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FREE ACTIONS, FILTERS & BRUSHES

Photography

Tips, Tricks & Fixes

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Capture dramatic sunsets

Master your camera today



Learn advanced camera settings

Digital Edition

FUTURE
ELEVENTH EDITION

OVER 500 ESSENTIAL HINTS & TIPS

Welcome to Photography Tips, Tricks & Fixes

Photography has always been a popular hobby, but with professional-grade equipment now more available and affordable than ever before, more and more people are picking up a camera for the first time. The right equipment will only get you so far, however, and to truly take your photos to the next level, you'll need a good understanding of what makes a great picture. That's where Photography Tips, Tricks & Fixes comes in. In this bookazine we'll teach you essential techniques to enliven your landscapes, enhance your portraits, sharpen your macro shots and more. Every step of the process is covered – from preparation, to shooting, to post-production – so no matter what stage of a project you're at, you'll discover outstanding advice to edge you over the finishing line. Our Tips section will give you a comprehensive overview of popular areas of photography, from landscapes to backyard wildlife. In the Tricks section, we'll cover a host of exciting projects, including shooting fast-moving subjects and creating gorgeous time stacks. And finally, in the Fixes section we'll show you how to edit your images to achieve the ultimate finish. Read on and help your photography to realise its true potential.



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Photography Tips, Tricks & Fixes

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Photographer**
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10 essential expert tricks

Take your photography to the next level with these techniques

“Make sure that your photos stand out from the crowd”



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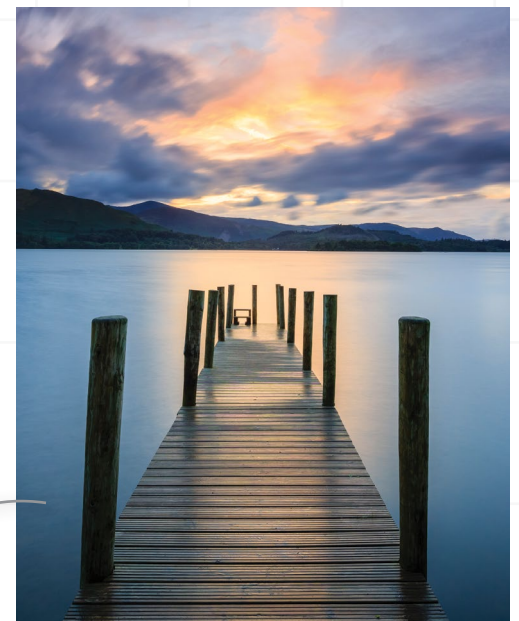
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Woodland sunbursts





10 essential expert tricks



Right

Stand out

Ensure your images stand out with pro techniques that include balancing flash and ambient light, shown here in this excellent capture from Neil van Niekerk

© Neil van Niekerk

MEET THE PROS



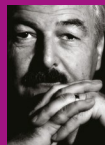
Katelyn James
katelynjamesblog.com
Professional wedding photographer James explains how to work in harsh light.



Ronya Galka
ronyagalka.com
Street photographer Galka considers wide-angle lenses and how to capture movement.



Adrian Dennis
adriandennis.com
Award-winning sports photographer Adrian Dennis shares his tips for capturing a strong sense of movement.



Ian Rolfe
ianrolfelightscares.com
Ian Rolfe reveals how sunstars can add something special to a landscape scene.



Andy Farrer
andyfarrer.co.uk
Landscape photographer Farrer shares his tips for stunning landscapes and seascapes.



10 essential expert tricks

Take your photography to the next level with these top professional techniques

With photography becoming increasingly accessible in recent years and the rising numbers of serious hobbyists and amateur photographers looking to flaunt their skills on social media, it has never been more important to make sure that your photos stand out from the crowd. It is often easy to spot a professional image, so we've compiled ten top tips from some of the best photographers in the business that will help you to elevate your imagery and take your photography to the next level, which should ensure that you have the stand-out image.

Over the next few pages discover how to handle difficult light, expose your people pictures to perfection and learn how to make the most of natural reflectors in the environment. Find out what it takes to shoot immersive street shots and stunning landscapes with tips on using wide-angle lenses and composition for striking results. We've also covered lighting tips that will transform mediocre shots into high-end, professional-looking captures, which include off-camera flash tricks and studio lighting advice. And if that wasn't enough, discover the importance of colour in your imagery and realise the power of shooting RAW.



Phil Drinkwater
philwedding
photography.co.uk

Wedding shooter Phil Drinkwater discusses low light and exposure compensation.



Moritz Schmittat
schmittat.uk

Professional studio photographer Schmittat explains the benefits of using a kicker light.



Neil van Niekerk
neilvn.com

Discover how to balance flash with ambient light with tips from pro shooter Neil van Niekerk.



Christina Greve
christinagreve.com

Using RAW correctly is incredibly important to your work, as Christina Greve reveals in her tips.



Sean Scheidt
seanscheidt.com

Portrait, fashion and editorial photographer Scheidt explores how to balance the colours in your photos.



Stabilise your camera

Avoid high ISOs by placing your camera on a monopod to stabilise it, enabling you to shoot at a slower shutter speed than would be possible otherwise. Monopods are much quicker to use than tripods and are very portable.

1. Meter right in difficult light

Capture perfect pictures in both harsh light and low-light conditions

Light from the Sun isn't always soft and flattering. At midday it can be very harsh, creating very unflattering shadows.

"Harsh light often creates unwanted shadows on faces and overexposed highlights on the subject, foreground or background," explains wedding photographer Katelyn James. "Some photographers would say that the only way you can shoot correctly in harsh lighting is to use artificial light to balance the Sun's intense rays. I have found that's not always true, especially for photographers like me who prefer natural light styles."

James follows a simple rule of thumb when shooting outside. "The goal is to keep the Sun to the back of the subject's head, as that protects them from spotty or uneven light that can be hard to expose properly... Other things I strategically try to do when shooting in harsh light [include] finding natural reflectors, keeping the light from my subject's face and chest and looking for diffused light."

When taking pictures in harsh light, you should set your camera's meter to spot metering, so you can select where your camera is metering from. "In my opinion, metering for the face is the easiest way to find proper exposure in harsh lighting situations, and this will immediately show you if your background is going to be overexposed or not," explains



Above Less atmosphere

This image has been skilfully framed, but a darker exposure would add more drama to the scene

Left Take control

By using negative exposure compensation, Drinkwater prevented the camera's meter from brightening the shadows

James. "You have to use spot metering in these situations, or else your camera will evaluate the situation for you and will decide to underexpose your image."

Low light can be just as problematic, as Phil Drinkwater explains, "Let's say you were shooting a city night scene in an auto mode (such as Aperture Priority) where 85 per cent of the image was near black with just some twinkles of light from houses. You would dial down the exposure compensation in order to compensate, otherwise the camera would try to make the average of the scene grey – so the black would be grey and the house lights would be overexposed."

Exposure compensation can be used in all conditions. "Shooting in low light itself doesn't lead to using exposure compensation differently to using it in the daytime," Drinkwater continues. "I tend to use auto ISO these days when using auto modes; not always, but most of the time. By using exposure compensation, sensible minimum shutter speeds and maximum ISO, I find the camera makes virtually the same decision as I would 95 per cent of the time. It's especially useful when going from indoors to outdoors; [just] change your exposure compensation to match the brightness of the scene."



Inset
Exposure compensation

This button is one of the most important on your DSLR or CSC



Above
Even tones

Spot metering and careful positioning of the couple in relation to the Sun results in a well-balanced exposure with good skin tones

Left
Unbalanced exposure

The camera has struggled to record all the tones in the scene in a way that's pleasing to the eye, with areas of flare that are distracting

2. Use natural reflectors

Illuminate your naturally lit imagery with reflectors found in the environment

Natural light is difficult to control, and depending on where the Sun is in the sky it can produce very undesirable shadows, especially under the subject's eyes. One solution is to position your subject next to an object in the environment that will reflect the light and fill these shadows. These natural reflectors are perfect for wedding photographers in particular, as it means less kit to carry around. It's important for photographers to think in terms of light and once you start searching for natural reflectors you'll notice potential sources everywhere.

"Natural reflectors are so important," explains Katelyn James. "When you are looking for a natural reflector, keep in mind that it should be light in colour and reflective of light." This can be anything from a light-coloured pavement or wall, a window or even a golden field of wheat. However, you'll need to watch out for unwanted colour being reflected onto your subject. "When you are photographing a bride and groom it's very important that the reflecting light is clean and doesn't have any colour to it," advises James. This is to ensure that the bride's dress stays pure white – but a warm hue might be welcome at times.



Warm glow

While your reflector should provide clean, white light in wedding shots, using a coloured reflector can add warmth to your portraits

3x © Katelyn James Photography



3. Go wide and get close

Shoot with a wide-angle lens and get near to your subject for extra impact

Often photographers become far too reliant on their zoom lens, and instead of getting in close to their subject they shoot from further back than they should – ultimately detaching themselves from the scene.

For professional photographer Ronya Galka, prime wide-angle lenses are the best choice for street photography, because these types of lens are close to the focal composition of the human eye – her particular favourites are 35mm and 50mm. “They give a wonderfully realistic vantage point for the viewer and help depict street scenes in their most true-to-life manner,” explains Galka. “A wide-angle lens enables me to get great shots up-close, but equally allows me to tell a more comprehensive story when the context of the wider scene is given.” A simple wide shot of a street scene with no foreground interest will lack impact and can often feel quite detached – great street photography should be fully immersive. This is also true when this technique is applied to landscape photography; getting in close to a foreground object while capturing the wider landscape beyond adds context and a sense of scale to the image.



© Ronya Galka

Wide advantage

“Wide-angle lenses [offer] much greater depth of field, [so] it’s much easier to obtain front to back sharpness... the horizon appears much further away from the foreground, adding depth and a sense of space,” explains Farrer.



© Andy Farrer

Street shot
“If you want to immerse yourself in a scene and get properly involved in what you see, there is nothing better than to get real close,” says Galka. As photojournalist Robert Capa famously said, “if your photographs aren’t good enough, you’re not close enough”. Galka agrees and says that when a street image is shot on a wide-angle lens the viewer should feel like they are part of the scene

Old Harry
Professional landscape photographer Andy Farrer says, “Getting in close to foreground objects guides the attention of the viewer to the elements which you have chosen. It will also make them appear larger in relation to the background, adding impact”



BEFORE



AFTER

4. Add some spark

Ian Rolfe’s top sunstar tips

1 Use a small aperture I find any f-stop smaller than f16 to be usually sufficient, but f22 is the optimum.

2 Avoid flare Make sure your lens is spotlessly clean and also avoid using a filter of any kind in front of your lens. If you

are getting flare it may just be because of the angle at which the light is hitting your lens, so consider changing your composition to avoid it.

3 Lens choice If the amount of aperture blades is an even number, it will produce that many points – if the amount of blades is an odd number, it will produce double as many points.

4 Block the Sun In order to get a crisp sunstar you need to partially block the Sun with an element in the scene. This basically just shrinks the size of the light source and helps it to flare as opposed to it just being a white, overly bright component of your scene.

5 Light matters Clear weather is a must. If you want a really crisp sunstar, then the Sun should not be diffused by any cloud, fog, mist or pollution.



5. Capture movement

A clear sense of action in your images adds a very professional touch

A sense of movement and motion in your photos will add dynamism and energy to your shots, making them much more compelling.

As professional sports shooter Adrian Dennis explains, “while it can be quite normal to shoot a rugby or football match at 1/2000 secs to capture the moment a player kicks the ball, photographing a racing car using a fast shutter speed freezes the wheels and makes the car look stationary” – completely removing the sense of movement.

To capture this movement you need to adopt a panning technique. With a slower shutter speed set, physically move your body and camera while keeping them in the same part of the frame throughout the exposure. If the subject is a racing car, for example, then somewhere on the main body should be sharp, with the wheels showing some motion blur. The background should also be completely blurred. It can be tricky, especially if your subject is moving fast, and keeping it in the same part of the frame throughout is difficult. Results can also be hard to predict, but a good panning shot can be really striking.



