The Royal Photographic Society
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DIGIT

Spring 2006 No 30

In this issue of your Digital Imaging Group magazine:

Grasses on a ledge by John Long ARPS

Daffodils at Coniston, England by Dennis Stephenson ARPS

Get right up-to-date - Log on to *www.digit.org.uk*
for News, Information, Folio, Forum, Competition and much more

From the Chairman

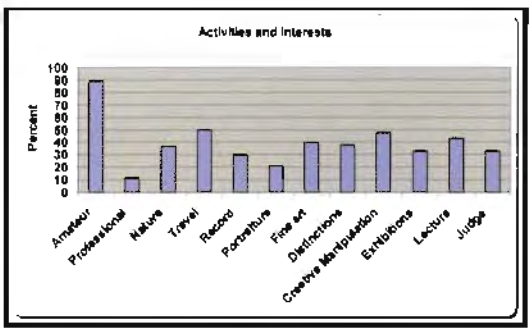
Barry Senior FRPS advising at the DI Day workshop in Bath - see p 10 for full report.

A big thank you to all those of you who took the time and trouble to complete and return the questionnaire which was enclosed in the winter issue of the magazine. This survey was designed help us to build up a profile of our members so that DI Group meetings, the website and DIGIT can be better targeted at your needs and interests. We wanted your feedback on our activities and to learn how you viewed the group, and in particular what you wanted from it in the future.

The Committee have had a preliminary discussion of the results and as Chairman I have read all of your responses to our questions, as well as your detailed comments. The results have been analysed to give an indicative statistical picture. I know that surveys like this do not usually generate a tremendous response but I must say that I was very pleased to find that over 16% of members had responded, including a number of you living outside the UK who are unable to get to meetings. We found it particularly helpful to understand how you rated DIGIT, and the balance of articles, pictures, travel reports and so on and what you would like more or less of. After all, the magazine is the one part of the Group that reaches everyone so we put a lot of effort into it and we want it to target as far as possible your needs and interests.

Our major annual event at Rugby, the Spectacular, has been running for some years so we wished to know for planning purposes how you saw it, and how you would like to see it develop or whether in fact it is past its 'sell by date'. The response of a good majority was to continue. The questions on more trade stands, more lectures and studio demonstrations for example had this in mind. And because we are very conscious that even within the UK, let alone for our overseas members, travel is always going to be an issue, how far are you willing to travel to meetings on a Sunday.

Not surprisingly, we are always keen to have help on the Committee and with local events. We were delighted that a number of you responded positively with offers to help in organising local events and also on joining the Committee - a good sign of a healthy Group - so thank you for your support. And a plea here, please, to those who said they would like to help but were too shy to give their name and contact details! Do please get in touch directly with our Secretary, Glenys Taylor - see back page for contact details.

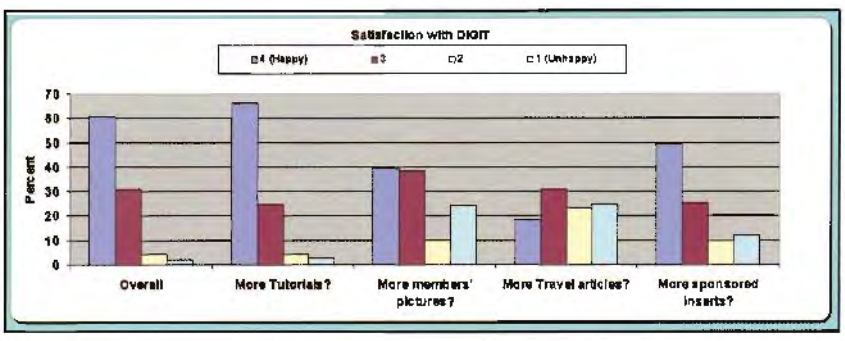


And now to the results. From more than 160 responses I have extracted the following headline indicators, and my commentary also reflects your written comments which you helpfully included. First who are you and what are your interests? Predominantly amateur, you have wide interests with Travel and Creative just topping the lists; and a gratifying number either lecture or judge to some extent. A large proportion have either SLR or compact digital cameras, or both.

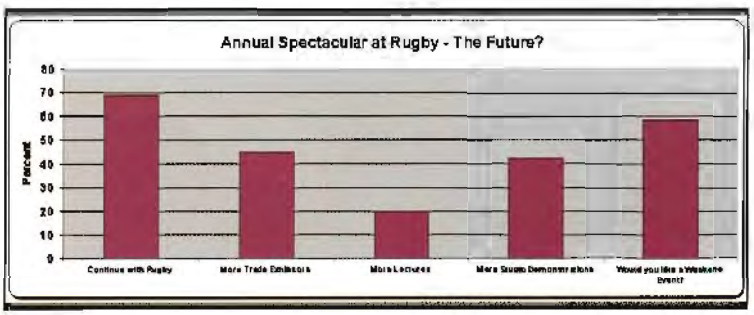
When it comes to DIGIT you were pretty much satisfied. As the chart shows, over 90% were overall on the happy side of the responses, with just six members expressing dissatisfaction. Tutorials were very much liked with more requested.

So, please let the editor have your favourite techniques, remembering that the group spans beginner to expert and we do need the easy to use types.

The sponsored inserts from suppliers were well received, particularly recognising that they help to reduce costs. You wanted cameras, paper and ink and printers covered. However, our existing sponsors have not found them a great commercial success and we welcome further suggestions. Although many of you have an interest in Travel you were evenly divided about having more such articles so we seem to have got that balance right. More members' pictures would be welcomed but that of course depends on you sending them to the editor.



Our major annual event, the Spectacular at Rugby, is supported by up to 300 members and friends and your interests were spread across the range of trade stands, lectures, workshops and the fun of meeting up with other members, as well as the instant exhibition of your work which we feature. Overall, it looks as though more emphasis on the studio demonstrations and workshops finds favour, and a greater number of trade stands. Interestingly, a weekend event, rather than just one day, was welcomed. Certainly you wanted to continue with the Spectacular. Rugby is a central location in England, if not the UK as a whole, but not surprisingly you really would prefer to travel no more than 50 miles, and Sunday is not the best day for everyone. Obviously that poses a real problem for us since we cannot satisfy all of you unfortunately. A number of you already share transport and we will see if we can put those seeking help with transport in touch. And with several disabled photographers attending we need to pay attention to facilities to ensure we can all enjoy the event.



Thank you again for your comments.

Barry Senior FRPS

It's not too late!

2006 MEMBERS' EXHIBITION

Closing date for postal entries - Thursday 13 April 2006 or bring to AGM - see insert in last DIGIT

Selection of prints - Sunday 23 April 2006 at the AGM

For members who live outside the UK please send A4 prints unmounted, perhaps in a cardboard roll. We will mount for the exhibition at an extra cost of £2 for each print.

Selectors this year:

Glenys Taylor ARPS; Paula Davies LRPS; David Rowley

Exhibition to be shown at: The Dylan Thomas Centre, Swansea 7 June - 2 July

The Swindon Library Link Centre 11 July - 22 July

The Old Schoolhouse, Oldbury, West Midlands 21 August - [illegible] September

The Podium Gallery, Northgate Street, Bath 2 October - 8 October

Library Hall, Weybridge, Surrey 27 November - 2 December

Any queries, or suggestions for new venues, please contact the Exhibition Co-ordinator:

Alex Duffy LRPS 127 Bradley Avenue, Winterbourne, Bristol BS36 1HW Tel: 01454 778485

Email: alexpatduffy@hotmail.com

AGM Reminder

Sunday 23 April 2006

The Old School House Smethwick PhotoSoc Oldbury West Midlands

Coffee served from 1030

AGM at 1100 followed by selection of prints for the Exhibition

Lunch must be pre-booked - see below

1400 Demonstration by David Rowley

1630 Close

David Rowley is a well known photographer who has been contributing tutorials to leading UK magazine Digital Photo for the last 4 years. He specialises in tutorials which have been used by digital imaging sites world wide. He now concentrates solely on digital imaging, writing tutorials and articles for magazines and giving talks on a subject that never ceases to amaze him.

A two-course lunch is available at £7 per head. Booking and payment must be made at latest by 12 April using slip in Winter 2005 DIGIT to Glenys Taylor ARPS - contact details on back page.

Some of your comments from the Survey...and a few responses

It was helpful to have your comments and feedback. We are trying to respond to all the specific issues raised directly. Here are just some of the points you made - unattributed of course - and published to show the range of views. The weight of your views is displayed in the analysis opposite which paints a clear picture. We have offered a few responses where appropriate.

Excellent website. We now have a very lively and well-informed Forum and about fifty regular users of the Folio to display and comment on images. And of course the competition - have you entered and voted this month?

Thank you for the splendid work you do on our behalf. It must take many hours to organise the Annual Spectacular.

A lot of projects are for the wealthy - try to give ideas that cost less for pensioners. And 'Mamosh' as reference with free or cheap software for [illegible] sharpening. Good point. We do have articles on free software - see pages 28 and 29 for free panoramic software. So let's have some more contributions with an eye on low cost projects.

Website is the most cost-effective vehicle to show members' work.

Images display a lack of critical engagement and theoretical insight. Well, there's a challenge for you to submit some cracking images!

More for the disabled photographer. Winter 2005 DIGIT featured the work of a disabled photographer. Anyone have experience of equipment and techniques to help disabled members?

Make it more for beginners. We recognise the wide spread of experience amongst members so let's have some How to - Start here contributions please.

In general I find the images in DIGIT disappointing in content/containing what Photoshop can offer. Another challenge!

Attract younger members if possible. Suggestions welcomed!

DIGIT is excellent. The Spectacular is great. Many thanks to the organisers of this event.

Web to set up a private website for car sharing to the RPS events. We will explore this.

Can we have more competitions?

More user hardware/software reviews on the website.

You are not giving enough help to local associations.

Very good publication.

Please include [illegible] wherever possible. Delighted to include your contributions - see pages 6 & 7.

Article in each issue on How to for those new to digital. We try to include [illegible] each time.

On inserts: Good for recycling.

What is a DIGIAM? See page 23 of Winter DIGIT which explains all. Also more information on website under DIGIT articles.

Introduce themes for submissions of articles. Some prominent samples about publication. Check members' area of website for email addresses.

Include profiles of committee. We are quite shy, honest!

Some input on Paintshop Pro please. Another challenge - let's have some articles and images for PSP please.

A weekend event would be welcome but I do understand that the planning and organisation would be a bit of a task.

Good quality technical, good promotion of people's work and the content is interesting and varied.

For full information on all events visit the regional websites on the back cover and see the DIGIT website

Decisions, Decisions

In this second of a two-part comprehensive overview of what to look for Sid Pearce FRPS examines some of detailed decisions you need to consider in buying a digital camera today.
Sid's interest in photography started about 50 years ago. He writes magazine articles on imaging and his two current booklets: Enhancing your Image with Photoshop and The Photographers How to with Photoshop are available from Sid - see DI Group website. He is also available to give talks and full day seminars, or personal tuition. Photographs by Sid.

It is worth repeating the opening of Sid's first article from issue 29: *The first thing to remember is that your purchase will be superseded by a new model within a year, and probably at a reduced price. This is just the same as it has always been with any camera purchase. There is now little difference between a digital and a film camera except that a sensor takes the picture in a digital camera instead of film.* Having looked at the primary features of a digital camera in the first article, we can now look at some of the main supporting features.

Light Meters A good metering system is essential. Virtually all digital cameras have first class light meters but it is good practice to check what metering modes are available. The main methods are Evaluative, Matrix, Centre-Weighted, Spot and Partial. Evaluative or Matrix is usually the best choice in general photography. Centre Weighted is a time-honoured method which preserves details in the background, whilst letting the lighting at the centre of the frame decide the exposure. Spot metering is invaluable in nature photography or when you have a background that is much lighter than the subject itself. Partial is similar to Spot but because the area covered is larger it is not as effective.

Most cameras will give you at least two methods of metering so your type of photography will determine which type is a priority for you. Even if you normally stick to one type of metering most of the time, it may pay you to look at the metering interface, to see if it is easy to change when required.

Nearly all cameras use Through The Lens (TTL) metering where the meter looks through the lens when evaluating the amount of light falling upon the image. The external meters on some cameras can on rare occasions be confused and give inaccurate readings. The big advantage of TTL metering on a fixed lens compact and SLR-style camera is that you can use converter lenses.

Lenses There is no point in getting all the bits and pieces on a camera body right if the lens is rubbish. Ask the camera stockist if you can take some pictures, download the images and evaluate the lens quality on their computer. If they haven't got this facility, consider buying a small memory card that will fit the proposed purchase, take the shots and assess them on your own computer. If you are a serious photographer buying a compact or SLR-style fixed laens camera you will need to buy a model with a known quality name as you will be lumbered with a fixed lens.

Obviously the focal length for your type of photography will have to be taken into account. If like me you like to take indoor shots as well as landscapes you will be looking for a wide angle. If your interest is nature or sport a good telephoto may be the main requirement. The quality of some of the fixed zoom lenses on the main camera manufacturers products is superb. You just have to decide where your priorities lie, wide or telephoto. If the lens on the camera is not quite the focal length you would wish, ask the retailer if there is a wide angle or telephoto converter. Using a converter manufactured by the camera maker usually makes no difference to the f-stop of the original lens and may prove to be the answer to your needs.

