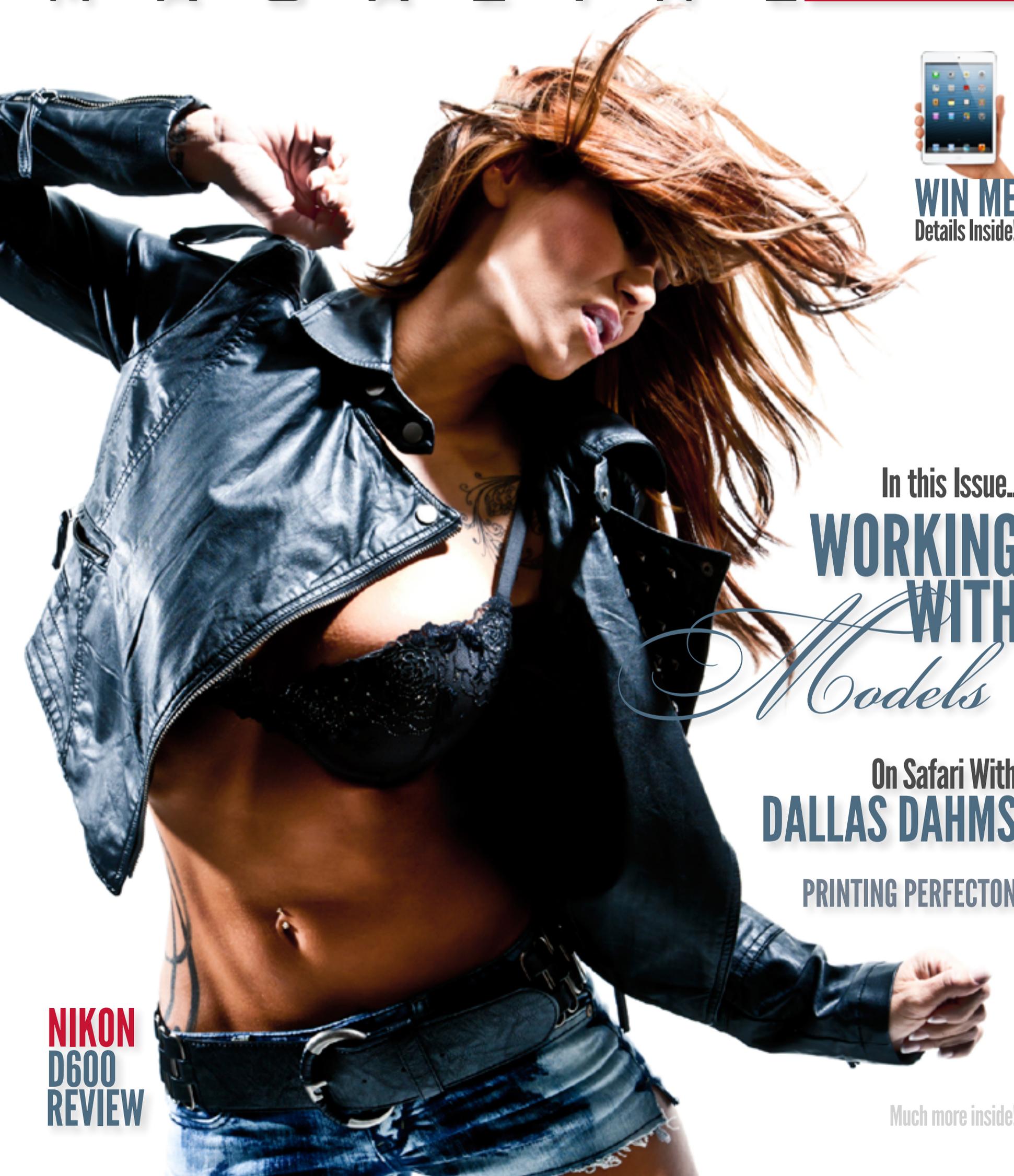


Darkroom **Pro**

M A G A Z I N E



WIN ME
Details Inside!



In this Issue...

**WORKING
WITH**
Models

On Safari With
DALLAS DAHMS

PRINTING PERFECTON

NIKON
D600
REVIEW

Much more inside!



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

GEAR GUIDE



Nikon D600

When the new Nikon D600 was announced, we couldn't wait to get our hands on one to see it through the glass -- and through the camera's viewfinder. The package we received was the Nikon D600 with the Nikon 24-120mm f/4 lens attached to the body, and being brought to you here. [View our Nikon D600 review](#).

FIRST IMPRESSIONS
The first look at the D600 was an impressive sight, before the power that this camera can offer. Lighter and more compact, it still has enough built-in features to be considered a professional in our hands. In addition, it is used for those who give significant attention to the things which cameras will not see outside.

8 - GEAR GUIDE

Join us as we take a look at Nikon's new powerhouse DSLR, the full-frame D600. Our comprehensive review will leave you fully informed as to whether a purchase decision is justified!



14- FRESH FACES

Indonesian photographer Shikhei Goh takes us into the world of macro photography, with his stunning, award winning images.



26 -COMPOSE YOURSELF

Sometimes a negative can be a good thing! Find out how in this issue's Compose Yourself column devoted to the appropriate utilization of negative space!



30 - DIGITAL DARKROOM

Ever been left scratching your head as to why your prints aren't looking identical to what you see on your camera's LCD? This issue's Digital Darkroom demystifies the printing process for you, providing solid advice and more!

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

NEW! D7100

With the release of the D7100, Nikon has introduced a new member to the DSLR family. Featuring a 18MP CMOS sensor, a 39-point AF system, and a 1080p HD video recording capability, the D7100 is a compact and powerful camera with a wide range of features. The new body will surely be a hit for all those who love the D7100 range of products. [View our Nikon D7100 review](#).



SmartPod Smartphone
One of the strengths of mobile phone photography is the ease with which it can be used. However, in capturing images in still modes, your phone gives you a lot of freedom. The difficulty comes when it comes to keeping your phone in place in order to capture a still image. SmartPod is a new tripod that allows you to get all the benefits of your phone without having to use a separate tripod. [View our SmartPod Smartphone review](#).

22- WHAT'S NEW

Everyone likes to see what the latest gear and gadgets are, and photographers are no different!

Check out this issue's New & Noteworthy column to see what cool gizmos await the shutterbug shopper.

You'll be certain to find something for every budget...

CONTENTS



36 - PHOTOPRENEUR

On Safari - with Dallas Dahms! Join us as we speak with Dallas about his photographic adventures in the South African wilderness...



50 - LIGHTROOM PREVIEW

We've all been quite curious to see what Adobe could possibly stuff into the next version of Lightroom... well the wait's over. Check out our in-depth preview of Lightroom 5.



54 - THE LAB

These days, photographers are often called upon to become videographers too! That's great... until you have to process the video. Check out our review of Adobe's Premiere Pro CS6



60 - LENS LORE

This issue features our review of Nikon's 24-79mm f/2.8 lens compared head-to-head with its older brother the 28-70!



64 - STUDIO SECRETS

Take your photography to the next level by learning how to work well with live models in the studio!

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72- PHOTO FUNDAMENALS

Why Are My Photos Blurry#@?! Find out in this issue of Photo Fundamentals!

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EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Welcome to the latest edition of DarkroomPro Magazine! We've been very pleased with the response the publication has been getting, and are happy to be able to maintain the price point at its current level — free of course!

As we ramp up our production schedule, we expect to transition from a quarterly publication to a monthly in the second half of 2013. In order to accomplish this goal, we need your support! Please give us a hand and make use of the buttons below to 'Like' us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. That way, not only will you be helping us out, but you'll be privy to all the latest photography news, events, industry related deals, contests, and giveaways as well. If you're feeling particularly kind, it would be great if you could rate and review the app on iTunes... that might even earn you a mention in our next issue!



Ok, so let's get on with the good stuff.

In this edition you'll find a great preview of Adobe's latest product offering: Lightroom 5! We delayed publication in order to bring it to you — so we hope you, like we, think it was worth the wait! Our regular columns are back, including Studio Secrets, on working with models, Gear Guide, where we review the

Nikon D600, Compose Yourself, on utilizing negative space, and much more! We've also a feature interview with South African entrepreneur Dallas Dahms, founder of NikonGear.com, and leader of exciting photographic safaris within his home country.

So again, we thank you for your support and hope you enjoy this publication as much as we appreciate being able to bring it to you.

Ray Richards

Editor

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GEAR GUIDE



Nikon D600

When the new Nikon D600 was announced, we couldn't wait to get our hands on one to run it through its paces — and happily, the company was willing to oblige. The package we received contained both the D600 and the Nikkor 24-70mm *f*/2.8 lens (also reviewed in this issue), and having thoroughly tested them, we are eager to share our results with you!

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The lean body of this full-frame, 24.3 megapixel camera, belies the power that dwells within... yet, while lightweight and compact, it still has enough heft to make it feel substantial and comfortable in your hands. Ergonomics, as is usual for Nikon, are given significant attention in the D600, which features well laid out controls,

generally easily accessible without having to take your eyes away from the viewfinder.

Of course you get all the things you're accustomed to on a Nikon DSLR body, however there are a few differences in how they're delivered. For example, the mode and release mode dials are both of the locking variety; and while this is a boon for those prone to accidentally changing from one mode to another, we found the lock button on top of the mode dial a bit difficult to get used to — particularly for those with larger fingers. This however proved only a minor inconvenience.

Another difference that was a bit of a disappointment was the lack of ability to have the image review function zoom to 100% by pressing the 'OK' button. We use that

feature all the time, and while you can certainly zoom via the combo buttons, it isn't nearly as quick as simply hitting the OK to see if you've nailed focus at the crucial point.

In addition to the usual manual, aperture priority, shutter priority, and program modes, the camera includes tons of scene modes (children, landscape, sunset, indoor party, etc.), and also full auto for the novice or those just getting their feet wet in the DSLR world. Introduced in the D7000, the D600 also features two user modes which are directly accessible via the dial, enabling you to instantly select all of your stored shooting settings for either. This is a fantastic addition which saves the photographer from having to hunt through menus; and we would definitely welcome its inclusion on future bodies from the company.

The D600 also includes two SD card slots which provide the ability to automatically backup to the second card, overflow to it once the first is full, or store JPGs on the second and RAW files on the first. Though we are no fans of SD cards period, given their inherent fragility, it's great to see a consumer/prosumer level DSLR provide this functionality, once only available in pro bodies. The files it stores are quite large however (27-28 mb each), given the 24.3 megapixel sensor... so be prepared to have some laggy performance in post, unless you have some serious computing horsepower under the hood.

IN ACTION

To put the camera through its paces we decided to take a trip to the Trestle Bridge near Shawnigan Lake on Vancouver Island.





The weather was grey and foggy — perfect for some desaturated, split-tone, and black and white architectural photography.

The camera performed admirably; exhibiting good dynamic range, with well preserved highlights and shadows, excellent metering, and snappy focusing. One thing we did notice however, is that despite the camera's purported 100% frame coverage through the viewfinder, we discovered it to be very slightly less. We originally chalked this up to user error, but tested it back at the studio and confirmed our findings. The only reason we noticed at all was the fact that we were doing architectural shots, and trying to put specific elements of the image exactly in the corners of our frame. Perhaps the unit

we received for testing was a little off. In any event, this will matter little to most and, the tiny excess can always be cropped in post.

For our colour tests, we photographed the Nanaimo harbour. The auto white balance, typical of Nikon's later bodies was dead on... in fact, I can't remember the last time I used anything other than auto outside of the studio. Colour rendering was very accurate, though using the 'Camera Landscape' profile in Lightroom could over-accentuate blues in certain situations as seen in the accompanying image. Of course this is easily compensated for, and in general, this body delivers some of the most faithful colour reproductions we've ever seen.

The shutter is quiet and responsive, and boasts speeds of up to 5.5 frames per second,

supporting operations at 1/4000th to 30 seconds. The release mode dial also features a quiet' function, which frankly we found mostly useless, given it is pretty much as loud as the camera's normal shutter operation, and simply seems to draw out the sound for a longer period as well as completely blacking out the viewfinder. Flash sync speed is also a little disappointing at 200 vs. the standard 250, but there again, most folks won't notice.

Unlike some of its predecessors, the D600 is compatible with nearly the entire line of Nikkor lenses, with only the very oldest and lamest among them excluded (IX NIKKOR lenses (why you'd want to put one of these on your DSLR is beyond us), lenses for the F3AF

(no problem unless you were a press photog in the early '80s), and non-AI lenses (do you have a lot of pre-1977 lenses kicking around that you're dying to use on your new DSLR? You can convert them to AI yourself if you're handy — plenty of how-to's on the Internet)).

The focus system employed in the camera, Multicam 4800 employs 39 focus points — all clustered at the centre of the frame. This configuration requires you focus and re-compose fairly often; however didn't seem inconvenient and just took some getting used to. It's extremely accurate and fast in decent light; we did however find it hunting a bit in low light — particularly in video.



VIDEO

Nikon's DSLR video efforts have definitely improved with every generation of body they've released. The D600 is no exception. Simply flip the rear switch to Video mode, activate Live View, and click the dedicated video record button to capture up to 20 minutes of video at the highest quality setting, featuring full 1080p at 24, 25, or 30 frames per second. Additionally, the unit will shoot 720p at up to 60 fps!

There is a built-in mono mic for audio capture and support for the addition of an external stereo microphone which delivers substantially better sound reproduction.

CONCLUSION

It's not everyday that you find so much photographic punch squeezed into such a compact format; and despite a few minor quibbles we had with it, the Nikon D600 delivers just that. A steal at \$2179 MSRP (retailing as low as \$1997), we highly recommend it.

While the built-in microphone is great indoors, as you can hear in the video, wind noise can be problematic. The addition of an external microphone substantially reduces this difficulty and greatly improves overall sound quality.

Nanaimo Seaplanes

We recorded this video in a noisy environment to test the effectiveness of the new built-in microphone. As you can hear, the wind noise is evident even over top of the sound of the seaplane engines.



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FRESH FACES

Shikhei Goh



Fresh Faces



38 year old Shikhei Goh, has been the recipient of numerous awards, including National Geographic's grand prize for their annual photography competition in 2011.

Shikui Goh



While an avid photographer interested in capturing a wide range of subjects, Mr. Goh's particular passion is macro work, and the fascinating world found on the diminutive scale.