© Adrian Dennis



© Ronya Galka

Above Motorbike pan

Be creative when you are shooting a sporting event, especially when there are a lot of competing photographers. This will help your images stand out, so avoid static shots where you have perfectly frozen the action



The Rat Race

“Movement is not only important for me in the subjects that I capture, but it is also a fundamental part of my technique when shooting street... I shoot while on the move and I think that movement makes for images that feel much more dynamic and alive,” explains Ronya Galka. *There’s no motion blur here, but each person’s position gives a sense of action*

6. Work with waves

Incorporate the patterns they create

Using the pattern of waves as lead-in lines in your seascapes is a useful skill. Landscape photographer Andy Farrer explains that “connecting the foreground and background will give better continuity to an image, making it feel like one image and not just a foreground and a background. Waves provide a natural and pleasing way to link the two.” These natural lead-in lines will help to draw the viewer into and around your image.

The sea is a constantly moving entity, and unless you are shooting on a particularly calm day, the motion of the moving water will create lots of interesting patterns that will add interest and help to convey the mood of your image.



© Andy Farrer



7. Balance the light

Learn how to use off-camera flash for shooting striking portraits in ambient light

On-camera flash can often be rather harsh, but the simple act of taking it off and moving its position can utterly transform your imagery.

When it comes to outdoor photography flash may not always be the obvious choice, especially when you consider some of our previous tips on tackling extreme natural lighting. However, in certain circumstances balancing flash with ambient light will really lift an image and give it more depth.

Without flash, if you expose for the subject your background will overexpose, and if you expose for the background then your subject will be underexposed. So the best technique is to position an off-camera flash to illuminate your subject and set your exposure to underexpose your background by around a stop or two. Experimentation is key here.

For professional photographer Neil van Niekerk, “the balancing of the flash and ambient light is essential, but it’s also just as much about the positioning of the light and how you pose your subject in relation to it. The key here is to work



conservatively, I often see photographers who are new to using off-camera flash place the flash too low, or too far off to the side.” Van Niekerk goes on to explain that “I aim to have Butterfly lighting, or

Loop lighting. This way there are no dramatic shadows and there’s little risk of the shadow of your subject’s nose creating a Charlie Chaplin moustache, or streaking across their cheekbone.”



8. Use a kicker

Enhance the depth and drama in your portraits with this simple addition

“A kicker light is the magic ingredient to making your portraits three-dimensional,” says portrait photographer Moritz Schmittat. “A main light, or key light, typically lights only one side of your subject’s face, and while this creates lovely light and dark areas on the front of the face, it doesn’t do much for the subject’s outline. This is where one or several kicker lights come into play... I tend to place my kicker light exactly opposite my main light in order to emphasise the contour of the hair. It’s a good idea to place the kicker light slightly higher than the subject and pointing downwards. The most important variable is power. If you overdo the kicker light your portraits will feel unbalanced.”

© Moritz Schmittat



© Neil Van Niekerk

1 Consider the ambient light Take a few test shots without flash and assess the results. Once you know what the exposure should be in order to expose the ambient light accurately, set your camera to Manual mode and set the exposure to underexpose the ambient by one or two stops. This helps to create a high-end look and feel in the image.



© Neil Van Niekerk

2 Set up your camera and position the flash You must ensure that your shutter speed is no faster than the maximum flash sync speed of your camera – this is usually around 1/200secs.



© Neil Van Niekerk

Above With flash

Here the flash has completely lifted the image and illuminated the model while balancing the ambient light with the flash

3 Expose the flash Set the flash to Manual and start on 1/4 power to begin with. Once you have taken some test shots you might find that you need to dial the power up or down depending on the results.

Quality of light

The closer you position your speedlight or studio flash to your subject the softer the light will be. Hard light is characterised by hard edges between the light and shadow and soft light has a smoother transition. If you want the light to be harder simply move the light further away.

9. Control colour

Sean Scheidt reveal his tips for tonal balancing

What is the importance of deliberately restricting the tonal palette in photos?

For me, everything comes back around to intent... using minimal complementary colour combinations really helps create a unified sense of a 'world' within the photograph. There is a visual consistency that allows the viewer to access the subject, feel the tone or be drawn into the story we are telling.

What advice would you give to other photographers when it comes to dealing with colour?

Remove all that is unnecessary... a plate of food made by a talented chef only has on it that which is absolutely necessary for the overall dish. Anything else is superfluous, muddying up the experience. Be thoughtful as you shoot and plan your shots in advance if

possible. It helps me to sketch. Take test shots and really look them over. Notice where your eye gravitates towards. Are there distractions? If so, remove them.

How can careful editing help to enhance this effect?

After the usual dodging, burning and contrast adjustments, I spend a great deal of time focusing on colour toning... again focus on how your eye travels. Remove any distractions to the overall composition. This takes care of everything you weren't able to get in-camera or perhaps some things you just didn't notice.

Right Tonal harmony

If you study the work of many professional photographers, you'll see that they are very mindful of colour balance



© Sean Scheidt



10. Get more with RAW

Give yourself maximum power to control the look of your imagery

Despite many advances in JPEG quality, professional photographers will still generally opt to shoot in RAW format, favouring the extra editing options that it provides them with in post-production.

“The control it gives me when I edit is absolutely wonderful, almost magical... As a lifestyle photographer always on the move, there’s often little time to organise the perfect setup for my photos like you would do in a studio. That’s when shooting RAW is a life-saver,” explains photographer Christina Greve. Each RAW image file retains all of the information that is picked up by the camera’s sensor, which means that you’ll be able to radically edit your images without degrading

your shots. Technically every image that is captured by your camera captures the entire sensor information, but as soon as you switch to JPEG you are giving your camera permission to discard a large chunk of that potentially important information. It makes far more sense to choose RAW and keep the power in your own hands.

Although best practice dictates that you should perfect your settings like exposure and white balance in every shot that you take, RAW provides photographers with a valuable safety net and flexibility post-shoot that JPEGs don’t. The most important thing to remember is that editing RAW files is completely non-destructive, unlike JPEGs.

“RAW provides photographers with a valuable safety net and flexibility post-shoot that JPEGs don’t”

1 Sharpness and clarity The amount of detail will mean that you are able to make large crops to your image without losing too much quality.

2 The Brush tool Fix highlights or open up shadows in specific areas of the image. Control where you want the viewer’s eye to focus.

3 Classic curves Play with the Curve by raising it slightly at the top and in the centre to add light, and lower it at the bottom to add contrast.

4 White balance Shooting RAW enables you to radically change and fix the white balance of your images post-capture.

5 Levels of brightness RAW allows you to make radical adjustments to Highlights, Shadows, Blacks, Whites, Contrast and Brightness.

6 Exposure If you have shot in RAW you will be able to recover even the most over or underexposed imagery without losing quality.





Tips

Develop your camera skills and explore new genres with these top tips

- 20** Master pro landscape compositions
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Landscapes

Master composition to capture stunning outdoor images



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TOP TIPS

- ✓ Gorgeous landscapes
- ✓ Pro portraits
- ✓ Lighting tips
- ✓ Master macro

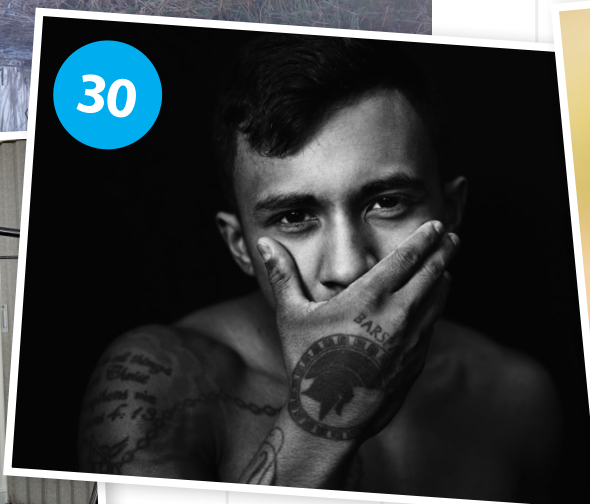
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“Knowing exactly what to look for in a lens is essential”

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Master pro landscape compositions

Hone your framing skills to help you shoot eye-catching images in the field

Successful landscape photography comprises two key elements – **light and composition**. Of the two, composition is arguably the more important: for most people, a well-composed shot in less-than-ideal lighting is generally more pleasing overall than a poorly composed shot taken in perfect light.

Photographers have very little control over lighting in the landscape. Photographing a chosen location in the right light is partly a matter of research to find out at what time of

year or day the angle of the Sun will best suit it, partly persistence and partly luck.

Composition, on the other hand, is very much within our control. Obviously, you have to work with what is in front of the camera, because apart from small objects, it is not possible to physically move the elements in a scene or introduce elements into it. However, changes in viewpoint, focal length, camera height and angle all have a significant impact on what elements are included in the frame and how they are rendered.

Composition in landscape photography is in many ways a problem-solving activity. The first problem is: how do you create a balanced and harmonious composition when the natural world is, on the whole, visually chaotic? Secondly, how do you best represent the three dimensions present in the natural world, using a two-dimensional medium?

Right

Balanced composition

Fantastic light alone isn't enough for a successful image. You also need a composition in which the elements are arranged to create balance and harmony

All images © Mark Bauer





Achieve balance and harmony

Understand these basic principles to help produce appealing compositions

Composition is the art of creating order among the chaos of the natural world, achieved by careful selection of what we include in the frame and where we place those elements.

Probably the best-known way of organising the frame is the rule of thirds. Imagine a grid dividing the frame into thirds both horizontally and vertically. The components can then be organised around these divisions, with key focal points placed on the intersection of horizontal and vertical lines.

The rule of thirds is a simplification of a naturally harmonious proportion known as the golden section, which has been used in art and architecture for many centuries. Start by dividing the image frame into two rectangles, so that the ratio of the smaller one to the larger one is the same as the ratio of the larger one to the whole frame (this ratio is approximately 1:1.618). If you continue to

subdivide the frame along these lines, you end up with something that looks like a 'squashed up' rule of thirds grid and which can be organised in a similar way.

The use of lines in the landscape – paths, roads, streams and so on – is another way to add structure. These leading lines are also very useful for highlighting the main subject in the composition. Diagonal and converging lines are especially dynamic.

There's more to visual balance than the rule of thirds or golden section, however. Thinking of physical balance can help us to understand its principles. If you place two objects of equal

weight on a seesaw, they will need to be equidistant from the fulcrum in order to be balanced. In visual terms, there is symmetry, often considered harmonious but somewhat static. With two objects of different weights, the lighter one has to be further away from the fulcrum to achieve balance, which in visual terms creates asymmetric balance – usually considered to be more dynamic.

We don't consider the physical weight of objects in the frame, but rather the factors which contribute to their 'visual weight' – including size, brightness, contrast, complexity and texture – and place them accordingly.

Right Rule of thirds

This peaceful river scene is organised according to the rule of thirds, in particular the church, trees and bed of reeds

Below The golden section

This image's harmony comes from the fact that the main focal point – the chalk carving – is placed precisely on an intersection in the golden section



Rule of Odds

One simple tip to increase harmony in compositions is to remember that odd numbers are more pleasing to the eye than even numbers. So, if including a group of objects, where possible make sure the group is an odd number. Three is often regarded as the magic number.





Direct the eye

Highlight your image's focal point using an effective composition

FOCAL POINT

The church is placed on the intersection of two lines in the golden section.

BALANCE

The horizon is placed on a horizontal line of the golden section.

LEADING LINE

The line of rock leads the eye through the frame to the main subject.

DEPTH

Strong foreground interest creates linear perspective, adding a sense of depth.



Create depth

Use lines and foreground interest to convey a sense of distance

One of the main difficulties landscape photographers face is how to create a sense of depth using a two-dimensional medium. Exploiting the same visual cues that the brain uses to judge distance and depth can help.