If lyou like to take indoor shots as well as landscapes you will be looking for a wide angle lens

A prime lens (fixed focal length) of a lens manufacturer will nearly always be sharper and have less aberrations than a zoom, but with the use of computers for lens design the quality of zooms today is very good. Despite this I would still check both ends of a zoom when buying a lens for an SLR. The wide end may have barrelling or pincushion distortion. Also check for vignetting - any darkening of the edges or sides of the image.

If purchasing a digital SLR you may already have the lenses that were used with the old film SLR camera. Apart from saving money, you may as well stick with the lenses you know as most digital cameras will use the lens mounts from film cameras. There is a problem though: using a film lens on a digital camera genrally increases the focal length by 1.5 or 1.6 depending on the manufacturer. This is a benefit for anyone working with telephoto lenses but the reverse is true of the photographer who works with wide-angle lenses. As an example of this a 17mm - 85mm zoom on a film SLR camera will equate to approximately 27mm-136mm on a digital camera. A wide-angle lens 10mm - 22mm will equate approximately to 16mm - 35mm on a digital camera.

This apparent change in focal length arises because most sensors are smaller than the 35mm film area which film camera lenses were designed for. Of course if you have a

fairy godmother and are going to purchase a camera with a full frame (35mm) sensor, the change in focal length does not apply.

A number of manufacturers are now making lenses specifically computed for digital SLR cameras. While in many cases, lenses designed for film will still be used on digital cameras, to reap the full benefit of higher pixel count sensors photographers will need to choose dedicated digital lenses.

Some lens manufactures have over the past few years brought out image stabilised lenses to combat camera shake. They allow you to take telephoto pictures up to 2-3 stops slower than with an ordinary lens. Even at the wide end of a stabilised telephoto zoom sharpness is improved. This is a great help to the more mature among us, as none of us are as steady as we were! In recent months another of the leading camera manufacturers has introduced moving sensor in their cameras that compensate for any movement by the photographer whilst filming. This seems to me a better solution as you pay only once for the facility. With the stabiliser in the lens you pay every time you buy a new lens.

This image of Spurn Lighthouse and Hail Fort illustrates the advantage of an image stabiliser on a lens or camera. It was hand held using a Canon 20D with a 75-300 lens, equivalent to 135-460, at full zoom and maximum aperture of f5.6 at 1/250th.
The fort was about 3 miles away and Spurn more than 5 miles. When I looked at the image on a monitor I could also see the Coast Guard station at the side of Spurn - the only full time staffed Coast Guard and Lifeboat station in the country, incidentally.

Focusing All digital cameras have auto focusing. Some are much better than others. Trying to take a picture while your lens goes in and out trying to focus can be a very frustrating experience. Most cameras focus by using the contrast in a scene. If the lighting is somewhat flat or low it may take a camera some time to focus. This is where manual focus comes into its own. If possible always go for a camera where this is an option.

Viewfinders Obviously you need a camera that has a comfortable feel when you pick it up, and the viewfinder has all the required information and is easy to use. Generally point and shoot cameras have both an optical and LCD viewfinder. Optical viewfinders in many digital cameras leave much to be desired. They rarely show more than 80 - 85% of the scene. Some are grainy and you can rarely see the result of any extensions, others have the viewfinder blocked when a converter is fitted to the lens.
LCD viewfinders are a very different kettle of fish. The majority of this type of finder is approximately 5 cm square and on the rear of the camera. You can also pull out the screen and rotate it on some models, They usually display all of your image and most of your camera settings. The big problem with this type is the difficulty of viewing outdoors in bright sunlight. Equally LCD viewfinders are also difficult to see at dusk. Many different technologies have been brought to bear on this viewing problem but it is still far from solved.
Another type of viewfinder used on a number of cameras with an integral zoom lens is a small LCD, instead of the usual optical arrangement. They give full image cover and control settings but they do have considerable downsides. The screen will freeze on some models when focusing and on others the screen takes time to catch up when panning, or following an image.
Few of these problems will ever occur with a genuine SLR with through the lens metering and viewing.

You will need to take some time evaluating each system for your own style of photography before making a choice.

Spot on focus and exposure are needed here

Speed of Use Start up and shutter lag is a problem that has affected many of the earlier digital cameras. Thankfully it has almost been removed on current models. I would still think it worth while checking before buying, as there is nothing worse than seeing a shot, pressing the button and nothing happens. An easy way to find out how fast the camera will start-up is to depress the shutter button and then turn the camera on. The delay if any will be obvious. Shutter lag is when you press the taking button fully and the shutter movement is not immediate.
After taking a picture, your camera downloads it to the storage card.

How long it takes depends on file type and size. A number of cameras now have a memory buffer. This facility enables you to take a number of pictures in succession. When you have used the buffer up the camera will stop until it has processed the images. The best way to find out how long the processing will take is to continually fire the shutter until the camera comes to a grinding stop and note how long the processing is before you can take further images. If you do sports or nature photography it will pay to check up whether the camera you favour has a burst facility and how many shots you can take with this option before it hangs up.

Playback Mode If you want to get some idea of the images you have just taken, it is as well to be able to zoom into the image so you can see the quality. Some makes bring up a histogram to help evaluate each image. A toggle that also allows you to move around an image is always welcome.

Auto bracketing In some situations where it is difficult to select the correct exposure Auto Bracketing can be a godsend

Noise Reduction Noise can often rear its head if you make a lot of time exposures. Check to see how well the camera can cope. It may well be that for your type of output it may not matter, or in the size of print you produce it will not show.

Digital Zoom In the specification of compact and SLR type cameras a digital zoom is sometimes quoted. Don't bother with it. The camera is interpolating the image upwards and while interpolating upwards is not to be recommended, it is better to be done in your computer-imaging programme, if at all.

General The SLR is the most versatile of all digital cameras but its Achilles heel is dust getting onto the sensor, the most costly part of your digital camera. Treat it as such. Before changing a SLR lens, turn off the camera since electricity can produce static in the sensor, attracting dust. For obvious reasons it's also a good plan to hold the camera body with the throat downwards when changing a lens. There is a number of sensor cleaning kits on the market, but I would be very wary of using them. One small slip could involve the replacement of the sensor at a cost of many hundreds of pounds. The cost of cleaning by a professional repair establishment such as Lehmans of Stoke on Trent (Tel 01782 413 611) is a far better option. Their charges currently are £35 for this service. Money well spent in my view.

Here are a number of websites where you can see reviews of various digital cameras:
www.steves-digicams.com
wwwdigicamreview.co.uk
www.dcrescource.com
www.planetphotoshop.com

I trust that these two articles will make your task of purchasing a digital camera a little less fraught. Whether looking for a small point and shoot to take with you in your pocket, an SLR style camera without the big boys' weight, or a full blown SLR with all the bells and whistles, it is the ease of use and the quality of the image you get that will be the final arbiter as to which model you buy.

Happy shopping till next time!

Reflections on Colour with Ray Wallace Thompson ARPS

These thoughts on colour and the impact of mounting were originally prepared for the Photographic Society of America at the 2006 Convention in Baltimore.

Just over forty years ago dinner guests asked to see my latest AV show and after about six or so pictures had been projected there was a 'thump' and lights on disclosed that Eleanor had fainted. On recovery she said her eyes became fuzzy and she had become dizzy and passed out. Next day I asked my optician friend, Tony, if he had experienced anything like this and I was invited round to his place for a full lecture on ocular variations. It transpired that Eleanor probably had a very extended ocular memory and that she would have been trying to effectively remember two previous pictures whilst the current one was being projected. Her brain couldn't cope.

That was just the beginning and Tony had me enthralled. First of all he tested my own colour acuity which turned out more or less normal. Apparently about 1 in 10 men have colour aberrations but only 1 in 40 women do. So it figures that if you want a colour opinion on your picture then ask the Boss - or if you haven't one, ask someone else's. It also came to light that normal babies are born with a full set of colour balanced cones in their eyes: however over the years changes can take place and the colour balance alters. These facts do give rise to other thoughts. In view of this information should all judges be asked to supply a Certificate of Colour Competence, although if judges have a fine exhibition record it a well be considered adequate. Of course if they are only judging black and white then this would not apply. It makes one wonder if some rejects were occasioned on a faulty assessment.

Naturally babies and young children do enjoy brilliant colours such as this chart and possibly those of us having well balanced cones also do, but as we age our paradyms also lead us to enjoy more sophisticated renditions as alongside.

As an architect I attended the Leeds School of Architecture, part of the famous Leeds College of Art. Our colour training was substantial and during it I came across the Fletcher Munsell Colour Notation System. Imagine a vertical tubular tree with the trunk being black at the base and rising in shades and tints to white at the apex. Branches reach out at each level to a colour circle and half way up is the colour circle we all know, springing from a grey at the trunk - a grey we are accustomed to: that on which exposure meters are calibrated. Nowadays I usually tend to have my pictures with colours at the same or adjacent chroma levels. Sometimes, however, introducing a departure does produce a colour impact, for instance red lips in a high key portrait. Remembering this system makes the use of Color Balance in PhotoShop more understandable. In using pure watercolours I mix French Ultramarine Blue with Light Red to produce a granulated cloud-grey and a similar approach applies in PS.

In the same vein of colour thought, I came out of my DPDs (Dinosaur Photographic Days) in a dark room in 1938 by way of exposing a Dufay colour transparency film and it was necessary to consider colours in a new light. After achieving colour results which were, to say the least, a bit unnatural, a resort to filters was advised. Reading works on colour temperature by Lord Kelvin of Glasgow, discovering that colour films were generally balanced for about 5500 Kelvin indicated that light's colour temperature should be adjusted before hitting the film by using either red or blue filters.

A CT meter and two batches of Wratten filters were acquired and enthusiastically used but by the time readings had been taken and reciprocals worked out to select the correct combination of filters either the light had changed or impatient partner had gone home! Eventually filter use stabilised into UV, 81A, 81B, ND, Grad Grey or Grad blue and a Polariser, otherwise light was accepted 'as was'.

Nowadays the use of digital equipment has changed matters: filters on cameras are just about forgotten. To adjust overall colours I sometimes use Sim filters in the PC which virtually cover the Wratten Range. Slides are now seldom used, my lovely Minolta Dynax 7 35mm camera has only had one film though it last year, and prints rule. Which brings another colour-ful thought to mind - how to display our prints. It is noticeable that when prints are shown in bright light on gallery walls, or even worse when displayed at club level on illuminated stands, the use of white or near white mounts introduces a surrounding glare situation which immediately denigrates the color content of the picture.

In those DPDs we often spent a long time making our prints. They were very precious being virtually one-offs and for safety we displayed them in glass. To prevent the print touching the glass we used recessed mounts. Today this is not necessary because a damaged print can be repeated easily. Also in digital work we can introduce many kinds of border and also our mounts are not restricted to white although some folks cannot depart from old systems and habits. The recent article on Borders by Ian Ledgard shows how unnecessary recessed mounting really is and I recall lectures by Judy Thomas in which her prints were beautifully bordered.

White light's colour temperature is high up the scale and black is low. Accordingly I now usually mount my prints on black to avoid the high reflectivity of white or near white surrounds. Occasionally I find that mid-grey is suitable for, say, an architectural picture, or perhaps a mid-green for a pastoral scene. Either colour does not introduce high reflectivity in the surround. Over recent times I have noted that one or two of my .local club folk, who are exhibition/competition inclined, have reached similar conclusions, but sadly some exhibitions still use just white, maybe finding it difficult to shed old habits but certainly denigrating the enclosed prints.

My 2004 Exhibition had to be glassed for safety and the Green Dragon Photo Gallery Curator, Kate, used a recessed black spacer surround for all pictures. Naturally if a picture is high key the use of a black surround can introduce far too much contrast and is therefore unsuitable, so proper consideration is always needed.

Overseas Member Focus
Mimicking the Masters Dr Kenneth A Deitcher

Ken was a pediatrician in Albany, NY, USA for over 45 years. In his 'spare time' he used photography as an avocation. He has travelled to the Galapagos Islands, Trinidad and to the Amazon pursuing his hobby. Ken has been president and occupied many positions in the Schenectady Photographic Society and have been very active in PSA competitions, especially in the nature division and now in the EID or digital sections. He is a Fellow of the Photographic Society of America and has four stars in the Nature Slide Division. Here Ken explores a easy to use technique to produce some fascinating results.

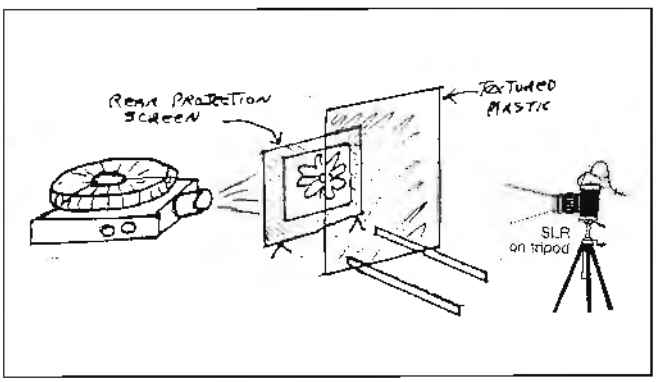
Many old and mundane slides can be revitalised with re-photography through textured glass or plastic.

I started photographing flowers and plants through textured plastic but I was limited by the available light and the subject matter. In order to broaden my horizons I took the textured plastic into my studio, added a rear-projection screen and started to experiment with projected images of landscapes, buildings and sport events.

The basic equipment needed is a slide projector, tripod, camera, cable release, a zoom or macro zoom lens and an 80A colour correction filter, if you are using outdoor slide film, and a rear projection screen.