Fresh Faces



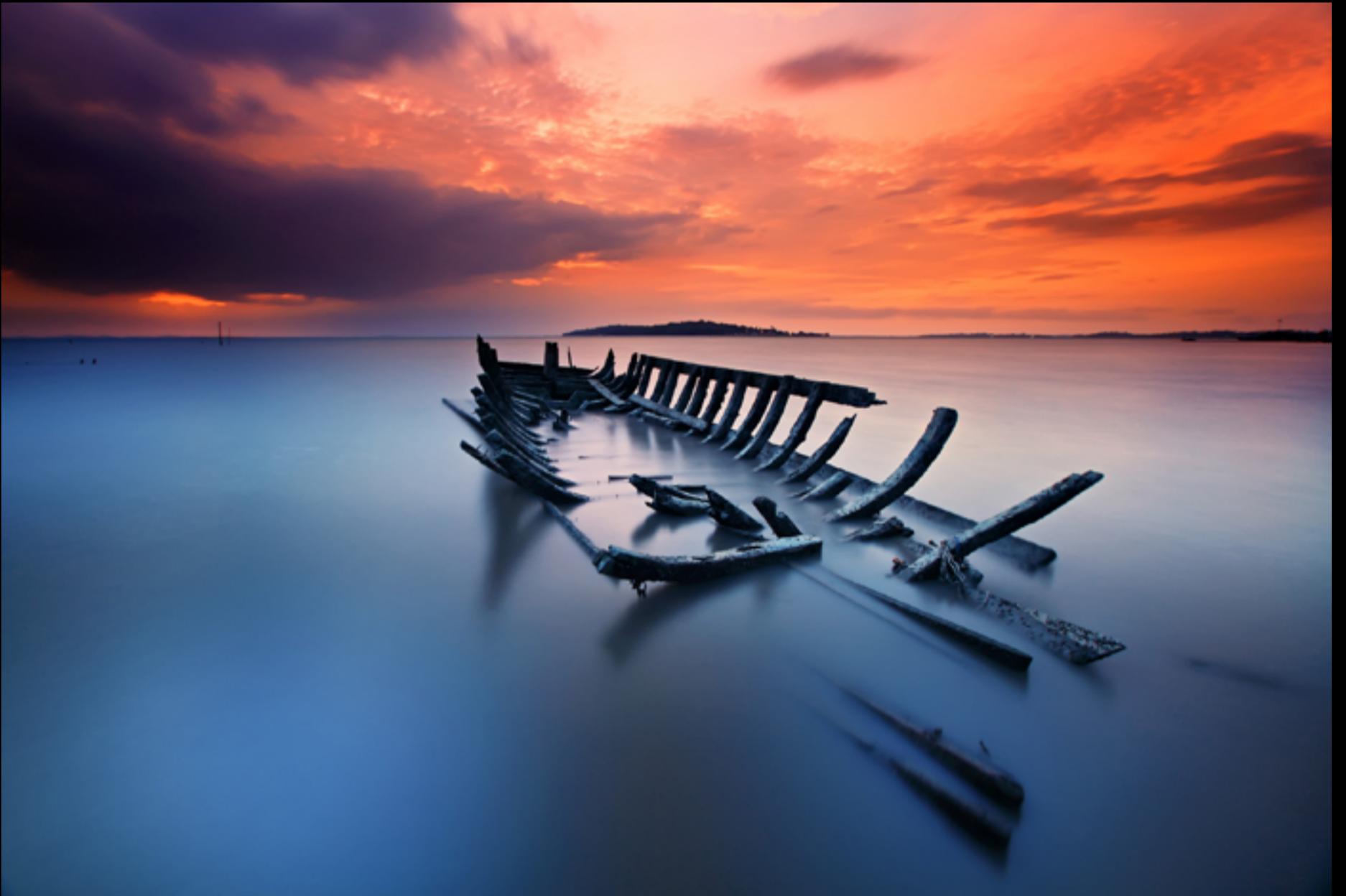
A native of Bantam Island Indonesia, Shikhei is a Canon shooter, wielding a 7D equipped with a Twinlight flash, and 100mm *f*/2.8L USM IS, MP-E 65mm, and Raynox 250mm macro lenses.

Shikui Goh



Mr. Goh has also won 'Photographer of the Year' for both 2011 & 2012, from Pixoto, and has been commended for his images in the top 50 for Sony's World Photography Awards in 2013.

Fresh Faces



Of course, while Shikhei spends most of his time shooting details from the miniature world, capturing larger vistas such as the above is also among his many talents. See more at www.shikheigoh.com

SIGMA



Sunflower | CAMERA: SIGMA SD14 | ISO: 50, F8, 1/13sec | LENS: SIGMA 85mm F1.4 EX DG HSM | Copyright © 2010 Paul Tracker

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NEW & NOTEWORTHY

NIKON D7100

With the release of the D7100, Nikon has once again raised the bar on their DX format lineup. Featuring a 24.1 megapixel CMOS sensor, shutter actuations at up to 6 frames per second, full 1080p video including slow motion capability, built-in HDR capability, and great ISO performance with a standard range of from 100 to 6400, the new body will surely be a hit for all those fans of the DX range of products. MSRP of \$1229.95 body only or \$1549.95 when paired with the 18-105mm *f*/3.5-5.6G ED VR kit lens.



GRIP TIGHT GORILLAPOD

One of the strengths of mobile phone photography (as discussed in the iPhoneography column in this issue) is the fact that the devices lend themselves to capturing images at odd angles given their tiny footprint. The difficulty presents itself however in keeping your phone in place in while attempting to grab that unusual shot. Well, Joby's new GripTight allows you to get creative with your framing — without having to learn new yoga poses! Retailing at \$29.95, this versatile product will be a welcome addition to any mobile photographer's gear bag.

MEMOTO CAMERA

If you ever had any difficulty remembering what you did on a particular day (I have certainly had more than my fair share of foggy mornings after the night before), you may be interested in Memoto's new 'lifeblogging' camera. A wearable device, the Memoto features *no* buttons or controls of any kind, yet takes a geotagged photo every 30 seconds (interval may be adjusted), and automatically compensates for whatever position you may find yourself in by correctly orienting the image upright. Battery life is up to two days and the built-in storage capacity will accommodate this period fully. Purchase also includes a free year of online storage with unlimited capacity. MSRP \$279



BLACKMAGIC POCKET CINEMA CAMERA

Want to take your digital movie making to the next level, but don't want to lug around a giant camera? Blackmagic, a world leader in innovative video technologies, has produced a tiny Micro 4/3 camera capable of delivering true Super 16 digital film output with an incredible 13 stops of dynamic

range. Compatible with a wide range of high quality lenses from a variety of manufacturers, the Pocket Cinema supports ProRes, an open file format which ensures you won't get locked into using strange software you're unaccustomed to. With the addition of an MFD lens adaptor, you are also able to employ almost any pro lens you like! Available July 2013 for MSRP \$995.



CONTINUOUS LIGHT FOR IPHONE

While the iPhone has a built-in flash, the effect its use has on images taken with it is often rather harsh. To rectify this difficulty, Photojojo has come up with an ingenious solution: a continuous light source that plugs directly into your phone. Great for those times when you need just a little extra



illumination on your subject, the iPhone Pocket Spotlight excels at producing evenly lit portraits, and plugs directly into your headphone jack, hotshoe, or just hold it in your hand. Charging via USB, the Pocket Spotlight runs for a full hour and retails for only \$30.

SEKONIC L-478DR LIGHT METER

If you read last issue's interview with photographer and Kelby Instructor Frank Doorhof, you'll know he advocates using a meter *every time*. Not only does this save you time and eliminates the trial and error from your studio equation, but your clients will appreciate your professionalism — which saves them time too. While there are a number of choices in meters available to the photographer, Sekonic's new L-478DR certainly merits some consideration. Featuring an intuitive touch screen interface, native compatibility with wireless triggers from Pocket Wizard, dynamic range calibration for your camera, and built-in control for both Canon and Nikon's range of speedlights, the L-478DR definitely raises the bar on what to expect from your meter. Retail at \$469.



IPHONE CABLE RELEASE

A perfect compliment to Joby's GripTight GorillaPod above, Photojojo's iPhone Cable release allows you to capture all the action without being in physical contact with your phone! As discussed in our iPhoneography column this month, one of the primary difficulties with mobile phone photography is the introduc-

tion of camera shake due to the nature of the devices. Circumvent this entirely with this innovative and inexpensive product! Just \$30 alone or \$40 including some nifty colour filters.

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NEGATIVE SPACE

Making Something Out of Nothing

These days, life has become so cluttered and busy, it's easy to forget to take the time to enjoy the restful silence which may be afforded one in the endeavour or appreciation of photography. The medium enables an individual to step back and isolate the essential and important, from that which is more appropriately described as background noise. A key component in this pursuit as applies to photography, is the skillful utilization of what's known as negative space.

WHAT'S THAT ALL ABOUT?

Employing negative space is about using the blank or nondescript area *around* a subject used to give more prominence *to* that subject. Effective use of negative space in photographic terms is accomplished via a number of techniques; preeminent among them, the use of large apertures in support of achieving shallow depths of field, rendering non-subject elements of the frame as a blurred backdrop. This works well in scenes

wherein the dominant feature of the capture, aside from its subject, is busy and colourful — a canopy of trees for instance — and provides an effective canvas upon which the photographer may highlight his muse.

You're *not* using negative space should these elements be distinguishable as potential secondary or tertiary subjects; as using this technique is all about the isolation of the subject against a calm and mostly uniform backdrop, using depth of field in this case to achieve this effect.

Of course, widening your aperture isn't the only way to go about working with negative space. The technique is about stripping away the non-essential to reveal the subject's qualities in a minimalistic context. This can involve use of plain paper backdrops in the studio, shooting against a clear sky, large expanses of water, brick walls and the like... anything that allows you to reveal your subject without distraction.

FILL THE FRAME?

The mantra of many well respected photographers is that it's generally better to

‘fill the frame with your subject’. They advocate zooming well in, tight crops, more weight, less craft. While certainly this technique has merit, there are often occasions where a photograph is substantially more powerful when the subject is given the space it needs to express its significance.

Let’s say you want to express the idea of ‘small, but important or essential’ in an image; wouldn’t a great way to accomplish this be to feature the subject in a rule of thirds position, but only occupying a small fraction of the frame — the rest devoted to a blank canvas? The subject is drawn into sharp focus and actually has more weight due to the contrasting void that surrounds it.

DESIGN DECISIONS

Negative space can not only highlight a subject, but define it. We’ve all seen the famous image which depicts either a vase, or two faces looking at each other — which one the viewer sees, depends on what they perceive *as* the negative space in the scene.

Take this M.C. Escher sketch for example... the negative space not only helps define the subject, but make makes a transition in both directions to actually become the subject. Designers frequently utilize this technique to subtly convey a message in a clever manner.

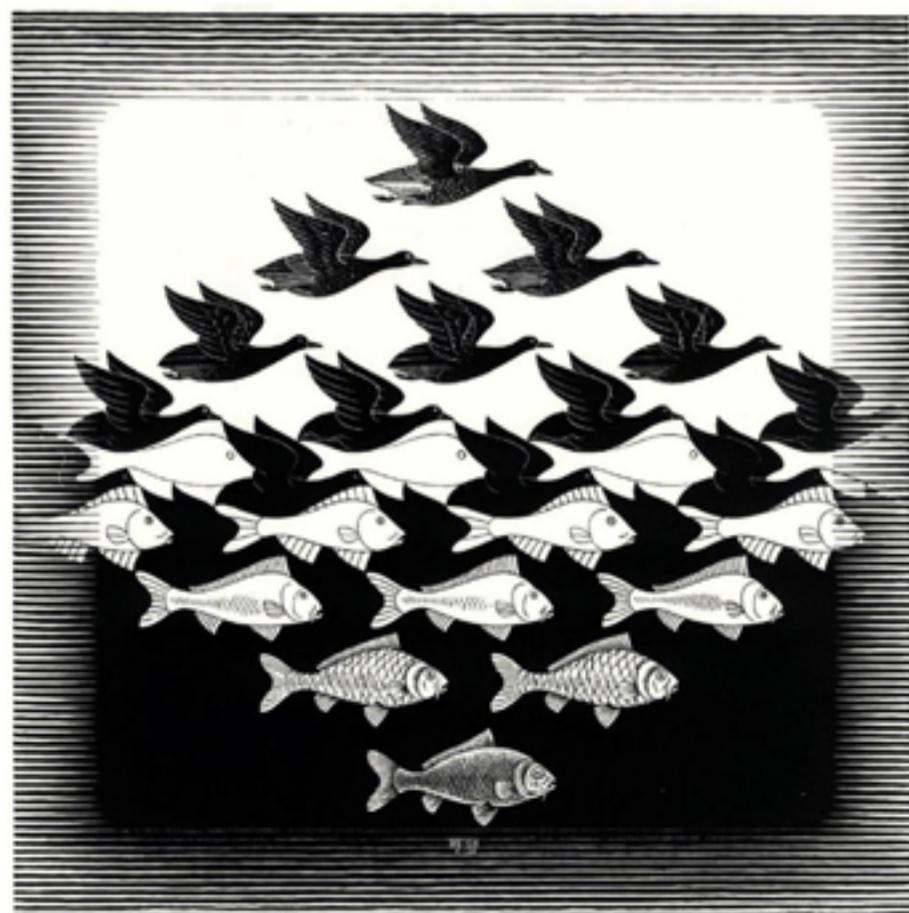
Designers aren’t the only ones that can pull this off however! Check out this brilliant ad for Pirelli Tires [following page] which employs the negative space in the scene to define the panda and convey their eco-friendly message. Careful framing of your sub-

ject can often lead to some extraordinary results if you pay as much attention to what’s around it as to your primary target.

HANDY HINTS

There are a few things to keep in mind when exploring the use of negative space in your photographs. For example, if you are using a human or animal subject, pay attention to their direction of motion and sight lines. It’s generally best to give them some room to move into within the frame... so provide some negative space in the direction they are traveling. Additionally, you’ll typically want their eyes to be looking into the white space [Ed. term for negative space used primarily in advertising] area of the image.

Failure to adhere to the above can lessen the restful appearance of your photograph — though this may be a creative decision undertaken to instil visual tension [Ed. see issue 2 for a complete discussion of visual tension!] in the image.





Cinturato P4 and P6. There's nothing eco-friendlier on the road.



Breaking the rules can be fun and lead to interesting results, just ensure you do it in order to achieve an artistic end, not because you weren't paying attention!

So, as you've seen here, what's *not* the subject of your photograph can be equally im-

portant as that which is. Negative space is an interesting and essential tool to utilize for any photographer; and knowing how best to exploit its potential in any situation can transform what might otherwise be a simple snapshot, into a work of art.

D600



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Introducing the Nikon D600 Full-Frame HD-SLR.

Long awaited by passionate photographers everywhere, the new Nikon D600 is an innovative 24.3-megapixel HD-SLR in a size and weight never seen before in FX format. Equipped to shoot virtually any subject – from landscape to portraiture and from still life to action – the D600 renders each with stunning sharpness and all of the benefits the versatile FX format can offer. Its larger dynamic range, greater scalability and true 35mm field – higher sensitivity, lower noise and superior low-light performance – are all harnessed in a compact, streamlined HD-SLR. As well, the spectacular HD 1080p video puts cinema quality movies at your fingertips. One of the world's most anticipated cameras has finally arrived. The Nikon D600. And it's waiting for you at your Authorized Nikon Canada Dealer.

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Digital Darkroom

Printing Perfection

Once upon a time, you blew through a roll of 24 or 36 exposures, dropped it off at the lab, and anxiously awaited the prints — never being really certain of what the results would be. Did you blow the focus... nail the exposure... did the subject blink? Not only did you harbour these concerns, but were also subject to the application of talents (or lack thereof) the lab technician brought to bear on your work — potentially converting your masterpiece into a holiday snap.

Of course, photographers were free to undertake darkroom duties themselves, and certainly many, if not most of the pros did; however, the alchemy involved was often beyond the ken of the aspiring shutterbug, and lack of facilities was also all too often a barrier. So, for most, photographers were stuck with what they got, for good or ill.

Today the situation is *far* better: not only are you able to instantly determine whether you've captured what you'd envisioned, but increasingly, photographers are personally embracing the entire process, from releasing the shutter, through producing the print — and relishing in the complete control afforded them in so doing. Unfortunately, while the current state of affairs as applies to the photographic chain is infinitely better than in years past; it certainly isn't without its own challenges and pitfalls.

THE DIGITAL DILEMMA

Given the inherent complexity in mastering the capture side of the photographic equation, you might forgive those who believe that producing a print which matches what they've viewed on their camera's LCD should

be as easy as clicking the correspondingly labelled button on their computer. After all, everything's digital right? Shouldn't the integrity of what's passed through the chain be preserved from LCD to print? Not quite.

As anyone who has undertaken to complete the chain themselves has witnessed, photographs can appear quite different through every step of the process: the image rendered on the camera LCD diverges for that displayed on the monitor, and further still from what is ultimately recorded in print. Often the final product bears little resemblance to that which the photographer believed they had captured. Why is this?

NATURE OF THE BEAST

The primary issue responsible for the above is the fact that different devices possess substantially disparate display characteristics. Camera LCDs are designed to be viewed in full sunlight; and as a result, are often far brighter than their computer display counterparts. This typically leads to situations wherein, the photographer, upon viewing the result of a shutter actuation, may erroneously determine an image looks great, when in fact, it is substantially underexposed. Of course, this situation may be rectified by careful attention to the histogram [Ed. for a complete discussion on using your camera's histogram, see our last issue!], but this



difficulty represents only one of many gotchas potentially experienced as you tread the path from click to canvas. Further, the way an image is rendered on a display is different from the way your eye perceives that which is laid down on paper. The former emits photons directly; while the latter depends on reflected light to cast an image upon our retinas, and this is substantially altered depending on the substrate utilized for

this purpose. That is, whether you are using matte or glossy, canvas or metallic... whatever paper you elect to print on will have its own reflective properties and affect the appearance of any image printed upon it.

