DIGIT

Autumn 2005
No 28

In this issue of your magazine:

Blackstone Edge by Vincent Lowe ARPS

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From the Chairman

The Spectacular at Rugby is here again with two excellent speakers, trade stands, an instant exhibition of the prints you bring and a good probability of winning a major raffle prize. Apologies to those of you with other commitments on Remembrance Sunday but the venue is now heavily booked throughout the year and we had no choice of dates in the autumn. Every year your committee debate whether to continue with the Spectacular but it is difficult to think of a replacement for an event which attracts over 250 people and has such excellent support from the trade. Equally, it is very hard to decide to discontinue an event which has such good support. The challenge is to think of an alternative. Ideas please on a post card – or the email equivalent!

Although Rugby is easy to reach, understandably it is too far for some members. So why not have something similar near you? As starting point to make this happen we need suggestions for venues and a firm commitment to help with the local arrangements. It is your Group and can be what you make it.

Barry Senior FRPS

What's on Where: a selection
For full information visit the regional websites on the back cover and see the DIGIT website

DIG 2005 Exhibition

Having been to Scotland and the Midlands, it can still be seen at: Kingswood Photographic Society, St Barnabas Church Hall, Warmley, nr Bristol on Friday 30 September 7.30 pm for 7.45 pm. Details from John Long ARPS Tel: 0117 9672231 Email: *johnlong@lineone.net*; and Harrow Art Centre, Hatch End, London NW 1-12 November.

Sunday 30 October: East Midlands Audio Visual Seminar

Do you take digital photos, use PicturesToExe or dabble with linking images with music? Want to find out more about digital AV? The Narborough Parish Centre, Narborough, Leicester (3 miles from J21 M1/M69) 10.30 am to 5.00 pm. Colin Balls FRPS and Keith Scott ARPS. Contact Brian Jeffs FRPS, 32 Parsons Drive, Glen Parva, Leicester LE2 9NS. Tel: 0116-2778452; Email: *brian-jeffs@tiscali.co.uk*

Sunday 13 November – Spectacular 2005

How the last year has flown. It only seems a short while ago we were enjoying Ian Bateman's and Steve Caplin's lectures and here we are looking forward to The Digital Imaging Group's SPECTACULAR 2005. This year is not to be missed with two top class speakers as well as a wealth of trade stands showing us all the latest and best in Digital Imaging. We are grateful to Malcolm Cartwright of Jessops for organising the trade stands and for getting them to part with the fantastic prizes they give for the raffle.

The Speakers are Martin Addison FRPS, whose picture The Eye won a Ribbon at this year's exhibition. He has just produced an excellent book on Painter1X - *Painter 1X for Photographers*. Those of us that have used Painter in the past know what a fiendishly difficult program it was. Painter 1X is much better and Martin explains it all in an easy to follow step-by-step fashion. If you have never tried Painter it can produce lovely painterly images from your photographs and is a complementary program to Photoshop.

Adrian Davies, our other excellent lecturer, is Deputy Head of Arts, Media and General Education at North East Surrey College of Technology, where he has introduced various courses on digital imaging. He writes regularly for a number of magazines and speaks at various conferences and exhibitions, as well as being an active wildlife and natural history photographer.

I do hope to see you there: it is the highlight of the Digital Imaging Group's year and well worth the effort of getting to Rugby. The Benn Hall is five minutes walk from the town centre with easy access from the M1, M6 and M40. Please use the special insert in the magazine to order your tickets.

Glenys Taylor ARPS

20 December Good Picture 2005

Imaging Science Group of the RPS meeting at University of Westminster, Regent Street, London 10 am to 4 pm. Ticket £45: Concessions £25. Dr Mike Christianson Tel: 0208 424 5774. Application form from *www.rps-isg.org*

DISTINCTION SUCCESSES We are delighted to congratulate the following DIGIT members who have recently gained distinctions. If we have missed your name from the RPS records, sincere apologies and do please let us know of your successes. It is good to see Greece featured in this group as well as the UK.

ISQ Level 3: Antonis Karydis

LRPS: Phillip Barker; Roger Barker; Christine Carr; Paul Cremer; David Dunn; Peter Gawthrop; Philip Hack, I McIntosh; Vikas Monawer; David Naylor; Alan Pearson; David Shortland; Paul Walker

ARPS: Andrew Bradford; Martin Elder; A W Milne; Tony Poole; Claire Howarth; Terry White

FRPS: June Cook; Andrew Gagg; Peter Stubbs; Keith Suddaby

Digit is the quarterly magazine of the digital imaging group of the Royal Photographic Society. We welcome contributions from all members on any aspect of our special interest. Please send all contributions – articles, photographs, comments – to the editor, Jim Buckley LRPS at *jimbuckley.baltic@btinternet.com*

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Making and Viewing 3D Pictures

Ian Watt ARPS hopes members were tempted to follow up Clive Haynes' introduction to 3D in the December 2003 DIGIT and enter a new world of 'solid' photography. Although you have just missed The International Stereoscopic Union's congress, the practical tips and methods for viewing the results, and the references, will help those exploring 3D photography. Ian has practised pictorial photography as a hobby, and applied photography in his work in electron microscopy. A common add-on technique in both fields has been the employment of stereoscopy to portray depth information in photographic and microscopic subjects. More recently digital imaging has become another useful technique, making stereoscopic manipulations much easier than previously. Ian is UK Representative for The International Stereoscopic Union.

Stereoscopic photography can be both fascinating and satisfying, especially when the experiences can be reliably shared with others. It is a many-facetted and continuously developing technology and Clive was naturally able to deal only with a few aspects of it in his article. I should like to add one or two extra details to his account, written from the viewpoint of a regular stereo worker who has found the manipulation of stereoscopic images very much facilitated by digital image processing.

First, some pointers on acquiring images. The sequential technique Clive describes for stereo image acquisition can be a convenient introduction to the techniques - I started that way myself - provided there is no movement in the subject. To cope with a wide range of subject types the stereo base, or horizontal separation between the two camera positions, is usually calculated to be about one thirtieth of the distance to the nearest part of the subject (the one-thirtieth rule). Thus, to make a stereo image of a flower head from 30 cm range, a camera movement of 1 cm would be enough, with the lens stopped down as far as practicable. Having the camera on a tripod-mounted slide bar is highly recommended for such a situation.

If there is movement in the subject the two images of a stereo pair must be recorded at the same instant. Either a multi-lens stereo camera should be used or two cameras end to end on a bar, with the shutters synchronised. An alternative solution is to use an attachment on a single camera which by the use of mirrors places half-frame images from two viewing directions side by side on a single frame of film.

***Second, how can you best view in 3D?*** With the stereo pair recorded, the requirement is to present the two images in a manner from which the brain can readily reconstruct the scene in 3D. This is the crucial turn-on or turn-off point for the aspiring stereo worker! There is a confusing variety of methods available for prints and slides. The essential requirement for any procedure is that each of the observer's eyes sees

Simple viewer for side-by-side prints up to 60 mm

only the appropriate left or right eye image, at infinity or a convenient viewing distance. An optical aid can use prisms, mirrors, lenses or a projection system to create this condition, starting from a pair of images in either side-by-side or over-and-under configuration, as slides, paper prints or images on a computer monitor.

The most effective way of showing stereo pairs to an audience is by projection on to a silvered screen, using plane polarised light to label the two images. For personal viewing a simple hand-held viewer will enable each eye to see its appropriate image. Popular print
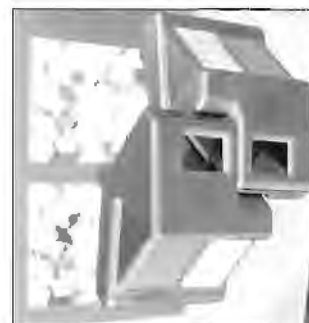
View Magic viewer for over/under prints

viewing techniques in stereoscopic societies use either side-by-side prints on a card (9 x 18 cm) for Holmes or StereoAids viewers or over-and-under pairs (10 x 15 cm) for the View Magic viewer.