The main way the eye judges distance is by linear perspective – the fact that objects of a similar size seem to get smaller the further away they are, and that parallel lines seem to converge in the distance. One easy technique, therefore, is to get in close to foreground objects with a wide-angle lens, making them loom large in the frame with the rest of the scene stretching out behind. Careful choice of foreground is necessary however, as it needs to complement rather than clash with the background.

Lines are an excellent way to lend depth to a scene. Converging lines are powerful depth cues as they create strong linear perspective, but any diagonal coming into the frame works well. Lines can also direct attention into the frame and highlight the main subject. Lines



coming in from the corners of the frame are especially useful as 'pointers' for subtly directing the viewer's attention, and S curves are excellent for taking the eye gently through the composition.

Top Converging lines

The path in the foreground suggests depth as the lines appear to converge, and it directs the eye towards the copse on the hill

Above Diagonal

The strong diagonal line draws the eye in, but doesn't highlight the focal point so effectively, as it curves away from it



Geared tripod heads

Tripod heads with a geared movement – such as the Manfrotto 410 Junior Geared Head – can really help composition. They enable you to make very smooth, precise adjustments and therefore let you fine-tune compositions with a high level of accuracy.

Be precise

Strong compositions come from identifying and only including the key elements of a scene

The best compositions are often the simplest. Too many elements in the frame can be visually confusing and dilute the impact of the image, so try to exclude anything that does not contribute to the composition.

The best way to start is by trying to identify what it was that drew you to the scene and, if possible, exclude anything else from the frame. Even small changes in position can have a huge impact on how things appear. For example, lowering the camera can often hide distracting elements, whereas a higher viewpoint can ensure proper separation between foreground and background planes.

Before pressing the shutter, have a good look around the entire frame to make sure that it is free from clutter, and fine-tune the composition if necessary by changing camera height, repositioning the camera or changing focal length. A careful check of the review image is also recommended.

1 First attempt The overall shape of this composition is pleasing, but the trees in the bottom left are distracting and hide the inlet – an important focal point.

2 A slight refinement Moving to the right removes the trees, but there is too much foreground and the rocks on the right edge of the frame are distracting.

3 Final version A change of focal length has refined the composition, providing better balance with less foreground and reducing the impact of the rocks on the right.





Correct framing

It's not easy to frame shots with the intention of cropping later to an alternative aspect ratio, but luckily many cameras enable you to select a different aspect ratio in the electronic viewfinder. This allows experimentation with alternative framing possibilities.



Work with aspect ratio orientation

Get creative by changing the camera orientation or image dimensions

The majority of photographs are taken with the camera in a horizontal or 'landscape' orientation. This is partly because this fits the human field of vision, but also because most cameras are more comfortable to operate this way. However, not all landscapes suit a horizontal framing and sometimes turning the camera on its side can dramatically improve a composition.

A vertical or 'portrait' orientation is obviously more suited to vertical subjects, but also works well when there are strong diagonal lines in the scene, as this places emphasis on those lines and makes the composition more dynamic. It is also an effective way of placing more emphasis on a strong sky or foreground.

Landscape format is more effective when there is a predominance of horizontal lines in the scene or horizontal movement – real or implied. With minimalist compositions, where you place a small object in a large area of negative space, horizontal framings also tend to work best.

Another natural tendency when composing images is to stick with the native aspect ratio of the camera, even though this may not suit the scene. For most cameras this is 3:2, but micro four-thirds and medium-format cameras use 4:3.

The 3:2 ratio works well in many cases, but the squarer 4:3 ratio makes it easier to exploit foreground interest when working in landscape orientation, and is also more naturally suited

to portrait format. A completely square format suits minimalist compositions, especially with the subject centred or placed boldly towards a corner. It also works extremely well with symmetrical scenes. Using a square ratio can really encourage creativity, as it encourages photographers to look beyond the traditional 'rules' of composition.

Panoramic images have always been popular with photographers, and for scenes where the tendency is to scan across the image from left to right, or where there is minimal foreground interest, they are the natural choice.

If you are struggling to 'see' a composition, try composing with an aspect ratio in mind – it may simply be that the scene doesn't fit neatly into your camera's native aspect ratio.



1 Native ratio Although this composition works well in the native 3:2 aspect ratio, with empty space to the sides attention wanders slightly from the main subject.

2 Square format The square crop really tightens up the composition, forcing attention firmly on the main subject. The symmetry works well in the square ratio.

3 Panoramic format This scene also works well in panoramic format, which places emphasis on the strong horizontal line of hills in the background.

4 Portrait orientation Shooting this scene in portrait orientation allows emphasis to be placed on the diagonal line in the foreground, as well as the dramatic sky.

5 Landscape orientation Shooting the same scene in landscape format creates a less dramatic angle on the foreground path and loses some interest in the sky.

Portrait or landscape?

How to choose the best orientation for the scene you're shooting

PORTRAIT FORMAT

- ✓ Puts more emphasis on the foreground and can therefore create more depth.
- ✓ Can emphasise diagonal lines in the foreground, adding more drama to a composition.
- ✓ Is a simple way of giving more emphasis to a dramatic sky.
- ✗ Can look unnatural as our eyes are inclined to scan across an image.
- ✗ If the horizon is very dominant, vertical framing can clash with this.
- ✗ Is harder to show subjects in the context of the surrounding landscape.

LANDSCAPE FORMAT

- ✓ Works well with scenes that have strong horizontal lines or movement in them.
- ✓ Is good for single subjects in negative space, as it suggests isolation.
- ✓ Feels more 'natural', as it is closer to our field of vision.
- ✗ Places less emphasis on the foreground and therefore can give less impression of depth.
- ✗ Doesn't allow you to place emphasis on dramatic skies very effectively.
- ✗ Doesn't let you create such dramatic angles with diagonal lines.





Camera height and viewpoint

The simplest perspective adjustments can have the biggest impact

When organising the elements in the frame, it is vital to ensure that each part has the right amount of space. Camera height and angle play a major role in this, especially when it comes to achieving visual separation between objects.

Visual separation is closely linked to depth perception; without separation, it is easy for objects on different planes to merge into one another. This can be exploited for comic

effect – with people apparently holding a distant object in their hands, for example. In landscape photography, however, the effect of not separating the key elements in a composition can be a lack of depth in the image. Camera height significantly influences visual separation: a high viewpoint separates the planes and opens up the middle distance, potentially creating a greater impression of depth. A low viewpoint does



Tripod height

1 Tripod at head height There is a strong, carefully placed focal point in this image, but with the tripod legs fully extended, there is not enough foreground to balance it and too much emphasis is placed on the empty middle distance.

2 Tripod at chest height Shooting slightly lower – at chest height – is an improvement as some bracken is now included in the foreground. However, there is still too much empty space between it and the tree, and the shape of the foreground is rather untidy.

3 Tripod at ground level Shortening the tripod legs and setting the camera up just above ground level improves the shape of the foreground, so that it provides a lead-in to the focal point and reduces the impact of the empty space behind it.



the opposite and can be a good choice when dealing with an empty middle distance, as this can reduce its impact.

Low viewpoints can also add drama to a composition by placing emphasis on the foreground, making it loom large in the frame and creating dramatic perspective. Care must be taken to ensure foreground and background elements don't merge together and reduce perceived depth. The angle of

the camera – whether it is level, pointing up or down – can also influence composition, but it's not simply a matter of pointing the camera up to include more sky or down to include more foreground. With wide-angle lenses, having the camera anything but level introduces distortion. This can be exploited to exaggerate the angles of objects in the corners of the frame; lines can be generated to act as 'pointers' and direct attention within the frame.

Live View

Very high or very low camera viewpoints make framing awkward. Fortunately, most cameras have Live View on the rear LCD, and articulated or tilting screens can make it easier to compose from difficult angles.



Camera angle

4 Camera upright Keeping the sensor plane level helps to prevent distortion, but doesn't create the most interesting composition in this case. There is too much sky and no interesting lines in the foreground to lead in and create depth in the image.

5 Camera angled down Here the rocks in the bottom-left corner point neatly into the composition, generating interest in the foreground and helping to produce depth. However, the 50:50 division of foreground and sky is a little static.

6 Camera angled down further This creates a more dynamic composition, with leading lines snaking in from the bottom-left corner, directing attention towards the rugged headland. Balance is achieved by placing the horizon on a golden section horizontal.



Learn to capture **PORTRAITS** *with* **IMPACT**

Discover how to create incredible images that convey a sense of character

Capturing portraits that make people want to look twice is something that every photographer desires to achieve, and very often what's required for that to be the case is plenty of visible character in the image. This is obviously a very nebulous subject and can be interpreted in a number of different ways. What defines character to one person is not necessarily what defines character to someone else, and there are many different methods and approaches that one can adopt when it comes to capturing a

portrait with impact. Over the next few pages, however, you will discover some of the key considerations and skills that photographers can utilise in order to increase their chances of success in this respect. From lighting on location to simple setups that you can try at home, all the way through to street and travel photography, there's something here for almost any type of portrait photographer. Read on to discover the techniques that the pros use to help them capture portraits with character.



Left
Capture character

A sense of personality from the subject you are photographing will make a big difference to your image

© Kerry Moore





with care

Choose your approach

The technical aspects of a character portrait are often second to your interpersonal skills

As with so many elements of photography, there are very different approaches that you can choose to take when it comes to shooting portraits with character. One might argue that all portraits must convey character if they are to succeed. "Portraiture is a broad field of photography," says pro photographer Jarek Duk (jarekduk.com). "It can be broken down into many more specific areas like simple head shots, studio portraits, environmental portraits and so on. Each one of them will carry its own technical aspects but one thing is true for them all: successful portraits need to have personality and character." But what defines character, and how do you ensure that this is present in your portraits? Perhaps the most essential element is that you have to show something that's real – a genuine reflection of a genuine person. "You have to learn the basics of your gear, lighting and composition first.

However, you don't need to be, as many believe, a master of all of the above to shoot great portraits with character. You just need to be confident enough so the technical aspects do not stand between you and the human

being in front of your camera – after all, this is the most important ingredient of the work you are about to produce. One of my favourite photographers once said, 'In order to shoot great portraits you have to be 10 per cent photographer and 90 per cent psychologist.' I could not agree more. So all the technical aspects that beginners [sometimes] like to focus on so much are contributing merely 10 per cent to your final success, the other 90 per cent is your ability to connect with the subjects, your interpersonal skills, the respect you give your subjects, the comfort zone you will create for them so their personalities can shine through.

The images you see actually feature real barbers with their clients. No models would ever give me this much personality and character. Prior to the shoot I had spent pretty much the entire day with these guys. I got a haircut, listened to their stories, got to know them on a personal level and even got a shot of bourbon from under the counter. Yes, it took a lot of time and preparation but in return I walked away with a set of great images and the feeling that it was worth it."



Above
Real lives

These portraits aren't of models, but instead feature real barbers with their clients. Jarek Duk argues that the most important part of shooting portraits with character is to capture the stories of real, genuine people, and develop good interpersonal skills in order to get to know your subjects and build a level of trust



4x © Jarek Duk

Right
Keep it simple

Window light is one of the simplest but most effective light sources, and the lack of fuss involved can be ideal for capturing portraits with character

Far-right
Shoot it quickly

Many of the best portraits with character were captured very quickly, in a situation where the photographer didn't have long in which to get the shot

Make it seem spontaneous

Photographer Pete Bartlett (petebartlett.com) discusses the work of Jane Bown – a master at capturing the most engaging sense of character

I've been lucky enough to shoot a few of the same famous faces as Jane Bown, and have been told a number of times that I've chosen the exact same spot that Miss Bown chose herself. One example was Ian Hislop, who I photographed in the Private Eye offices when I was starting out. It was print day and there was a lot of stress around the office. I tried a few different setups with him but his mind wasn't really with me. When my time was up I reviewed the images and I knew I didn't have the killer shot I needed. In a move of almost Bown-like tenacity I crept up beside him while he was talking heatedly to the print manager and asked nervously if I might grab him for one last shot. I took him all the way to the top of the internal stairwell where earlier I'd spotted a little skylight window casting some lovely Rembrandtesque light onto the stairs. He focused for a few shots and gave me 'the shot', one I've always been fond of. As we went down the stairs he told me I was only the second person to take him to that skylight to be photographed. The other was you know who!