But wait — there's more! Not only do display qualities and medium characteristics interfere with maintaining image fidelity throughout the process, but differences in colour gamut between devices are frequently to blame for inconsistencies realized in the final product. So while you may be shooting in one colour space, say Adobe RGB, you may be (quite often actually) viewing the image in another, typically sRGB [Ed. For a full discussion on colour spaces, see issue Volume 2]. Is it any wonder then that your end result often diverges from what your perception of the initial capture might be?



SO WHAT TO DO?

How you circumvent these difficulties involves making decisions and undertaking actions in every step of the process... from camera, through computer, to print.

As mentioned above, the image displayed upon reviewing in your camera's LCD should only be used as a rough guide; and the histogram should be utilized in

support of evaluating exposure.

Use the preview image to determine fram-

ing, and zoom in to your focal point

at 100% to gauge whether you've

nailed your focus. Don't use in-camera

effects or sharpening, and use RAW

instead of JPG, as this format enables significantly

more latitude for colour correction etc. in post.

Additionally, you'll want to employ the widest colour gamut available on your camera — typically Adobe RGB — to ensure you are capturing the full range of the tones in the scene that your camera is able to process.

Fine tune your white balance on your computer — having done the best you can to achieve accuracy in capture. When you use RAW, white balance is easily adjusted in Lightroom or whichever RAW editor you choose, and has no ill-effects whatsoever.

ever on the finished product. Fortunately, these days, automatic white balance settings are so accurate, many photographers pay little attention to it until they actually view the image on their PC. However, to achieve the best results, take a white balance calibration shot using a grey card or similar (WhiBal, Spyder Cube etc.) and you'll be assured of consistency in your images.

Ensure your monitor has been correctly colour calibrated using one of the many excellent hardware solutions available [Ed. See a review of the Spyder 3 Studio SR], and always process your images in an environment which has consistent lighting. Often this involves doing your digital development work at night, as this generally assures a constant level of illumination. You must also remember to recalibrate your monitor on a regular basis, as these devices tend to experience drift and will fail to remain colour accurate over the long term. If you are able, (and this is becoming an increasingly affordable option), use a monitor that displays a wide gamut to present a true representation of your photograph on the screen. As you generally want to shoot using Adobe RGB, you will find that many monitors are incapable of rendering the range of tones captured within that gamut. Almost all consumer level displays utilize the sRGB colour space, and you'll find this will often produce unexpected results when hitting the print button.

On the printing side of the process, there are a number of things to bear in mind before committing ink to substrate... foremost among them, which printer to have purchased in



the first place. If possible, you'll want to buy a unit that also supports a wide gamut — either Adobe RGB or ProPhoto. Many manufacturers offer models that include this functionality; however, don't expect to find it in those at the lower end of the price scale.

Further, ensure the printer you select has custom profiles available for a wide variety of printing surfaces. These profiles are imported into your computer and are user-selected

thereafter in your application upon electing to print, according to what type of paper you are using. Choosing the right profile for the substrate ensures the best possible result in maintaining colour fidelity.

Finally, you'll want to 'soft proof' your image in advance of hitting that print button. Soft proofing in an application such as Adobe Photoshop or Lightroom (4 and above) allows the photographer to see any parts of the image that are 'out of gamut', so that you may make a decision to either adjust accordingly, should these areas fall within important sections of the image, or just live with the result. When you're satisfied with the result, it's time to click that print button; but here's a couple of tips to bear in mind in so doing...

Make certain you are only managing colour in *one* place. That is, don't have both the printer driver and the application you are printing from fighting over colour manage-

ment, as this will lead to very sketchy results indeed! You'll typically want to let your editor take on these duties, be it Lightroom, Photoshop, Aperture, or whatever. Additionally, print a test image at 4x6 or similar before committing to ink and paper expenditure on a larger scale. This will save you significant headaches and money, as even if you adhere to the above faithfully, no process is perfect, and your initial result might require some tweaking in advance of pulling the trigger on that wall-hanger. Nothing is worse than blowing a ton of ink and wasting expensive substrate; so do a test — your pocketbook and therapist will thank you.

Having complete control over the photographic chain is at times both frustrating and challenging; however, the rewards conferred upon the photographer far outweigh any potential negative experiences. So, dive right in... your next masterpiece awaits!





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PHOTOPRENEUR

DP: Hi Dallas, why don't you start us off by telling us how long you've actually been involved in photography?

Dallas: I've been taking photography seriously since about the year 2000. I'd always been interested in photography since I was a very young child, probably about the age of 8 or 9; but we grew up in kind of a poorer environment than most people do, and cameras and things like that were kind of a rich man's pursuit in those days for most people. Obviously there was no such thing as digital back then; but SLRs were kind of the rich man's toys that we encountered in our environment.

My parents bought me my first camera probably when I was about 13 or 14 years

old. It was a Canomatic...

Dallas Dahms

I don't even

think it was 35mm, I can't quite remember. [Ed. It was] I spent quite a bit of time using that camera and my parents ended up taking it with them on an overseas holiday, and when they came back, it was broken. It was the last camera I had for quite a long time, until about the year 2000. Then I picked up an Nikon F60 — which in the States I believe were called the N60 — sort of the entry-level model, and that was where it built from.

Initially I hadn't really intended getting as deeply into it as I have become, but somebody gave me a lens, and it was a little bit

better than the kit lens that I had on the camera. Once I saw the results of that lens, I started thinking ‘Wow! Now I can start understanding and appreciating how this whole photography thing comes to be.’ So it all sort of snowballed from there. One lens led to another; another camera body led to another; and the next thing you knew I had started a website all about Nikon equipment. So that’s kind of how it began for me.

DP: And that’s of course NikonGear.com originally, correct?

Dallas: Correct, yes.

DP: Ok, Now, can you tell me a bit about how that site came into being? At one time, you were an active member of NikonCafe.com I believe...

Dallas: I was. Actually, the NikonGear site started in 2005... I think that’s when I first registered the name. What actually happened is quite interesting: I went to a book sale, and I came across a book in which the author had catalogued just about every Nikon body and lens that had been produced from the inception of the company up until the time of print. It was a fantastic resource and I thought “Wow, this would good to have something like this online!” So that was the original intention: to produce a website that had as much information about the Nikon cameras and lenses that one could possibly get hold of. So I started it off like that... and I’d been involved in forums for quite a long time, but not on the actual browser type forums — more on the Usenet forums, which was where I

got my whole grounding with how forums organically become communities online.

What happened was, I wasn’t really active on the NikonCafe website, but I think at that time — mid 2006 if I recall correctly — there was a bit of a spat there. I had at that stage started investigating forum software and I knew nothing about it. So I basically figured out how to install — and I don’t even recall what version of software I was using... some sort of an open source software system. A lot of people were very unhappy with what had happened at NikonCafe...

DP: Do you recall what the nature of the spat was about? Because I think that’s actually quite important to differentiate your community from others.

Dallas: Yeah. It was all surrounding nude photography.

DP: So artistic nudes essentially?

Dallas: Yeah. The owners of NikonCafe basically had taken a decision to not allow nude photography on the site anymore. That obviously annoyed quite a lot of their regular members who had been posting nude photography for quite some time — tasteful nude stuff, you know, nothing pornographic in nature. So, what I did was (and I contemplated this for quite a long time, as I wasn’t really sure what the outcome would be), I private messaged about 15 to 20 of the members who had expressed outrage at the fact that they weren’t allowed to post nudes anymore; and I said to them, “Well, I’ve got this website, and I’ve just put a forum on it.



Maybe you'd like to join that, and you can post your nude photos without any problems."

The next thing I knew, there were just hundreds of people joining up on the site; and from there, it just became pretty much a last work for me, keeping it all in check. Over the years we've grown from the original hundreds of members to over 12,000 members. Not so many of them are always active all the time, but what I find quite interesting at NikonGear.com is that we have a huge amount of people that just lurk — they don't post anything. You find there's a core group

of people who are producing a lot of the posts most of the time. I'd say it's almost a 10 to 1 situation where you're having 1 person active on the forum for every 10 who are visiting and not active if that makes sense.

DP: I'd say that's probably true for most forums, where people come in and consume the content, dip in and dip out. Certainly, not to take anything away from NikonCafe — I think they're a great site; they're just more family oriented, and they want to prevent people from stumbling across some content that might not be appropriate for young children. However, for photographic artists it seems that the nude is a fairly common subject, and is in all the studies that you'd be doing at photography school. So, for me the whole issue of censorship kind of stuck in my craw a little bit, and that's actually why I joined the site originally back at the time that the 'spat' as you call it transpired.

DP: So, aside from this, what would you say sets your website apart from other photography forums?

Dallas: That's an interesting question. I've tried to analyze that for years, and I still can't quite put my finger on it. I think if you look at it, it tends to be more of a mature audience than you'd find at most other photography websites. The average age of the active membership is generally over 40, which I think has made quite a difference in terms of the need for things like moderation and things like that. We hardly ever use our moderation system. I think in the seven or eight years that we've been running

for, moderation has been so limited that, when somebody posts something in the moderation forum these days, it's almost like there's a panic — what's happened?! Generally, the audience is more mature; they're a lot more widespread than you'd find on a lot of other photography forums...

DP: You mean geographically?

Dallas: Geographically, yes. We have members from all over the world. The split is actually quite unique in that it's predominantly European these days. That's changed a lot over the last year or so. Previously I'd say it would have been about 60% American, or North American to be more precise, and then about 30% from Europe and surrounding countries. I also have quite a large group of people from Australia these days which is great! Interestingly, in Africa, there's very few of us; and that's where the site originates.

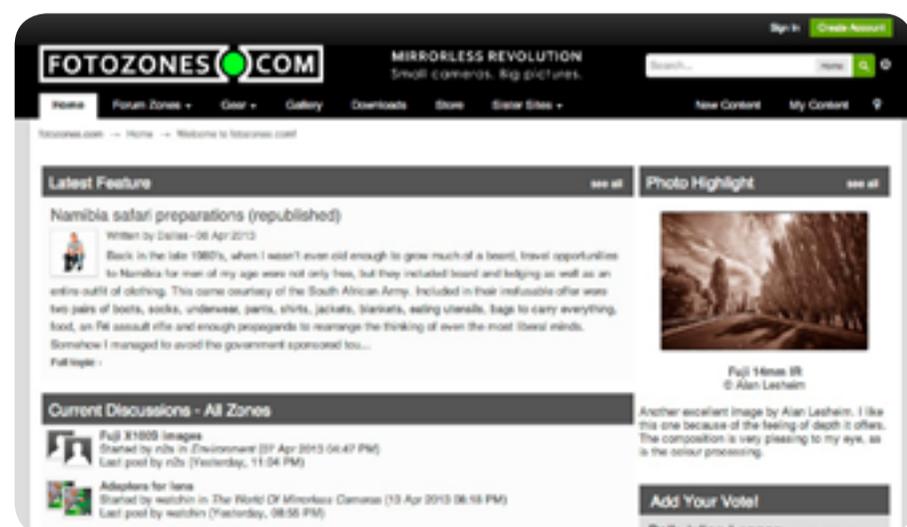
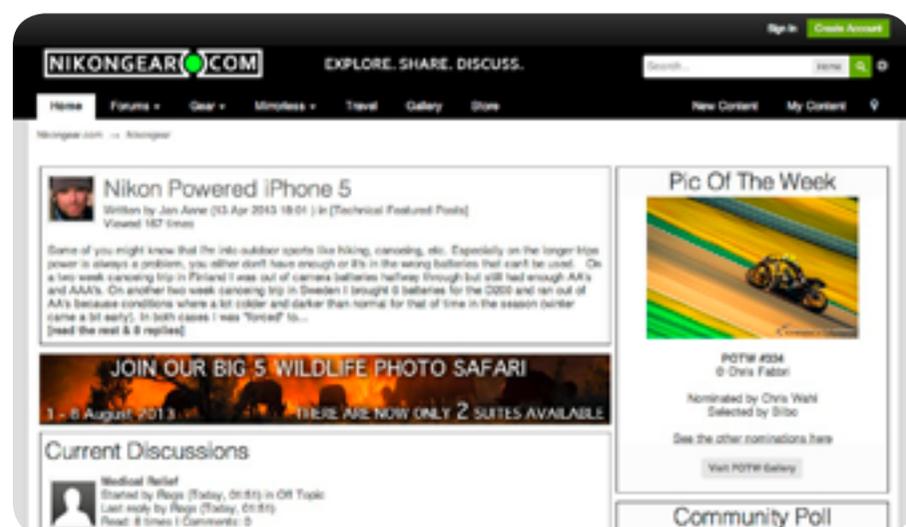
DP: Well, I'm certain you'll get more indigenous members as time goes on! So, maybe you can tell me: you still type in NikonGear.com, but you've made a transition to Fotozones.com.... can you tell me what was involved in that evolution?

Dallas: Ok, NikonGear is obviously a brand

name; one of the problems I've had for a long time with the site is that I don't want it to specifically be about one brand — the forum aspect that is; the Nikon aspect will remain the same. We want to keep that information out there; we want to make sure that people are making informed decisions on what equipment to buy. I also think that keeps the manufacturers on their toes as well; because we don't want the manufacturers to start pushing rubbish that nobody is going to make good use of. So I think in those terms it's great. From the actual branding point of view on the forum side, I've always wanted to have a more generic approach to open discussions. A lot of the content on the website isn't really around Nikon at all...

DP: Well what kind of content is there?

Dallas: Well, a lot of the image sharing that people are doing on there — that's the bulk of the website at the moment. It puts a lot of people off when they see a site called NikonGear.com and they want to share photos and stuff like that an audience that is quite advanced in terms of how they view their photography, and how seriously they take their photography. Also the 'Gear' name... the gear aspect of it is really non-indicative



of what we're trying to accomplish with the site, which is to create an online community that discusses pretty much anything related to photography, not necessarily the gear.

Fotozones is kind of difficult to put into words... it's a branch out. The way I explained it to one of our guests on Safari last year was: if you can imagine NikonGear as being a part of the greater site. So Fotozones.com would be the umbrella site, and within that umbrella we're going to have things like the NikonGear website and I've also introduced another 'zone' specifically for micro 4/3 and mirrorless cameras. We'll have a technical zone, and we've got a travel zone as well which is obviously a huge part of what I'm doing.

DP: Ok, well you've just mentioned the Safaris; maybe you can tell me a little bit about that. Certainly you're living in Africa, and of course there's a big interest in taking Safari there — photographic or otherwise — but how did it end up that you got involved?

Dallas: Well, photography safaris have always been an interesting thing for most

photographers; people want to get out and actually use their cameras for more than just taking pretty snapshots. What better way to do that than to go see really wild African animals? It just made sense for me to do it. So, what we've got are several game reserves in South Africa that are very accessible to me, but the problem of course is that you can have the access to the game reserves, but putting an actual safari together is a little bit more involved than that. There's all sorts of legal aspects; and for that specific reason, I don't personally do any of the organizing. I've contracted a very nice person named Pepe Jones who does all of that for me. She's got all the necessary licenses and qualifications, and a fantastic tour guide. What I do is say, "This is where we want to go... that's what we want to see..." and she organizes everything for us.

DP: Well that sounds great! Now, take me through a typical day on safari with your company...

Dallas: Well it depends on where we're going. The first safari that we did in 2009 was





entirely different than the one that we're doing these days. We did pretty much a road trip from my hometown, Durban, and we drove for nearly 4000km between where I live and Johannesburg. So we took in huge amount of different attractions along the way. That safari was kind of a huge learning curve for me.

The difference between what we're doing now and what we did back then is huge. The safaris for instance in the Sabi Sands that we're putting together, those are really done for a specific purpose. So for instance on the first safari we did everything from landscapes, to wildlife, to cultural stuff; whereas now we're much more specialized. For instance, the 'Big 5' safari happens in a specific area with people who are really specialized and able to provide us with the best opportunities to photograph the big 5.