The two most important pieces of equipment will be the textured glass or plastic and the rear projection screen.

The rear projection screen is a translucent or opal glass or plastic used to project images from the rear of a slide show or display. If unavailable, a large sheet of tracing paper or a sheet of sheer white sheeting can be substituted. This should be attached to a frame for stability.



The textured plastic or glass is the kind used in shower doors and can be purchased from distributors listed in your telephone directory, under plastic building supplies or stained glass supplies. I prefer the plastic sheets for safety reasons and because they are much lighter in weight than glass. You will need a sheet at least 2 or 3 feet square, at least the size of your rear-projection screen or larger. Care must be used with the plastic, as the surface scratches quite easily. The type I recommend is a coarse large pattern, the smaller beaten silver or pebble surfaces are too distracting. The pattern of the glass or plastic must be random so that light passing through it from the projected image will be refracted producing the desired effect.

Select a well exposed slide with interesting large patterns that can be improved with abstraction. In general an impressionistic image should possess strong graphic lines that guide the eye to the subject. Vivid splashes of colour also provide dramatic impact.

I place the textured plastic on a stand that will hold this in a perpendicular position. The stand is constructed from two 2 x 2 inch x 24 inch pieces of hard wood, with $^1/_4$ inch grooves cut at 1 inch intervals at about $1^1/_2$ inch depth. This allows the textured plastic to stand vertically and to be moved, if desired, to any effective position in front of the rear-projection screen.

The patterns on your photo are greatly affected by the distance of the plastic sheet from the rear projection screen. The textured glass or plastic is placed $^1/_2$ to $1^1/_2$ inches in front of the projection screen on the camera side. The closer it is placed the less the distortion. This is a matter of trial and error and according to your objectives. You can observe the amount of abstraction through your viewfinder.

Once your composition is satisfactory, get your camera ready. Be sure to focus on the textured plastic to give a brush stroke appearance to your photo. I load my Canon camera with Fujichrome 100 slide film, attach the cable release, and set the lens to aperture preferred mode at f8 to 11. Place your cameras electronic controls on auto bracket mode, If your camera does not have this feature just bracket manual1y. I bracket one to two stops over and under the meter reading. This is necessary, as you are shooting into the projected image. I get no "hot spots" with the rear projection screen. Before exposing your film be sure to attach the 80A filter then expose 3 to 4 frames. My usual exposure times are from $^1/_2$ to 3 seconds.

The result will be three identical photos, one slightly under exposed, one normal and one over exposed. The variations depend on how much compensation over the normal you set your camera ($^1/_2$, 1 or 2 stops).

These slides are abstracts of your original with a painterly quality. The essence of the subject is represented in splotches and shades of colour. Pick your subject carefully. I usually choose slides with saturated colours and large coarse objects. Many slides with fine lines may not re-photograph well. Scenes that include flowers, trees, and weathered structures are especially suitable. Avoid pictures with expanses of sky or water, or those with close-ups of people as subjects. Even slight image distortion may become more distracting than complementary.

You can alter the colours of your creation by the use of colour correction filters, to warm or cool the subject matter. There are no hard and fast rules in this technique. You must make your own individual adjustments. After the refracted images are processed study the resulting effect carefully and judge if the enhancement has radically distorted the image.
Don't throw away those slightly out of focus or somewhat
soft images as these are perfect for abstraction, sometime the grainier the image, the better. For marked grain try using high speed slide film or set your digital camera to ISO 1000.

Make sure your slides are reversed when you place them into your projector so that they will be properly oriented when photographed from the opposite side of the screen.

Although with bracketing, you will use up three times more film it will be worth it. In most instances you will obtain at least two acceptable original derivations of your original slide. The slight build up of contrast, when using regular slide film instead of a copying film can be an advantage.

The slides and prints produced by this technique reproduce quite well as prints and make excellent murals. I have enlarged several to 20 x 30 inch size and they have been quite outstanding.

Three's Company: Digital Triptych Workshop at Fenton House

Bill Henley LRPS hard at work with Sue Eley on her triptych

On Saturday 21 January 2006 Bill Henley LRPS ran a DIG workshop day at the RPS headquarters in Bath. Running from 1000 to 1700 twelve memebrs brought their digital cameras with aview to taking photographs locally and printing an A3 exhibition quality triptych to take away. A triptych is a set of three associated artistic works, says the Oxford English Dictionary, historically a hinged, three panel altar piece. Computers and printers were provided by the Society and all the images can now be seen on the website - http://www.digit.org.uk/images/thumbs.asp?exhib_id=94
Here Bill reports on the day with photographs by Graham Whistler FRPS.

Arriving at Fenton House the weather was bright with blue skies. The top floor had been set up by Director General Stuart Blake and Liz Williams with the Society's laptops in grand array and a video projector at the ready. My thanks to Stuart and Liz for this as it enabled the day to start in very good order with an introductory presentation: What is a photographic triptych? complete with various examples and suggestions. The delegates were ferried to the centre of Bath with cameras in hand and bright sunlight to encourage them. We were pleased to see such productive discussion and friendly help in the afternoon when the images were downloaded and manipulated to produce everyone's A3 triptych print. It was a superb team effort with committee members Barry Senior, John Long, Graham Whistler, Alex Dufty, and Ray Grace. We had our reward at the end of the day when there was so much enthusiasm, with those who came - and some who could not make it this time - asking: When are we doing it again?

Ray Grace LRPS, Vice-Chairman of the DI Group, reports: I brought an Epson 2400 fitted with Fotospeed Continuous InkFlow to the workshop. It is a very fast printer and I was working from just one laptop. All images were printed on a selection of Fotospeed papers, the most popular being High White Smooth - Fotospeed's biggest seller - and Natural Textured. One picture was printed on the award winning Pigment Friendly Lustre; a monochrome print greatly admired by the other participants. The Epson 2400, properly profiled, produces absolutely perfect monochrome images, using all the colours. This method produces better results than the Advanced Black & White mode that is built into the printer driver. Fotospeed enjoys its association with the DIG and hopes to support further workshops.

Fotospeed's InkFlow system

Just some extracts from your comments ...

Had an absolutely super day today and want to thank all the guys who put a lot of hard work into organising it all for us. Learnt a lot and will think differently when taking shots in future - what might not work on its own might as a triptych. Great day - can't wait for the next one!
Janet Haines LRPS

It was a fantastic day. If this event is repeated I would highly recommend anyone to attend. I received lots of helpful advice during the day and learned many new techniques. I was delighted that Ray was able to print my monochrome work using the new Fotospeed K4 ink system. The results were brilliant. *Ben Gorman ARPS*

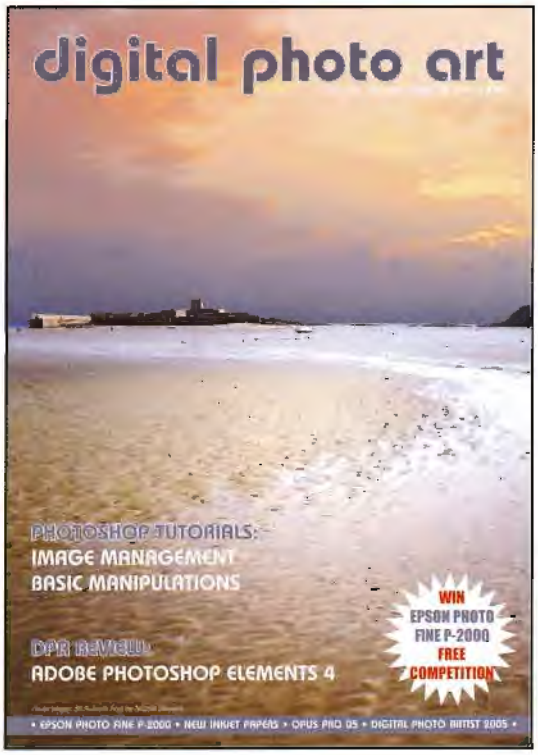
Can only reiterate what has already been said about the Triptych Workshop, it was excellent. How nice to put faces and voices to printed words on the Folio. The helpfulness and friendliness was terrific. There is nothing like hands on tuition. *Bert Housley ARPS*

It has affected my looking - and it was great to meet so many other photographers and experienced people I would particularly like to thank all those who gave up their Saturday to organise and help us. *Sue Eley*

Workshop members having fun, with the committee helpers and tutors standing at the rear.

You can see all the triptychs on the website and here is just one made by Uwe Stalf who tells DIGIT that he used a Nikon D70s, shooting in RAW using aperture priority with an AFS Zoom-Nikkor 18-70mm lens. The frame on each picture is made with Photoshop CS2: Shadow.

Try DPA for free - special offer for DI Group members



Digital Photo Art is a magazine devoted to the needs and interests of the serious enthusiast who regards digital photography as a medium for producing memorable images.

It is refreshingly different from the mainstream mass market productions. The first differences one notices are the physical quality of production – on good quality art paper – and the relative absence of advertising. Digital Photo Art prides itself on maintaining a healthy diet of interesting and inspiring images – both through its £3000 reader competition and the publication of portfolios by selected photographers. The other key aspect of Digital Photo Art is the in-depth tutorials on digital imaging techniques – carefully written and illustrated by experts such as Steve Wilbur, Eddy Sethna, Peter Clark and DPA editor, Roger Maile. These are distinguished not just by the degree of expertise exhibited, but by the fact that the magazine allows the space for subjects to be explored fully: it is not unusual for a tutorial to run to six or seven uninterrupted pages if the topic demands it.

Roger Maile is the founding editor of Digital Photo Art, launching its first edition in September 1998 under what was then the Creative Monochrome Ltd banner (now Arem Publishing Ltd). 'We were one of the earlier titles to hit the market,' says Maile. 'At the time, digital imaging was the subject of heated debate in many clubs. As I did the rounds of judging local club competitions, I could see inkjet prints beginning to surface and there were one or two pioneers of digital capture. There was a predictable bias towards gimmicky images, and I felt this was a good time to try to establish a magazine catering for the serious photographer who was interested in digital imaging as a tool rather than a toy. I was quite certain that digital imaging would become the primary medium for serious photographers, but even I have been taken aback by the speed and extent of its growth.'

Roger Maile's publishing company backs up Digital Photo Art magazine with its own range of tutorial CD-ROMs and a competitively priced specialist mail order service for digital imaging materials.

Whilst other magazines have come and gone at an alarming rate, Digital Photo Art has remained in continuous production for over seven years. 'Frankly, selling quality magazines in the UK market is a struggle,' says Maile. 'News-stand distribution is a nightmare for the small publisher: the costs, discounts and returns of unsold copies mean effectively that you have to economise on paper quality and fill the magazine with advertising in order to make it viable – and what you get

as a result is the sort of lowest common denominator 'popular' titles you see on the shelves. So we have chosen to stick by high production and content standards, selling by direct subscription to our particular niche of the market. The sad aspect of this, of course, is that you have a superb product but low circulation – so an opportunity like this, to spread the word to DIGIT readers, is most welcome.'

On the basis that the proof is in the pudding, Roger Maile is backing up that comment with a special offer to DIGIT readers. If you mention this article, they will send you, completely free, a sample issue so that you can see the quality of the magazine for yourself and decide whether to subscribe. For those who don't need any convincing, the annual (six issues) subscription rate is £20 in the UK, £25 in the rest of Europe and £30 elsewhere. You can contact Arem Publishing by phone on 020 8686 3282, fax on 020 8681 0662 or e-mail to ***info@arempublishing.co.uk.*** There is also a website with a secure online ordering system at: ***www.arempublishing.co.uk***.

A Fellowship with Flowers

Andrew Gagg FRPS is both a DI and Nature Group member and here he tells us of his blossoming into the treasured F status, and how he mounted his panel of prints. This account is based on that already published in Iris, the Nature Group's magazine. Andrew says that he has always specialised in photographing wild botanical subjects, ever since he hijacked his mum's hobby when he was at college. He went straight for an A without attempting Licenciateship in 1989. This piece of arrogance, as Andrew puts it, paid off. But now the years were passing and he decided that time was no longer on his side, and that if he wanted to achieve the ultimate distinction from the RPS he had better get on and do it!

I attended a workshop in Swansea, taking a selection of what I thought was the right kind of print and from it gained an idea of what was required, principally from Harold Grenfell FRPS.

I had thought of showing all parasitic plants but my selection was unnecessarily narrow it seemed. My wife Christine came with me, returning home with a phrase which was later to haunt me - the now badly over-used expression the 'wow' factor. Subsequently, a submission of twenty slides failed, with the comment from those familiar with my published pictures that it didn't seem to represent the best of my work. Oh dear! Could try harder! Now what?

I needed advice and visited Tony Wharton FRPS coming away with the significant notion that I should create and submit prints next time. Tony is really keen to help aspiring applicants succeed.

As the digital tide was rising rapidly around me, the prospect of creating twenty digital prints of good enough quality was daunting, but not nearly as daunting as the idea of doing the same thing by darkroom methods! I whittled the collection of possibles down to twenty-five or so, taking heed of his parting remark that the final selection must be mine, as that was an essential part of the test.

It is now almost traditional to refer in these cases to ones spouse as 'my sternest critic' - believe me she really was (and still is). Christine continued to scrutinise my selection minutely, regularly belabouring me with the now-hated 'wow factor'. I had tended to include scientific pictures of rather dull plants, but I was prodded towards those images which had most visual impact, in terms of colour, composition and striking subject. Rarity was never a consideration - I knew a poor picture of an excitingly obscure species would get me nowhere.