The alternative is to combine the two images in one red/blue, red/green or red/cyan print (the anaglyph) as described by Clive Haynes; there is then no size limitation and no lenses to look through – only two coloured filters – but no natural full-coloured images either! My own early days in stereo included working with micrographs from electron microscopes, when the images were greyscale by nature and ideal for anaglyph presentations.

Third, sources of stimulation and specialist knowledge. There is a grave danger of being put off stereoscopy as a result of working in isolation, and it can be inspirational to sample the results provided by photographers who specialise in stereoscopic techniques. The Stereoscopic Society (***www.stereoscopicsociety.org.uk***) invites visitors to attend its meetings, held monthly in London and Coventry; they also hold a three-day annual Convention. The International Stereoscopic Union (***www.isu3d.org***) has members worldwide and holds a world congress in a different country every other year. The latest was at Eastbourne in September 2005. Both of these organisations produce their own, very different, quarterly magazines with information about what is going on in the world of stereoscopy and have

ScreenScope viewer for side-by-side view of larger prints or screen images. With the computer program 3D Viewer (www.stereoaids.com.au) it is possible to zoom into selected regions of the image, still retaining the 3D effect.

circulating postal portfolios. The website ***www.stereoscopy.com*** is very informative on many facets of stereoscopy and has two freely downloadable ready-made programs for creating anaglyphs. Finally, the computer program 3D-EASY (***www.3d-easy.de***) can be recommended for allowing stereo pairs to be input, adjusted and printed out in any of the formats mentioned earlier, as well as providing the means of combining, printing and viewing stereoscopic images from up to ten sequential frames by the lenticular and barrier viewing methods – but that is a much longer story!

THOSE WERE THE DAYS!

Early days with the twin Carousel projectors and an Imatronic dissolve unit

***Tony and Marjorie Furmston FRPS became hooked on audio visual back in the 1970s after seeing Pollock's Peepshow at Dewsbury town hall. In 1989 they were awarded a Joint Fellowship (the last one ever awarded). Here they share some memories of those early days of AV. The way ahead is digital say Tony and Marjorie.***

Digital AV today

We have enjoyed thirty years of making sequences from coloured transparencies with Tony's vast library of records, now superseded by CDs, providing suitable music. Unfortunately major heart surgery in 2001 meant the end of lugging heavy equipment all over the country. Each Carousel projector itself was over the weight limit allowed by Tony's doctors. So what next? Digital AV was in its infancy
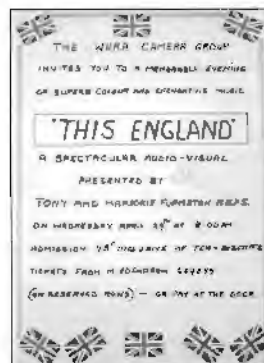
Hand made poster announcing an early show

and we settled on Pictures to Exe realising the potential. But what about all those thousands of slide that would have to be scanned? We wisely decided not to look back, and recall learning digital imaging with Barrie Thomas – we hired him for a joint day of tuition at home! Now we realised that everything was possible and we could make the sequences we had always wanted to.

Digital distinctions Day at Smethwick on 19 June 2005

Graham Whistler FRPS demonstrates in the studio session

Members and guests enjoyed a great day at this workshop thanks to all the hard work of Glenys Taylor and her team. It was a pleasure to see so much excellent work displayed around the Smethwick Club by those who had gained distinctions, and to see several projected including very clever audio visual sequences, masterminded by Maureen Albright.

Graham Whistler's studio session taught us a good deal about lighting and we were fortune

Jane Moyle LRPS at work in the studio session

to have the family and their eggs as well! We all got good shots but the editor's choice for pride of place goes to Clare Whistler's eggs shown below.

Guy Cowan

Guy Cowan stood in at the last moment for an indisposed speaker and was an energetic presenter who provoked us to think outside the box. Although you should bear in mind that his website, **www.etipsntricks.com**, is still very much in development and has limited material, he has a special offer for DIGIT members at the moment. See the spring issue of DIGIT for more details or Guy's website.

Eggs in One Basket by Clare Whistler LRPS

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The Wizard of Oz

Transform Again ... and again, and again

Always a tremendously energetic and knowledgeable contributor to the DIGIT Folio, Tony Healy ARPS lives in Sydney, Australia. He has been taking nature photographs for almost 50 years and this was the subject of his ARPS, encompassing animal, vegetable and mineral. Tony says he specialises in the less obvious creatures: Everyone notices an elephant but it takes a bit of effort to see a jewel beetle! He has illustrated two books - Australian Insects in Colour and Australian Crustacea in Colour, out of print now but available on Amazon. Tony has just satisfied one ambition: a visit to the Galapagos Islands. Fantastic, a natural history Aladdin's Cave he says. Here he shows us a technique to make wizard images.

One of the features in Photoshop that can create extraordinary images from even the most mundane of subjects is the Transform Again command found in the Edit menu. The steps required to do this are very simple:


The original

1. Open a new file in Photoshop. For practice keep the resolution small. Start with say 8 x 8 inches with a white background. Later you may find a transparent background useful if you decide to drag it onto another layer.

2. Open the image you want to work with and drag it onto the NEW file. You want some space around your image on the background so sit it in the centre.

3. Duplicate the new layer by dragging it down to the duplicate icon in the Palette menu. You now have a background layer, layer 1 and layer 1 copy, as shown below.
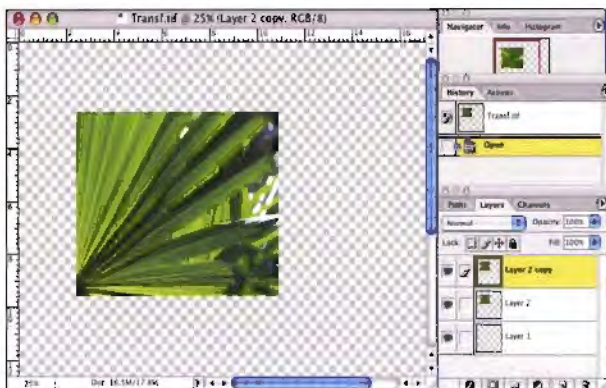
4. With Layer 1 copy active go to Edit >Transform or use keystrokes Cmd-T (Mac), Ctrl-T (Win). You will now see a frame appear around the image with handles in each corner and a centre spot.

5. Hold down the shift key and use one of the corner handles on the Transform frame to reduce the size of the image (say about 10%). Next place the cursor just outside one of the corner handles and it will turn into a double headed arrow. Use this to rotate the image clockwise on top of the Layer 1 image. Place the cursor inside the transform frame and move the whole frame a bit to the right and down. Press Enter to apply the command.

6. At this stage the Transform move is in memory and still active. You now want to Transform Again. There are two optional keystrokes for this: either

a Shift-Cmd-T (Mac) Shift-Ctrl-T (Win); or

b. Shift-Opt-Cmd-T (Mac) Shift-Alt-Ctrl-T (Win)

I used the latter. Now just keep repeating the key strokes and the image will keep repeating itself. When you have it in the form you like you can crop it, copy it, flatten it, add a fill to the background, drag it to another background or/and add a border. There you have your new image.