DP: And for our readers, the big 5 being?

Dallas: The big 5 are the large African animals; so your lions, your leopards, rhinos, elephants, and buffalo. That's what's known as the big 5.

When you go to the park game reserves like Sabi Sands, your access to those animals is, from a photographic point of view, a lot better than you're going to get from the national parks. In the national parks you can't go off-road. So if something is happening 200-300 metres from the road, you've got to sit there and watch from either a pair of binoculars, or obviously using a really, really super telephoto lens. The difference with private game reserves is that if something happens off-road, your rangers are able to take you right there to the action is. So you're literally within an arms-length

distance from what's happening. On the last safari that we did, we came across a lion kill — they had taken down a buffalo — and we were literally 4-5 metres away from where these animals were devouring this buffalo. That's the kind of experience that you just really don't get in a national park.

DP: Oh, I'm sure! What kind of people do you get coming for your safaris?

Dallas: We get great people coming on our safaris! You know one of the most enriching aspects of what I do, is actually meeting people from all over the world who have got one specific common interest, being photography, and being able to show them what Africa has to offer has been really such a fulfilling experience.

DP: Is there a typical age group, or level of fitness that's required?

Dallas: No, not at all. We've had young people that have been in their 20s and early 30s, and most recently we had people that were retired and in their 60s. One of our safari people that have come on every safari we've done is a lady from New York, and she's just recently turned 75! You've never met a more energetic person in your life. On our first safari, she was walking across suspension bridges with us carrying a 200-400mm lens... so yeah, she's got real spirit.

DP: Well, speaking of gear, what would you recommend people bring on your safaris?

Dallas: Well, it depends on what you're after. If you're coming on the Big 5 safari, you



really don't need huge telephoto lenses; but the 20-400mm seems to be the most popular choice for most of the Safarians that come out. Excuse me, just to backtrack, we call them Safarians; that's just a nickname we've come up with for them. A lot of them have arrived with 200-400s; you don't really need anything more than that. A 70-200 is probably more than adequate when you're doing a Big 5 safari, because we get you in so close to the action. Recently, on the last safari, I used a Sigma 120-300mm f/2.8 which I reviewed on the NikonGear website and it's really an excellent lens; I can highly recommend that, because the 200-400mm is out of reach for most people's pocketbooks.

DP: Now are they going to need a tripod, or are there places to mount your gear in, I assume you use Jeeps or Range Rovers?

Dallas: In the private reserves, they use a Land Rover, which is an open vehicle with elevated seating behind the driver's seat. So for instance, you've got three rows of seats, and we only allow 2 people per row. Generally it would be better if you came on your own on safari, because each suite that we sell on safari has a row of seats. So if you're occupying the suite on your own, the entire row of seats is yours, and you can switch from one side to the other. As far as camera support goes, what we've found is the best thing is a monopod. You can clamp that to the bar in front of your seats, but what Sabi Sabi, the place that we stay at have done is mounted arms on those bars that you can swing and attach a Wimberly head on to. So, you've got quite a few options in

terms of mounting the camera and the lens.

DP: Ok, and how long are these safaris typically?

Dallas: The Big 5 safari goes on for a week; and that's an entire week where we drive around in the mornings and in the evenings for two to three hours at a time, and most of the people who have come on that trip have said that a week is long enough. Every day in the bush presents something new and different to wonder about; it's really an incredible experience.

DP: And what are the accommodations like?

Dallas: 5 star all the way!

DP: Fantastic. So you actually go out at night and shoot as well you're saying?

Dallas: Yeah. What we do is, on the last trip we took some time to do star photography, which was really quite a deviation from the normal animal type of photography. It was quite exhilarating because you get off the Land Rover in the middle of nowhere, and you don't know what's around you. So you've obviously got to stick quite close together as a group...

DP: Yeah, I suppose you don't want to get eaten by anything!

Dallas: Yeah, you definitely don't want to become a lion dinner! So yes, we got off the Land Rover, and we walked a little bit to — I can't remember what the name of the tree was that we photographed — but we did painting with light with this tree and the stars in the distance, and got some really fantastic photographs of the



Milky Way. So the opportunities for taking photos are not just limited to the animals; it's a beautiful landscape, the light is wonderful the time of year that we go, and it's really a great place to exercise your vision.

DP: So what time of year is it that you find best?

Dallas: We try to go closer to the winter months now, because that's when the bush is at its thinnest. What would normally happen is that if you're going in the summertime, you'll find that the African bush gets really thick.

DP: So you're in the Southern Hemisphere, so for most of our readers in the Northern, that would mean they'd want to go in their Summer.

Dallas: That's right; you just invert it. The last couple of trips we've done in October,

which is the start of the rainy season. Now the trouble with that is that the rainy season means that you can't really go off-road because they don't like to drive the vehicles... or rather they're not allowed to drive off-road because after a rain it tends to mess things up a bit. So we've now set up a trip this year in the first week of August which is going to be a completely different experience than the October trips that we've done in the past. The tracking is easier because the bush is less thick; it's easier to spot animals; and also, obviously the off-road aspect is a lot more achievable in the Winter months than it is in the Summer months.

DP: Well that's great! So let's say I want to go this year — I don't know if you have all your

spots booked as yet, but let's say you didn't — how much am I looking at in terms of price?

Dallas: Well we price everything in South African Rand, because obviously the providers that we use price themselves in Rand. The trip that we're planning for August, I believe the figure is 40,000 Rand which if I can quickly convert for you, would be just under \$4500 USD, and that's per week.

DP: So that includes your accommodation and meals and such?

Dallas: That would include everything except your airfare out here. So once you step off the airplane in Johannesburg, until the time you get back on the airplane, those costs are all included. Obviously, personal things like laundry, and telephone calls if you haven't got a roaming cell phone, wouldn't be included, but all your accommodation, your drinks,

your meals, your transfers to and from...

DP: So alcohol as well?

Dallas: Certain alcohol, yes. The locally manufactured alcoholic drinks would be available to you, and that would be included in the price. That's the wine, beers, spirits... obviously your Johnny Walker Blue Label is not included in that...

DP: No, but you can't go wrong with South African wine! So, switching gears a little, did you ever think that you'd end up in the photography business?

Dallas: No, I didn't. I've always seen myself as being more of a writer. So what I'm finding now is that I'm writing about photography, which is kind of interesting... at least I've got an angle.

DP: So I guess it took you by a bit of a surprise



that you're actually doing this... and now you're in the travel business as well! What do you think of the whole transition? What was it that you were doing in advance of this?

Dallas: Initially, when I first started working, I was employed in a bank. I worked in the bank for 12 years; but during those 12 years I did a lot of different things. I started off on the clerical side; then I moved to the IT side, where I got involved in programming and learning a little bit more about information technology; but being the kind of person that I am, one thing is never really going to be enough for me. I like to sort of spread myself a little bit thinner over a lot of different subject matters. So I got involved in marketing; and if I could use one word to describe what I'm like, it would be that I'm a marketer. That's kind of the way I see the world. So yeah, I worked at the bank for 12 years; and towards the end of the 12 years, the bank merged with another bank and the corporate culture changed completely. This was kind of my cue to get out of the industry at that time, which I did.

I took a retrenchment package in 2001, and meandered around doing all sorts of arbitrary stuff which didn't really help much. That's when I first became involved in professional photography. I started taking a few commissions and got involved in sports photography at that time. Then the financial aspect of it became quite pressurized. I had a young family, and trying to rely on sports photography to feed a young family that were used to having an executive income from a bank didn't quite pan out the way I'd planned.

So I then got involved in manufacturing. My brother had a business in manufacturing concrete; and they started making concrete paving, and invited me to come and help market it, being the marketer that I am. I did that for five years, and then my brother sold that company and emigrated to Australia. So since then I've been doing more photography and website stuff than ever before, and that's pretty much where I am right now.

DP: Hmm. Now you said that it was difficult with a young family, being a sports photographer... what is it that you think about the state of photography as an industry as it stands today?

Dallas: It's constantly in a state of flux. I don't think there's any kind of formula that you can say works these days for very long. There's always innovations; there's always people coming up with different business plans, and different ideas. The sports side of things obviously required some huge financial input in terms of equipment; and that equipment is also always changing, specifically in the bodies. When I first started, I had a D30 which was a Canon believe it or not, and that is what we were using, but within the space of two or three years there'd been the D60, then the 10D, then a series of 1D models... and the clients were all demanding that everybody have the latest camera. Unfortunately, if you didn't have the money for those cameras, you couldn't really afford or justify those costs, you weren't going to be working. Then you were also looking at 400mm lenses, which in this country cost an absolute fortune...



DP: In this country too, trust me!

Dallas: Well I'm glad we're not alone in that respect! But yeah, I love sports photography, but making a living at it was not something that was viable for me at that time. I've tended to shy away from it, and what I do now is concentrate on corporate photography. That seems to be where the money is these days... the corporates are prepared to pay the prices, so that's what I'm sticking to.

DP: So what are you doing... headshots and portraiture primarily?

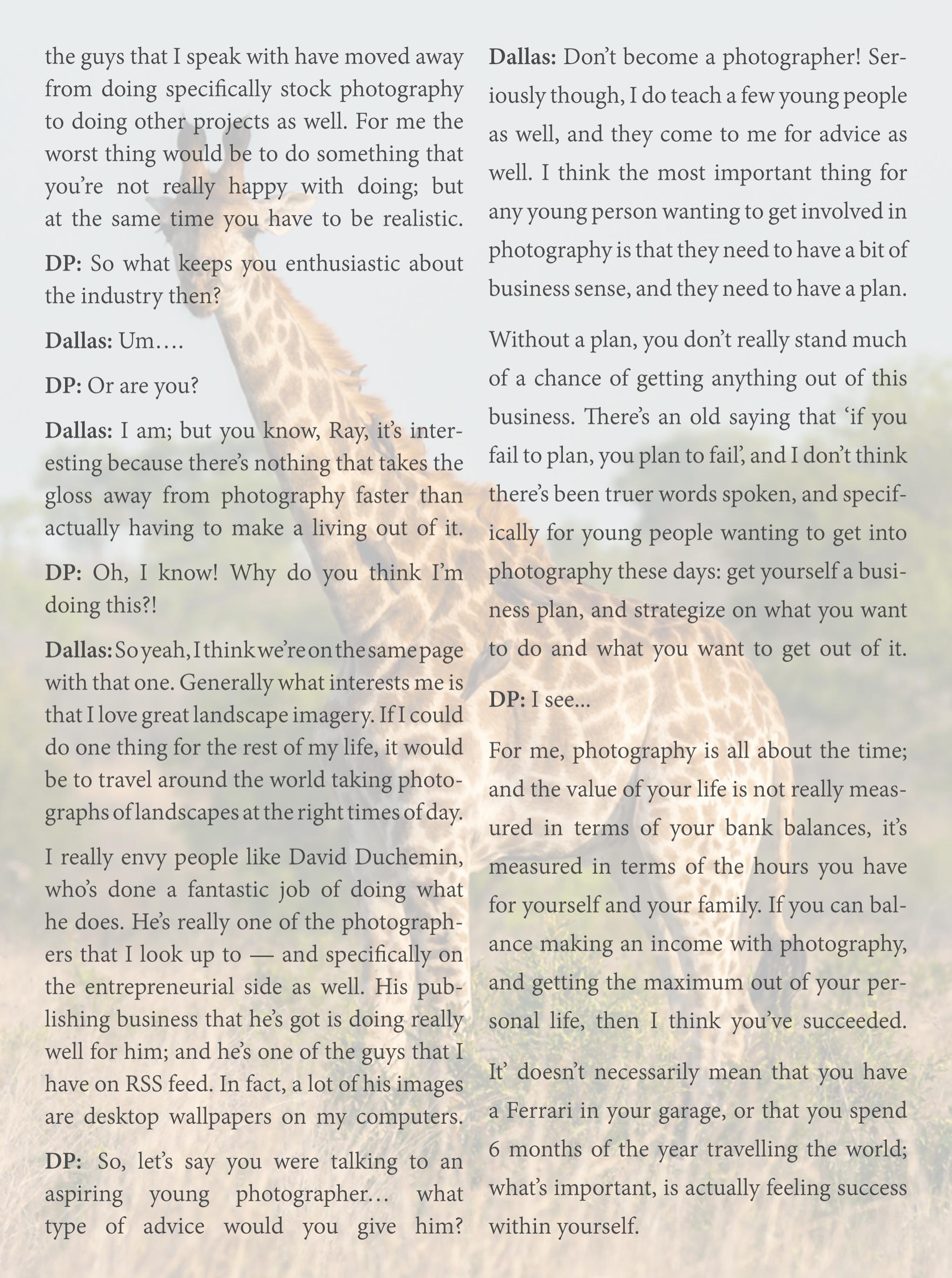
Dallas: It's varied. I do a bit of corporate portraiture, I've done a few reports for companies as well. A lot of the time, what I do is corporate events. So for instance, they have conferences that they need documented, I'll go and do that over two or three days. It's not really the kind of photography that excites photographers; but it pays the bills, and ob-

viously, that's kind of an important aspect.

DP: Well for sure; and as you know this interview is for the Photopreneur column in the magazine, and it seems everybody that I've interviewed thus far for this column, that's been successful in photography lately has been doing a whole bunch of different things to make ends meet. Do you think that's pretty much a prerequisite to be a successful these days?

Dallas: You have to be adaptable. If you're not adapting, you're dying. That's just the sad truth of it. I speak with a lot of photographers on NikonGear.com as well that are professionals, and they say the same thing. With regards to making a living out of stock photography in the past — making really good money — the microstock industry has just killed that. So they've had to adapt and do other things as well. A lot of





the guys that I speak with have moved away from doing specifically stock photography to doing other projects as well. For me the worst thing would be to do something that you're not really happy with doing; but at the same time you have to be realistic.

DP: So what keeps you enthusiastic about the industry then?

Dallas: Um....

DP: Or are you?

Dallas: I am; but you know, Ray, it's interesting because there's nothing that takes the gloss away from photography faster than actually having to make a living out of it.

DP: Oh, I know! Why do you think I'm doing this?!

Dallas: So yeah, I think we're on the same page with that one. Generally what interests me is that I love great landscape imagery. If I could do one thing for the rest of my life, it would be to travel around the world taking photographs of landscapes at the right times of day.

I really envy people like David Duchemin, who's done a fantastic job of doing what he does. He's really one of the photographers that I look up to — and specifically on the entrepreneurial side as well. His publishing business that he's got is doing really well for him; and he's one of the guys that I have on RSS feed. In fact, a lot of his images are desktop wallpapers on my computers.

DP: So, let's say you were talking to an aspiring young photographer... what type of advice would you give him?

Dallas: Don't become a photographer! Seriously though, I do teach a few young people as well, and they come to me for advice as well. I think the most important thing for any young person wanting to get involved in photography is that they need to have a bit of business sense, and they need to have a plan.

Without a plan, you don't really stand much of a chance of getting anything out of this business. There's an old saying that 'if you fail to plan, you plan to fail', and I don't think there's been truer words spoken, and specifically for young people wanting to get into photography these days: get yourself a business plan, and strategize on what you want to do and what you want to get out of it.

DP: I see...

For me, photography is all about the time; and the value of your life is not really measured in terms of your bank balances, it's measured in terms of the hours you have for yourself and your family. If you can balance making an income with photography, and getting the maximum out of your personal life, then I think you've succeeded.

It doesn't necessarily mean that you have a Ferrari in your garage, or that you spend 6 months of the year travelling the world; what's important, is actually feeling success within yourself.

Lr 5

Just as we were about to pull the trigger on publishing this issue, we received a mysterious note from Adobe, inviting us to a press conference in order that we might witness the unveiling of their latest product — which turned out to be Lightroom 5. We postponed publication until Adobe's embargo on releasing information about the application had expired, and are now pleased to provide you with all the juicy details...

Now, as regular readers of DarkroomPro will know, we've always been big fans of Photoshop Lightroom, and indeed use it for all our personal and professional imaging tasks. In our last issue, we highlighted all the advances in the previous version, wondering what they could possibly include in the next. Let's just say we weren't disappointed!