There was now a fair mix of digitally originated images from my new toy - an Olympus E-1, and from scanned slides, some going back a good few years - one or two had been part of my A submission. The transparencies were all taken with one of my Olympus 35mm cameras - mostly the OM4Ti, using a favourite 24mm lens for habitats, and a 50mm macro for portraits. They were built up over many years as my attempt to record, at least in part, the flora of Europe. My title therefore was *Flora Europaea*.

My methods are mostly conventional, but my big bugbear has always been tripods - I hate them. In the context of close-ups, depth of field is so limited, and camera shake so likely that it is essential, but it is no use battling with all that ironmongery if the plant isn't still! If there is the least bit of breeze when you make the exposure it becomes pointless. Finding a support low enough to get down eye to eye with the subject can be difficult. The legs don't spread far enough on most miniature tripods, so that a big camera is unstable and topples. Benbos will get you down low or into other awkward positions (and your camera!) but I remember describing them in print once as a 'set of demented bagpipes'! Ground spikes are possible if there is ground to spike, but the most interesting plants often seem to grow on solid rock.

I suppose the missing ingredient was patience. Patience to carry a tripod, and patience to adjust it with care, and the patience to wait for a lull in the breeze - I've now learned that an opportunity usually does offer itself, eventually.

Part of the reason for using a tripod is of course to enable the use of a small aperture to gain depth of field (and a concomitant long exposure). When a composition is just a single flower, its centre should be sharp, like the eyes in a portrait, but the nearest parts usually need be acceptable as well. So while in very close work, it is a battle to have sufficient depth of field, it can be a two-edged sword - a nicely defocused background is frequently what's needed to isolate the plant, detail blurred out to avoid distraction. Biscuit-brown stems, all at different angles, are one of the worst offenders. So depth of field needs to be checked using the appropriate stop-down button.

A sensitive issue is 'gardening'. A bit is inevitable to obtain an image that is un-marred by distractions and free from foreground vegetation in front of the lens. My guidelines have always been to put the plant and its habitat (including other nearby plants of the subject species, or any other) first. Ensure that young plants are not crushed in the effort to make the best picture. And whatever you move (especially that which is living) should eventually be replaced where it came from, uninjured. It can almost always be pressed gently to one side rather than cutting or uprooting. My old white sun hat has often been a gentle weight for stems and such, and sometimes doubles as a white reflector! Do nothing which affects the scientific truth of the resulting image. My purpose in this kind of image-making is to make an honest statement about what a particular species looks like in context. Finally, cast around to select the most suitable specimen first, and the results will probably be superior, with less effort needed.

One technique seen in some of the images is the use of wide-angle. My favourite lens was my 24mm Zuiko, and now the wider zoom on my E-1 does the job. A plant can be shown whole, and in context ecologically. Such an image is packed with information, and can be pictorially striking too. For

small subjects I use dioptric supplementaries - not close-up 'filters' as some now say! Because of the short focal length, I can often work hand-held without detriment. This is bliss, allowing me free rein to sort out composition unhindered by all that metalwork!

I spent the winter of 2004 getting through stacks of printer paper - nothing special, just Epson Premium Glossy. Early on I had abandoned the idea of a satin-surfaced paper like Colour Life - it seemed to diminish the sharpness and colour of the finished prints. After much thought I'd decided on a submission of A4 prints, the advice being that a good A4 was better than a less good A3. I worried over this a good deal, but stuck to the A4 format. I did experiments with margins and borders, and decided on a black pin-line (not more than about 1mm) around the image - helping to define its edge. Outside that I put about 15mm of white. I worried about this reduction in the area of the printed image too, but the effect was what I wanted.

I got through gallons of ink - an odd combination of Jessops Epson-compatible colour ink and Jet-Tec black. First chosen on grounds of price, plus a satisfactory result of course, it was what I knew and there was no reason to fiddle with the recipe. I needed to keep fullest control of nuances of colour balance, plus printing up or down to get the maximum information into the print. I made a chart for each image, noting as systematically as possible what I had done to each version, keeping it together with all the numbered prints until I had got what I thought was 'the one' in each case. I revelled in the control. I'd never had the ability to achieve the same results in a darkroom.

Having produced a fairly finished batch of prints, I considered mounts. Dark boards were discarded quite early on, as I had been advised that they were not in fashion at present, and I was not going to contradict. Next I thought to match the board to the colour of the print paper exactly, but found nothing in any of the manufacturers ranges that was an exact match, so I sought a very pale cream just far enough away to avoid the impression of a bad match with the white print margin. I had intended to use one of the black-cored boards which, cut on the bevel, makes a fine black line around the window, but the effect was too funereal here. Finally I found an extremely thick (4mm) board that produced a beautiful wide bevel round the window. This was Britannia Astral White 3400 microns thick. My chosen mount size was 22" x 16", a pleasing proportion when accommodating a caption window. This happened to cut economically from a standard sheet, and was within the size given for the assessment display stands. I have been cutting bevelled mounts ever since my student days, but such heavyweight board had always been beyond my ability to cut cleanly. I sent the whole lot off to a local framer, with a full-size measured design for the mount. It had a window for the print, and another for a caption. To preserve the uniformity of the presentation these windows were both the same width, if varying a little from one print to another. I set a fixed margin at top and a deeper one at the bottom, the difference in the varying height of my prints being taken up by the variable distance between the upper and lower windows.

The captions were all quite long, with the scientific name of the taxon, authority, English name, and locale. After experimenting with the colour, I printed them in a mid grey, on the same Epson glossy paper.

I had also given a good deal of thought to the overall look of the completed set of prints. Considerable significance is given by the judges to a harmonious and balanced display. I was fortunate in being able to offer twenty portrait format images, and attempted to ensure that each picture took its appropriate place in a line up of 7 - 6 - 7 which evolved as the most suitable arrangement. Considerations such as strength and quality of colour in each image, as well as the few which were obviously handed, i.e. with a composition more appropriate to the right or to the left of the display, were also accommodated to the best of my ability. I found a set of 3" x 2" miniature prints useful in resolving this, each mounted on a bit of white paper the correct scale size to simulate its mount. This gave an impression of the separation between the displayed prints - an advantage of putting A4 prints in fair-sized mounts, reducing the interaction between neighbouring images.

All decisions made, paperwork and labelling double-checked, it was all boxed up and personally delivered to Bath. It weighed a ton, and I remember saying to the lady on the reception desk as I dumped it that I was glad to see the back of them, thinking that I'd be happy never to set eyes on them again!

Back home, I looked at the stack of paper (not 'waste' - each was an improvement on the last, though sometimes it was hard to see the wood for all those trees needed to make it) and shuddered to think what it all cost. My Epson 830 printer has never been the same since - it really needs an overhaul.

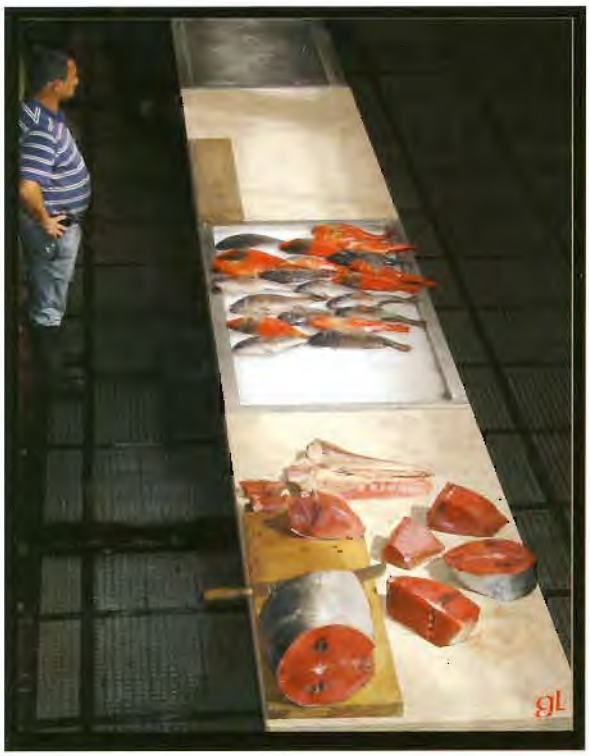
The rest, as they say, is history. I gather that the panel were fairly whole-hearted in their decision, and it can be imagined what I felt when that special letter of acceptance arrived!

It remains only to thank the RPS members who so willingly gave their advice to such good effect, in particular Tony Wharton.

Finally my affectionate thanks to Christine, 'who mostly made it possible, if occasionally totally impossible!'

FiNNishing Touches with Gitta Lim LRPS

Our Scandinavian border effects expert offers some special ways to add that extra polish to the presentation of your prize work



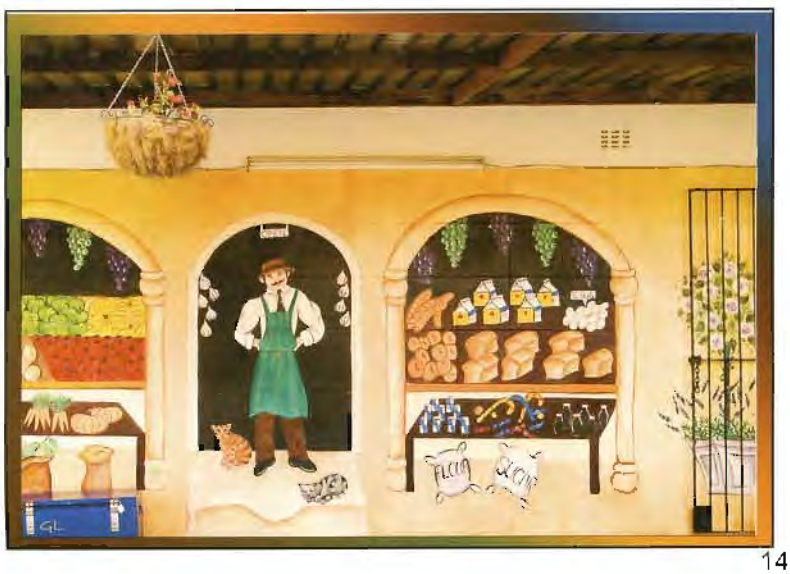
A border adds a finishing touch to your image and sometimes it can even hide minor defects. When taking the fish stall picture I was concentrating more on the fish and didn't take notice of the fish seller who ended up being far too close to the edge of the frame. A wide border helps to make my mistake less noticeable.

Wide gradient colour border To create a wide border outside the actual image you need to extend the canvas. Here's how to do it.

1 Double click your background image in the Lay ers Palette to make it a layer 0. Add a new layer underneath your image: Go to Layer>New>Layer.

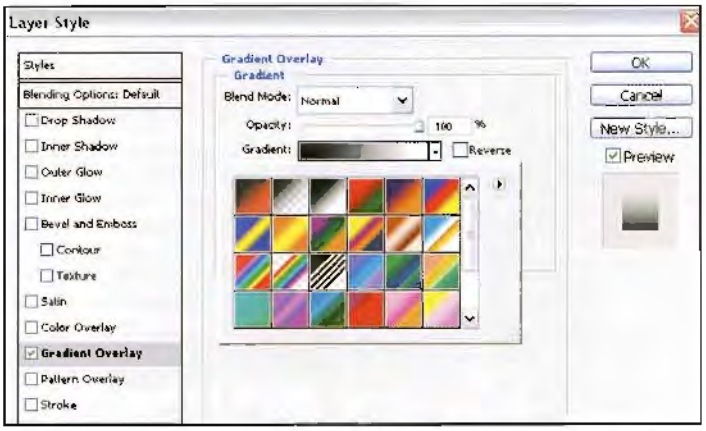
2 To enlarge the entire canvas go to Image/Canvas Size and tick the Relative box. I've extended my canvas here by 1cm but use any required amount.

The simplest border is created by filling the layer with a complementary colour. Use the colour picker to pick Foreground colour and apply it by going to Edit>Fill.

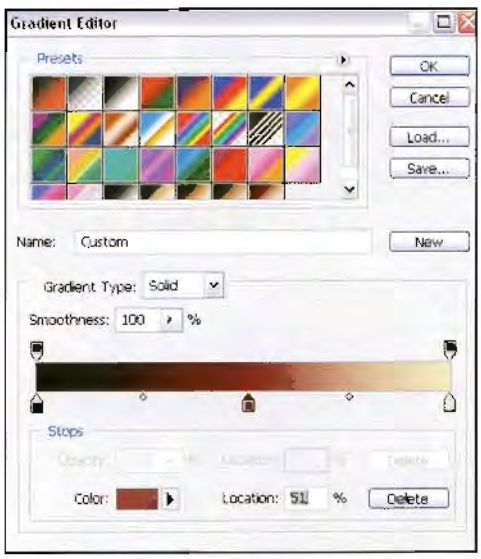


Layer Style Effects Once the new layer is filled with (any) colour you can add effects. The most flexible way it to open the Layer Style. Go to Layer/Layer Style/Gradient Overlay. Keep your Layer Style dialogue box away from your image so that you can see the effects you are creating.

The default Preset is a black to white gradient. Click on the little arrow next to the b & w Gradient and Presets will open.



You can use any of the Presets to add colours to your border layer but their colours are rather garish. To add your own colours click on any of the Presets to open the Editor.