You can make some variations now. In step 5 with the Transform handles showing you can move the centre point around the inside of the Transform outline - see next page. This repositioning will make the repeat images rotate on a new centre and create a different swirl. This must be done BEFORE using the double-ended arrows to rotate the image. It is
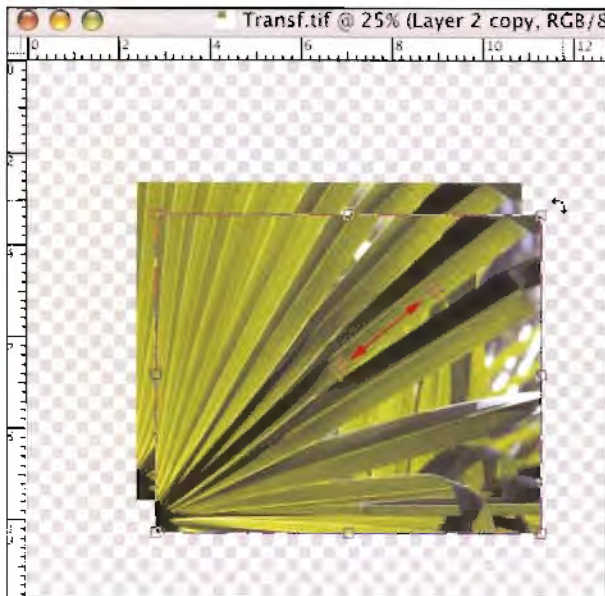
A variation

best done after you have resized and repositioned the image only. Should you decide not to resize the image but just move its position you will create a different rotation pattern. If you combine both these settings you will create another set of variables.

Be aware that very minor repositioning of the first Transform command can make large differences when the Transforms are

extrapolated. Therefore if you want to create an exact copy of an image with higher resolution using the original image it is best to record it in Actions (Window>Action) before the first Transform. The Action palette can also be accessed with the History palette. If you do not wish to keep the Action file you can always delete it.

Flight. An image not resized - only repositioned

The Transformed Image

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Nikon D2X New Pro Digital SLR

Graham Whistler FRPS, a professional photographer with extensive digital experience, is impressed by Nikon's new flagship

I am now nearly six months into using the new camera, with its all-new 12.4 mega pixel CMOS sensor. After nearly four years of using the D1X my expectations were high: Nikon's new flagship camera has not disappointed. I can find little to fault the performance of the D2X: image quality is stunning and the amount of fine detail captured will amaze even the most critical photographers!

The robust camera body handles very well, is extremely responsive with zero start-up time, excellent write times (I am using 2GB Lexar x80 speed cards) and very intuitive controls. The new 11 point auto focus system is lightning fast with AF-S lenses and works well even in very low light. High speed continuous shooting even with 12.4 mega pixel RAW images is at 5 fps with up to 17 consecutive shots possible. The D2X also has a unique high speed crop mode allowing 8 fps and 29 consecutive 6.8 mega pixel RAW images.

As an advertising and commercial photographer image quality is far more important for me than high speed continuous shooting. Nikon's all-new CMOS sensor delivers exceptionally pure colour rendition, wide tonal range and very clean image processing with almost no digital artefacts. The new improved 3D Colour Matrix Metering System works very well but I find it underexposes by about half a stop most of the time. Not a bad fault as burnt out highlights are rare with this camera and the exposure can be easily corrected in Nikon Capture 4.3 with no loss of quality. There is little or no image noise at 100 - 300 ISO and only very slight noise in the shadows at 400 ISO. Images at 400 ISO are still very good and will produce high quality A2 or larger prints. I have not used the camera beyond 400 ISO - it is very rare for me to need more than 200 ISO - but some reviewers say image noise is quite high at the higher settings.

It is not all good news. I miss the IEEE 1394 FireWire connection of the D1X and find the USB2 works much slower; and with much larger files sizes (NEF RAW files are 20mb). downloading a full card of 99 images takes nearly 20 minutes. I enjoyed using my D1X

Studio photograph with D2X and 60 mm Macro lens Graham Whistler FRPS

connected direct to the computer for studio work with RAW images opening in Nikon Capture in less than 6 sec. Now the 20mb D2X RAW images take over 1.25 minutes to open via USB2 directly connected to a very fast Dell laptop PC with the latest version of Nikon Capture 4.3. Even processing loaded RAW images in Nikon Capture is slow. I hope Nikon will address this problem very soon as these new cameras with large high quality files need speedy post production processing to cope with a busy photographer's work flow.

Nikon have retained the 1.5 factor sized sensor and not been tempted like Canon to go full 35mm frame size with the D2X. Full frame sensors may be the digital photographer's dream but they do place much larger demands on the lens. Nikon, by using the central 'sweet spot' strategy, are able to produce a new range of smaller (lower cost) very high quality DX lenses. Reviewers have said that there is little to choose between images from the D2X and the full frame Canons. However there is a major cost advantage: the new Nikon at £3500 body only is a full £1500 less than its Canon full frame rival.

The D2X has many other advantages but one I value highly is the greatly improved lithium-ion battery power. With my D1X in a busy day I could work through three batteries. The all new smaller lighter batteries last for several working days and do not develop memory faults. The new much larger 2.5 inch LCD monitor gives improved sharpness and images can be reviewed almost as you take them! Out of the box I found pictures looked a little over-exposed but later proved to be slightly underexposed when opened on the computer. I turned down the LCD brightness and am now able to get a very accurate review of my pictures as I shoot. In bright sun the image can still be hard to see but use of the histogram helps greatly. In-camera menus are quick and easy to use and custom settings can be created and stored. (I have created an exact colour white balance for my studio flash and store it in one of the preset memories.) The extensive system options including the new WT-2 wireless transmitter and GPS systems will be of interest to some photographers as will the high speed shooting.

The 20mb RAW files open in Photoshop CS2 as 16 bit 70mb Tiffs. This size is more than large enough for 95% of my work as most clients are happy with A4 300dpi 8 bit 23mb files. At A4 size it is not all that easy to see the full advantage of the D2X with its 12.4 million pixel sensor compared with the 5.7 million pixel sensor of the D1X but once you go larger or start serious cropping the D2X wins hands down. You do need to work with the very best quality Nikon lenses to take full advantage of this camera's high resolution.

Troy   RPS Workshop portrait

D2X 70 mm AF-S Lens and Studio Flash

For me it is also the pure clean quality, colour and sharpness of the images. This is one of the finest cameras I have ever used. The no compromise fully viable professional digital SLR from Nikon is here at last. You need never shoot film again!

How June Cook became Top Dog with her F Panel

Little did I imagine where a spontaneous trip to a dog show at the NEC in Birmingham in December 2000 would lead me. Having taken voluntary redundancy from working as a PA to consultants in Public Health Medicine, making a trip to randomly photograph dogs and sending the pictures to their owners to find out if they wanted to purchase them seemed a good way of trying to bring in income for my new part-time career in photography.

One of the breeders at the show, Dorothy Bridge, who also happens to live in Gloucester (and who later became my mentor), rang to say that she was delighted with the three photographs she had received. She said she ran a 'ring class' and wondered whether I would agree to take pictures of the owners' dogs one training evening. Not a problem. Why should there be when there were only twenty-seven dogs to photograph?

Apart from one large strong lively dog pulling his way through the portable studio lighting and wires, and a nervous Borzoi wetting himself over the base and backdrop, the evening went remarkably smoothly.

One sitting led to another and as new puppies came along, so did more orders. This progressed to dog shows, racing Afghans and whippets, and police dog handlers at work with their dogs. Not bad going for someone who is cat mad and has never owned a dog herself.

It soon became evident that there are similarities between dogs and human beings when it comes to portraiture. The end result can be flat and uninteresting unless the attention is roused. Mentioning 'walkies', 'cats', squeaking a toy or even the photographer making whining noises can bring about a bright alert look and perk up the ears (talking about dogs, not humans). Then there are the ubiquitous hanging tongues and the problem of what to do about them: amazing how effective a squirt of lemon juice can be!