While at present, Lightroom 5 is still only available as a public beta, free for anyone to download and try, it's remarkably stable (we only experienced one issue that caused the program to get stuck on the move and zoom hand tool, which was rectified with no data loss by simply restarting the program), and

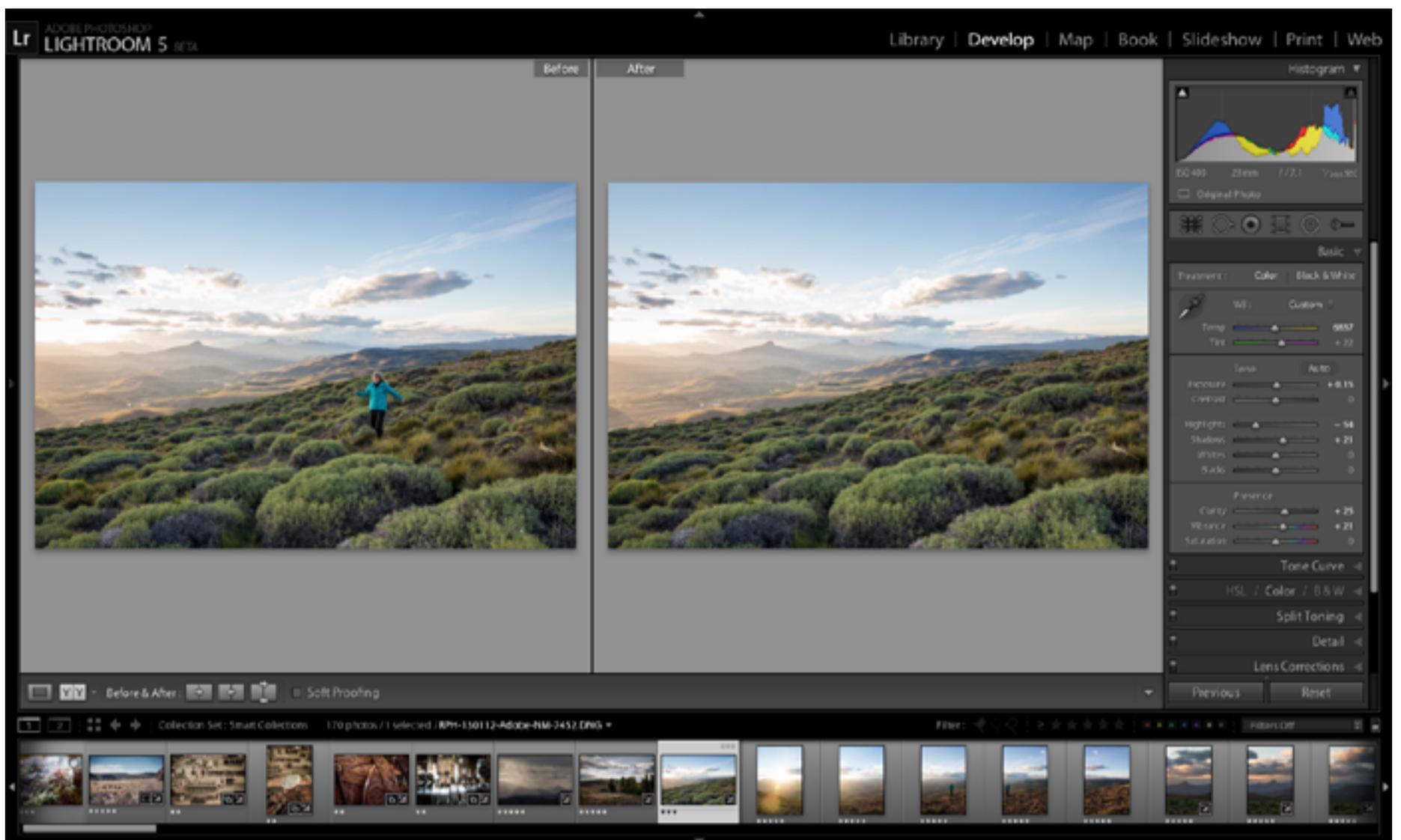
the enhancements are such that we'd be surprised if all current users didn't start using it immediately. Here's a quick rundown of the new features you can expect to find...

RADIAL FILTER

One of the first additions you'll see in the Develop module is a radial filter which permits the user to select a circular or oval area, and then apply any of the effects which were previously only available through an adjustment brush to the entire area outside (the default), or inside that selection. This is a great way to isolate a subject in a manner similar to using vignetting, but is significantly more flexible, as you can utilize sharpness, exposure, clarity etc. in support of that goal. Neat!

ADVANCED HEALING BRUSH

Everyone wants to look great in their photos; and often it's better to give a client a shot that more closely resembles what they *think* they look like, rather than the stark reality revealed by tack-sharp lenses and high



ADVANCED HEALING BRUSH

resolution cameras. The new healing brush affords the user significantly more control over the subtlety of the effect you are trying to achieve in this regard. Better than any wrinkle cream ever invented, use the Advanced Healing Brush to soften the look of fine lines in your portraits, while retaining some semblance of truth in your images.

Further, you can use the brush to completely remove unwanted elements from a photograph as depicted in the example. Performing this task seamlessly in past often required a quick trip to Photoshop, but now that same power resides in Lightroom.

VISUALIZER SPOTS

Dust particles on your sensor and lens are the bane of every photographer. Granted, recent advances in sensor cleaning technology

have lessened this to a certain degree; however, dark spots on our photos, particularly at smaller apertures, are still an unfortunate fact of life. Given these may sometimes only present themselves when viewing an image at 100%, they are often only discovered upon printing. Of course, by that time it's too late, and you've wasted time and money.

In an effort to make our lives easier, Lightroom's new Visualizer Spots feature enables the photographer to quickly and easily detect dust particle spots by inverting the image and dramatically enhancing the contrast — revealing once hidden anomalies with ease. Now it's just a simple matter of a few clicks, some judicious use of the spot removal tool, and hey presto — you're ready for the printer. Great addition.



UPRIGHT

Previous versions of Lightroom featured perspective correction, primarily based on lens profiles that come installed with the application; however, these didn't always prove adequate to the task. Certainly manual perspective correction was also available; however, the interface and controls were a little arcane, and difficult to use for many.

Lightroom 5 includes a new feature named 'Upright' which corrects perspective automatically and rapidly by detecting both horizon and leading lines, and making adjustments based on these measures. Manual corrections are still available however — and sometimes you'll still need them — but the utility is remarkably effective, and will definitely save time and lessen frustration for photographers everywhere!

SMART PREVIEWS

Don't want to clutter up your hard drive by storing your entire image collection locally? Still want to be able to make adjustments to your images while on the go? Smart Previews to the rescue! This new Lightroom feature enables the user to employ a cache of smaller preview photos in support of making alterations, either in metadata or the Develop module. Simply reconnect your external or network drive and all the adjustments you've made will automatically sync up. Easy peasy.

Of course, if you are doing pixel level edits such as sharpening or spot removal etc. — anything you'd normally do while zoomed in to 100% — you'd best wait until you're able to access the actual file, as your alterations will be less accurate when performed on a preview sized image.

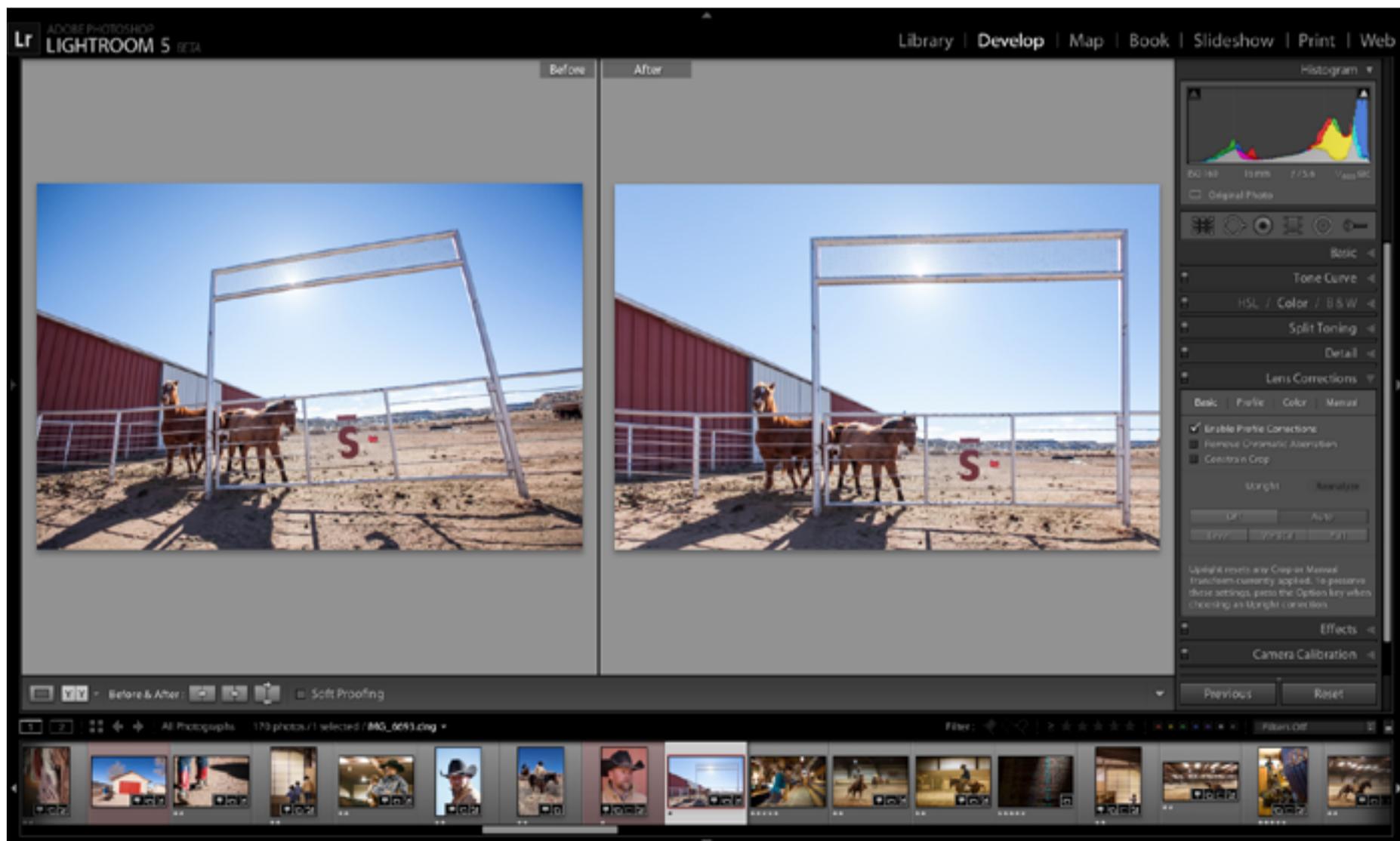
BOOK BENEFITS

Lightroom 4 introduced the Book module, which allowed the photographer to generate excellent quality paper-based publications from the Blurb online publishing service. The included templates definitely simplified the task of whipping together a professional looking coffee table book; however, we creative types are typically demanding of more flexibility than what is afforded in the utilization of canned layouts. Adobe has responded by enabling the user to customize the included templates — empowering photographers to create publications which are truly personal and unique. Hat's off, Adobe!

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Though we haven't had a great deal of time to play with Lightroom 5 beta, we've been really impressed with what we've seen so far. One of the initial things we noticed was

the fact that, despite the 'beta' state of the software, and the attendant lack of optimization that typically characterizes applications at this stage of development, performance was extremely peppy compared to its predecessor — particularly (given the beta won't import catalogues from previous versions) in importing photographs into a new catalogue. The Mac we ran it on for testing was a little underpowered for the previous version, but ran considerably more smoothly in nearly every way for Lightroom 5. The new features, while not revolutionary, are definitely welcome additions, and will go far in streamlining photographer's cataloguing and editing tasks. We certainly look forward to the final release and the inevitable performance tweaks that will surely make this the best version yet!





THE LAB

Once upon a time, photographers shot still images... that was it. It was about capturing the essence of a moment in time — not faithfully duplicating an extended period of it. Nowadays, not only are point-and-shoots coming equipped with basic movie mode, but every pro body now features advanced video capture functionality. Well that's great for journalists, whose ever-expanding job descriptions now include documenting the key moments in a situation as it unfolds via the still frame, *as well as* creating professional-grade video content... but what about the rest of us? For most photographers,

video has taken a distant back seat to single-frame capture; however, now that the tools are being included in our bodies *by default*, many are diving into this new medium head-first.

So off they go and capture hours of raw footage, only to bring it home to discover they're really not sure what to do with it all. Certainly, there are lots of inexpensive video editing packages available out there; but like most photographers, the perfectionist in them demands more of their work than many of these software suites are able to provide.

ENTER ADOBE PREMIERE PRO

Not many years ago, non-linear video editing was the province of professionals

PRO PRO PREMIERE PREMIERE



Improved Interface Options

utilizing software costing thousands of dollars on dedicated specialty video editing computers. That's all gone.

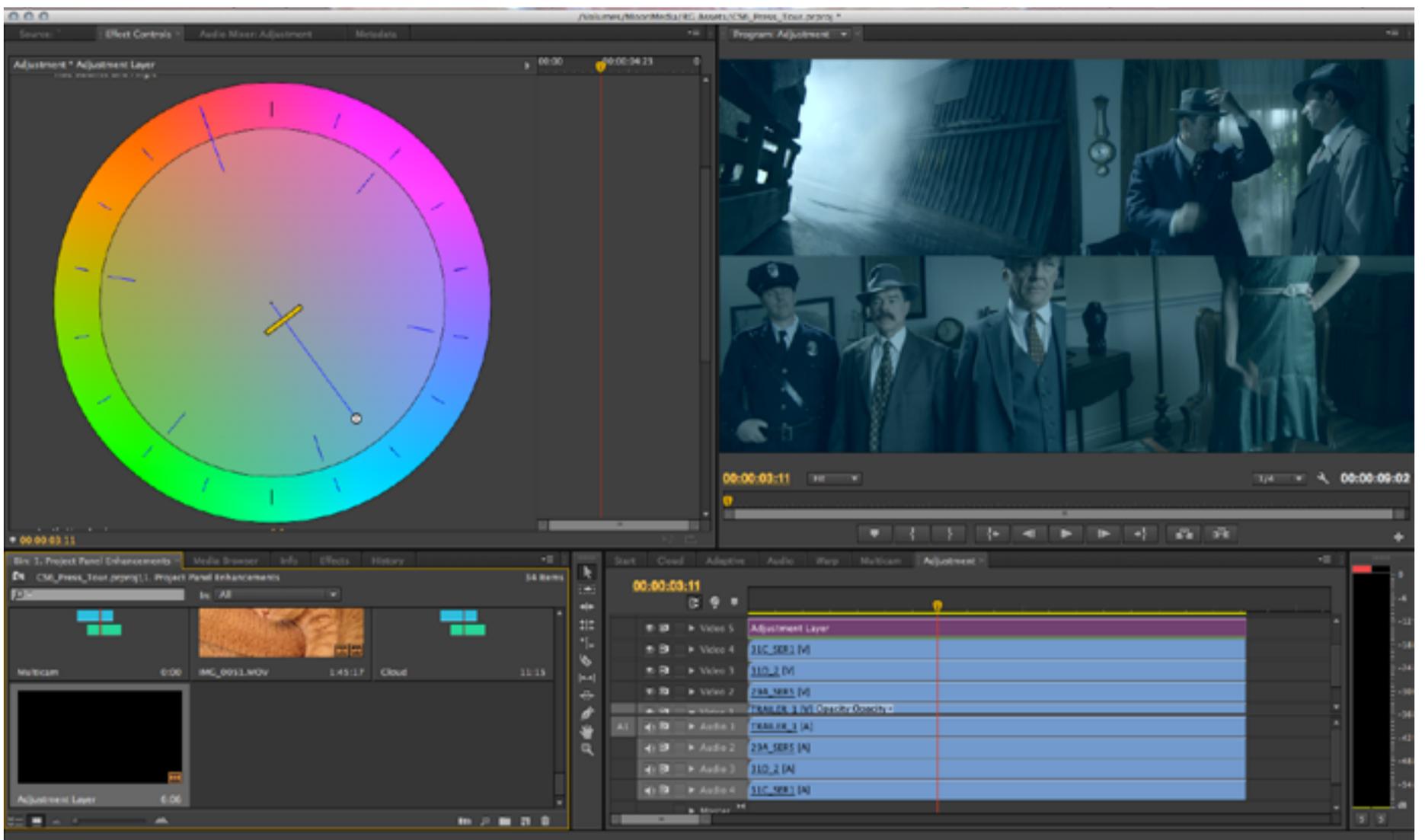
Seeing into the future, Adobe recognized the market's potential and released Premiere in 1991 on the Macintosh. Premiere Pro, its successor, was produced by the company in 2003, and the video editing landscape has never been the same.