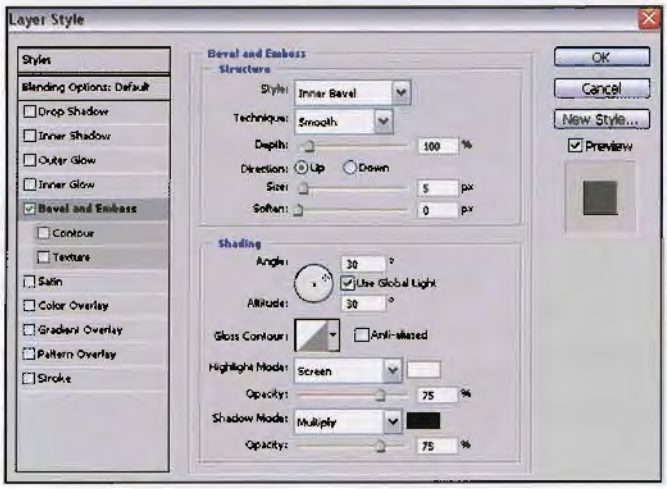
Click an existing colour Stop on the slider to open Colour. By Clicking on the actual colour box the Colour Picker opens up. Use the Eyedropper Tool to click on any colour on your actual image and it will be added to the gradient slider. Pick another Stop and add a second colour on your slider. You can pick as many colour Stops as you like.

To delete a colour Stop drag it down with your mouse or use the Delete button. To add a new Stop click with your mouse next to an existing Stop.

At this stage you can move the Angle needle to change the colour angles on your border. You can click Reverse to reverse your colours and additionally you can slide the colour Stops and Midpoint markers back & forth to move your colours around your border. Styles can also be added but Linear usually works the best. When finished editing the Layer Style will be saved on the new layer and can be edited later on. If you click the little arrow on the right hand side of the new layer on the Layers Palette you can see the Layer Style effects you have added – double click it and the Editor will reopen.

To separate the actual image from the background border layer a bevelled edge looks more effective than just a plain keyline. Activate the actual image layer and go to Layer Style>Bevel & Emboss.

Adjust the Angle to follow the natural direction of light in your image then you get a white edge where the light enters and black edge on the opposite side.



Simple: Bevelled edges and drop shadow effect
My Tulips image below has one of the simplest presentation effects. Use the extend canvas method in steps 1 & 2 and fill it with white. Then Bevel & Emboss the actual image layer (as above) in Layer Style and finally drop a soft shadow effect. Go to Layer Style and open Drop Shadow. Adjust in Angle the shadow to follow the natural light direction in your image. Adjust Distance, Spread and Size as much as required. Ensure Distance is more than the Size – otherwise you get shadows on all four edges. Adjust the Opacity to a low level – less than 50% gives a soft effect. You an add your signature and picture title below the image (and shadow) using the Type Tool.

Blurred border effect Copy your actual image. Select it with Ctrl+A, copy using Ctrl+C and paste Ctrl+V. Extend your canvas as described above in steps 1 & 2. Next make your copy layer active and use Image/Transform (Ctrl+T) and drag from corners to extend the copy image slightly over the edges of the new canvas.

Next go to Filter/Blur/Gaussian blur. I used 20 pixels of blur in my flower image below but use any amount to create a suitable effect.

To finish off add Bevel & Emboss effect to your original image layer as described above.

Brian Beaney FRPS has made remarkably rapid progess the photographic field. Early work with a plate camera i which he still owns. Brian joined the local Ipswich ca landscape cup in the second year. During that time he v studio taking wedding photographs. But it was a situatio story of his road to his Fellowship.

Sadly I declined a career in commercial photography when a position became vacant to run the reprographic studio of the printing company at which I worked. For the last forty years I have been engaged in repro and pre-press, including 25 years when I ran my own reprographic studio, The Printlab, serving the screen process and litho trade. Because of continuous deadlines and other commitments my creative photography was put on the back burner albeit just simmering. Nearing retirement I sold the business to a large group of printers who wanted a technical team to look after the repro and quality control of their plastic card division.

During the final run down to retirement I bought a Nikon F100 and scanner together with an Apple Mac with a view to gathering material for painting and digital imaging. Painting became very frustrating as my work did not match up to my quality control. However as I got deeper into Photoshop I was hooked. My repro skills of masks, colour matching, making selections and layering images made Photoshop easy to adapt to my needs. I decided to re-join the Ipswich Photographic Society but most important I joined the RPS and the Digital Imaging Group. I should have become a member when I was younger! It's one of the few regrets I have in life.

The F Panel Layout

My life now seems to have come round in a complete circle and I am almost back to where I left off. At last retirement came and I was able to move forward and start to create my own photographic art and also to pursue the road to the distinctions. With the advent of digital imaging I had been exploring a desire to combine art with photography and found by using my skill as a retoucher a style began to emerge. Using this approach I gained the L distinction and continued developing it for the A panel. After receiving encouragement from an exhibition judge that my work was up to F standard, I decided to prepare 20 prints and go for it.

I considered work in townscapes and landscapes but preferred the rivers and coastline. My personal challenge was not only to find a cohesive panel but one in which each picture was different and would stand up alone on an exhibition wall. My style was moving towards a stronger atmosphere with a much more detailed foreground. So a few early mornings and late evenings I started to gather the pictures.

The image which set the standard for me was ***Boat for Sale,*** below. For some reason the picture almost painted itself. It was taken about an hour after dawn, the tide had just gone out, everywhere was still and quiet as the three boats settled in the mud waiting to live again on the flood tide. The atmosphere had a strange timeless quality and could easily have been 100 years ago. It was this mood I tried to capture when I returned home with my state of the art raw file images. All the other pictures followed suit. I have to admit though it wasn't that easy: two pictures I overworked and had to start again (quality control stepped in again) and the picture ***Berthed in Mud*** opposite took three attempts to get the picture from my head onto paper. Most of the pictures took over 20 hours to complete plus extensive proofing. In my Intent I said: *It was my aim to produce images that have been digitally enhanced with light, mood and atmosphere that epitomise the peace and tranquillity of the heritage coast and rivers.*

I am delighted that the Society has awarded me a Fellowship for my style of photograph.

Fast Fellowship

from L to the coveted F status. But, says Brian, it was the culmination of a lifetime in the late fifties was followed with a Microcord twin-lens reflex and a Nikon SLR, all of mera club and won the beginner's cup in the first year followed by the prestigious as working for a silk screen printing company and also working weekends for a local which could not last and he had to choose one or the other. Here Brian tells us the

Getting the Buzz

Clive R Haynes FRPS is well known as a teacher of photography and digital imaging skills and for his panel-based print lecture Foto-Synthesis, co-presented with Martin Addison. He also gives workshops and teach-ins about Photoshop techniques. Regional Organiser for the Midlands RPS DI Group, Clive is a passionate believer that photography should communicate and that frequently the photograph is the stimulus and basis for a voyage of visual discovery. Clive considers digital imaging to represent an incredible leap forward in our ability to express our emotions and in this pursuit believes all techniques are artistically acceptable. Recent developments in Art Programs have greatly improved the means for our expression.

As photographers, digital imagers and artists, we constantly seek fresh ways to represent our individual 'vision of the world' and we endeavour to help our audience to be vividly aware of the scene that inspired us. Naturally viewers will formulate their own response but our viewpoint, image and treatment will have a profound effect upon their interpretation.

Digital imaging is a powerful means of expressing our visions, and the array of management tools and options for enhancement within programs such as Photoshop is quite incredible. Numerous filters may be added to these sets of tools, and artistic programs such as ***Painter*** can enhance our vision further.

Once in a while, an easy-to-use program or plug-in arrives which is simple and intuitive to use; yet offers a quick and satisfying method of working. Two such products are the creation of Cambridge based digital wizards, ***Fo2PiX***. These are ***Buzz*** and ***Art Master***. Both are available in versions ranging from basic to advanced/professional.

Buzz is a plug-in for Photoshop and other major imaging programs. It readily self-installs and appears in the filter menu. *Art Master* is a stand-alone, full program that may be used quite independently. In this first part of a two-part feature, I'm using *Buzz* and reviewing the way we can use its many artistic filters to advantage in our image-making. Next time I'll look at *Art Master*.

Access to 'Buzz' via 'Filters'

To access the Buzz menu, simply open an image and apply Buzz as a filter in much the same way as any other Photoshop filter.

Once a Buzz filter has been selected, a dialogue box, complete with a medium-size thumbnail view, opens, and depending upon the filter selected, various sliders and options also appear. The latest version of Buzz Pro 3 offers 22 standard filters, plus 25 pre-set stacks. The stacks are, in essence, pre-set combinations of filters that open as group to provide a starting point. The dialogue box that opens for each stack gives various levels of editing control.

Buzz filters are many and various. However, the common factor is that they have artistic intent. That is to say, the appearance of the image is altered in a way that tends to give an artistic impression. As in all filter programs, some effects are immediately appealing whilst others need to await the correct image for their most suitable expression to be apparent.

The 'initial' Effects List

Buzz filters are flexible and are designed to give control over the desired effect. For example, a basic filter such as Simplify has options for adjusting the Amount, Light or Dark areas separately, or both together by selecting Both.

A simple introduction to the artistic scope offered by Buzz is to use the Simplify filter that cleverly suppresses detail at various controllable levels yet retains edge definition.
My preferred way of using Buzz is to make a copy layer of the original image, then apply the filter(s) to it or to further copy layers. This enables the Buzz treated layer to be fully or partially combined with the underlying original (Background) image as needed. This combining is usually by the layer Opacity Slider, an appropriate layer blend

Typical, simple, two-layer arrangement

Buzz Layer & Layer Mask

Original Image (Background)

mode or by the application of a layer mask.
The following steps represent a typical workflow and use the image in the next column as an example:

Step 1 Open the image and make a duplicate/copy layer;

Step 2 Open Buzz via the Filters menu;

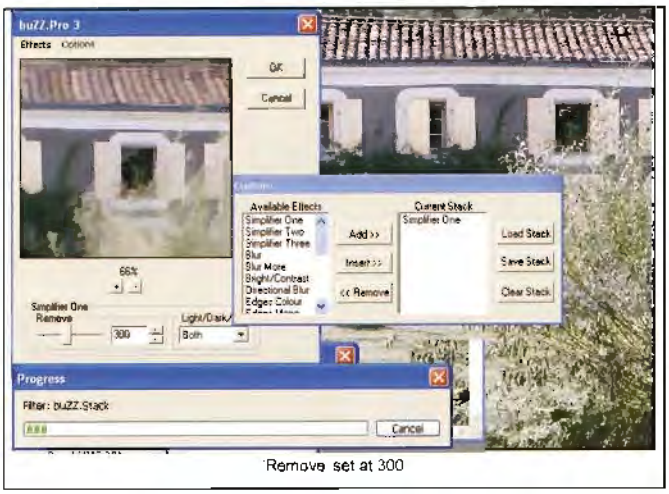
Step 3 Select a Buzz filter - in this case Simplifier One.

Step 4 Adjust the sliders to the level of filtration needed.

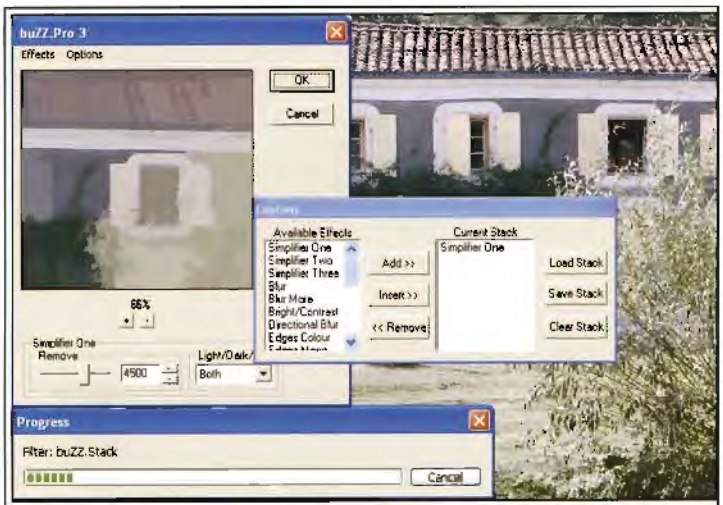
Original Image

After clicking 'OK' the process begins. The progress barometer indicates the successive filter steps applied.

In this example I show two different settings to give an indication of different intensities of filtration effect.



'Remove' set at 300



'Remove' set at 4,500

Note: The larger the file, the longer the computer will take to process the filter effect. Large files, say in excess of 15 to 20mb, can be slow to process.

Step 5 Blend, mask or mix the Buzz layer with the one below. In the example opposite a layer mask has been applied.

Original Image

Result at 'Remove' 300

Result at 'Remove' 4,500

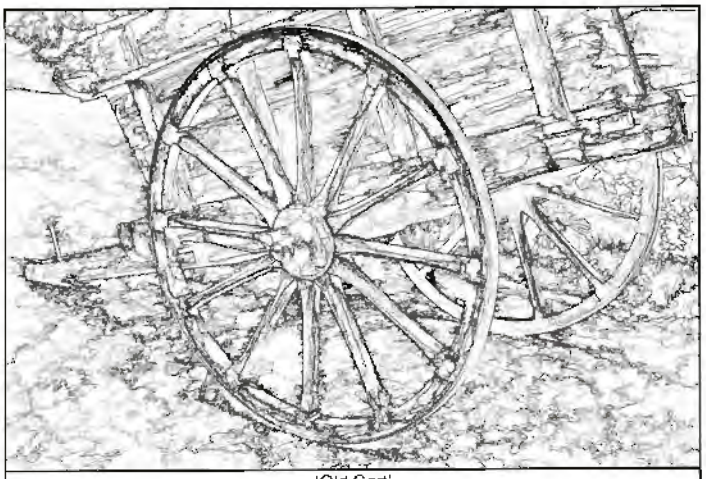
As one becomes more experienced using Buzz, more than one Buzz filter layer may be introduced, with the original image copied to each layer having a different simplification level or different Buzz filter applied. The image layers can be combined using an amalgamation of opacity, blend modes and layer mask.