With the studio sittings, the more time the dog could be given to settle down, the better. However, the easiest models were the ones who came fully obedience trained, fully groomed, had clear young eyes and 'appeal'. Surprisingly, one of my most successful models turned out to be a porky wrinkly-faced pug called Elliott, so it didn't have to be a graceful Afghan or a pretty beautifully groomed Shih Tzu! And the unstinting help from friends and dog owners was a true gift, as the images would have been impossible to achieve without them.

One evening a week was spent with my friend Malcolm getting to grips with the basics of Photoshop, poring over exercise books and brainwashing ourselves with CD tutorials, whilst endless cups of coffee went cold. Oh, the joy of watching as the print appeared from the printer. Okay, so it was garbage out at that stage, but it was magic all the same. Two days' tuition followed from my idol, the Adobe Photoshop guru, Adi Sethna, and he advised us to join the Midlands Digital Imaging Group, which we did. Due to the top class lecturers engaged by the Group, we achieved a level of control over our images we had never experienced before. This also led to me teaching Photoshop myself, which I still do on a one-to-one basis.

Using the Epson 1270 and 1290, a variety of papers were tested and finally Permajet Papyrus was chosen, which tended to bring out the dimension of quality being sought from the dogs' coats. The camera used was a Nikon D100, with a 2.8 Sigma 24-70 mm lens.

Dorothy Bridge, apart from providing a continuous stream of dogs to photograph, consistently encouraged me with the words: 'You don't know where this will lead'. 'But I don't want it to lead anywhere – I am winding down, not up'. 'Doesn't matter, it will still lead you somewhere whether you like it or not'. I didn't take her seriously, but she proved to be right as it led me to the unthinkable, unreachable, incredible, quite unattainable 'F'.

June's Panel itself and a selection of images are on the facing page.
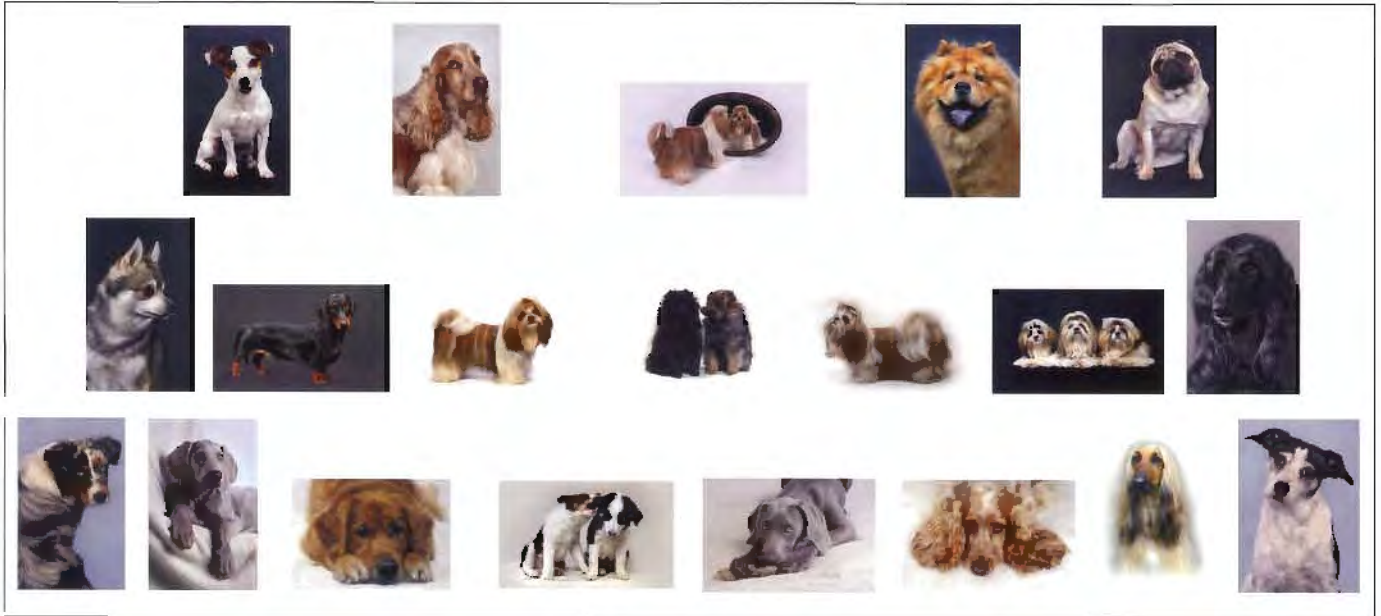
Double Digits

Regular Folio contributors, Guy and Paula Davies, both LRPS, are keen photographers using Nikon D70 cameras. Digital capture releases inhibitions and many more photographs are taken. They both freely admit though that this means more go into the recycle bin! They took up photography seriously on joining a camera club in 1988, shooting mainly landscapes. Now retired and living in North Yorkshire, their styles have diverged and Paula has developed an imaginative, artistic style, concentrating more on close-ups and intimate landscapes, whilst Guy still concentrates on the broader open views.

You've heard it said before, haven't you? "We go to the same places together and take pictures, but end up with quite different results." Well it happens to us too. Of course, sometimes we do stand side by side and come away with almost identical shots, and then it is a race to be the first to make a print, because whoever is first claims the use of that shot in the next exhibition or club competition. Not that we compete against one another very much really, because we seem to be developing our own separate and quite distinctive styles.

Let's take a look at the two styles, bearing in mind that we are usually never far apart when taking pictures.

Paula has developed an eye for intimate details in the landscape which probably started on a holiday at Lakeland Photographic Holidays. We were going to St Bees for some photography and on the way we stopped at a small church right on the coast. The church was built of large sandstone blocks and the wall facing the sea was very weathered and worn. The faces of some of the blocks were weathered into interesting patterns and Paula instantly got to work. One of her pictures from there is **Sandstone Landscape No 1**, which shows the face of one block only about 18 inches wide.

Arriving at St Bees, the weather looked threatening but the light was good. Paula went out on the beach with John Gravatt and while they were out a squall blew in and the heavens opened. It was so bad they stayed put and when it cleared she decided to photograph the rocks they were standing on. The result was **Rock Sculpture** amongst others. The rest of the party, including me, had weathered the squall cowering behind a bus shelter!
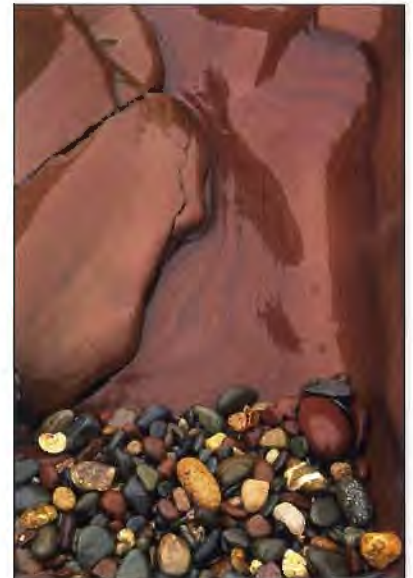
Her other developing passion is to make artistic and impressionistic pictures, usually from flowers. This started several years ago with some shots of tulips, and her latest flower picture is **Study in Violet**.

She produced a different sort of flower picture recently. We had been on a camera club 'evening out' to photograph bluebells in Newton Woods close to where we live. Bluebells are not easy but she saw a picture and was able to bring out the delicate feeling of the flowers, whilst at the same time hiding all the dead bits

that seem to get mixed up with them. The result was **"Bluebell Glade"**.
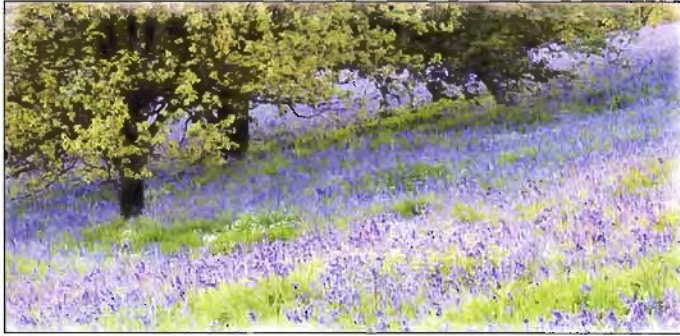
So what about me? The seaside town of Saltburn is not far away and, although it is on the north-east coast, the lie of the coastline is such that in high summer the sun sets along the beach, over the mouth of the Tees with its attendant industry. I love a good sunset and Saltburn seems to produce some good ones. My picture **Saltburn Sunset** shows it how I saw it, even if it was not exactly like that at the time!