With pricing options that now include \$49 a month via Creative Cloud for the *complete* Adobe software collection (Photoshop, Lightroom, Illustrator, InDesign, Premiere Pro and nearly 20 other titles) or \$19.99 for Premiere Pro by itself, professional post production results are now available to most anyone!

WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

Of course Premiere Pro can do everything you'd expect of a non-linear video editing package: trim and splice clips together, create transitions between them, add music and graphics, and export to DVD or digital video file format. Certainly it handles all these tasks with ease, but what else does it offer the photographer interested in video?

For starters, Premiere Pro handles both Nikon and Canon's video formats *natively*... in addition to those of many other manufacturers. This is a huge time saver as no lengthy transcoding conversions are required — just plug it in, and it works. Furthermore, the software integrates seamlessly with Photoshop, allowing you to import your



Adjustment Layers In Action

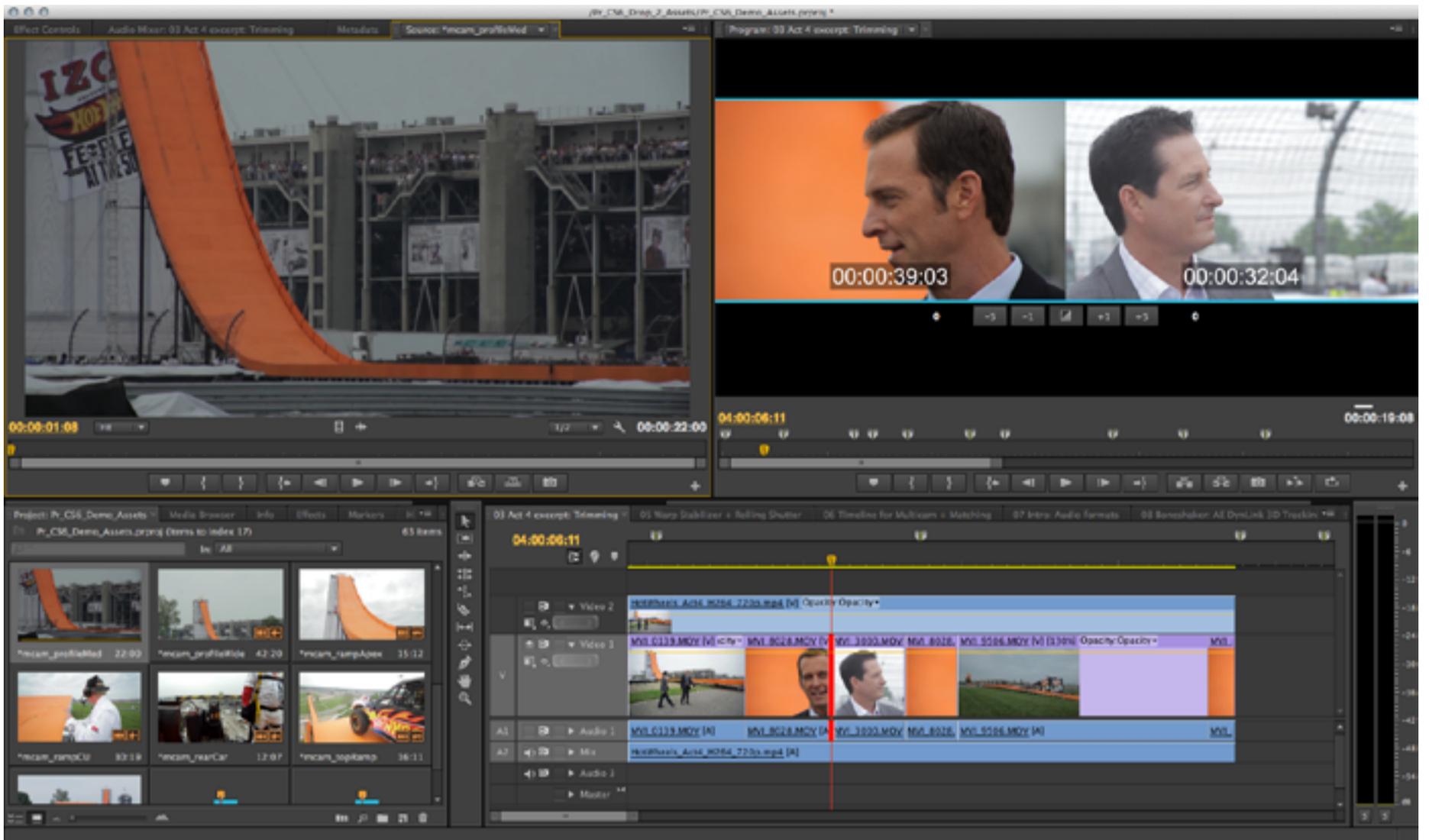
still creations — with all their layered effects intact — into video projects with ease. Not only that, but with Photoshop Extended (included in Creative Cloud), you can do pixel level editing of video — clone, paint, make lens corrections, colour correct etc. — and then import directly to Premiere Pro. What's more, the inclusion of many Photoshop-like controls allow the user to quickly fix their video's audio, exposure or colour problems within the application itself. Everyone knows that audio capture on DSLRs, while having seen significant improvement over the past few years, still, in large, leaves a little to be desired. Managing separately recorded audio sources is a snap in Premiere Pro by way of the Merge Clips feature, which allows you to seamlessly integrate and sync your high quality DSLR

video, with an audio track that actually measures up. The audio controls within the application also provide extreme flexibility in editing this critical component of your digital video project... so even if you're stuck with less than optimal audio, Premiere Pro will allow you to squeeze the best out of it!

Finally, the application utilizes your computer's graphics processor when rendering video by way of its advanced 64 bit Mercury engine, making short work of otherwise time consuming and tedious media preview and encoding. What more could you want? Read on...

CS6 ENHANCEMENTS

Adobe's latest video editing offering certainly wasn't neglected in terms of upgrades in CS6. A sleeker more user-customizable interface



Trimming Clips

features a default 'two-up' workspace which allows you to see source clips and the program monitor simultaneously in an uncluttered UI that provides more room for video display. The monitor panels also feature customizable button layouts, allowing you to reposition or replace any of the transport or default controls with those you'd prefer. Or, for those for whom keyboard shortcuts are the way to go, dispense with them entirely, leaving more room to view your content.

The audio mixer has seen significant improvements as well, including the multichannel look and feel of that which is included in sister application Adobe Audition. Much requested features, such as quickly resetting a fader to zero, are now handled through a simple double click. Additionally more options are present for easily re-

viewing peaks and valleys in your track — with both static and dynamic indicators available by way of a contextual menu. Even little things like automatically scaling the interface elements when you resize the panel are welcome additions... and include intelligence enough to switch between horizontal and vertical orientation depending on how you alter the UI window.

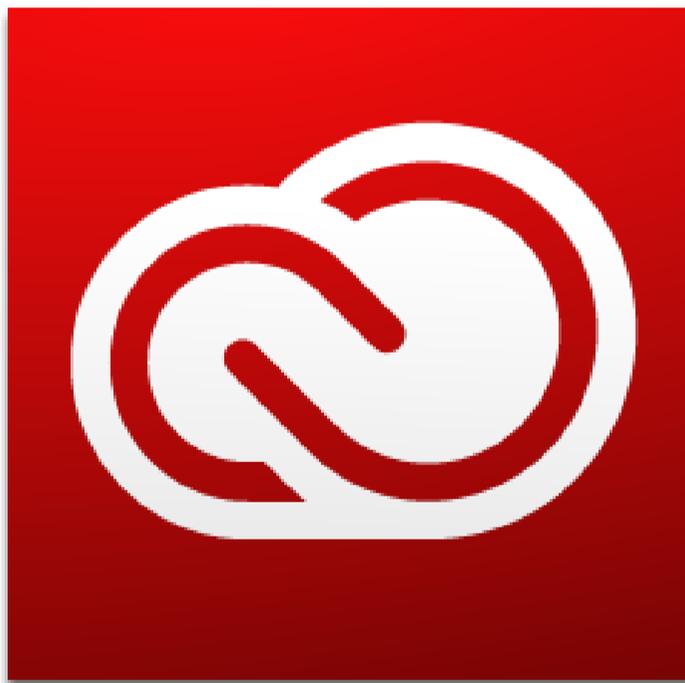
Finding your content has never been easier thanks to new views which are available in the project panel. Featuring 16:9 resizable thumbnails of your video elements, the application allows you to scrub through by simply hovering your cursor over the clip, and even mark In and Out points directly within them for rapid initial editing. Very handy indeed.

The task of trimming clips has seen significant attention in this latest release with the



advent of Trim Mode in the Program Monitor which provides 'two-up' display of the outgoing and incoming clips with buttons for performing common trim and transition functions. Knowing how much time is spent on this task, Adobe has also included more than 10 new convenient keyboard shortcuts directly related to trimming.

Of special interest to DSLR videographers, Adobe has now included Warp Stabilization in Premiere Pro. Now your shaky, handheld video can look like it was shot with a professional rig. Not only smoothing out camera motion within your clips, the Warp Stabilizer removes artifacts *caused* by that motion and processes individual areas of the frame to address parallax, with other modes to correct perspective, scale and rotation, or position. Originally seen in Adobe After Effects CS5.5, this fantastic feature is now resident within Premier, and will save many an aspiring videographer's bacon.



Creative Cloud

When you are ready to deliver your final product, these days it's often the case that it is to be made available in multiple formats. Adobe has you covered there too. With the included Media Encoder, Premiere Pro allows you to select from a variety of presets (or create your own) and run a batch to output them all while you grab a coffee. Also included with the package, Adobe Encore allows for efficient DVD and Blu-ray authoring and even supports delivering the same robust Blu-ray experience over the Internet via a web interface! These and so many more improvements definitely make Premiere Pro CS6 the best release to date, and will be

indeed hard to surpass in their next effort. So whether you're a video neophyte, or a seasoned veteran, there's definitely something in Premiere Pro for you... and given the aggressive price point for the entire Adobe suite of applications via Creative Cloud, why *wouldn't* you try it? Heartily recommended.



Once upon a time in Africa...

You will feel this place with every sense you possess. You will find yourself drawn by its scents, awakened by its sounds, delighted with its tastes, stirred by its touch and entranced by its sights.

This place is Africa. This place is our home and we'd like to show you the very best of what it has to offer your photographic vision. From the Southern tip of Africa to the source of the Nile River in the very heart of the continent, we have crafted specialised photographic safaris for groups and individuals seeking to know the mysteries of Africa. None come away disappointed. Many return again and again.

Because our tour leaders and organisers are based in Southern Africa there are no inflated costs for tutors who come from afar. We don't do workshops but we do offer opportunities to build great friendships. We learn off one another in a relaxed, uncomplicated and informal manner. We offer excellent value for money but we don't make you feel like you're in a Bear Grylls survival situation. You will have full comfort wherever we go.

If you'd like to feel the magic of Africa please visit our website for details of group safaris we offer, or ask us to customise a safari to suit your needs.



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LENS LORE

KEEPING THINGS SHARP...



Since the advent of full-frame digital cameras, my venerable Nikon 28-70mm $f/2.8$ (which originally debuted in 1999) has been the go-to lens for a large portion of my work; and indeed is the glass that lives on my body until such time as another is temporarily swapped in.

So, you may be surprised that I didn't immediately jump on the bandwagon as soon as the updated version, the 24-70mm $f/2.8$ was released by Nikon. Well, for starters, the 28-70 is a brilliant lens, and I wasn't convinced that the 24-70 would be improvement enough to warrant the expenditure of another couple of thousand dollars... so I held off. Sure, there were a couple of extra mm at the wide end (but I have a 17-35 that covers that range beautifully) and it used the new nano coating... but was it really going to be so much better than my old standby? I figured of course I'd eventually switch;



but, I kind of just never got around to it, as I was so happy with my 28-70 — there being so many other enticing photographic products to spend my money on.

I was therefore extremely curious when Nikon shipped us the D600 (also reviewed in this issue) to evaluate and included the 24-70mm $f/2.8$ as part of the package.

This seemed the perfect opportunity to run a head-to-head test to see whether my reluctance was prudent or simply foolish.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

One of the few complaints people seem to have about the old 28-70 has been the fact that it's *big*... and certainly it does come by its nickname 'The Beast' honestly. Frankly the size never bothered me, but I was surprised to see that despite reviews I'd read about the 24-70 being so much more compact, it was a slight 35 grams lighter (at 900g), and only of marginally less circumference.

So for me, there's really little difference here. Of course, the next most obvious difference was the lack of an aperture ring on the 24-70, it being a G lens. Well, that's fine for most folks who have only modern equipment; however, I own a few older film bodies that my 28-70 works fine on... and it's simply not an option to mount this new lens on my old gear. Is that a showstopper for me? Definitely not. How often do I shoot film anymore... once or twice a year? If that. Your own circumstances will obviously dictate whether this is problematic for you.

RUN DOWN

Like its older brother, the 24-70 features 15 lens elements in 11 groups, with a 9 bladed diaphragm for rounder bokeh, supporting apertures from 2.8 through 22. However, the the 24-70 also sports Nano Crystal Coating (more on this below), a closer focusing distance of 15 inches versus the 28-70's 27.6, and better dust/weather sealing. Additionally, the 24-70 includes three aspherical elements, unlike its predecessor's one — improving resistance to wide-angle distortion and other types of lens aberration.

IN PRACTICE

For testing the two lenses head-to-head, we decided to affix them to a well tested and reliable D3 in turn, using a tripod and cable release to ensure consistency. What we used for our initial subject matter was a stone wall in order to measure corner sharpness at various apertures. This would allow us to have enough variability in the sur-

face to adequately distinguish detail differences between the lenses across the range. Since the advent of digital full-frame, vignetting has again become a factor to consider, and of course the 24-70 and 28-70 perform about equally well here, with noticeable effects from wide open through about $f/5.6$. Since this focal length is often used in portraiture however (where you might actually want to add vignette in the first place), it certainly isn't a primary concern... and as most lenses exhibit this quality, isn't something you can get away from anyway — unless you select DX mode.

The 24-70 seems to render images slightly warmer than the 28-70, but in most situations the effect is pleasing and of course can be adjusted in post if need be.





SHARPNESS

For me the key metric that would be the deciding factor on whether I would purchase the 24-70 is definitely sharpness. As mentioned, I have been very happy with the 28-70 in this regard and was a little skeptical as to whether the 24-70 would outperform it to such a degree as to make a purchase decision obvious.

Well, I was certainly surprised with the results. Not only did the 24-70 best its older sibling in corner and edge sharpness wide open, but centre sharpness as well... and this is with the latter lens having had the benefit of micro-tuning afforded by the D3. This isn't to say that the 24-70's corners are tack-sharp... indeed, there are issues through about $f/4$. However, they are definitely sharper than the 28-70's; and what I thought was a sharp centre, wide open on the 28-70, turned out not to be the case when compared to its younger brother.

Stopped down to $f/3.2$ however, the centre sharpness differences began to disappear — though the 24-70 was *as sharp* at $f/2.8$ as the 28-70 was at $f/3.2$! The 24-70's area of corner softness was also smaller than that of the 28-70 — a welcome surprise.