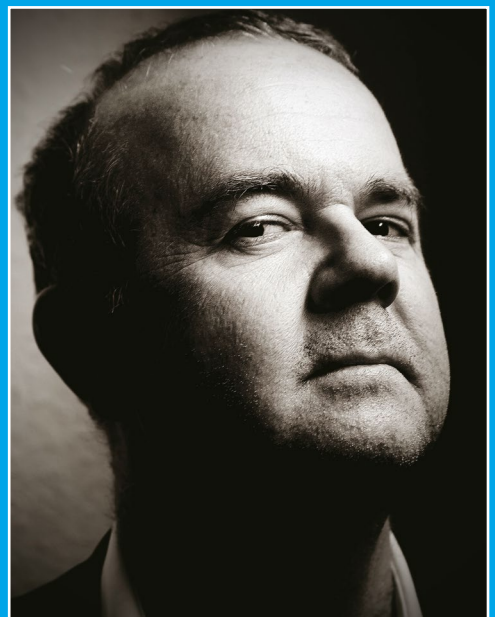
Jane Bown was a master of using natural light for her portraiture. Famously she said, "I last changed my camera 50 years ago. All I need is a good face and the right light." Getting skilled at using natural light begins by looking and noting down what you see 'in real life', then trying to replicate that in your own pictures. For example, Bown's Beckett picture is shot in a doorway. Doorways can often produce a beautiful light. You want to get the subject out of direct sunlight, as you want to

avoid harsh shadows. Having the door open gives them a nice dark backdrop to pop out of.

For similar reasons, canal bridges can provide beautiful light for portraits. Again, you want to recess the subject out of the direct light. This tunnel or doorway effect can be replicated by setting something up in your garden or wherever you have room. In the past I've used the frame of a super-lightweight greenhouse. I've covered the top and partway down the sides with black sheeting. Straightaway you have a tunnel/doorway that you can move around to find the right light and backdrop combo. It produces a beautiful light for headshot-style portraits.

Bown uses window light fantastically well. The general rule is that if it's a sunny day and there's a lot of light kicking about, look for a north-facing window. Skylights can work well, but so too can a big window. In the portrait of Jo Brand I sat her to the side of a big Georgian window. So as to avoid too big a shadow and also to get the window catchlights in her eyes, I asked her to look out of the window. It's very simple but the big light source gives a very soft and beautiful light. Looking out of the window gives a wistful, reflective look to the face.

In a more abstract sense I think an important part of Bown's 'technique' was to simply be herself. I am sure that because she was honest and unpretentious, she got honest and unpretentious portraits from people. Beyond asking people to be positioned where I want them, I never ask them to 'do' anything for me. I want them to be who they are in that moment.



2x © Pete Bartlett



Work with natural light

Trevor Cole discusses his approach to capturing well-exposed travel and street portraits with impact

I try to shoot in the golden hours or at least where there is shade from the Sun, and I always use natural light. Most of my portraits are shot while travelling and I strive to use light in a variety of ways. The soft, warm light at sunrise and sunset is unquestionably the best, as the lower angle of the Sun creates glow and shadows are less harsh. In some cases side lighting can be used very effectively by the photographer using spot metering to highlight contrasts. Where the subjects are facing the warm light their faces take on an inimitable glow, which enhances the portrait. In situations where the light is overhead and generates shadow it is still imperative to shoot, if opportunity arises. It is here that the photographer must use a little enterprise. Trees provide shade and diffuse the light. Doorways, the shaded side of the street and umbrellas all create opportunity to avoid the intensity of the midday Sun. Natural light from windows can create interesting reflections and the presence of dust or smoke in the air creates beams, which provide an atmosphere in which to capture those inimitable moments.



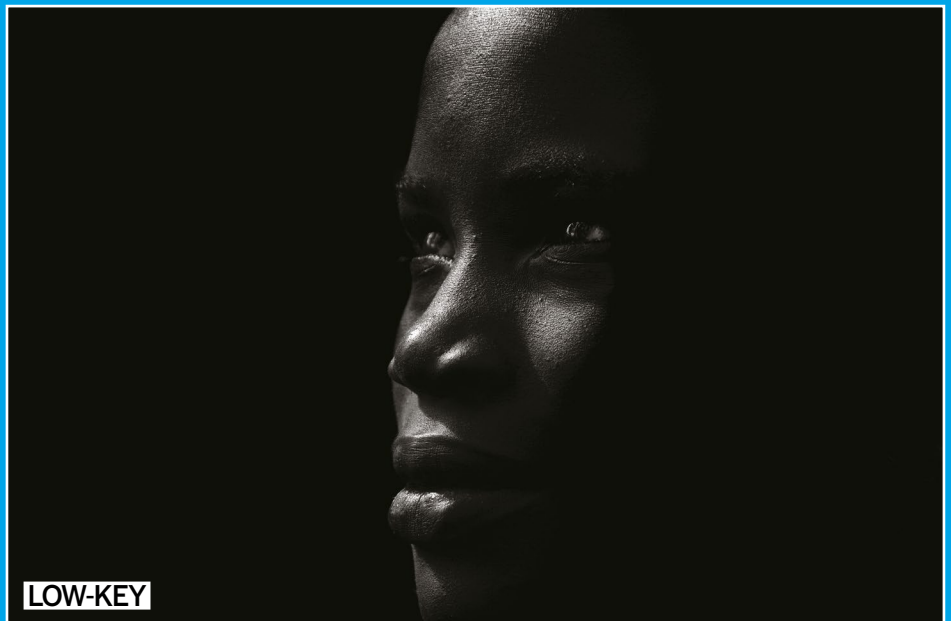
Use spot metering

Trevor Cole looks at the benefits of working with this mode

I use spot metering specifically when I want a well-lit portrait to stand apart from a darker background, and also when there are marked contrasts in lighting. For example, in the shot on the right I spot-metered on a highlighted area to ensure it was exposed correctly, while at the same time casting the darker areas into shadow.

🔦 **Low-key** Here spot metering has been employed to create a low-key effect.

🔦 **High-key** I used spot metering here to ensure that the subject's face was perfectly exposed. The background was lighter, apart from the folds in the scarf, creating a high-key image.



LOW-KEY



All images © Trevor Cole



Left
Work with contrast

A Cuban on the streets of Havana. Here I took advantage of bright, reflected light on the street, but also a shadowed background to provide the variation in lighting

Above
Use shafts of light

An Ethiopian priest in a rock-hewn church in Gheralta, Tigrai, Ethiopia. The light from a window created wonderful tones and contrast as well as casting light onto the rock face

Convert to black and white

If you are looking to emphasise character, removing the colour can offer many advantages

With the colour taken away, this portrait takes on a much more direct and immediate quality, with the attention going straight to the woman's wizened expression and haunting gaze.

Rather than being a means of simply improving imperfect images, converting to black and white makes it even more important that the portrait itself is a strong one.





Left

Afar woman

A woman of the Afar tribe, Danakil desert, Ethiopia. The extraordinarily direct eye contact gives the viewer a sense of the woman's soul

Below-left

Keep it real

A young boy from the Entoto hills, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The boy's direct yet hesitant gaze suggest a youthful vulnerability. For the most impact, your portraits should always be believable

Below-right

Shoot the moment

An old Romanian man on the streets of a town in Maramures, Romania. His expression and facial characteristics were encapsulated in the moment. A spontaneous shot taken with the available light

All images © Trevor Cole

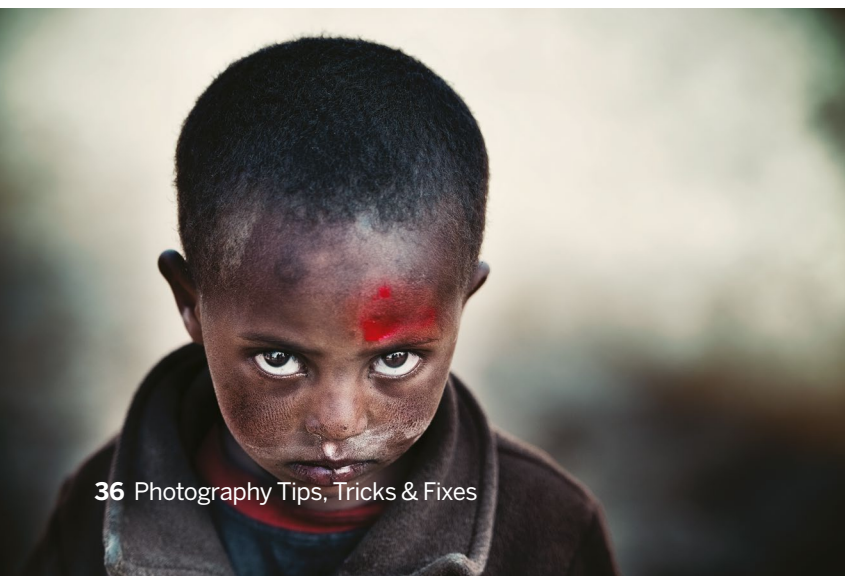
Consider the pose

The success of a portrait often depends on the subject's expression and position in the frame

Trevor Cole's approach to travel and street photography involves deciding on both who to photograph and how to capture them. "With time I have come to select who I want to photograph, envisaging the outcome ahead of shooting," explains Cole. "Taking portraits of people in the marketplace, street or in a tribal village requires interaction. There are clandestine shots that are often taken with a longer lens and are discreet, but most of my portraiture is a product of interpersonal moments. I like to get to know the characters being photographed. I always ask and even

when my efforts are rejected I respect their choice. Sometimes, even with difficult subjects, spending a little time and using a little humour can yield positive results. In Ethiopia, one of my favourite travel destinations, most people are relatively easy to photograph except, perhaps, for those who are more conservative culturally and/or religiously. Even then, I relish the challenge and will certainly try! If feasible I seek backgrounds that are uniform or dark in their colouration. Spot metering combined with a wide aperture (f1.4/2.8) helps to ensure that the portrait stands apart and there is

little distraction. Where this isn't feasible I shoot to capture the moment, again using a wide aperture to blur background distraction. I may take a number of frames to ensure that the image is sharp. With tribal peoples photography is different. I am very sensitive to the impacts of tourism, hence I will always try to make visits sustainable and not promote 'zooification'! I strive to capture light, colour, emotion, insight, character and spirit. In the right light, at the right time, the ordinary becomes extraordinary and that is something to aspire to."



Work with models

Include a sense of character in your fashion and beauty shots

Whenever the brief allows, you should seek to let the character of your subject shine through. Talking to your model before and during the shoot and finding out what makes them tick as a person is always a good start, but when you are directing a subject for a specific purpose – as can often be the case – it can be hard to capture a sense of their true character at the same time. Jarek Duk explains that it's possible to observe the model's natural movements and mannerisms and allow these to inform the way you conduct the shoot. "[Pay attention to] the way they walk, the way they smile, the way they flick their hair," Duk says. "As one famous fashion designer once said, 'The style is not what you wear, but how you wear it.'" The essential key to achieving this is the ability to be flexible – have a plan for the shoot, but don't necessarily allow these ideas to override what's actually working with the model during the day. With experience and practice, you will be able to incorporate a model's personality into the shoot, no matter how precise the brief is.

Models matter

Sensitive and experienced portrait photographers will pay attention to the character and personality of the model they are working with, incorporating their specific traits and characteristics into the shoot

All images © Jarek Duk



Tips | Tricks | Fixes



ADD SOME FILL
The fill was a small, hard fill with a warm gel and diffusion over it. The stand has it raised up so I don't block the light.

