with the two main seeds so close together. Separating the two seeds would allow the closer one to be the star while the second one takes a back seat. You could also go for a bit more depth of field by shooting at f11 or f16. However, it is great to see some imagination and artistry.

SAIMA’S TIP: It is not necessary to leave the house to create interesting imagery.

TITLE: Wishes

PHOTOGRAPHER: Susan Shanta

DETAILS: Olympus EM5 Mark II, M.60mm F2.8 Macro lens.
1/500s @ f8, ISO 200.



TITLE: Work the Piece

PHOTOGRAPHER: Rob Sykes

DETAILS: Canon 650D, Sigma 17-70mm lens @ 23mm. 1/4s @ f8, ISO 100. Tripod. Yellow and mid-tone contrast to separate background tools from background slab hut. Levels and sharpening.

GET THEM ON BOARD

Rob Sykes took this shot at the Redland Historical Society. He went there first and scoped it out before returning a week later with a plan of where to position himself to shoot the blacksmith at work. He said: “I noticed the best photos were taken at about 0.25 sec resulting in movement and good sparks. I also got to know how the blacksmiths worked.”

There is a load of interesting content in this scene with all the old metal tools and materials. It is a difficult situation to capture well. One issue is that the scene is too light, by about one f-stop, and making it darker would help the bright sparks shooting out left and right from the anvil stand out better. The smithy also needs to be sharper. A combination of static and blur would be effective. For that, a request for his co-operation then some coaching so he holds his body still while one arm moves could work. Adding a small amount of fill flash to help freeze some of his features - say f11 with flash at -1, would also be a good move. The white line (light coming through the background wooden slats) intersecting the blacksmith’s arm is disturbing. Coaching the subject with his positioning would also avoid this happening.

SAIMA’S TIP: Asking for permission and engaging a subject in the image-making process may make it an enjoyable experience for them as well as help get a better shot.



WHERE TO LOOK?

Rebekah Rosenzweig created this image from a photo she captured of a butterfly sitting on pink flowers. She said she wanted to create something completely different with a twirling effect.

In this sort of image, the original subject itself has become negligible and the effect is the new subject. This picture does conjure up other associations such as a spirograph and the vortex effect often depicted in movies with space travel, but is almost not “photographic”. It is an attractive abstract with nice colour and lines, but with no strong point of focus. Looking at it in terms of lines and colour, I think that the blacks here are verging on grey, so an increase in contrast would boost them.

SAIMA’S TIP: With no strong point of focus, an image runs the risk of being easily forgettable.

TITLE: Twirling
 PHOTOGRAPHER: Rebekah Rosenzweig
 DETAILS: Nikon D5600, 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6 lens @ 55mm.
 1/2000s @ f5.6, ISO 500. Edited in Adobe Photoshop, filters include Blur, Pixelate and Distort-Twirl, finished off with blending layer modes.



TITLE: Untitled
PHOTOGRAPHER: Graham Lockerbie
DETAILS: Minolta Dynax, Sony A-mount Tamron 15-30mm F2.8 lens. Exposure details unknown. Processed in Elements 18, cropped then modified using Silver FX Pro and 034 Yellowed 2 filter for enhanced contrast and distressed photo border.

SUBJECT FIRST

A 2019 *AP* article, 'The Wheel Deal', prompted Graham Lockerbie to submit this image. He had a hybrid approach to this image: shot film, had the film commercially processed and scanned, which gave him a digital image for processing in Photoshop CC or Elements. He wrote: "I shot monochrome Ilford XP2 film in an old (but mint condition) Minolta Dynax 7xi fitted with my newly repaired lens, as much to test the post repair lens quality as to take a monochrome film nostalgia trip."

The whole process and effort in making this image is obviously a personal journey and challenge, but I don't understand the appeal of the messy reflections and shadows on the car. To fit in with the nostalgic trip with that 70s style edging effect and the sepia-style tone, a vintage car would have been a more comprehensible option as a subject. The olde-worlde effect with a fairly average modern car doesn't quite make sense.

SAIMA'S TIP: A lot of tweaking and effects does not make up for absence of great subject matter.



TITLE: Untitled
PHOTOGRAPHER: Geoff Skoien
DETAILS: Fuji X-T2, Fuji 50-140mm, f/2.8 lens @ 119mm. 1/300s @ f9, ISO 400. three bracketed exposures merged in Photomatix, Lightroom adjustments: spot removal, sharpening and cropping.

SUM OF ALL PARTS

Having travelled on this section of the Bruce Highway north of Brisbane since he was a child, Geoff Skoien said he was amazed at the new view of the Glasshouse Mountains which materialised after harvesting of plantation pines. "I had to get a photo while the view was so good. I rose early one morning, and the weather looked promising so I travelled from my home on the Sunshine Coast to arrive in time for the sunrise. I was able to park the car far enough off the highway to be safe and used the door frame as my tripod."