'Buzz' Filtered 'Artistic' version

Let's look at another example, this time one of the Sketch effects. This filter is contained within the Buzz pre-set Stack of filters. This old cart has an antique and rugged character that could be emphasised by a sketch-like approach.

'Old Cart'
Original Image

The Buzz Stack was loaded and from the list Sketch 1 was chosen. The sliders were adjusted to provide an outline sketch effect with sufficient detail.



'Old Cart'
'Buzz' 'Sketch 1' filter applied

The layer containing the sketch effect was then combined with the original (background) image to create a more dynamic picture.

'Old Cart'
Combination of 'Buzz' 'Sketch 1' Filter & Original Image

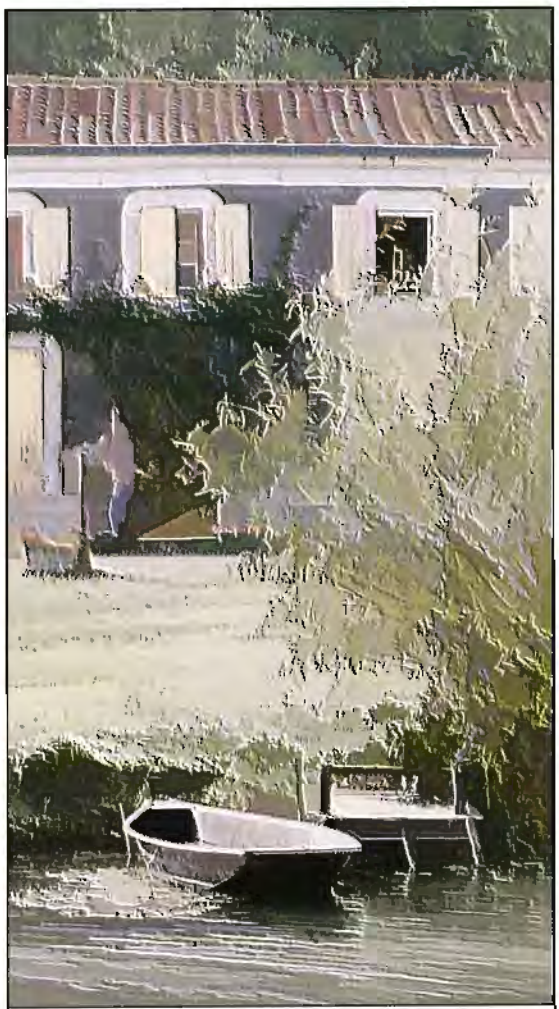
The Old Cartwheel shows another example of combining Sketch 1 filter with the original image, this time by using a Linear Gradient on the Layer Mask.

'Cartwheel'
Combination of 'Buzz' 'Sketch 1' Filter & a Gradient Layer Mask

Buzz can, of course, be used as a direct filter without any subtle bending. As an example this straight-on approach, I chose Palette Knife from the Buzz Stack.

Original Image

'Palette Knife' filter Dialogue Box

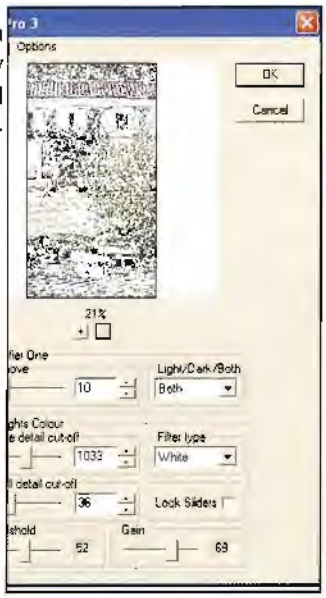


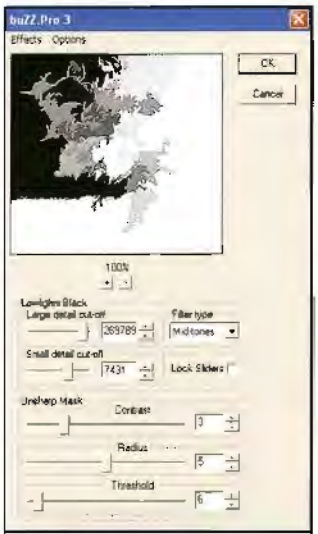
Application of
'Palette Knife' filter

The Art of Buzz The real art in using Buzz lies in the ability to combine different filter effects then, as required, subtly blend the original image information with the Buzz-filtered versions.

As an example of this more artistic approach I chose two filters from the Stack - Colour Patches 2 and Fine Scale Lowlights with each filter applied to separate copies of the original image. A Layer Mask was added to each layer to subtly reveal the filtered images.

Next, I used an art brush on a Layer Mask to delicately restore parts of the original image to produce the pleasing result below.





'Fine Scale Lowlights' filter Dialogue Box

Application of
'Fine Scale Lowlights' filter

Application of
'Colour Patches 2' filter

As you can see from the dialogue boxes for the two filters there is a high degree of control.

In brief summary, Buzz provides a set of filters that produce highly individualistic and artistic effects. Used subtly they can provide that extra level of expression to enable an image to communicate more effectively. Buzz is available in six versions each with different levels of filter complexity. For more information visit:
www.Fo2PiX.com

In the autumn issue of DIGIT I'll be exploring the range of features in Art Master.

Below: The finished article using a combination of Fine Scales Lowlights, Colour Patches 2 Filters and original image shown above in the left hand corner.

Combination of
'Fine Scale Lowlights',
Colour Patches 2' Filters
& Original Image

Digital 3D Special offer for DIGIT

Break out of two dimensions with help from Tony Shapps of the Widescreen Centre.

"Here's looking at you" in Virtual Reality

Firstly, what exactly do we mean by 'virtual reality'? Well, like the term 'A-V', 'V-R' is a much-abused description. But from my point of view it is trying to create the maximum visual reality using the latest present day digital techniques - and this is, and was, surely the aim of the inventors of photography.

However, anyone who has even just dabbled in digital imaging knows that it is now capable of doing even more than that, by creating images and worlds that don't even exist, except in the imagination and minds of their creators.

Stereoscopic 3D photography is as old as photography itself and has, until recently, remained very much a peripheral area often confined to purists arguing the minutiae of the subject, but now all that has changed. Digital has given 3D a boost that its earlier users could never have visualised.

The **Virtual Reality** that I am involved with would certainly not exist without computers and the ability that this gives for you to manipulate those images. But more then that, the great big multi-million businesses out there of Games Programmes have really latched on to it in a big way. In fact there are now well over **1000**** computer games (which are as far removed from those original 'space invaders' as we are from the paeolithic age). But, probably, one of the most effective of these is **Microsoft's Flight Simulator** programme. Fact is, the latter is a very serious business around which has grown up a whole industry with supporting magazines and is used by many pilots for checking out aircraft types prior to flying them.

But I digress. To use the three-dimensional content stored within these programmes you need to invest in a pair of **LCD Shutter Glasses**. These are supplied with the necessary software and interface that allows you to take full advantage of all this information.

ACHIEVING THIS WITH YOUR OWN IMAGES

However, one of the great things about digital is that you can also produce and create your own images both in width and in space. You can literally make your images jump out from the screen (an effect not to be over done). The computer screen simply disappears and you are truly looking through a window. There's a programme called **3D COMBINE***** which will let you do all this with great ease, and also let you do the impossible of creating a three-dimensional image from an original two-dimensional photo! You can also position subjects within your photo just where you want them, behind, at or in front of the screen.

Returning to our Flight Simulator for a moment, using the 'virtual reality' setting plus a little add-on gimmick called **TrackIR**, you can not only see around the cockpit of an aircraft, but can stand up or lean forward and look over the front of the engine, or glance at the ground way below simply by moving your head!

In fact, with the right digitally based equipment no visual effect is impossible to achieve. Here is an example taken from one of my stills images that can be viewed on a computer but which I have used ***3D COMBINE to convert to anaglyph*** so that you can see, at least, some of the effect. If you don't happen to have a pair of red/blue anaglyph glasses just contact me and I'll send you a pair. This same programme also offers numerous other

conversion possibilities (but more of that later).

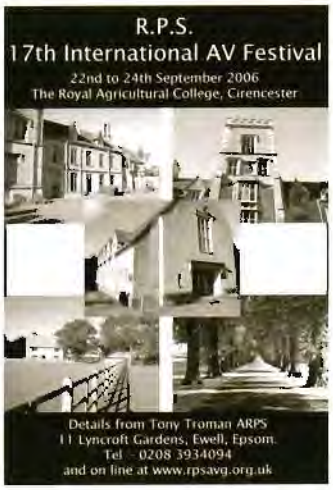
TONY SHAPPS
tony@widescreen-centre.co.uk

** I have a **pdf** available listing all those we've tested.

***Also available is a **FREE 21-day trial** version of 3D COMBINE so that you can see the potential yourself.

Audio Visual News

Hello Digit members



As a new comer to the Digital Group, I'm really looking forward to joining in with your activities. I'm still at the bottom of that steep learning curve with digital manipulation but I'm fascinated with it. I started image manipulation in the darkroom and ended up teaching GSCE Photography in a sixth form college. Even the less able youngsters got a thrill out of seeing their work materialise in the semi darkness. One young lad with an entreperial bent went to gigs and earned enough to buy himself a digital camera by processing pictures of his friends.

Today the darkroom at home is gathering dust and I've moved into a light bright room to do all the image manipulation I need. As Editor of AV News and AV Co-ordinator of Sheffield PS Audio Visual group, I'm involved with producing digital Sequences. I don't know how many of you are familiar with Audio Visual but I can tell you that it becomes quite addictive! If you haven't been to one of our events, do give pay us a visit. All our events are posted on the RPS website: ***http://www.rps.org/index.html***, and AV World ***web site: http://www.avworld.org/*** You can be sure of a warm welcome. You may even find something else to do with those digits!

Joan Horne ARPS

Digital Imaging A-Z by Adrian Davies ARPS

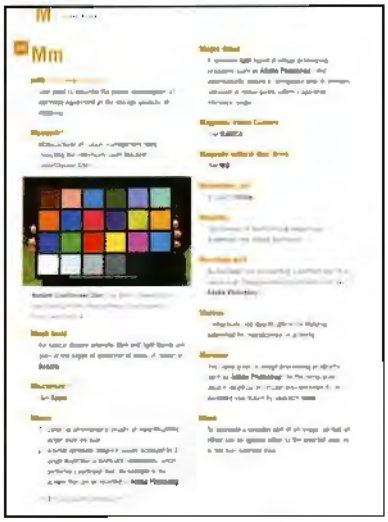
Focal Press ISBN 0 240 51980 9

www.focalpress.com £15.99

Confused by jargon or terminology? In this clear, easy-to-use book, DI Group member Adrian Davies explains all the jargon associated with digital imaging. In a fully revised second edition he offers a comprehensive range of over 1000 definitions and explanations.

But why, you may well ask, would a photographer want to leaf through a dictionary of terms used in digital imaging, except on rare occasions to look up a new phrase? Fortunately this nicely printed and clearly set out A - Z does much more: for example, it devotes three pages to Histogram, with full colour photographs and screen grabs to show how exposure problems can be detected and corrected.

Fully updated to cover all the latest techniques and technological developments, new extended sections cover all the important terms, including CCD, colour management, resolution, sharpening and compression. Illustrated throughout with high quality colour images, The Focal Digital Imaging A-Z is also supported by a constantly updated website, giving you information on other useful resources.



New Audio Visual date for your diary Sunday 29 October 2006 East Midlands AV Day at Narborough near Leicester Details from Brian Jeffs FRPS 0116 2778452

Rapid Sizing Reviews with Sid Pearce FRPS

When I first started using Photoshop, image interpolation used to be a no no word, at least as far as photographers. While interpolating downward was almost acceptable, to increase the size of an image was almost supping with the Devil. With Photoshop giving you five methods to interpolate the practice is now almost acceptable. While the quality of interpolation in Photoshop is good, the algorithms used by small software specialists are even better.

Genuine Fractals Print Pro This is an image interpolation system par excellence that can be used with Mac or PC. It works in RGB or CMYK and in either 8 or 16bit. Quality scaling up to 700% in either size or resolution is possible, with no visible degradation of the image. Available from: ***www.ononesoftware.com***

pxl SmartScale This image interpolation program works in a slightly different way to others and gives you control of sharpness, edge contrast and edge detail. Scaling can be up to 1600% without discernable loss of print quality. Again available from: ***www.ononesoftware.com***

As I have stressed on many occasions, always try out a demo on any software before buying. Even if you like it, the programme may not be compatible with your computer.

Alex Dufty's Book Review: *ILEX* Digital Studio

Photoshop Photo Effects Cookbook by Tim Shelbourne

Expert, beginner or somewhere in between. It doesn't matter at which level you are, this book is for you says Alex Dufty LRPS. This is one of those books that you keep handy by your computer for easy reference. The introduction suggests this is some sort of cookbook using recipes to cook up your version of a digital photo - and that's what it is. And it works. Alex shares his enjoyment of the book with us and shows some of his images based on the recipes.