A different kind of sunset occurred one August when we were photographing the Transporter Bridge at Middlesbrough. We were on the north side of the river with the sunset backlighting the bridge when I turned round to see an enormous cloud over the steelworks, lit up in a fiery orange-red by the setting sun. The light was changing rapidly but I managed to get **Tees View**.

Another thing I really like is cloud formations. We had gone to the west of Ireland for a holiday and had some fairly mixed weather, with wind and rain somewhat inhibiting the photography. All the flowers that Paula found were blowing around madly, and all my grand landscapes were shrouded in cloud. However, it did brighten up on a couple of occasions and although the foregrounds were not tempting when it did, the clouds were really magnificent. One which I like is **Storm Clouds at Inch.**

Finally, we all read in magazines that you shouldn't be put off by bad weather. Well it's not so easy is it? However, while in Ireland, we pulled into a picnic area car park one miserably wet day to rest and have a snack. Sitting in the car and looking out over the deserted play area, I was suddenly tempted to try a shot as the camera was within reach. I focussed on the wet window beside me and used a fairly large aperture, both to throw the background out of focus and to give a reasonable shutter speed for hand-holding. I had to cut out a large chunk of plain car-park and move the wing mirror up a bit to get what I felt was a pleasing result, **Summer-Time Blues**.

Nature in the RAW

Dr John Nathan LRPS is a semi-retired GP, now working part time. A keen photographer for twenty years, mainly wildlife and mountain scenery, he was Chairman of Central Southern DIG for three years until last April. His other great interest is walking and from visits to the Alps, Himalayas and Andes John confirms that carrying a SLR at high altitude on trek is difficult with battery failure, films cracking, and a hernia from the weight of it all! Compact digital cameras, despite their limitations, have been a godsend. With friends he has walked most of the long distance footpaths in South East England and elsewhere, always with a camera. This year John has walked in the Alps and Pyrenees and taken in the scenic splendour of Patagonia, at the Southern tip of South America. Patagonia is so outstanding that the cloud formations alone would satisfy a photographer, says John. Here are some of his experiences in coming to terms with RAW.

John beside a glacial lake, below Fitzroy – a very impressive needle shaped mountain, impossible to photograph close up. Taken in a 70 mph gale from the icecap, only a mile away. A few seconds later everyone was blown over.

We are constantly being told by the experts to take our pictures in RAW format. This article is to give a word of warning. I speak as a photographer who often travels to remote places. I do not pretend to be an electronic expert.

John's overnight accommodation in a mountain hut at Cerro Torre in Argentina

There is no doubt that the RAW format gives control of the final image in a way never before possible. After the photo is taken you have control of exposure, shadows, contrast, even lighting conditions, before saving the picture.

But there are problems, as I discovered on return from a recent trekking trip to Patagonia. I took some 1600 shots in RAW on a Canon EOS 10D. I used a 1GB microdrive, then saved pictures daily onto a Flashtrax battery driven portable hard disk - not easy in a tent by the light of a head torch. I used 12.2 Gigabytes of storage.

Three towers of Torres de Paine Chile

When I came home I downloaded them into my computer, creating 6 folders each of approximately 2GB. I tried to preview the pictures in 'My pictures' on Microsoft XP - impossible. Each picture is saved twice, in RAW and as a JPEG, both visible only as a logo. I could however view the pictures in Adobe Photoshop CS Browse so I decided to save my RAW files. This took 17, yes seventeen, CDs. After opening pictures in Adobe Photoshop CS I had the option of using 8 or 16 bit colour. 16 bit gives more shades of colour, so was the obvious choice for high quality prints.

Perito Moreno Glacier Argentina

Most of us would want to save images as TIFF files for permanent storage, after correcting the RAW images. My pictures were 5 - 6 MB as RAW files, then about 36 MB as TIFF files, ie approximately seven times the size of the RAW files. This would require 84 Gigabytes of storage, quite a lot even for a modern machine with a 160 GB hard drive. So, I have had to store them on DVDs. When you save the image, using Save As, unless you create a new title, it is not immediately obvious from the thumbnail which is the original RAW file, and which is the TIFF. You can find that from the metadata.

But like other photographers, I want to both print pictures of the highest quality and to show them on a computer monitor or with a digital projector. There is no advantage in having a file size of more than approx 1.5 MB for the pictures shown on the monitor or TV, and it is convenient for purposes of slide shows to save them as JPEGs. I think that approximately 120 pictures are enough for a slide show without causing boredom. Saving JPEG images compressed solely for a slide show would use 180 MB for 120 slides, not 4 GB as in the original TIFF format. I now found that I did not have an option to save a 16 bit file as a JPEG, so I had to convert each image back to 8 bit first (Image>Mode>8 bit). Resolution had to be reduced to approx 100 ppi to end with a file size approximately 1.5MB each. This is fairly laborious with all 120 pictures for the slide show and I am exploring the possibility of doing it with an 'Action'.

This is not meant to put people off using RAW files: but they are more difficult to handle and take up huge amounts of memory. So it is necessary to have a strategy for storage and later usage of the images.

Summit of Paine Grande Chile

Linux & GIMP for Photographers: Getting Started

Peter Gawthrop LRPS was given a digital camera (Nikon Coolpix 7500) as a birthday present three years ago and thus took up digital photography; he now has a Canon Powershot Pro 1. He joined the RPS and DIG in December 2004 and has learned a lot from the Folio pages - and as a result has recently been awarded an LRPS. Though a beginner in photography, Peter has used Linux since the mid '90s and all his computers are Microsoft-free zones. He now uses the Linux tools GIMP, Hugin and ImageMagick to process his images. This article shows an easy route to try out Linux and GIMP without changing anything on your computer. Look at the web pages given in this article for much more information and let us have your comments and queries on the DIG Forum.

Linux (*www.linux.org*) together with the associated **GNU** (*www.gnu.org*) project is a widely-used operating system developed by software engineers worldwide. It is free both in the sense of freedom and free beer...

Knoppix (*www.knoppix.org*) is a version of Debian GNU/Linux which runs off a live CD. This provides an easy introduction to Linux *without* touching your hard disk. You should save your work onto removable media eg floppy, flash or USB memory (See the Knoppix web site) and you will find that running from a CD can be slow.

To get started do the following, noting that you should **make sure that you back up all that you care about** *before* **starting. I cannot be held responsible for any loss or damage!**

Buy a Knoppix CD, for example from Use Linux (*www.uselinux.co.uk*) who do one for £2 at the time of writing. Put it into your CD tray and reboot the computer which should boot into Knoppix. If it does not it may be that your BIOS will have to be changed so that the CD boots first.

At the Knoppix prompt just press enter (return). Eventually - this takes a couple of minutes - you should see a desktop appearing on your screen with a web browser. Exit the browser with the X in its top right-hand corner. The toolbar is at the bottom of your screen. Towards the centre are four buttons labelled 1-4; these correspond to four different desktops - just stick with desktop 1 for the moment.

The main menu button is the large K symbol at the left. Clicking on this reveals many possibilities; **K>Graphics** is of most interest to photographers. Select **Gtkam** now.