Some images do not need much, if any, "doctoring" at all, and

this is one of them. The rule-of-thirds composition works, the subject matter fills the frame well and is interesting, the lighting is nice with a combination of light and shade, the colours are natural and appealing, and the post-production is subtly executed. The mist also adds a nice touch. I would be picky to suggest cloning out the far left gum tree, so I won't! All I can see is a job well done.

SAIMA'S TIP: One of the arts in using software is knowing when to stop.



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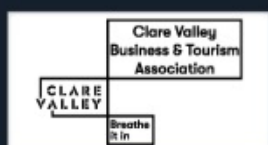
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IMAGE DOCTOR

FUJIFILM X

TITLE: Untitled
PHOTOGRAPHER:
Jillian Staton
DETAILS: Fuji X-T1,
Fuji XF 18-55mm
f/2.8-4 @ 50mm.
1/150s @ f5.6, ISO
400. bracketing mode
for exposure (three
stops), merged in
Lightroom.



STRIP IT BACK

This is one of Jillian Staton's favourite photos from a trip to the Amalfi Coast, Italy. She said that she loves the way the cats mirror the men's gestures of checking out the morning's catch, and had to take several shots to get the one that felt 'right'.

This is such a busy, busy scene. As such, a decent shooting angle for the cleanest mirroring effect of cats and men (without a lot of background clutter) was going to be a big ask. While we can easily guess why the cats are there, it would have helped to have some fish in the

scene, or at least another shot or two or three to give a documentary story line. The scene is also too blue and the contrast is too heavy. As a guide, check out the heavy blacks under the fishing nets. Easing up on the contrast would definitely help this scene, but I think that this is only ever going to be a holiday moment memory image.

SAIMA'S TIP: A merge to HDR in Lightroom is not as good as in dedicated software (for instance, Photomatix) which allows more control.

WIN!

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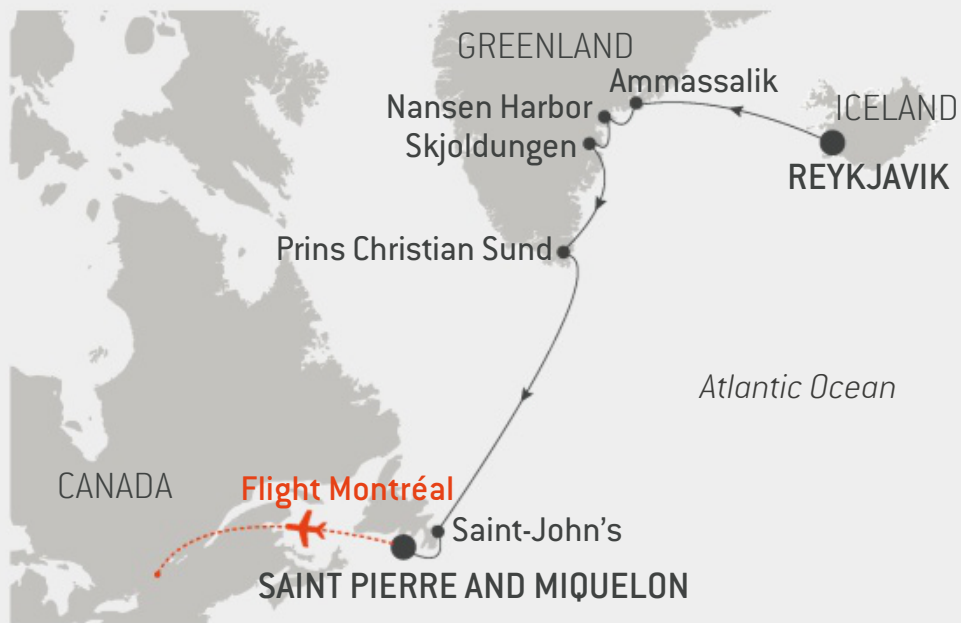
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DAN WESTERGREN, Photographer

As the long time photo editor for National Geographic Traveler magazine, Dan Westergren was responsible for the magazine's photographic vision. He's been lucky to photograph amazing places for Traveler, such as the summits of Mont Blanc, the Matterhorn, and Kilimanjaro as well as the North Pole.



M JACKSON, Expert

Geographer, glaciologist, National Geographic Emerging Explorer, and TED Fellow, M Jackson studies and writes about glaciers, people, and climate change. She has worked for more than ten years across the Arctic guiding backcountry trips and has served as an Expert for National Geographic in Alaska, Iceland, and Antarctica.

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