None of the tutorials (recipes) are complicated; some are just two pages and very straightforward. There are some that need to be followed carefully and are four pages long, but the instructions are precise and even I managed to finish with a digital photo that looked good. And I am one of the beginners.

With some sixty good, easy to follow tutorials the book has an abundance of technical information. Divided into nine sections, the book starts with 'Ready to Cook', half a dozen pages of basic techniques to get the beginner started - Selections, Layers, Adjustment Layers, Layer Masks, Colour Fills and Gradient Fills, Sharpening and Lighting Effects Filters. All these are simple, straightforward instructions to help you before you start on the main part of the book. There were techniques in this introduction that I did not know or had simply forgotten.

The next eight sections range through graphic art and distortion, traditional photographic effects, texture and presentation to mention just some. I have to admit that I am very enthusiastic about this type of book which presents the tutorials in such a simple and well laid out form. There were effects that I have seen other people do extremely well. You say to yourself: How did they do that? Read this book and you will know, and maybe do it better.

Tonal and Colour Effects, one of the first in the book, contains a section on selective colouring and I enjoyed playing with some of my pictures. Here is an example, showing my starting picture.

You take a colour picture, duplicate the layer, desaturate it, make a layer mask, and paint on the mask with black and there you are. All this is explained in detail in two pages, with about nine steps, very straightforward and easy to follow.

Anyone will tell you there are many ways to do things in Photoshop but unless you write it down or do it regularly you forget. Keeping this book close at hand will show you some of them, even if you eventually finish up doing it your way.

Rather than giving you the full list of recipes, I have just picked out a few more to give you a flavour of the range that is available in this book. Looking at the Watercolour section, found in Graphic Art Effects, I thought I would try out one of my narrow boat pictures that I took on the Oxford Canal in April. Here's the original and my watercolour version. Perhaps not a competition winner but it shows what can be produced in 14 easy to follow steps over four pages.

Pencil Sketch was a more complicated tutorial but well worth the effort. I found a colour negative portrait that I had scanned in to the computer but never printed. Digging it out, I made a suitable copy and took about 45 minutes from start to finish in 13 stages over four pages. You could improve on that as you gain more skill but it is not difficult for the beginner if you take your time.

When I came to Creative Black and White, I remembered a shot of a Greek church taken in bright sun - aren't they all - which I thought might have more impact as a mono picture with some sepia toning.

I hope you will have as much fun 'cooking' as I did.

*ILEX Online Books special offer for DIGIT members. The online book seller ILEX have a special discount offer of 30% for readers of DIGIT. Simply put the code DIG773RPS24ilex in the box provided when making a purchase through the ILEX website - **http://www.ilex-press.com/publishing/home.php** to obtain the discount. For phone orders use 01273 487440.*

An opening for Apple: Aperture Version 1

Bill Henley LRPS has spent a week in London training as an authorised Apple trainer for Aperture. He used the program extensively and is extremely impressed. He will now be running courses at AT Computer in Tewksbury and by request. Here he gives us an overview of Apple's new offer.

Adobe has rushed out a beta version of Lightroom for Macintosh computers, responding to Apple Computers' entry into the market for professional photographic software with its Aperture program. Perhaps just the beginning of a battle between these two industry giants as Adobe works to defend its industry standard position? There is more information and a tutorial for Aperture on the Apple website and a beta version of Lightroom for the Mac may be downloaded from the Adobe web site.

Aperture is bound to influence the development of Adobe software and vice versa as each incorporates the winning ideas of the other. So, DI Group members will be interested in Aperture even if they are not users of Mac computers. Built on Apple's ColorSync, users may instantly create contact sheets, print locally or order colour managed prints online. Aperture requires a high end Mac but all the new Intel based machines should cope well.

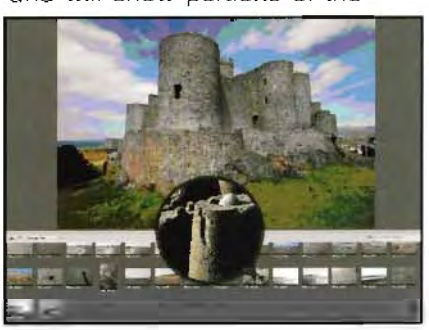
Aperture is aimed at professional photographers (fashion, wedding, sports, portrait, fine art, commercial and editorial); business-use photographers (estate agents, law, medicine) and hobbyists who want to work like the pros.

The aim is to save time and money by using Aperture's highly efficient, all-in one post production workflow. Aperture lets users work in the camera's RAW format without the need for intermediate conversions. The best shots may be found by using intuitive compare and select tools and a full wide screen workspace for comparing multiple images side by side. The original photos are not altered by a single pixel with all the adjustments being stored separately There are flexible organisational tools, comprehensive meta data support and powerful search tools.

The images are imported into an Aperture library with the facility to create 'vaults' on other disks to backup the library. There is no need to Save as since the original image is never changed. Even different versions of an image only require the one original image with consequent a saving in disk space and an ease of searching.

Aperture is not a competitor to Adobe Photoshop and indeed is designed to allow users to export their images to Photoshop for manipulation. The new program does include some manipulation features but they are limited to standard corrections and filters. But Aperture is certainly an alternative to Bridge. However, unlike Bridge all the images have to be imported into the Aperture program and stored in the designated folder and you cannot access other folders or files via the program It is therefore necessary to have a large disk in which to store all your images. The advantage is the great level of organisation that is then possible together with the ability to do very complex searches. The searches can employ the metadata and keywords. However, keywords only work if all the images are tagged and in a consistent manner. This is where Aperture facilitates the process by permitting the creation of a library of categories and keywords that may be easily attached to one or many images. Having entered all the data for one image that information may be "lifted" from the image and then "stamped" onto one or groups of images. Images may be automatically placed into stacks according to the time between the exposures. This easily groups a set of multiple exposures of the same subject and enables the best to be selected. These stacks are displayed on the screen in framed sets and it is possible to choose a "pick" image and to order the other stack images beneath it. The stack may then be collapsed to show just the "pick" image or expanded to show the entire stack. All the images are held in one image library but it is possible to create folders for groups of images and within folders you can have albums of images. Albums may be created automatically by setting criteria with the possibility of an image appearing in any number of albums if it meets all the various criteria. It is then possible to automatically create books, web pages and slide shows from albums using the templates included. Apple has the term "sharing" for the various forms of output. There is integration with music in Apple iTunes and simple one-click systems for writing to CD or DVD. The new iWeb allows instant creation and publication of web pages for subscribers to dot Mac. There are a number of other options using the "free" iLife software that comes with the Apple computer.

The images may be viewed as thumbnails with a slider to adjust the size of the images. A magnifying loupe may be moved over the thumbnails and will show portions of the image at 100%. It is therefore very easy to check the images for technical quality and content without the need to open them. Because the software has been programmed at machine code level to make the best use of the Mac OS X system everything is very fast. However, the specification of the computer has to be high for the program to even install.



RAW image files are recognised and all the basic manipulations of exposure etc are supported. The RAW file is never changed even if the image is cropped. The original is retained unchanged and the file tagged with the information about the changes made It is possible to create different versions of any image with different manipulations for varying purposes.

A useful book is: Getting Started with Aperture by Estelle McGechie, Peachpit Press ISBN 0-321-42275-9

New Digital SLR - NIKON D200

Nikon fan and professional advertising photographer Graham Whistler FRPS gives us his user view of the new DSLR and shares some of his first pictures.

Nikon's all new D200 10.2 million pixel DX CCD Digital SLR, the long awaited replacement for the D100, arrived in UK at the end of 2005. I was lucky enough to get one from Park Cameras in mid- Decemeber and this is a report of my findings so far. Much the same size as the now 3½ year old D100 it replaces and with a weight of 830g without battery, the new metal body is slightly up on the 700g of the plastic bodied D100. This gem of a camera fills an important gap in the Nikon Range. It is a natural upwards progression for users of the Nikon D70s or D50 and for those of us with Nikon D2X it is a first class back-up body, ideal for weekend or holiday use when it is great to travel light. At just over £1200 for the body only it costs a lot less than its nearest rival, the full framed Canon EOS 5D with body only cost of about £1900.

First impressions are of a high build quality, with a durable magnesium alloy body and chassis the camera feels very good in the hand. To withstand the stress of professional and advanced amateur use the D200 body uses the same weather sealing as its big brother the D2X. It has a much stronger shutter than the lower priced Nikons and should stand up to years of hard work. Sharing many other of the professional D2X's features this new camera pushes the specification of the medium priced digital SLR to new heights. The all new 10.2 million pixel DX CCD is only 2 million pixels less than the CMOS chip of the D2X. After two months of using the two cameras back to back I defy even the most critical user to see any major difference in the images from the two cameras. I tend to stick to low ISO settings and it is rare for me to go over 250 ISO. The one area that the D200 will score over the D2X is at 800 or greater ISO. The very low noise levels from the new sensor at extreme ISO levels are amazing. The D200 has an ISO range of 100 to 3200.

Comprehensive in-camera menus are quick and easy to set-up. The large bright 2.5in LCD monitor makes viewing images, menus, shooting data and histograms a pleasure. A great deal of research has gone into designing the new interface with a range of user controlled options to control nearly every aspect of picture taking. The less advanced user will still get good results with the camera as set almost out of the box. Colour space can be left at default sRGB setting for prints from the CF card direct by your local camera shop but advanced users who will work with images in Photoshop should set the camera at AdobeRGB giving a wider colour gamut. Colour mode options can be set for 1: Natural skin tones 2: Renders images with wider tonal range for high quality output 3: Setting for more vivid landscapes. Options 2 & 3 must be used with the AdobeRGB setting. In-camera sharpening can be set as required: I found the Normal setting to work well with most subjects giving good crisp clean images requiring little extra processing in Photoshop. Only very small amounts of USM were required for final file output from PS CS2.

The large clear viewfinder shows 95% coverage with dioptre adjustment - compared with 100% coverage on the D2X. The fixed screen has on-demand grid option, great when working with buildings to keep verticals in line. Auto focus is by 11 area user switchable spots. Focus is swift and most of the time very accurate but can be fooled by bright highlights, poor contrast or low light levels. Focusing is much better than its little sister the D70s but not quite up to the deadly accurate D2X. The all new 3D Colour Matrix Metering 2 is the same as fitted to the D2X and works as well. Images from camera need little exposure adjustment in PS, if anything perhaps one third of a stop underexposed, a good fault as blown highlights are rare. The camera also has centre weighted and variable spot meter settings as yet they remain unused as I find the Matrix works so well. Exposure modes are: program, shutter and aperture-priority with full manual as required.

The new battery is the EN-EL3e 1500mAh Li-ion similar in size and shape to the D70s battery but they are not interchangeable. It has a real time fuel gauge system revealing the percentage charge remaining and shots taken. Nikon claim 1800 shots per charge. Take this with a pinch of salt: with the recent cold weather and shooting NEF Raw images only I have been getting 150 pictures per charge, although Nikon do say NEFs use batteries much faster than JPGs. With a new camera I have been reviewing images and data on the LCD far more than normal. However in warmer weather and shooting JPGs 300-500 images per charge should be possible. As always I advise shoot NEFs for best quality and serious photography. The batteries re-charge in just over 2 hours and are small enough to have a spare in your pocket. This type of battery can take a top-up charge without damage. The optional MB-D200 battery pack can use a pair of EN-E3e batteries or six AAs.

The D200's all new 10.2 megapixel CCD measures 23.6x15.8mm and like the D2X has a x1.5 image size factor, so that a 50mm lens shows similar field to a 75mm lens on a 35mm film camera. The new optical low-pass filter is claimed to prevent moiré and colour fringing. The 4 channel sensor output enables the D200 to share the same high quality image processing engine as the D2X. NEF images from the D200 are about 15mb each giving 120 images on a 2GB CF compared with 99 NEF images from the D2X on the same card. Processed NEFs open as 16 bit 69mbTiffs in PS with all the quality and sharpness you will ever need for A3+ or even larger prints.

With the new DX wide angle Nikon high quality lenses the 1.5 factor is no longer a disadvantage and, as I have often stated, has very positive advantages. With full frame digital SLRs normal wide angle lenses have great difficulty with lateral chromatic aberration or colour fringing at the edge of field. Coma or oblique spherical aberration also causes smearing of point images into a comet tail with wide apertures. Vignetting or darkening at the corners is also a problem with full frame cameras. The Nikon DX $^{2}/_{3}$ sensor uses only the high quality axial rays or 'sweet spot' to give pin sharp images across the field. Images from the D200 are of the highest order and like the D2X to take advantage of this quality use only the best Nikon lenses. Very large prints are possible from both cameras.

Post production processing of NEF (RAW) images will require Nikon Capture 4.4.0 PC (4.4.1 for MAC) software but the latest version of Photoshop CS2 now has the latest RAW Plug-in version 3.3 with Nikon D200 NEF drivers. When up-loading the new drivers from Adobe take care to remove the old 3.2 drivers first from PS or the new drivers will not work and you will not be able to open D200 NEFs! Image quality from converted NEF files from both Nikon Capture or PS is of similar very high quality. I think that Photoshop CS2 works faster than Capture 4.4.0 and is less prone to computer crashes.