MAIN LIGHT
My main (key) light was my Profoto 22-inch Beauty Dish/Softlight Reflector fitted with a honeycomb grid to keep the light nice and focused, while the grid gives more dramatic shadows.

AVOID A FALL
Sandbags are my best friend; it was a really windy day and weighing your stands down will stop them from falling and injuring your talent.

PORTABLE BACKGROUND
The pop-up background means I have an instant studio anywhere. It's a velvet-type fabric that absorbs almost all the light, making it really easy to get a dark background.



Shoot and edit on location

Go behind the scenes with pro Tom Barnes as he explains how he captures character

How do you define character? I interpret it as capturing someone's true personality, which has to be the hardest part of shoots – especially if you are photographing people who are not used to being in front of the camera. For this shoot with Jay from a callisthenics group called BarSparta (look them up – it's wild what they can do) I wanted to shoot some action shots but also get the portraits – this is my bread and butter and capturing people's character is why I get hired. I originally had planned to use a large octagonal softbox as my main light, but when we arrived at the location we were stuck with heavy winds which meant we were forced to use smaller modifiers; luckily I love using the beauty dish, especially on tighter portraits. The lighting

doesn't necessarily affect the character of the person in the photograph, but it can make them feel uneasy if they aren't used to being shot with equipment. I get around this by explaining what everything does (in basic terms) and it seems to have a calming effect when working with less experienced talent; it wasn't needed on this shoot, but it's good to know. I find posing people when trying to capture character a little awkward – if you are trying to capture their natural character you should avoid getting them to do anything that might be completely alien to them – it will look awkward. I chat all the time to the subject while I am shooting them, I direct them slightly but instead of getting them to do specific poses I get them animated through chatting

and telling stories. Some subjects just light up when they are in front of the camera and require little prompting, but sometimes these look too [over the top] – it's all about finding the balance. When it comes to editing I try to keep it natural and realistic, I don't smooth skin although I will remove blemishes and spots. I tend to do an overall tone curve then dodge and burn specific areas to give me the exact look I am after.

Above-inset
Involve the model
I always show people images throughout the shoot. It boosts their confidence on set and they feel more involved

Opposite
Let it flow
Rather than directing his models excessively, Tom Barnes prefers to let their character shine through naturally

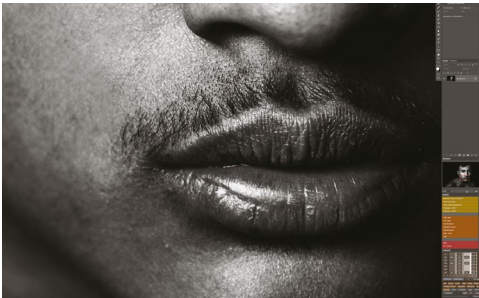
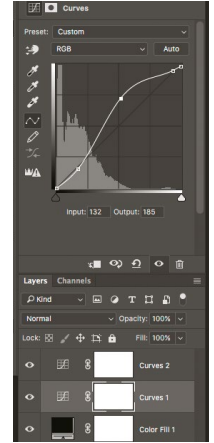


1 Image selection Begin rating your favourite images with a star. Then review these and rate the best as two stars, then review and rate with three stars and so on – by the end you'll have four to five levels of refinement.



2 RAW tweaks I boost the shadows a little, bring back the highlights across the scene and make sure I get an accurate white balance. I will also do lens correction and more general tweaks, before opening as a 16-bit TIFF file.

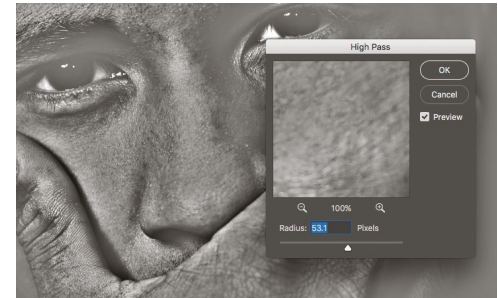
3 Convert to black and white You can use any one of multiple methods – there are arguments for each of them – but I like to create a new solid fill adjustment layer and adjust the Opacity to choose the level of desaturation – I always use adjustment layers as these are non-destructive and can be adjusted throughout the editing process.



4 Skin I have a skin healing layer set to Lighten and I use the Healing Brush to then heal various blemishes. Set the brush to a hard edge for sharper results. Re-select your target point continually to get textures.



5 Dodge and burn I put this on a separate layer, set to Overlay blend mode. I then paint on to it with a white or black brush to affect the shadows and highlights – use this sparingly as it can look overdone quite easily.



6 High-pass filter I use this in order to give some of the shots an extra bit of punch and micro-contrast – it is effectively oversharpener an image so that it affects tone rather than sharpness.

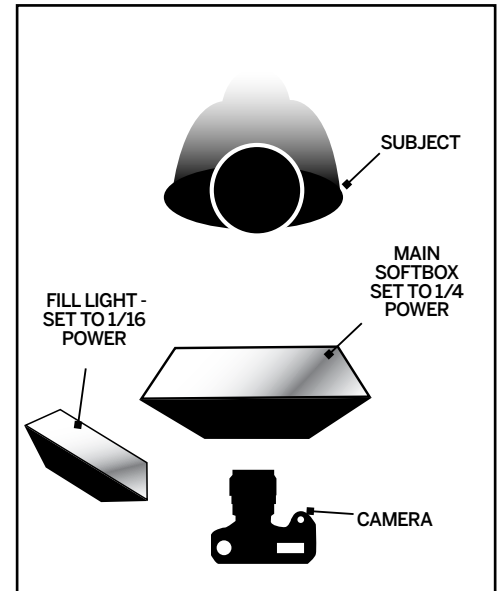


Light and edit the human face

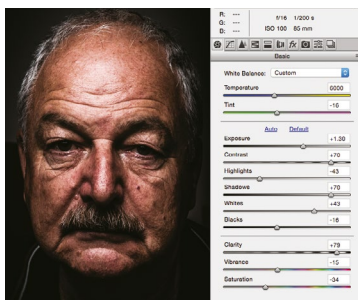
Discover a contemporary technique for capturing and processing a close-up portrait that you can try at home

If you take a look at the work of many modern portrait photographers online, you'll find that they often adopt a look that has an almost painterly feel to it in terms of lighting, yet at the same time is edited to reveal plenty of detail. Fortunately, this doesn't require lots of professional equipment or a big studio space – you can create this effect at home with just a speedlight or two. The ability to put some distance between the model and whatever is behind them is useful, however, as this allows you to take advantage of the inverse square law to capture a background that is at least fairly dark, but preferably completely black. Achieving this might require an ambient-only exposure of 1/200sec (or whatever your fastest flash sync speed is) and a narrow aperture of f11 or f16 at ISO 100. Positioning your key light fairly high above your subject will enable you to create a butterfly, loop or

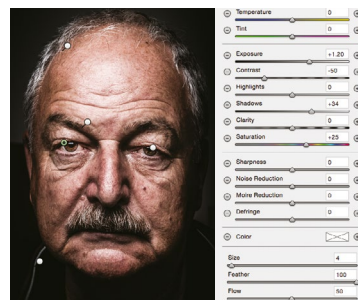
Rembrandt lighting effect in terms of the way the shadows form on your subject's face, depending on the angle of the light's position. You can add a fill light beneath the key light in order to make some of the shadows slightly less dense. Soft light, achieved by attaching a softbox, is easier to work with much of the time, but you can experiment with a harder light for the key light if you wish. Have your subject stare into the lens directly and use a focal length of at least 50mm (though the classic 85mm portrait lens is preferable). The processing involves careful adjustments of micro-contrast and exposure, so it's definitely advisable to capture a RAW file.



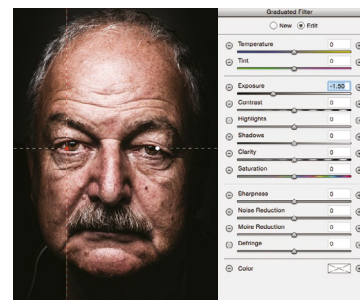
Opposite
Face full of character
This study was captured with both a key light and a fill light and then carefully processed to create a painterly effect



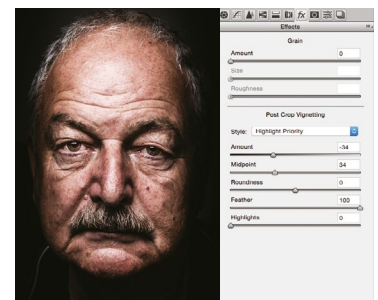
1 Adjust the sliders Head to the Basic tab to increase global and micro-contrast. The Clarity slider is useful for the latter and it's worth lowering the colour Saturation and tweaking White Balance.



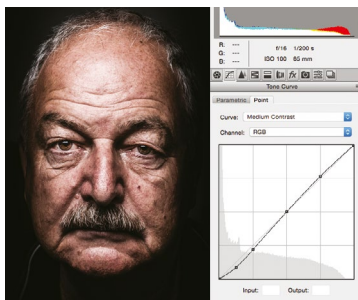
2 Use the Adjustment Brush This brush, found in both Photoshop and Lightroom and most other applications, is ideal for making local tweaks to specific areas of the subject's face.



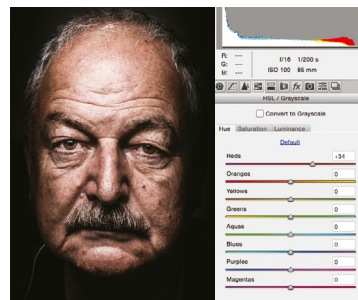
3 Add gradients These are useful for tapering off the light so that the sides of the photo around the face are darker. Do this with care, though, as you don't want it to look too obvious.



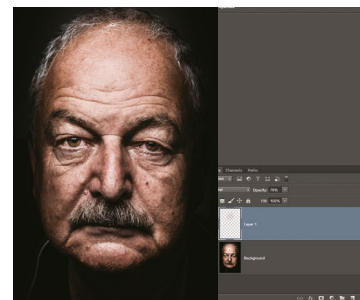
4 Use vignette The Effects tab can be used to add a vignette to the edges of your image, useful if you struggled to achieve a completely dark background during the shooting process.



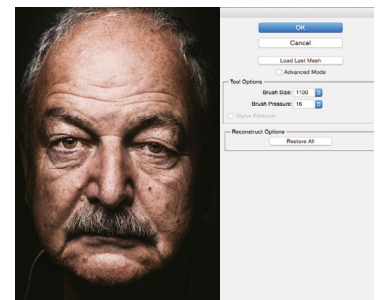
5 Boost the contrast You can increase the overall image contrast a little further by going to the Curves and creating a slight S-curve, which can be done via a preset and then manually adjusted.



6 Adjust hues Another option is to tweak the Reds using the Hue, Saturation and Luminance sliders. This isn't essential but is useful for enhancing the painterly feel of your images.



7 Paint in Photoshop Head into Photoshop and create a blank layer. Use the Brush Tool set to a suitable skin colour and a low opacity and carefully paint over areas of highlight on the skin.



8 Liquify For a deeper edit, you can carefully use the Liquify tool to push and pull parts of the subject's face – obviously this isn't the way forward if you are looking to achieve the most natural result.





SHOOT YOUR BEST BLACK & WHITE

Explore the world of black and white photography and learn how to compose striking monochrome images with impact

When did you last see a black and white photograph that really inspired and excited you?

More importantly, who took it – you? It's very easy to get complacent, reaching a point where you can produce work that's technically excellent and creatively sound, but is still lacking that all-important 'wow' factor.

Putting a finger on exactly what it is that elevates an image from average to amazing is difficult, simply because there are so many factors involved. The lens you choose, the quality of the light, the angle you shoot from, the proximity to your subject – all these factors can either add impact or take it away.