NANO CRYSTAL COATING

Initially introduced on the Nikon 14-24mm $f/2.8$ ultra-wide zoom, the Nano Crystal Coating is also featured on the 24-70. Designed to reduce ghosting and flare (a result of reflections inside the lens barrel when light enters diagonally), this coating will likely be incorporated into all future pro lenses that feature wide-angle focal lengths.

According to Tsuyoshi Murata, one of the coating's primary developers, “The word “nano” denotes one billionth. Although the term evokes an image of hardness and precision, the reality is completely the opposite. The actual grains that comprise the material are extremely small nano particles which are arranged in a spongy construction, rather than being tightly arrayed. This coarse structure—which is in complete contrast to the densely packed composition of existing coatings—is a major strong point of the material.”

Ok, well, that's interesting; but what does it mean for photographers? We tried to purposely create flare in several images using the 24-70, but never achieved

anything like what we were able to pull off with the 28-70. The bottom line? This stuff works. Of course, if you are trying to create flare for artistic reasons, this mightn't be ideal... but hey, isn't that what Photoshop filters are for?! (just kidding).

Comes
with Case &
Hood

CONCLUSION

The Nikkor 24-70mm $f/2.8G$ ED is better in nearly every conceivable way than its predecessor, the 28-70:

- 4mm wider
- Sharper both in corner/edge and centre areas wide open
- Lighter
- Closer focusing
- Better flare and ghost resistance
- More weather/dust resistant

Its only weakness is the lack of aperture ring — which as mentioned, isn't at all an issue for folks who aren't interested in using it on very old gear.

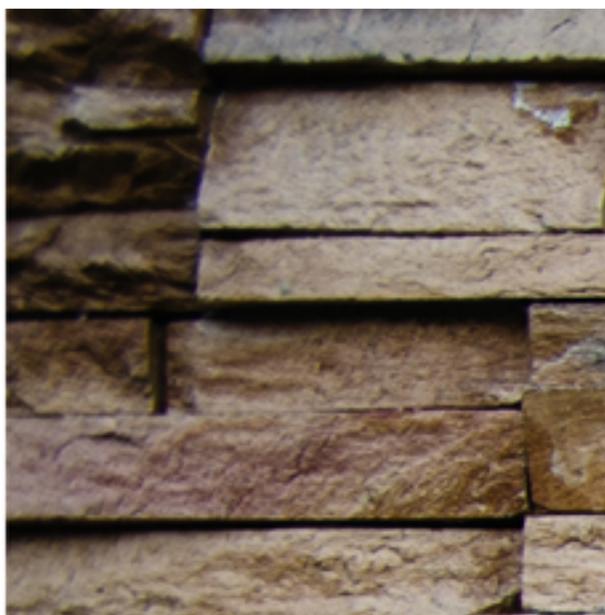
So will a new 24-70 sneak its way into my camera bag in the near future? Definitely.



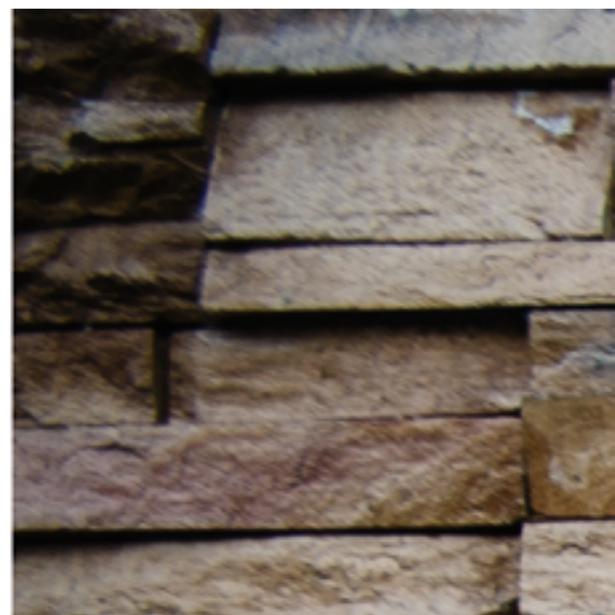
CORNER SHARPNESS



24-70@24MM&F/2.8



24-70@28MM&F/2.8



28-70@28MM&F/2.8

SECRETS

Working With Models



There comes a time in most photographers' lives when shooting candid photos of friends and family, still life, landscapes, and the neighbourhood squirrel loses its allure. For many, the answer to photographic ennui is working with live models in a controlled setting — be it the studio, or a location shoot. Few photographic situations generate the same level of engagement, and inspire as much creativity as model shoots; so it's easy to see why so many photographers are drawn to them. However, this path isn't the easiest to tread; and there are definitely some tips that will help ease your transition into this new and exciting realm.

WHERE TO BEGIN?

Not all of us regularly associate with 'the beautiful people,' and as a result, mightn't have ready access to ideal photographic subjects. After all, are you really going to ask Aunt Mabel to pose in her bikini in order that you might gain some portfolio-worthy imagery for your Glamour section? Probably not. So, what to do?

Fortunately, as with most things these days, the Internet has your answer. There are several sites specifically dedicated to connecting photographers with models — from the aspiring to professional in both categories. Probably the largest among these is Model-Mayhem.com. This site enables the user to search for models in a specific geographical location, and refine your query by a range of

variables including gender, compensation requirement, hair and eye colour, measurements, types of shoot, and so on. With around 3/4 of a million members, you'll be surprised at just how many you'll find around you!

If you're just starting out, you may discover that working with new models is probably the way to go. Not only will they likely be more patient with you as you fumble through your initial shoots (and fumble you will), but they will often agree to exchange their time for prints and digital copies of your shoot to use in their portfolios. In fact, Model-Mayhem.com allows you to search specifically on these criteria. Additionally, the site allows you to find area makeup artists, hair stylists, body painters, clothing designers, and event planners — among many others.

ON WITH THE SHOW

Ok, so you've found a model and have scheduled a shoot, what now? The first thing to keep in mind is *be prepared!* Don't waste your model's time setting up lights and fiddling around with backgrounds and reflectors etc.; know what you want to capture in the session, and prepare accordingly. If you haven't mastered basic posing, spend some time researching in advance. There's plenty of source material to be found in books or on the Internet [Ed: We'll be covering this topic extensively in our next issue, so stay tuned!]. Learn exactly what you want to achieve, and be prepared to explain that to your subject. Spend some time with your model before you begin shooting, clarifying and reinforcing what your objectives are for the session

(you should have already briefly explained these within the context of your initial contact), and ask whether they have any questions about what you're proposing to capture. Don't try to come off as a seasoned pro if this is one of your initial attempts at working with models. Being honest in this regard is key, as otherwise you are going to look like a jackass — inexperience shows, even to those who are inexperienced themselves. Following these guidelines will help establish rapport and trust — ultimately leading to better photographs, as your model will be more relaxed and poses will seem less forced.

Further, provide a private area where your model may attend to wardrobe changes, hair and makeup touchups, and so forth, ensuring you show them where everything is. If you aren't employing a makeup artist and



hair stylist, don't assume your model will have thought to bring along items required to touchup or alter their look. Inform them in advance of what you need them to supply. It's a good idea to prepare for contingencies and have some basic hair and makeup products on-hand should your model be forgetful.

ACTION!...?

So now your model is standing in front of the lens and you're all ready to go — do you shout 'action' and let the magic begin? No. Unless you're shooting a supermodel who is only down for giving you a few practiced moves from their repertoire (and if you are, why are you wasting your time reading this article?!), your subject needs direction.

Establish the parameters of the relationship right away. Certainly, what is produced at the end of the day is the result of a collaborative effort between you and the model; however, *you* are in charge. Don't expect your model to put on a performance without being told what exactly it is you are looking for. The experienced subject will more ably provide you with flattering poses, transitioning between them with ease; while those less so, require specificity, and may not be as cognizant of how best to showcase their talent within the context of your shoot. So take charge — not in an abrasive or domineering manner, but firmly, and with a smile.

Often it is helpful to mirror what it is you are looking for from your model in an effort to coax the best from your subject. So, if you want broad smiles, reflect that in your demeanour; should you require a

more serious expression, ensure the one on *your* face represents that. Your model will subconsciously pick up on these cues and their output will be stronger, and more in line with your desired result.

Constantly provide feedback (beyond what you're asking of them in terms of poses) as the shoot progresses: 'that's great!, a little bigger, that's perfect — give me some more of that', and so on. Models, especially new ones, need to feel that they're rising to the occasion; and your feedback will not only move the process along, but result in a significantly better performance from your subject.

THE BIG QUESTION

Sometimes (actually quite often with new models), you'll find that despite your best efforts at verbally communicating a desired pose, it just isn't getting across. Seemingly, the easiest solution to this dilemma would be to simply physically move the model into the correct position; however, this may prove problematic.

There are many advocates of the 'Never Touch the Model!' approach to studio and location shoots; so should you subscribe to this philosophy? As with most things in life, situations are seldom so black and white as to apply blanket maxims to them. After all, in a studio situation, time is very often money, and if yours is being wasted, you need to rectify that difficulty as expeditiously as possible. So let's just say, 'it depends'.

Ideally, you mightn't have to physically interact with your subject, but how often



are conditions ideal? The trick is knowing how and when to do it. If you've spent over a minute trying to verbally indicate your desired pose on more than one occasion during a shoot, it may be time to consider assisting the subject physically.

If you've established some rapport with your model, the touch barrier might be easier to transcend — ensure you've addressed this at the outset as much as possible. Approach them with a confident demeanour and simply ask 'May I...?' while indicating with your body language that you wish to reposition them. Their physical reaction will immediately let you know if it's ok to proceed. Of course, if they say 'no', that's it, and it's time to pursue other options. However, even if they say 'yes', gauge whether to continue from their body language. If they appear to have a negative reaction to your request despite giving you permission, work to reassure them, and apologize for not being able to explain what you want from them more effectively.

Take the responsibility for the situation, not dumping the communication failure on

them. The last thing you want your model to feel is self-conscious as a result of not being successful in responding to your requests, as this will be reflected in the subsequent shots.

Breaking the touch barrier is far easier for female photographers than their male counterparts; however, adhering to the above will hopefully ease the transition should the situation demand. Once you've moved beyond this point, touch can actually enhance rapport in many cases... so long as you don't move from being perceived as acting professionally to creepy (often a fine line).

A NEW WORLD

As you gain familiarity and proficiency in working with models, you'll either find it an incredibly exciting and fulfilling experience, or a tedious and stressful occupation, depending on the kind of person you are — live model photography isn't for everyone. However, for those wired for it, entirely new realms are opened for discovery, and your journey will be filled with experiences you've yet to imagine. Time to take the first step...



photoPhilosophy

They say ‘the *best* camera is the one you have with you’; and certainly given the ubiquity of smartphones, very frequently that role is filled by them. After all, how often do you tote your DSLR to the supermarket, or the coffee shop...? Truth be told, there are innumerable photographic opportunities to be found in venues wherein it mightn’t be either practical, or appropriate to lug an indiscreet camera body and accompanying glassware.

THE DILEMMA

Unfortunately, up until very recently, the inherent quality of imagery obtained from these devices left significant room for improvement. So, while you could certainly capture scenes from locations and situations you mightn’t be able to otherwise, what you were left with at the end of the day was of little use, beyond that of a memory aid. Nowadays, most smartphones feature multi-megapixel sensors backed by an engineer’s cauldron of software wizardry, which enables heretofore impossible image quality

to be rendered from these tiny devices. That’s not to say there’s any competition when compared to a DSLR; however, smartphones are definitely giving point-and-shoots a run for their money. In fact, the market for this latter category has contracted so dramatically over recent years, we’d be surprised to see these cameras on store shelves in the long term.

An unfortunate side-effect of the smartphone-driven photography explosion however has been the increased tolerance for mediocrity. After all, if you see 100 photos a day (and with social media’s burgeoning influence this is very often a low estimate), and 98 of them are crap, your perception of what constitutes ‘good’ is reframed (no pun intended). This problem is also to a lesser degree expressed in the stock photo market, where ‘good enough’ crowds out ‘great’, by virtue of the new price, versus quality driven model.

So, what are we left with? We have incredibly powerful devices, which are frankly capable of producing relatively decent imagery, yet for the most part don’t. Why? This failure is primarily a result of user error.

WHAT TO DO?

The most common generator of photographic rubbish as applies to smartphones is not understanding the limitations of one's equipment. To be honest, despite all the advances touted above, your Android or iOS device is pretty terrible at capturing images in low light conditions. Certainly you may employ the built-in flash to some effect (though the artificiality generally achieved via its utilization more often than not reduces the image's utility), just don't expect miracles from a lens and sensor the size of a nail head. Motion blur, unacceptable noise levels, and camera shake are such prevalent features of smartphone photography that you'd think their presence was due to artistic decisions made by the photographer; however, of course, this definitely isn't the case.

Further, even in situations that provide adequate light, the mechanism whereby the shutter is released leads to a deterioration of image quality, due to the fact that some measure of camera shake is almost always introduced by the user tapping on the screen. Some smartphone manufacturers have elected to address this by enabling the user to depress the shutter by way of the mechanical buttons located along the edges of their devices — though few mobile photographers seem to be aware of this feature's existence. We'd recommend you *always* use the hardware buttons, as not only will it reduce camera shake, but it will allow you to more effectively frame the shot by virtue of the fact that your fingers are no longer in the way!



Acceptance of, and working within your smartphone's limitations will definitely go far toward your production of actually usable imagery; however, there are a variety of techniques you can employ to improve your odds. Using a support for your phone is a sure-fire way of enhancing image quality, and given the size of the devices in question, your options



for what to employ in this capacity are substantial indeed. A table, bean bag, counter top... pretty much anything that is stable and provides a relatively flat surface can serve your objective of minimizing camera shake. There are also miniature tripods available, specifically designed for smartphones which may prove effective. We feel however, that these devices are of limited value. If you are going to be lugging around a miniature tripod, why not just bring a DSLR instead?

WHO CARES?

For some reason, many people tend to shoot mobile generated images with reckless abandon -- throwing all basic photographic principles to the wind. They shoot right into the sun, pay no attention to composition, disregard shadows in the scene, fire flashes directly into mirrors... and then post the results directly to social media,

making me want to take a scrub brush to my eyeballs upon viewing these digital disasters. If folks would simply follow traditional photography precepts, and play to the *strengths* of their devices, the resulting imagery would be substantially improved.

For example, the main advantage mobile device cameras have over their bulkier DSLR cousins is flexibility in framing due to their extremely lightweight and diminutive designs. Capitalize on this! Shooting from the bizarre angles and tight spaces afforded the smartphone photographer by virtue of their device's form factor provides opportunities for increased tension, and perspectives which definitely add interest to your images.

I also find myself pulling out what little hair I have left when I see a photo whose subject matter is obvious, yet occupies a tiny fraction of the frame — which is otherwise

filled with uninteresting garbage. Zoom with your feet! No camera phones (none that we've heard of anyway) feature optical zoom — and digital zoom is best avoided if at all possible, as this results in a pixelated, noisy mess for the most part. As a result, you'll have to get closer to the action with your body instead. Used in conjunction with the framing possibilities afforded the mobile photographer as described above, your results will certainly show improvement.

Another common feature of photographs shot on smartphones is that they are either over-processed, or not processed enough. The former category is generally a result of the ubiquitous filter factory type of applications (Snapseed, Instagram, Hipstamatic etc.) which allow you to apply canned effects to your shots — making them look like everyone else's hamfisted attempt at 'being creative', while those that fall into the latter are straight-out-of-the-camera images that could benefit from a little tweaking.

We'd recommend avoiding most filters if you can, unless you have a very specific result in mind before you take the shot. Black and white or split-tone images for instance are good examples of times you may wish to employ a software filter; but for the most part, we find the effects lack subtlety, and are used as a digital crutch to prop up mediocre photography.

On the other end of the spectrum, many smartphones produce dull, flat looking images by default, which could benefit from a little time in an editor. Often these photos

simply need a curves adjustment and a little sharpening; while sometimes pixel-level edits are demanded... the difference being, these are educated choices, not the random result of pressing a filter button in an app.