Gtkam (*www.gphoto.org/proj/gtkam/*) is a tool for extracting photos from your digital camera via a USB connection. Connect your camera to your computer's USB port. Click **Camera>Add camera** menu and click **Detect**; this should detect your camera which should appear in the left-hand pane; click on the triangle icons until you reach the photos - these should appear in the right-hand pane as thumbnails. Click on the thumbnail of your choice and then **File>Save Photos>Selected**, select the Desktop folder and tick the relevant boxes. Give the photo the name *photo.jpg*, click OK and it will appear on your desktop.

Alternatively, if you use flash memory and a laptop, another method is to put the flash memory into the PCMCIA adaptor and a new folder (PCMCIA disk) will appear on your desktop. Click on this folder, and through to the folders it contains, until you find the image of your choice; drag and drop this image file to the desktop. Either way, you should now have an image file on your desktop which you can view by double clicking on it.

GIMP (*www.gimp.org*) is roughly like Photoshop. Click on **K>Graphics>gimp**. The file menu is in the upper left hand corner; use **File>Open** to open your image (remember it lives in Desktop). As far as I know, Gimp can do everything that PS can. Tools such as crop and clone are in the main GIMP panel; basic colour menus are in **Layer>Colors** and basic filters in **Filter>Enhance**.

Explore and enjoy!

Camera buying

Alan Ray-Jones LRPS has been through the torture of choosing a new camera and spending his hard-earned cash. His experiences started a few years ago as he relates. The prices quoted may shock our younger readers! Alan, incidentally, although protesting that 'I am just a very normal amateur, so it doesn't seem to be in the genes' is the elder brother of Tony, the famous 60s photographer who tragically died young of leukaemia in 1972. The NMPFT at Bradford holds Tony's negatives and staged a retrospective exhibition last year.

My first compact digital camera, bought in 2000 for a round-the-world trip, was a 3 megapixel Canon Power Shot G1, which cost well over £600! It served me very well, but its top shutter speed of 1/500 was limiting in bright light, and it was a very heavy beast for its size – not at all the sort of camera to carry everywhere in a pocket. In any case, 3 MP cameras don't cut the mustard when it comes to A4 or larger prints, and since 8 MP cameras were on the market in 2004 at prices under £1,000, it seemed time to upgrade. I think the old rule that computer owners may feel the need for an upgrade every three years applies now to computer-driven cameras!

My first thought was to buy a Canon 300D, relatively light-weight as SLRs go, so that I could make use of the four Canon lenses I already had for my now rarely used Canon 300 film camera. The photo magazines pretty much agreed at the time that the 300D was a best buy in its class. But it still cost a substantial amount (£670 with a lens or £570 for the body on the internet in August 2004). Even when I was younger and living in Prague, from 1995 to 2001, I found such kit too heavy to carry round all day. In fact my favourite lens for the Canon 300 was a 28-210mm zoom, which enabled me, on many occasions, to leave all the other lenses at home.

Mainly because of the weight I considered only sub-SLR cameras, with picture quality and pocketability as equal top priorities. Of course I looked at magazines, in particular Digital Camera Buyer, for reviews of cameras costing around £700 at 2004 street prices. But to supplement these fairly brief magazine reviews, which are inevitably written for a wide audience, I also checked the details on Phil Askey's fine website, ***www.dpreview.com***, which is independent of both manufacturers and retailers. The reviews of cameras on it are, to me, quite breathtaking in their thoroughness. In addition, the site has a valuable comparison facility, which makes it easy to line up the specifications of several selected cameras from a shortlist, which can be compiled quickly by specifying features which are required - for example a shutter speed of 1/4000. The cameras considered best by Askey are described as 'highly recommended', but this is not an accolade which is given easily or often. Not surprisingly, the Canon 300D was 'highly recommended', as was the Nikon D70, but most of the best prosumer (ugh!) cameras were no more than 'recommended'. It would have saved me a great deal of internet research time if the website had a tag for identifying cameras according to their pocketability, as well as those that are 'highly recommended', but at present this is not done. The quickest research method is to look at the conclusion given for each camera, before reading the detail.

In the end I decided to be less ambitious financially, and my research produced a shortlist of three: the Nikon Coolpix 5400 (the successor to the Nikon Coolpix 5000); the Nikon Coolpix 5200; and the Sony Cyber-shot 5 megapixel DSC-V1 – with a Carl Zeiss lens and a 4x optical zoom, first on the market in 2003. Another valuable feature of ***www.dpreview.com*** is a section giving users' opinions. The users of the 5400 and the Cyber-shot, as well as the reviewers, seemed slightly more enthusiastic about the latter, though clearly liking them both. Also, the Sony is smaller and lighter, so I decided to buy it, despite the lack of a tilt-and-turn LCD, which I find very useful on the Canon Powershot; and the fact that the memory is exclusively Memory Stick. Interestingly, the Sony was the least expensive camera of the three, but the only one with a 'highly recommended' rating.

I then had to buy the camera. I would have used the net, but I wanted it the same day, so I visited my local camera shop (a branch of a national chain), armed with a print-out showing an internet price of about £275 including post and packing. The shop had the camera on sale at £340, but offered it to me for £318. At another branch, in Tottenham Court Road, I was surprised to find it priced at only £300 (due to local competition in the area) and bought it there. I wonder how long such price-matching will continue, and whether it will be affordable long-term for firms which have to maintain local shops and pay town-centre rates. Clearly high street photo stores are in a tough position, and we would be worse off without them, so I suppose we may eventually shoot ourselves in the foot by forcing them to accept online prices. Perhaps camera shops will become a rarity, and camera manufacturers will have to somehow finance camera 'libraries' in the main towns, to enable users to examine cameras before buying them on the internet!

The Sony camera was and is very good for a compact, and I continue to take it with me everywhere. But because I already had Canon SLR lenses, I succumbed when the 350D - the first 'film quality' DSLR - came on the market this year at a price that I could afford. I added a Tamron 17-35mm wide angle lens after a visit to **www.fredmiranda.com/reviews**, to cover the deficit at the wide end produced by the 1.6 multiple in focal length resulting from the small image sensor on the 350D.

Now I have to see if I can produce some decent photographs with my new camera, and find out if my own experience confirms the website review.

Dr Leo Dosremedios ARPS writes from California:

As an 85-year old new member, I find the learning curve of Adobe Photoshop CS too steep, so I stick to APS Elements 2. Even that is hard and I am intimidated by the amazing images in DIGIT 27. Over the years I have accumulated about 300,000 slides. Of course, 99.9% are documentary snapshots but the remaining 300 winning slides (or at least the best 30) are worth tweaking digitally to raise them from a 95% quality rating to perfection. So this is my present project.

I have not done too badly having won the RPS Travel Gold Medal for 2003 and Gold plus Silver in 2005. So I would advise older RPS members who find digital photography daunting, to do as I do.