Henri Cartier-Bresson's best-known photographs have impact, but it's very subtle and a result of careful timing to capture the

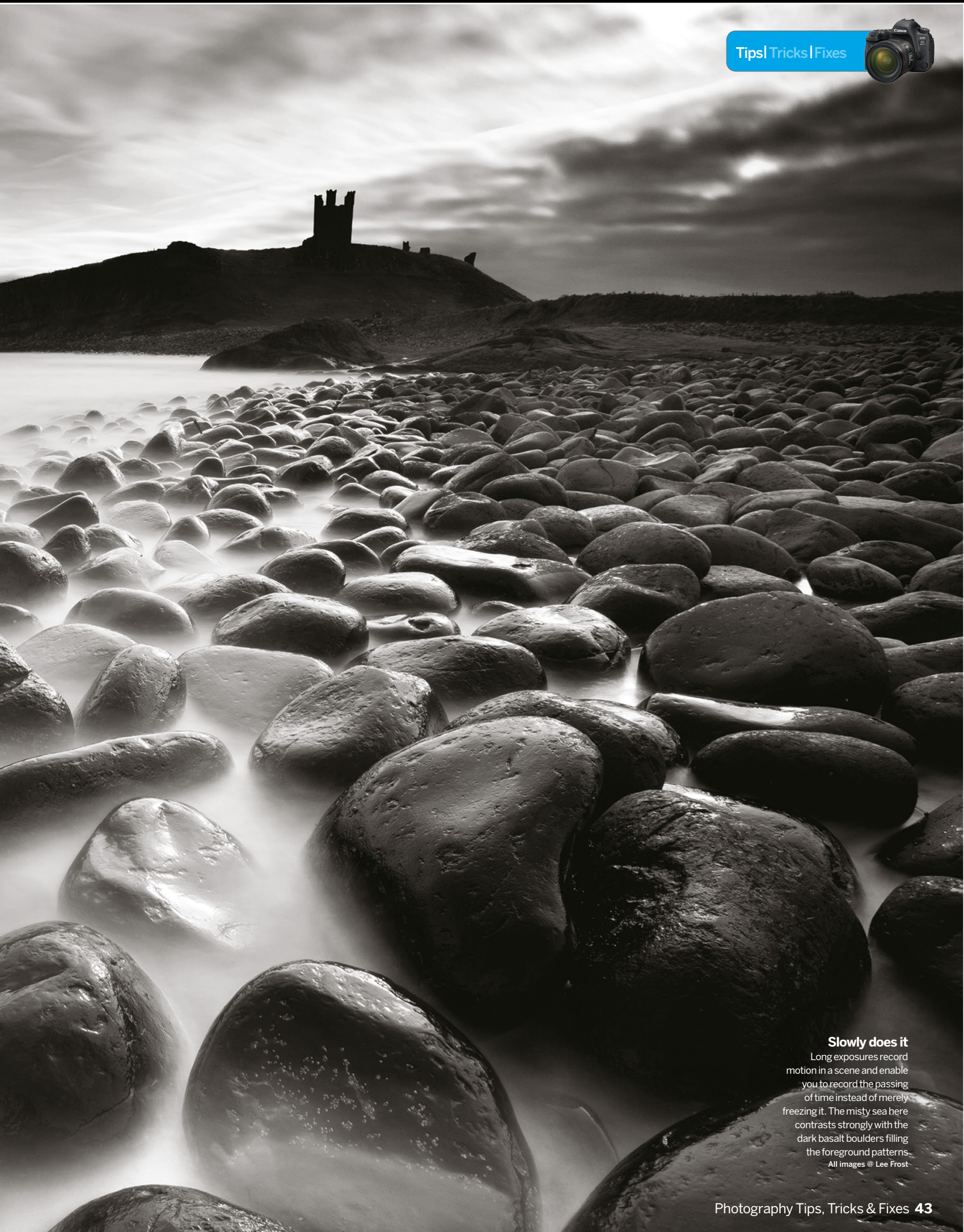
'decisive moment', rather than because he was photographing high drama. He took ordinary, everyday scenes and elevated them to fine art: a family picnicking on the banks of the River Seine; a man leaping over a puddle; a grinning child walking down the street clutching two bottles of wine.

Although Cartier-Bresson's images appear to be spontaneous, as though he wandered the streets shooting on the move, he was actually far more premeditated in his approach, composing a scene to make use of geometry – lines, curves, shadows, shapes and frames – then waiting for someone to step into that 'geometric pattern'. As he said in his book *The Decisive Moment*, "Photography is the simultaneous recognition, in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event as well

as of a precise organisation of forms which give that event its proper expression."

In contrast, American photographer William Klein, one of the fathers of street photography, was renowned for rejecting the rules of photography – using blur in his images, getting up close and personal with a wide-angle lens so you feel like you're part of the story rather than a voyeur looking in. His compositions are often cluttered, with multiple points of interest. They seem raw and unplanned, sometimes technically flawed, but that gives them a vibrancy and urgency that few ever manage to achieve.

Here we will explore the factors to consider when shooting and editing a black and white image with impact, along with tips on how to really upgrade your monochrome shots.



Slowly does it

Long exposures record motion in a scene and enable you to record the passing of time instead of merely freezing it. The misty sea here contrasts strongly with the dark basalt boulders filling the foreground patterns.

All images © Lee Frost



SURROUNDINGS

Location carefully chosen so the subject would be backlit by the setting sun.

AUTOFOCUS

Servo AF was used so the lens continually adjusted focus to keep the cart and driver sharply focused.

EXPOSURE

Test shots were taken to make sure the main subject didn't record in silhouette due to the brightness of the sun.

HEAD-ON

A sequence of shots was taken as the cart travelled towards the camera and the best frames were chosen for editing.

A MOVING SUBJECT

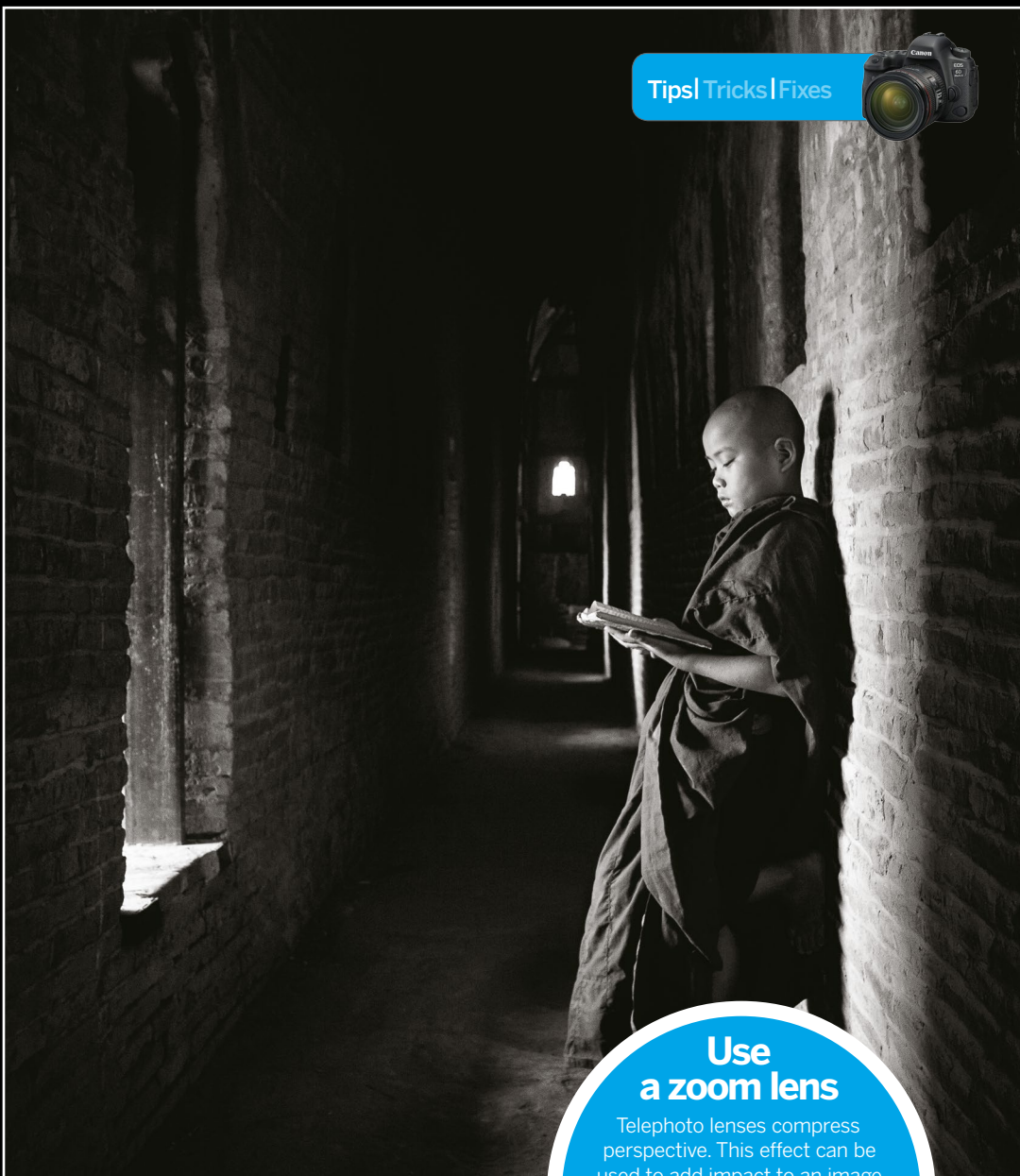
fast shutter speed (1/1,000sec) was chosen to make sure the moving cart was captured sharp.

Complete the picture

How do we produce black and white images with impact when faced with everyday subjects? It could be argued that a lack of colour makes it more difficult to achieve. After all, colour has great symbolic and emotive value. However, as wonderful as colour photography is, it can also be too familiar. It shows us what things look like and leaves us feeling reassured and comfortable. But in art, reality isn't always the best solution because it doesn't encourage us to look beyond familiarity and appreciate an image for any reason other than what it depicts. As soon as you remove colour from an image, everything changes because it no longer represents reality. It's an interpretation of the world, rather than a copy.

Black and white images are more dramatic, more evocative and more atmospheric. Our emotional response to a colour image is often rendered superficial by familiarity, but comes from a much deeper place when we take that colour away. Light, shade, texture and shape take centre stage and what's actually in the scene becomes almost irrelevant. Good black and white images inspire the viewer to complete the picture in their mind's eye.

The late French photographer Lucien Clergue photographed a diverse range of subjects, from bullfights in his hometown of Arles to circus children. However, he's probably best known for his depiction of the female nude. In the 'Nus Zebres' series he photographed models in New York; the use of shadow patterns and contrast transformed his images into poetic abstracts where light and shade take centre stage.



Use a zoom lens

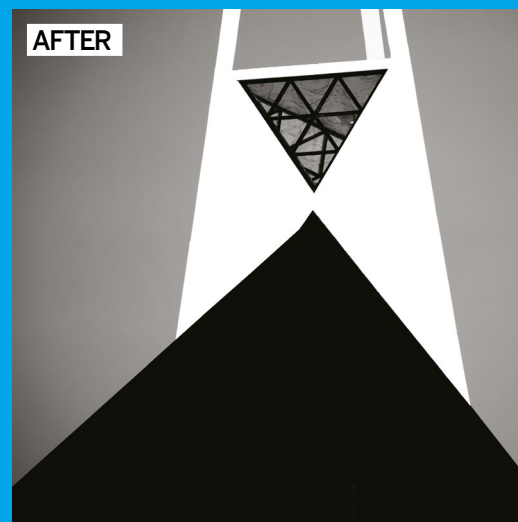
Telephoto lenses compress perspective. This effect can be used to add impact to an image because everything in the shot seems to be crowded together. Distant features loom large in the background and dwarf smaller features that are closer to the camera.