IN THE END

These days, the path of least resistance is so well trodden, that with increasing regularity it's seen as the only viable trail upon which to venture. Engineers labour feverishly in an effort to pare 'It's as easy as 1-2-3!' down a couple of notches in complexity. Fast food, reality television, microwave ovens, headline news, iPhoneography... there are *so many* examples of where technology, in conjunction with the demands of our frenetic pace of life, have lead us to elect the facile and convenient, over the superior. To say society and culture suffer as a result, is a gross understatement.

Breadth of knowledge is reduced, culture is homogenized, human health diminishes, choice is limited, and industry standards spiral downward to cater to the lowest common denominator — wherein profit lies.

The trick, in the end, is knowing that selecting the thornier of two paths diverging in a wood typically yields better and more interesting results, and therefore should more often than not lead to your destination; however, for those occasions wherein one finds oneself lacking the requisite hiking boots, making the most of opportunities afforded by the groomed thoroughfare via careful, versus casual attention to craft, will make all the difference.

Why Are My Photos Blurry?!@#!!

It seems inevitable: you frame the perfect shot, catching the action just right, and depress the shutter release... quickly chimp the photo on the rear LCD... 'nailed it!'... only to discover upon loading the image up on your computer that the photo is blurry! A torrent of expletives ensues (at least among my ornery aspiring photog friends), and a once in a lifetime moment is consigned to the digital dustbin.

WHAT GIVES?

There are three primary factors responsible for image blur: blown focus, camera shake, and inadequate shutter speed. Let's cover these each in turn, exploring the causes and detailing appropriate remedies you may apply to circumvent these difficulties.

BLOWN FOCUS

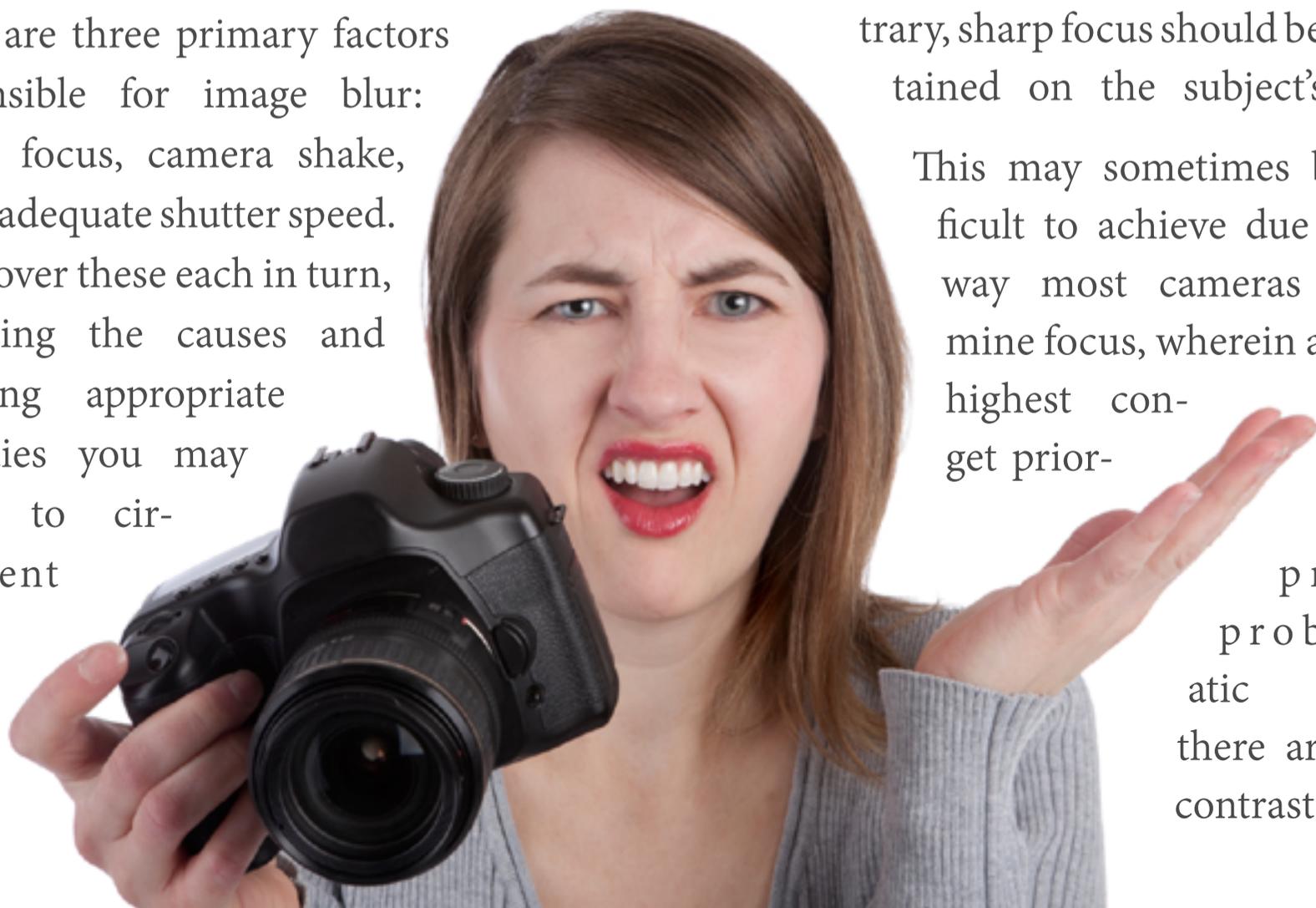
On the surface this one seems the most obvious; after all, a shot is either in focus or not, right? Well, not exactly. *Something* is generally in focus, just not necessarily the correct subject, or location *on* that subject.

Novice photographers may often snap a portrait which at first seems fine, and yet upon detailed inspection, discover that 'something's not quite right'. What they mightn't realize at first is that focal point for portraiture is crucial; and unless an unusual artistic

decision has been made to the contrary, sharp focus should be maintained on the subject's eyes.

This may sometimes be difficult to achieve due to the way most cameras determine focus, wherein areas of highest contrast get prior-

ity. This proves problematic when there are high contrast areas





in-frame which don't correspond to your desired focal point... particularly so should you be using a shallow depth of field. A typical example of this might be shooting at $f/1.4$ close in on a subject wearing glasses. The frame of the glasses grab focus leaving the eye behind slightly out.

So what to do? Well, if your subject is relatively stationary, you can always switch to manual focus and using your depth of field preview (assuming your camera has this feature), gauge whether your desired focal point is indeed in-focus. If the action is fast enough to preclude manual focus in an accurate manner, you may wish to employ your body's best sensors (typically cross type) which are generally found clustered in the centre of your frame. Many bodies also feature modes that will employ multiple cross sensors in support of each other; failing this however, keep in mind that your camera will always focus best using the focal point

located in the very centre of your viewfinder. So you might want to focus using this sensor, and recompose accordingly. Finally, you may wish to increase your depth of field in order to obtain a wider margin of safety around your desired focal point.

On my main body, I have the button in the centre of the multi-directional switch set to zoom to 100% at the focal point, which allows me to instantly evaluate whether I've indeed nailed it, or need to reshoot. This however doesn't help if you've missed a shot that you can't repeat... so how do you deal with that?

Some images are simply too far gone in terms of blown focus and are destined to be deleted. If you've narrowly missed however, there are a few things you can do to save the photograph. First, when sharpening the overall image in post, you can choose a significant amount, perhaps nearing 100%, and use a larger radius, say 1.6,

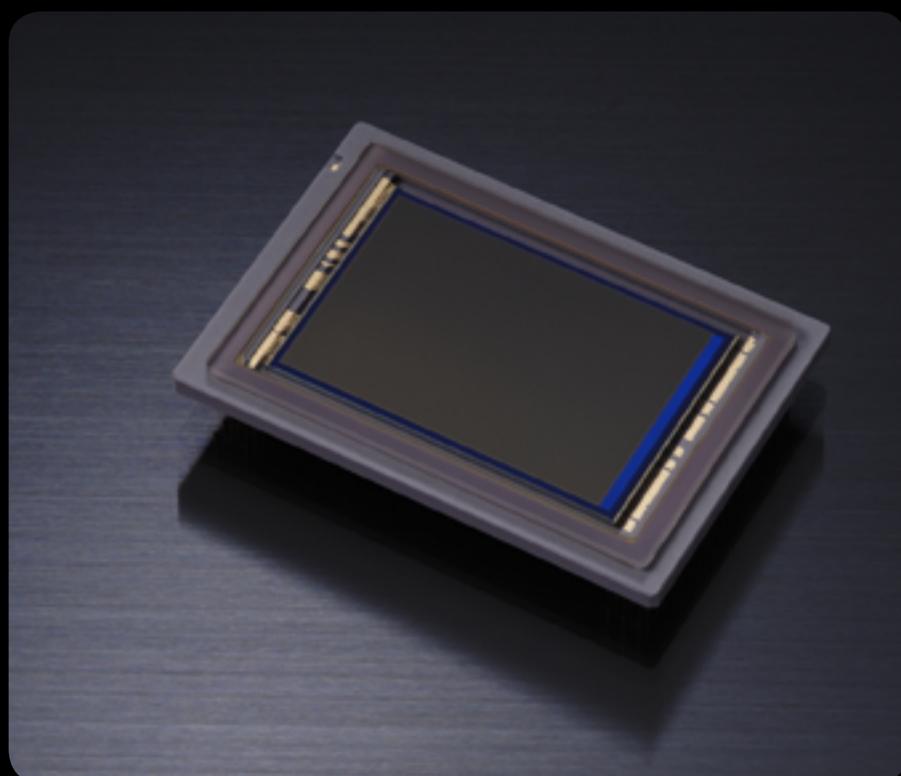
which may prove enough to create a usable image. Using a non-destructive RAW editor like Adobe Lightroom or Apple Aperture will allow you to play with the sharpening settings as much as you like without ruining the underlying image.

Further, you may elect to undertake area specific sharpening activities within a pixel-level editor like Adobe Photoshop, or by using an adjustment brush set to sharpening in Lightroom, paying particular attention to the eyes. Finally, reducing the size of an image utilizing the bicubic sharper method will have the effect of sharpening the entire image up. Of course this is a last resort, given you really don't want to reduce the resolution of your files if you can help it.

CAMERA SHAKE

While you might expect to experience it having just consumed an entire pot of coffee, or perhaps bathing with your toaster, camera shake will still ruin photos in even the most steady of hands, should you not dial your settings in appropriately. Even nearly imperceptible motions on the part of the photographer will result in image blur should you not solve the focal length versus shutter speed equation in advance of taking the shot... particularly in dimly lit conditions.

Fortunately, this equation doesn't require an doctorate in physics to comprehend. In full-frame cameras it is simply this: ensure your shutter speed at least equals, or (preferably) exceeds your focal length. For example, if you are shooting at 50mm, make sure your shutter speed is at least 1/50th of a second. This



rule however gets a little more complicated in non-full-frame cameras that utilize smaller sensors. You have to take into account the 'crop factor' inherent to your particular unit — 1.5 in most APS-C sensors, though 1.6 in Canon's. So in Nikon's case, in the above example, you'd multiply 50x1.5 and require a shutter speed of at least 1/75 of a second.

Another wrinkle in the above concerns high megapixel sensors which are more sensitive to the effects of camera shake due to the increased number of photosites crammed into the same physical area as cameras with significantly less of them. It's a good idea to treat these in the same manner as you would a cropped sensor, even if they are full-frame.

All this aside, ultimately, you want as high a shutter speed as you can achieve which will provide a comfortable safety margin above the calculated minimum, while still accomplishing your artistic objectives in terms of depth of field and framing.

So the next obvious question would be 'how do I achieve this?'. Well you have several options to reduce camera shake,

each typically involving tradeoffs. You have only so many photons to work with, and if your shutter speed is too low as a result, you can do one of five things:

- Increase the number of photons in the scene — i.e. increase the amount of available light by way of flash or some other means. The tradeoff here is the potential for loss of that special ambiance seemingly reserved for natural light captures. A proficient photographer will however be able to balance natural and artificial light in such a manner as to significantly reduce this effect. Often, adding light is the best solution to camera shake.
- Widen your aperture — i.e. if you are shooting at $f/5$, perhaps move to $f/4$ or $f/3.2$. This will definitely increase your shutter speed; however, the tradeoff is the loss of depth of field... which may or may not be acceptable, depending on your subject matter. I tend to use this option far more often than flash, as I definitely prefer working with natural light — your mileage may vary.
- Increase your ISO. This has a similar effect to turning up the volume knob on an audio amplifier — with similar negative effects should you go too far: noise. In an audio setting this is expressed in distortion; while in photography your images become grainier as you push your ISO further up the scale. Fortunately, in recent years, the major camera manufacturers have made significant gains in handling of noise at high ISOs, and so this is often



the go-to solution for photographers who don't want to compromise on depth of field or natural light. You can however, definitely go too far with ISO; and we've seen many a potentially great image ruined by uncontrolled noise, when another solution might have been more wisely selected.

- Use a tripod! You can often get away with significantly lower shutter speeds by use of a good camera support. Tripods in conjunction with the 'mirror up' setting, and a cable will enable the photographer to eliminate many of the inherent difficulties of shutter speed — particularly with longer lenses. Of course the tradeoff here is mobility; though this may be partially mitigated by instead using

a monopod, which has its own negative in that it's not as stable as a tripod.

- Utilize lenses with built-in image stabilization or vibration reduction (Canon and Nikon IS and VR respectively). With varying degrees of efficacy, these lenses are designed to assist the photographer in conditions that require a normally lower than desired shutter speed for the focal length employed. These lenses are indeed effective in pushing the limits, but you're



completely trusting in the technology here; and if you do this exclusively, you're bound to run into problems eventually.

INADEQUATE SHUTTER SPEED

Often some elements of your image are blur free, while others exhibit classic motion blur. Certainly this may be an artistic choice made by the photographer; though more often than not, it's simply an error resulting from inadequate shutter speed selection.

Frequently this occurs in low light situations; however this is covered in the above. What we are concerning ourselves with here are scenarios wherein it's the action itself that is blurred, despite there being adequate light in the scene to capture it, should you have only set your shutter speed correctly. The following are some typical situations in which this might occur, and the correct settings to use in each.

- For fast moving cars or motorcycles, you'll generally want to use a shutter speed of around 1/1000th of a second. This will freeze the motion, and provide crisp results.
- 1/1000th of a second is also a good base shutter speed for capturing animals which may move unpredictably.
- For birds in flight, you'll probably want to go a little higher at 1/1200th of a second or more, unless you are purposely attempting to capture wing blur. Note: if you want to shoot a hummingbird, you probably won't be able to freeze its wings without using a flash.



- Mountain bikes require at least 1/500th of a second.
- Waves can be captured as low as 1/250th, though you may wish to go higher should you hope to freeze spray from them crashing on rocks.
- With most sports, you're ok at about 1/1000th of a second; however, should you wish to capture the instant a baseball makes contact with a bat for instance, you're going to want to use 1/5000th or more!
- Sometimes you actually want motion blur in your images, which otherwise would look less professional. A good example of this would be airplanes or helicopters. For these, you are going to want to use a shutter speed of no higher than 1/250th of a second for propeller driven airplanes,

while for helicopters you'll want to go even lower, depending on the number of blades they have: for three or more 1/125th, and for a two bladed craft, 1/60th.

FINALLY

Whew! That was a lot to digest; however, if you regularly employ the strategies outlined above, eventually they'll become second nature, and your photographs will far less likely become digital refuse, destined for the recycle bin.

NEXT TIME

Be sure to join us next issue when we will continue to explore the world of photography in what we hope you will find an informative and engaging discussion, both highlighting what is new, and rediscovering techniques of the past which are still so relevant in today's digital realm.

Highlights include:

- Mastering black and white photography
- Lightroom tips and tricks
- Sekonic L-478DR reviewed
- Effective use of light modifiers
- Using Reflectors
- More composition techniques
- Great interviews
- Contest winners
- Much more!

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