This shot of Mount Haydon, North Rim, Grand Canyon Arizona is from a slide that was scanned and darkened in Colour Variations.
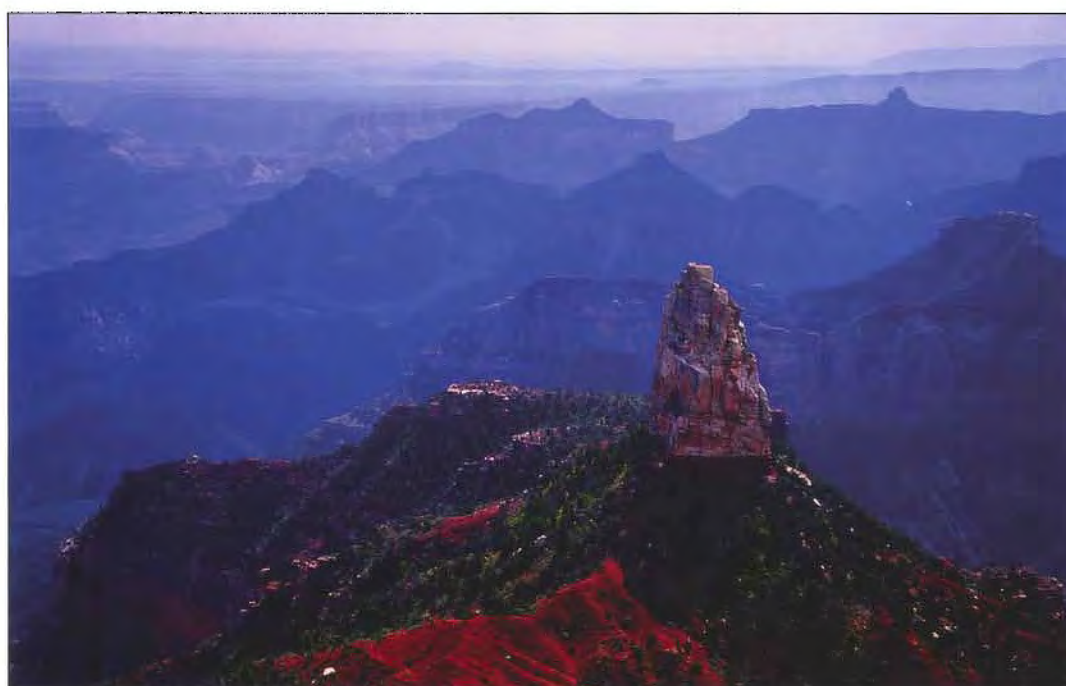
Clear the Decks

Maureen Albright ARPS offers some quick tips for those running audio visual presentations and competitions

Some AV users enjoy taking their sequences around to other clubs and groups to project a show. If like me you have a desktop which is filled with program icons and notes, it all looks very cluttered and distracting for your audience when you show the screen. You can of course easily change the background image from those provided by Mr Gates to one of your choice. Visit Control Panel>Display>Desktop. Here you will see a list of Windows-supplied background images. Click Browse and you can find one of your own images. Click Apply to view the effect and your image will appear among the Windows pictures in the list on the left.

However your new background image will still be covered with all your many icons. You could go through and delete all these familiar friends but after the show you might find you miss them dreadfully and have to reintroduce them again. There is another quicker and more convenient way to clear your decks for just the night.

Create another user for your computer. *My Tidy Alter Ego*, to take around on display to audiences. Visit the Start>Control Panel>User accounts. Create a new account and name it 'AV Show'. This name will appear on the welcome screen and on the start menu when you switch on your computer. No more displaying all your favourite program icons to the entire world. It's cool to be clear now!

You will be asked if you want to create a computer administrator or a limited account. I create the former. I have two reasons for this. Firstly sometimes on an AV day another person wishes to show their sequences or a new program they have written so I need to be able to load items onto the system. Secondly it is easy to delete this type of account.

Once you click 'Create Account' the new account appears for any future use. If you suddenly need to switch to another user account it is very simple. Click Start>Log Off>User and then the account name you need. When you first bring up your new user screen, for example AV Show, your first task is to delete any icons from the screen which have transferred across. Remember you are deleting only the shortcuts and not your programs.

Then tidy up the task bar. If you are running a sequence it is best if the task bar is not present. So right click on it and select Properties. Then you have some choices to make. For shows I prefer to Auto Hide Task bar. It will immediately drop down and disappear. If you take your cursor down to the bottom it will immediately reappear.

Now you have a nice clear, tidy background screen with which to start work. You can if you wish put shortcuts to your AVs dropped straight onto this (create a background image in Photoshop with the titles listed and then crop your short cut over the title) or create three small shortcut icons.

1 Shortcut to the folder where you hold all your show AVs and any images that you will need to access.

2 Shortcut to your introduction menu page which you will have created with invisible buttons to just click and start your show or competition.

3 Shortcut to any software program you may be demonstrating, or other folders you may need to access.

The Mersey River Festival 2005

Anne Gilmore LRPS sends a rallying-cry from Liverpool. How about visiting to take some exciting shots: light on the ever-changing waters of the Mersey and the Bay, the great docks, powerful ships or the magnificent waterfront buildings. See you!

2005 has been a special year on Merseyside: Liverpool won the European Cup to complement the anniversary of Nelson's victory at Trafalgar and we celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the Mersey River Festival's Photographic Competition and Exhibition.

Despite poor weather, the Festival weekend was a great success with more visitors than ever. There was a range of activities to capture every photographer's interest from stunt-planes to street performers and a continental market. Of course, the river was thronged with craft of every description from tall ships, naval vessels and yachts to tugs and canal boats.

The photographic entry continues to grow in size and quality. The real headache is selecting the Exhibition prints. So many excellent photographs could not be displayed owing to lack of space - a problem for most exhibition organisers.

The Competition has three sections: The Main Section: People, Places and Events. It is repeated annually and continues to amaze all by producing fresh and original images each year; many reflect the Liverpool humour and record the diverse activities taking place on Merseyside. The Special Section, sponsored by the Mersey Basin Campaign in recent years, always has 'water' as its theme: images can be taken anywhere in the country. This year, the title "Water Ways, Water Days" produced wonderful atmospheric images and some dream-like shots taken in different parts of the British Isles. The final Section reflects the city theme of the year: Sea Liverpool 2005. The aim was to photograph life on the Mersey from its source to its mouth. There were some superb entries but they were perhaps a little narrow in their range. Few entries reflected the history, natural history, trade and industry of the area, subjects which create a fascinating mosaic of the river's life.

At the pleasant and relaxed Grand Opening photographers can renew acquaintance over a glass of wine. We were pleased to welcome from amongst our loyal sponsors representatives from Calumet, Fotospeed and Kodak.

A tradition of the Competition is that entrants are told they have won a prize -but they do not know which one until they arrive. In addition, each entrant has a chance to win something since all receive a free ticket for the Grand Draw with its excellent prizes. RPS members were well represented amongst the winners and two had their pictures chosen as a subject for meditation for the Radio Merseyside programme Thought for the Day.


Pier Panorama by Keith Suddaby FRPS

The Photographers 'How To' booklet with Photoshop
Sid Pearce FRPS

In 1925 Bertrand Russell, the famous British mathematician and philosopher, penned a booklet entitled the ABC of Relativity. His aim was to explain Einstein's General Relativity without the use of diagrams or mathematical symbols. But in the end he did need to include a couple of formulae and a diagram. Sid Pearce does not have such an exotic or grand aim but his latest booklet for photographers, running to nearly 50 pages, relies on a straightforward text without diagrams and technical explanations – and his one photograph is on the cover! Sid's approach is to offer the reader a logical sequence of procedures and tips to deal with many of the common issues which confront the photographer who wants to enhance images using Photoshop.
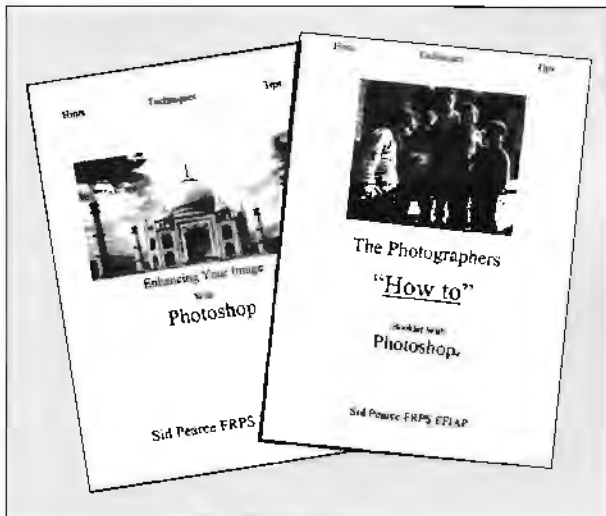
Some years ago, in co-operation with Adi Sethna, Sid produced a number of pamphlets and now publishes his own monograms, the first of which Enhancing your image with Photoshop is still available. This latest booklet does assume a basic knowledge of the photo editing software and is bang up-to-date with a short section on camera raw formats. For the beginner it will be worth starting with the first publication since the latest offer does not go over the original ground and assumes some experience of adjustment layers, for example.