Above Travel inspiration

There's nothing better than travel to open your mind and improve your skills as a photographer. Exploring different countries and cultures will expose you to amazing photo opportunities

Take an abstract view

Abstract images gain their appeal not from the fact that you can identify the object recorded, but from the shapes, patterns, tones and textures that make up that object. This means that literally anything can be used as the basis of an abstract image. Look for criss-crossing lines, overlapping shapes and eye-catching angles. Forget about what the subject is and focus on how the elements in your camera's viewfinder can be organised in an interesting way. Experiment, and don't be afraid to let important elements break out of the frame, or reduce the composition to a bare minimum.





Seeing in black and white

Purists insist that in order to produce meaningful black and white photographs you must 'see' in black and white – step beyond the realism of colour, strip your subject down to its bare bones and previsualise how the final image will look as a monochrome print.

There is some truth in this, but it doesn't have to be the Holy Grail. If you're exclusively a black and white photographer then you're going to become attuned to seeing the world in black and white – looking at a combination of colours and instinctively knowing how they're going to translate to shades of grey, for example. You will also set out with the intention of finding subjects that appeal to your monochrome vision.

However, the reality is that few of us fall into that category – we just love going out into the world, shooting pictures, and while the majority of them remain in full colour, some end up as black and white simply because they work better that way.

Does that mean those black and white images are going to be inferior? Not necessarily. The post-production control you have over a digital image file today means that creative decisions can be made long after a photograph has been taken.

The master of pre-visualisation was the legendary landscape photographer Ansel Adams. His large-format black and white prints of the American West, primarily Yosemite National Park, have inspired for decades. Adams was a technical genius,

and helped to devise the famous Zone system that enabled him to set the exposure for an image based on how he previsualised the final print to look. His first 'pre-visualised' image was 'Monolith, the Face of Half Dome', made in Yosemite in 1927. Adams made that image using his last glass plate and put a red filter on the lens to boost contrast and darken the sky. He later said, "I had been able to realise a desired image: not the way the subject appeared in reality but how it *felt* to me and how it must appear in the finished print". That print launched his career and changed the face of landscape photography forever.

Another master of the landscape image is British photographer Michael Kenna. Kenna's work gains impact through simplicity and purity. He attempts "to evoke and suggest through as few elements as possible, rather than to describe with tremendous detail".

Kenna primarily shoots and prints in the square format, which adds symmetry, balance and tranquillity to his images, and often his compositions are distilled down to the simplest forms – a single tree in a snowy landscape, or fishing nets out at sea captured with a long exposure, for example.

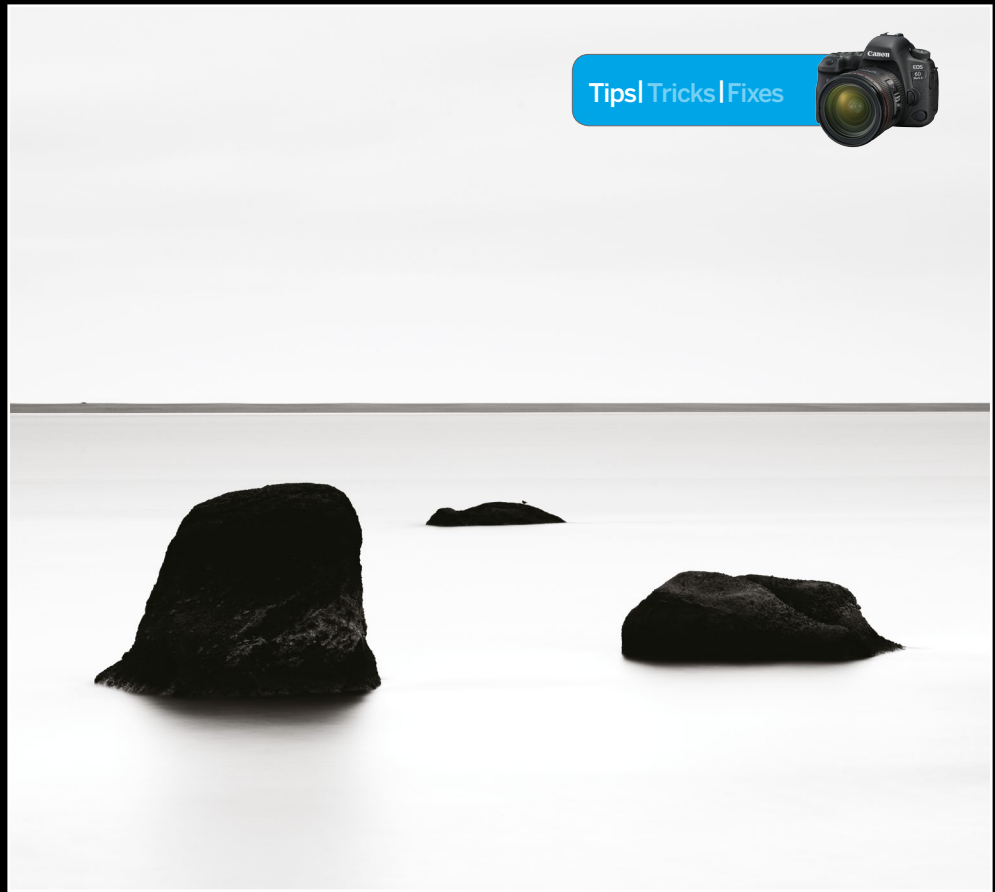


“Step beyond the realism of colour, strip your subject down to its bare bones and previsualise how the final image will look”

Change your viewpoint

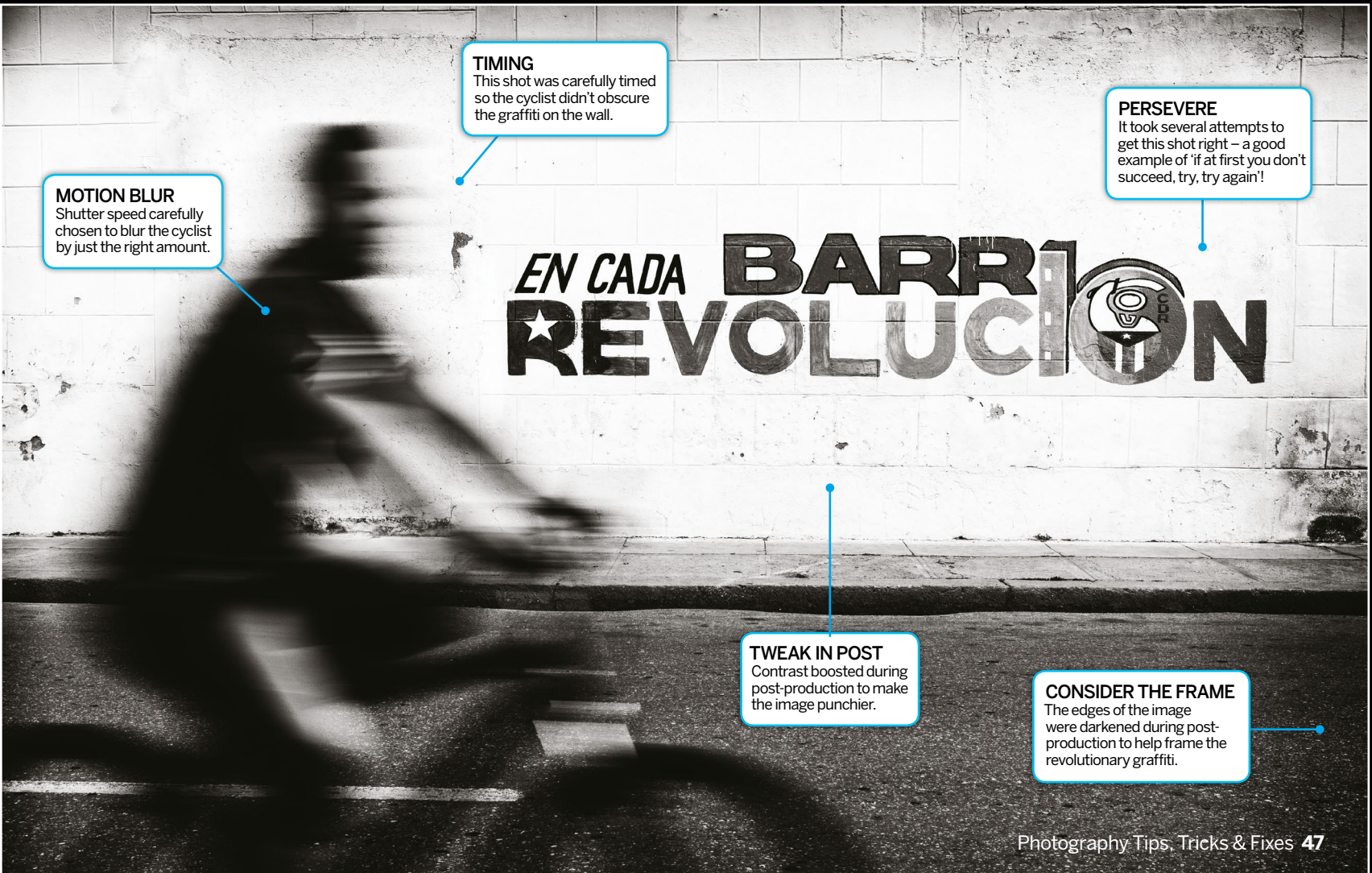
The norm in photography is to shoot at eye level, however, by intentionally shooting from alternative viewpoints or unusual angles, you can add an element of surprise to your images that grabs the viewer's attention. Try holding the camera a few inches above the ground – if it has an articulated screen you'll still be able to see what you're shooting. Or shoot from a higher position: standing on a wall or climbing some stairs can make a huge difference.





Left
Repeat after me
 Use patterns and repetition to add impact to your images. This is easier to do in black and white because there's no colour to distract. Increasing contrast during post-production is an effective way to boost shadow patterns

Above
Quirky compositions
 Don't always strive to capture scenes in a familiar way. Black and white is unrealistic by its very nature, so make the most of that by looking for unusual subjects, or shooting the ordinary in a way that makes it extraordinary



MOTION BLUR
 Shutter speed carefully chosen to blur the cyclist by just the right amount.

TIMING
 This shot was carefully timed so the cyclist didn't obscure the graffiti on the wall.

PERSEVERE
 It took several attempts to get this shot right – a good example of 'if at first you don't succeed, try, try again!'

TWEAK IN POST
 Contrast boosted during post-production to make the image punchier.

CONSIDER THE FRAME
 The edges of the image were darkened during post-production to help frame the revolutionary graffiti.



AMBIGUITY

The image works because it has an abstract feel – it takes a while to work out just what it is you're looking at.