The camera has a very quick start up time of 0.15 seconds and continuous high speed shooting of 5 frames per second. Using SanDisc Xtreme 3 2GB cards 21 RAW NEF files (or 27 high quality JPG) can be shot before the buffer fills up and slows the camera down. Sport and wild life photographers will be very happy with this.

The new camera performs well with portraits, landscape and studio shots - opposite page.

This is a superb camera with many advanced features, a build quality to last and remarkable results that will appeal to professional photographers and serious amateurs. The nearly three times more expensive D2X has only fractionally higher resolution. The Nikon D200 sets a standard that will be hard to beat in the middle range of digital SLRs. I have yet to read a bad review on the internet or in the photographic press.

Go wide - for free: Getting started with simple Panoramas

Peter Gawthrop LRPS joined the RPS and DI Group in December 2004. He isinterested in using panoramas to capture scenes with a field of view beyond ordinary cameras. This article provides an introduction to simple single-row panoramas. Peter's work takes him to Australia where he found a moment to photgraph this example.
Peter can be contacted at peter@gawthrop.net.

When in Sydney, one of my favourite walks takes me from Berowra railway station down to Waratah bay. I don't think that a single picture can do justice to the scene, so I took five pictures and created this panorama from them.

My early naive attempts to create panoramas involved loading pictures into layers, shifting them around and trying to blend the edges; this takes a long time and results can be poor. Now I use stitching to create seamless panoramas.

There are many stitching programmes available. I use ***Hugin*** (***hugin.sf.net***) which is available (free of course) on Linux, Mac and Microsoft operating systems - just go the the download page. However I expect that the principles are the same for commercial programs. ***Enblend***, also available from the Hugin page, does a very nice job of blending the images, so download that as well.

Taking the Pictures

1 The individual pictures will form a whole, so camera settings should be the same for each picture: put everything, focus, aperture, shutter speed and white balance on manual and leave unchanged for every picture. Take a note of the focal length

2 Each picture must overlap the adjacent pictures by at least 25%. Using a tripod helps but is not necessary.

3 Try to avoid objects moving across picture boundaries.

4 Taking jpegs will do, but in this case the pictures were in Canon raw format and converted to 16bit tiffs using ***Ufraw*** (***ufraw.sf.net***) using the same setting for each picture.

Stitching the Pictures

1 Run Hugin. This will bring up the Images screen. Use the Add Individual Images button to load the images; make sure the first is the leftmost and the rest are in order

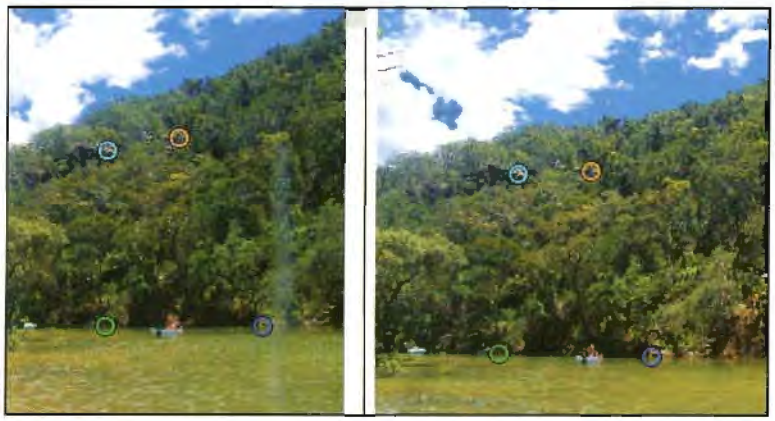
2 Use the tab at the top to access the Camera and Lens screen. Click on the first image and enter the focal length in the first box. This is expressed as the 35mm equivalent focal length, so I entered 28mm, not the actual 7.2mm of my particular camera. Tick the Inherit box to avoid doing this for each image. Check that the Degrees of view makes sense √ it is about 63 for me.

3 Hugin needs to know the centre and horizon of the panorama. Return to the Images screen. Click on the centre image and click Anchor this image for Position and Anchor this image for Exposure. Click on set anchor image, and a window pops up of which the illustration above is a part. Click to set the cross as shown; the critical thing here is to set the horizon correctly to avoid a banana-shaped panorama. Here I have chosen the far beach as the horizon.

4 Click on the Control Points tab to bring up that screen

where there are two identical versions of image 0 (the left-most picture) side-by-side. Click on the 1 above the right-hand image; you now have images 0 and 1 side-by-side.

5 The figure below shows four pairs of control points - that is, points in the two pictures which are the same. It is important that the points that you choose cannot move; for example: don't choose the boat or a cloud. Points are selected by first clicking on the left-hand picture followed by a click on the right-hand picture at about the same place. *Hugin* automatically fine-tunes the second point to match the first accurately; if this doesn't work, choose a more salient point. Four points is about right for this sort of picture. *Hugin* will choose points automatically, but this is not recommended as it might choose the moving boat or a cloud. Repeat for the other pairs. See illustration above.



6 Click on the Optimiser tab. Click on the Optimise now! button and wait a few seconds for *Hugin* to complete its optimisation. Towards the left of the upper toolbar is a screen icon representing Panorama preview; click on this and a new window appears. In the new window, click on Update and you should see the image at the bottom right. This is how *Hugin* proposes to stitch the panorama. Notice how it distorts the images to give the correct perspective. At this point, I often return and readjust the Set Anchor Image screen and repeat the optimisation (leave the control points alone.)

7 Choose the Stitcher tab to access that screen. Choose: Equirectangular, none and tiff in the various options. Tick the softblending box: this removes the visible joins which appear in the preview. Choose the pixel size of the panorama, the 'optimal' size is usually far too big. I chose 8000 pixels horizontally, but choose something smaller (say 3000) for a start. Finally, click the Stitch now! button. Go and have a cup of tea as this will take a while.

Finishing Up You should now have a tiff corresponding to the panorama previewed below but at a higher resolution and with nicely blended boundaries. Read this into your favourite program (I use Gimp, but PaintShopPro or PhotoShop or similar are fine) and crop off the rough edges. I was left with the problem that the boat had moved from the first to the second picture giving me one and a half boats in the final picture. So, clone tool to the rescue. As well as printing, the panoramas can be displayed as movies see: ***www.lightspacewater.net./Panoramas***. A lot of relevant information is gathered at the PanoTools wiki: ***www.panotools.info***

Creative Darkroom techniques: Digital Pseudo Litho printing

Bob Moore Hon FRPS is Director of the Jessops School of Photography and has been in the industry for over 30 years. He continues to be as passionate about photography as when he first started out and is a popular lecturer, last speaking to the DI Group in 2005. He has been awarded The Royal Photographic Society's Fenton Medal in recognition of his dedication and service to photography and he has served as President of the Society and also chair of the Visual Arts Panel for Associateship and Fellowship. Bob's images were created using Iridius Photoshop Actions TT-Lith Editable. The different tones and colours are achieved by using a Hue Saturation Adjustment Layer in Photoshop CS to simulate the toning of a lith print.

Lith printing has long been a popular technique amongst serious darkroom printers. Due to the unstoppable advance of the Digital Light Room and the consequential decline of home based darkrooms the technique has become something of a rarity. Unfortunately, there are now only a few, hard-core enthusiasts out there who still practise the technique which is a pity because it can produce some stunning images.

In the darkroom the process can be incredibly slow, particularly for an impatient snapper like myself! Processing times can vary between 5 and 20 minutes and sometimes even longer! Having said that, the process does have the ability to produce the most wonderful, continuous tones, dark shadows and subtle highlights with a range of interesting hues, especially when the developer gets older. Although I'm certainly not an expert, I have dabbled with the process and found the technique to be frustrating yet strangely addictive to get to grips with. You need endless patience and determination and you will rarely, if ever, produce consistent results but you can end up with something different. which could well catch the eye of the exhibition judges.

The basic process in the darkroom is relatively simple. A print is overexposed by 2 or 3 stops and then developed, by inspection, in diluted lith developer. Not all photographic paper is suitable. A sense of adventure, some experimentation and quite a bit of stubbornness on behalf of the printer is essential, not to mention a lot of time.

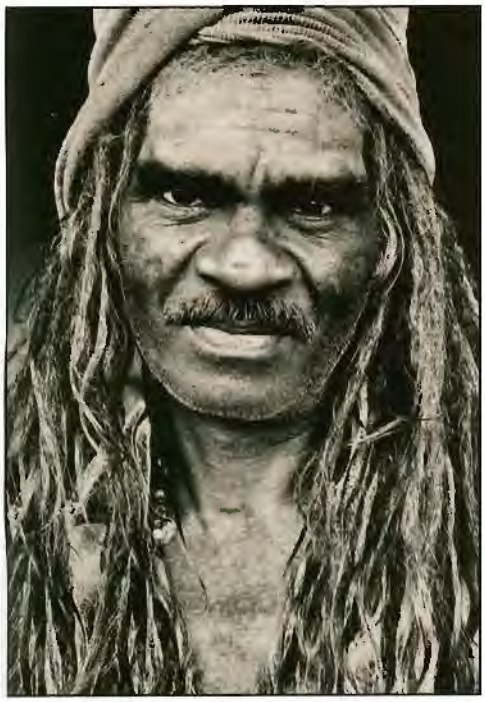
I think it's fair to say that I'm an obsessive print maker.

Abandoned Car by Andy Wharton ARPS. Andy helped Bob with the article.
This print won the best Mono image at the 2005 South Shields International Exhibition.

Rarely does a day pass by that I don't produce something or other. At present I'm using the impressive Epson R2400 printer which is ideal for producing high quality monochrome images. My once loved traditional darkroom has, I'm afraid, long since disappeared.

Since abandoning the darkness for a digital light room, I've experimented with various methods of trying to produce a lith print that looks like the real thing. I've tried just about every technique you can think of, and probably a lot more besides. Some have been more successful than others but in every case the journey of discovery has been part of the fun as well as the end results. It's the only way to increase your skills and, like in the darkroom, it's the adventurous who found these techniques in the first place.

I have found a number of web sites which offer information and downloads that are worth trying but in this article, I'll discuss just one of them - Iridius Photoshop Actions 1.1. Iridius Actions can be downloaded from ***www.iridius.co.uk***.



The full cost, at the time of writing, is £34. Over 90 creative Actions are included in the package ranging from soft-focus effects and cross processing to infra red and other black & white and colour processes. These Actions are compatible with Mac and PC versions of Adobe Photoshop 7.0 and above. Iridius Actions 1.1 are easily installed in Photoshop by following simple instructions.

So what are Actions? Well it's like using a tape recorder within Photoshop. To create an Action you start the recorder, carry out a set of steps to manipulate the image and then stop the recorder. You can then open any other image and replay the steps with that to apply the same effect. With pre-recorded Actions someone else has done all the hard work to develop and record the steps. You just need to open your image, highlight an Action and press play. It could not be simpler.

The Iridius package defines itself as: *A collection of more than 90 professional production and creative Actions that have been written specifically to streamline and automate repetitive tasks regularly undertaken by digital photographers.* And: *Written for photographers who have enjoyed years of experimenting with alternative printing and toning processes, this set of Actions reproduces fashionable and distinctive print finishes of the darkroom.* How well does it live up to its ambitious claims? I think that's up to the individual photographer to decide: one man's print is another man's disaster, but personally, I found the software to be very useful.

There is, of course, nothing new in the writing of instructions for a digital imaging technique - they can be found on almost every freebie digital CD and magazine on the market. However, the main benefit of using pre-recorded Actions is that once installed and available through Photoshop you don't need to get involved in the detail under the covers. Using Actions cuts out the need to follow what can be rather laborious and sometimes dubious instructions that are provided on the give a way CDs. Most of us have been along that route!

Iridius provide a number of Lith Printing techniques - Lith Portrait - Lith Landscape Warm - Lith Landscape Cool and Lith Editable. They all have their particular merits and all give creditable results. The Lith Editable Action has an advantage of giving full control over colour, shadow and highlight detail. It creates three adjustable layers which can then be used to adjust the contrast and colour, add grain and finally tweak up the final image.

On the face of it, the software takes care of the process and that's that. Not true! Each individual image will need to be adjusted within the process to suit the subject matter and the required effect. Like the darkroom process, it will require a level of experimentation, something which will take time but the results can be extremely effective.

It's generally thought that infra red images are ideal for lith printing. Iridius contains four Actions that can simulate the technique. My best advice would be to use a suitable image and experiment. If you like the result, follow it up by using a lith printing Action. Using a computer still doesn't quite replace the real darkroom print but it does get pretty close in assuming a character that looks impressively like the real thing.

Well, what do I think? Let's be honest, it's not lith printing in the truest sense of the word. It's a simulated, pseudo effect but it certainly looks like a lith print, and using a suitable paper, for example PermaJet Classic Portrait, it feels like a lith print. If you want to add an extra dimension to your black & white prints that will make them stand out from the crowd, why not give Digital Lith Printing a try? You may also help to improve the number of black & white images accepted for the Members' Exhibition.

Just a few Hints and Tips.

1 Choose your source image very carefully. Make sure it has good design elements.
2 Don't accept your first effort. Try different setting and carefully analyse the results.
3 Keep a record of what you have done. Just may want to reproduce a favourite effect.
4 Use a good quality printer; and ...
5 Experiment, experiment and experiment!

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And finally, when will you send us an article for DIGIT? Remember that everyone is learning and all experience is valuable. We look forward to hearing from you, by post to 1 Aldenholme, Weybridge, Surrey KT13 0JF or email to ***jbphotos@btinternet.com***. Thank you.

Jim Buckley LRPS Editor