These booklets are not intended to be comprehensive and detailed explanations of the way in which Photoshop works but short, comprehensible descriptions of how to achieve particular effects.

In *Enhancing your image with Photoshop*, the author begins by stressing the importance of keyboard shortcuts and moves on to cover layers and selections, scanning, layer masks and areas such as converting colour to monochrome. For example, here he offers us a range of methods including this one: 'A little-known method of achieving a good Grayscale image, which I only recently discovered, is perhaps the easiest to achieve. It even retains the RGB channels. Bring a coloured RGB image onto the screen. Choose Image>Adjust>Gradient Map. You will then be faced with a Gradient Map Dialog Box. To the right of the box is a small triangle which you should click. This will open the Gradient Picker drop-down palette. The third gradient from the left should be, by default, a black and white gradient. Click to get a very superior Grayscale which, as I said before, still retains the RGB channels. You can if you wish also alter the image tones by clicking in the large box in the Gradient Picker and moving the sliders.' This extract is typical of the conversational style of the booklet.

The more recently published How To booklet moves on from the basic techniques to more advanced methods which replicate darkroom procedures using Photoshop. Here we have more on adjusting highlights and shadows, enhancing detail in shadows, learning to use the history palette and other specialist uses of the program which allow you to simulate mist, lightning or shadows. Sid also deals with panoramas and resizing images for the Web.

His booklet again adopts a conversational tone, and is not afraid to advise against the conventional wisdom. For example when talking about sharpening we have: 'For my part I am now going against the established norm by sharpening immediately after scanning. Why? My reasons are that whenever I scan a transparency, or bring an image from a camera or card into the computer, it is always slightly different to the original. Invariably it will be darker and slightly softer. For many years I have cropped and done colour corrections before any other image changes.

This is much the same as most photographers. Since we all make these initial changes, why should we not also give the image a slight sharpen to bring it back to its original state, immediately after scanning. When I first tried a light sharpen I found that with the sharpening of the image, I was able to do other corrections more accurately and easily. Try it out, you may be pleasantly surprised.'

Throughout both booklets we are offered a number of different ways of achieving a given result. Sid is not prescriptive in pointing out a single "best" method and encourages us to try out the ideas.

So, how does the style, and the total lack of diagrams and screen shots, work for the reader? Surprisingly well in my view. For one who was brought up on diagrams and pictures, I thought I would miss an explanatory screen shot to enable me to follow the text. In fact, because of the relaxed style it is very easy to work through the techniques in both booklets. However, I think the reader would find it useful to flag specific pages which are of particular interest since there is no index, and perhaps make notes in the margin after experimenting with the techniques.

Both booklets are available directly from Sid Pearce at: 232 Laceby Road, Grimsby, NE Lincolnshire, DN34 5DW. They cost £6.50 and £9 respectively (inclusive of post and packing) and would make a useful addition to your library of Photoshop volumes with their range of tips, hints and techniques in a very readable form.

Letter to the Editor

The Editor, Digit Magazine.

As a member of the RPS digital imaging group I read your excellent magazine. I am in no way anti digital; in fact I have been digitising bromide prints since 1993 on an early flatbed scanner and digitising negatives for many years now. I just feel that the time has come for those who are interested in going forward to look up from the table and see what's out there.

In my opinion, digitally-produced inkjet prints have reached a plateau, particularly in the monochrome department. They don't seem able to make that final step, seriously to rival the old silver image. Latterly I have been sending my carefully manipulated monochrome digital files to a local lab for printing onto bromide paper.

I have made manifold increases in my mega pixel rating by moving from 6 cm x 7 cm to 5" x 4". I have recently shot many unusual (particularly close up) images with a Bob Rigby pinhole camera. I have read Dan Burkholder's book - "Making Digital Negatives for Contact Printing" - in which he explores the technique of printing negatives, both in black and also in orange se/ellipt colour, onto acetate sheets for contact printing in your own darkroom. These so called 'Spectral Density Negatives' can also be adjusted digitally, to print by alternative chemical processes.

Controlled digital techniques are very well suited to accompany and supplement traditional chemical photography. Produce your well graded, digital, spotted and adjusted image and then the choices are almost endless. Whilst most of my comrades are happily snapping with their mega digitals, I can be seen struggling to focus with my head under the black cloth - some would say 'in the sand'. I don't think so!

Tom Whitehead
tom@leeduf.plus.com

Easy Digital Competitions

Nigel Plant LRPS has owned a camera of one sort or another since he was quite small. In the distant past he dabbled with both monochrome and colour (Cibachrome) printing but has only really got into "darkroom" work with the advent of digital. He still uses film, scanning transparencies into a Mac using a Nikon Coolscan and gained his LRPS in 2002. He enjoys unusual camera angles and selective framing to create pictures out of everyday scenes. Southampton Camera Club is one of the leading clubs in southern England, providing a mixed programme of competitions and lectures, and organising a well established International Exhibition of Photography, with the 94th Exhibition planned for 2007. In this article Nigel explains how he runs digital competitions at the club.

If you have a Mac, and cannot find a custom programme for running digital competitions here is an easy solution. If you don't have a Mac, read on. I'll explain why at the end.

Most modern Apple Macs come with a clever program called Graphic Converter pre-installed. Its main function is to act as a kind of electronic can-opener for almost any sort of graphics file imaginable.

But it has a number of other useful tricks up its sleeve.

You can use it to run a slideshow of a folder (including or excluding sub-folders as required) of images (and hide things like controls or titles as you choose) either as a timed presentation or changing on a mouse click. Other options available in the comprehensive preferences pane include things like scale, fade effects and the ability to overlay a logo.

You can set the background colour (by default I think it is black) so your entrants do not have to mess around filling in space around images – unless they want the border bright pink!

Best of all, you can nominate "Move" folders. Designed, I assume, to make sorting hundreds of images a breeze, it is ideal for competitions.

At Southampton Camera Club, we allow four images. As the entries come in, I add a 1, 2, 3 or 4 to the front of the filename, check that the images are within the permitted pixel dimensions and (for the purposes of generating a list) add the author's name and image title to the XMP metadata in Photoshop's file browser so there is no need to open the images.

Before the start, you need to create a series of new folders named for each score (for example 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15) and then assign F key combinations to each in the preferences for "Move" folders. Once the competition starts, I set the slideshow to auto-run at 5 second intervals to give the judge a chance to see them all and then change the preference to "mouse·click" for the second run through. As the judge gives a score I just hit the appropriate key combination and the image is moved into the folder appropriate to the score. The next image displays automatically. For club competitions I have a "Hold" folder as well for ones that the judge cannot make up his mind about. At the end of the competition you have them all sorted into their scores. This makes it easy to run through the high scorers again if the judges need to award medals or ribbons.

A bigger competition such as an International might have more complex requirements. But if you have entered the metadata (or specified what entrants need to enter themselves) you can use file-cataloguing software such as Extensis Portfolio (Mac and Windows) to produce lists of each folder.

"But I haven't got a Mac" I hear you cry. Unfortunately, Graphic Converter is a Mac only programme. But with a Mac Mini (16.5 cm x 16.5 cm x 5.1 cm!) equipped with a AGP 4x - ATI RADEON 9200 - 32 MB graphics card and DVI output available for as little as £280 ex VAT it might be worth the investment!

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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 jimbuckley.baltic@btinternet.com.

Thank you.

Jim Buckley, Editor