LOOK FOR INTERESTING PATTERNS

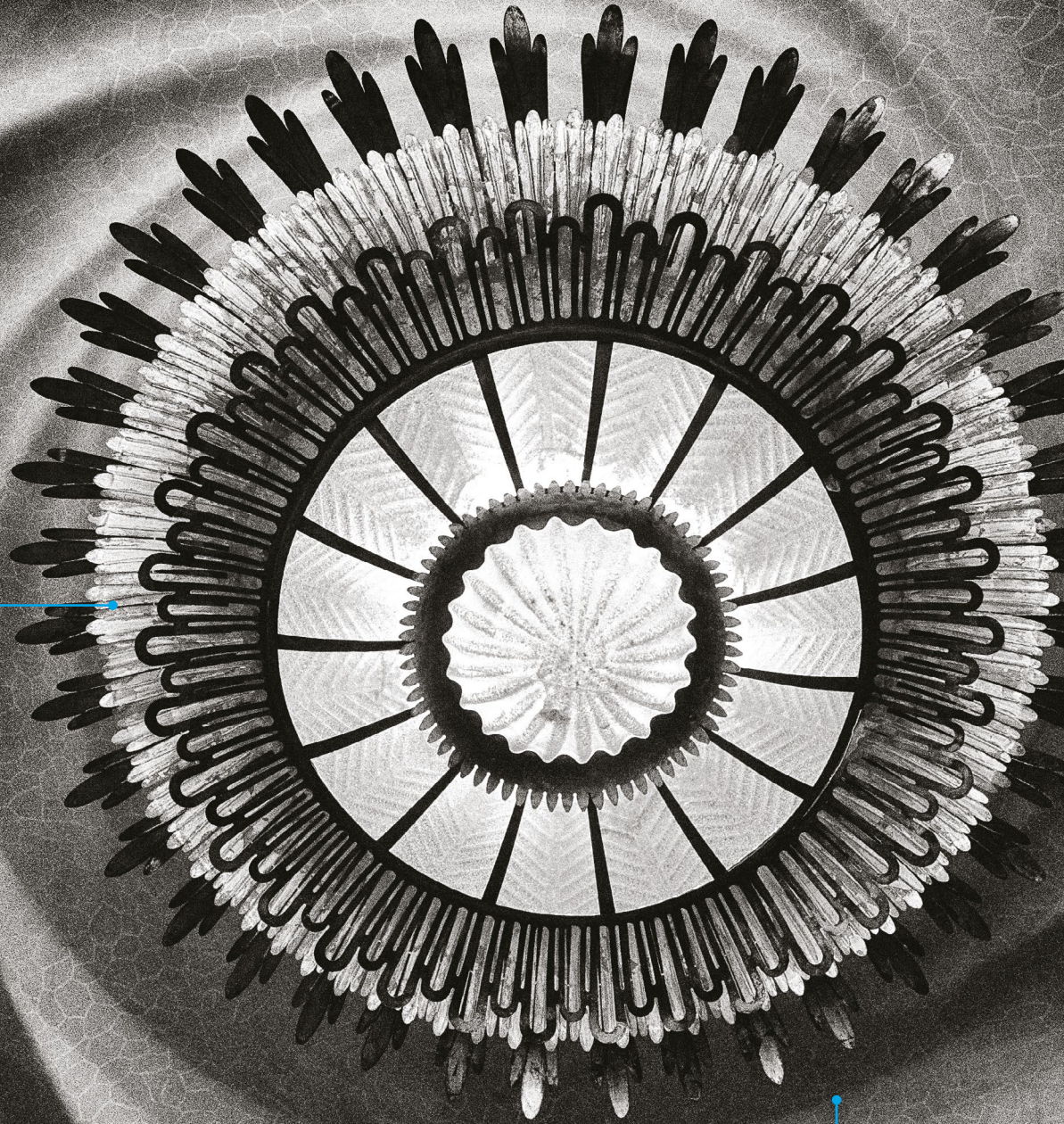
The subject (an ornate lamp) was photographed from directly beneath looking up to emphasise the pattern in the design.

VIGNETTE

The vignetting at the image's edges is natural, created by the fall-off in light from the lamp itself.

ISO SETTINGS

A high ISO (3200) was necessary to take the shot handheld in the low light of the interior.





COMPOSITION

Image cropped to a square to emphasise the symmetry of the subject and make the composition more balanced.

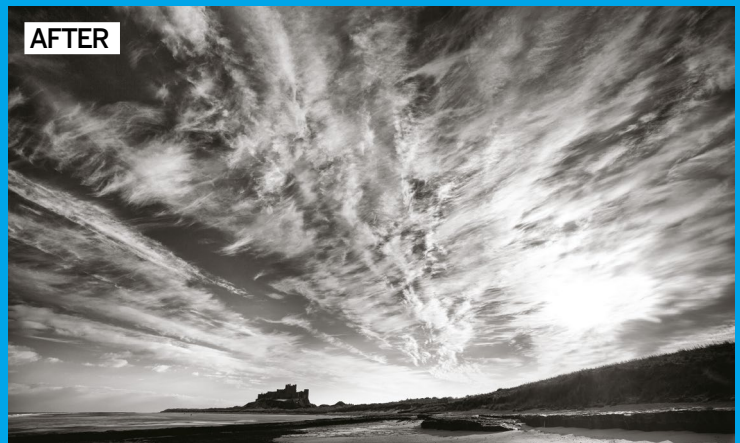
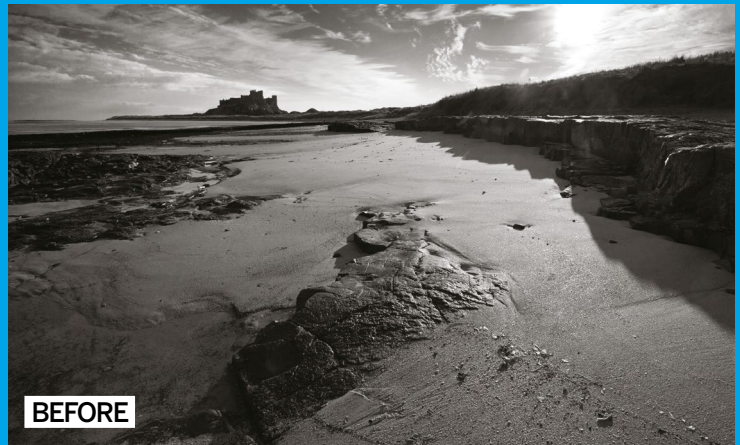


Above
Celebrate the ordinary

Though travel is exciting and inspiring, you can produce fantastic images on your doorstep. The great thing about shooting locally is you can go back to the same locations time after time and make the most of dramatic light and weather

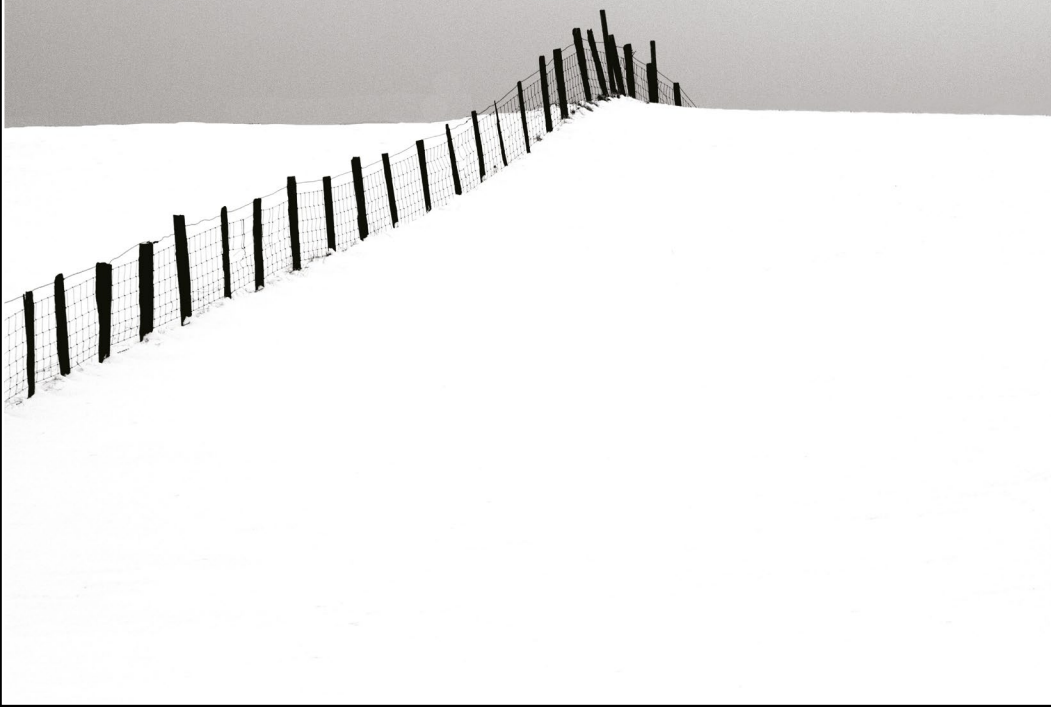
Make a feature of the sky

When we shoot landscape images, we often tilt our cameras down to make the most of foreground interest, and the sky becomes nothing more than a sorry slither running across the top of the frame. In many situations, this approach is necessary as a boring sky dilutes impact. But there will be times when the sky is more interesting than the landscape, and that's when you need to change your approach, tilting the camera up instead of down so the sky is celebrated in all its glory.



Crop it

Although best practice is to try and compose your images in-camera as you want them to be, don't be afraid to crop during post-production if doing so will produce a stronger image. Cropping can tighten up a 'windy' composition and get rid of unwanted elements. A square crop can also transform the look and feel of an image.



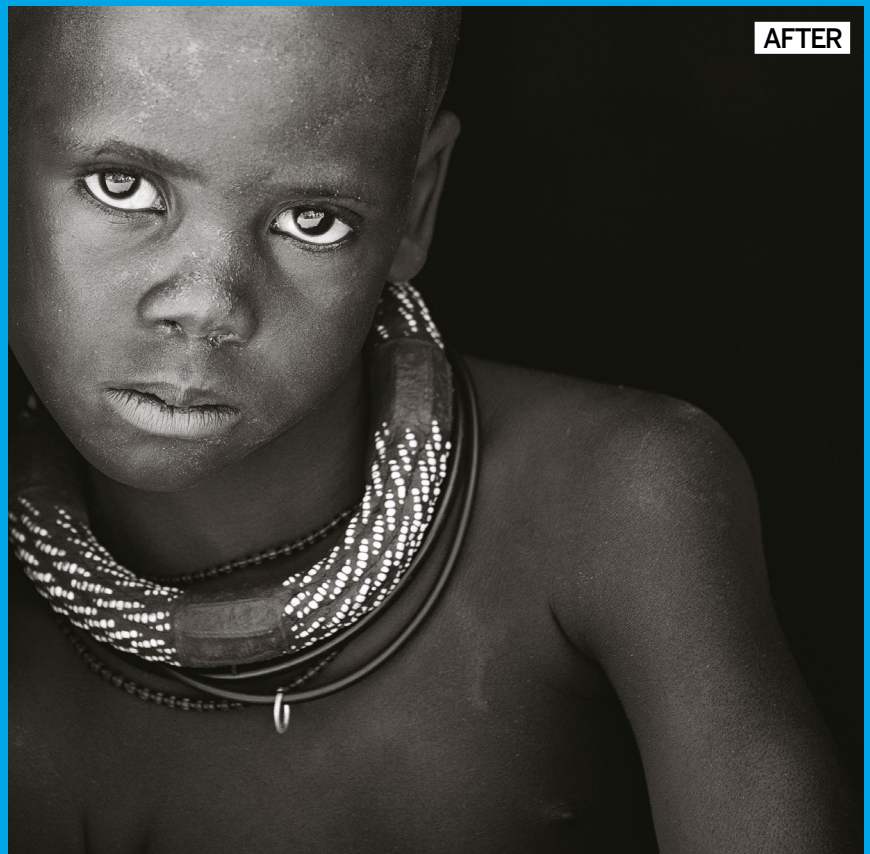
Strength from simplicity

Putting yourself into the right mindset to 'see' in black and white can be tricky, but it's an obstacle that can easily be overcome. You could set your DSLR to Monochrome mode then shoot in both RAW and JPEG – the image you see on your camera's preview screen will be black and white, so you'll have a good idea of how the scene translates, but you'll also have a colour RAW file on the memory card which you can work on later. The other option is to shoot as normal, in colour, then decide later which images you want to convert. Some will work, others won't, but there's no reason why you won't end up with some great images.

Ultimately, photographs of any subject can have impact if you want them to, whether it's a landscape, a close-up or a portrait. All it takes is confidence and commitment. You need to approach the subject purposefully, be prepared to take creative risks, make mistakes, push your skills to the limit and see what happens. As Michael Kenna once said, "Nothing is ever the same twice because everything is always gone forever, and yet each moment has infinite possibilities."

Move closer

"If your pictures aren't good enough, you're not close enough," so said the late great Robert Capa. It's a useful maxim to adopt no matter what subjects you shoot. Not getting close enough is perhaps one of the biggest mistakes photographers make. Landscapes with no foreground interest, portraits surrounded by unnecessary space, candids snapped from too far away... There seems to be a fear of getting up close and personal to the subject, but it makes a huge difference to the impact of the final image.



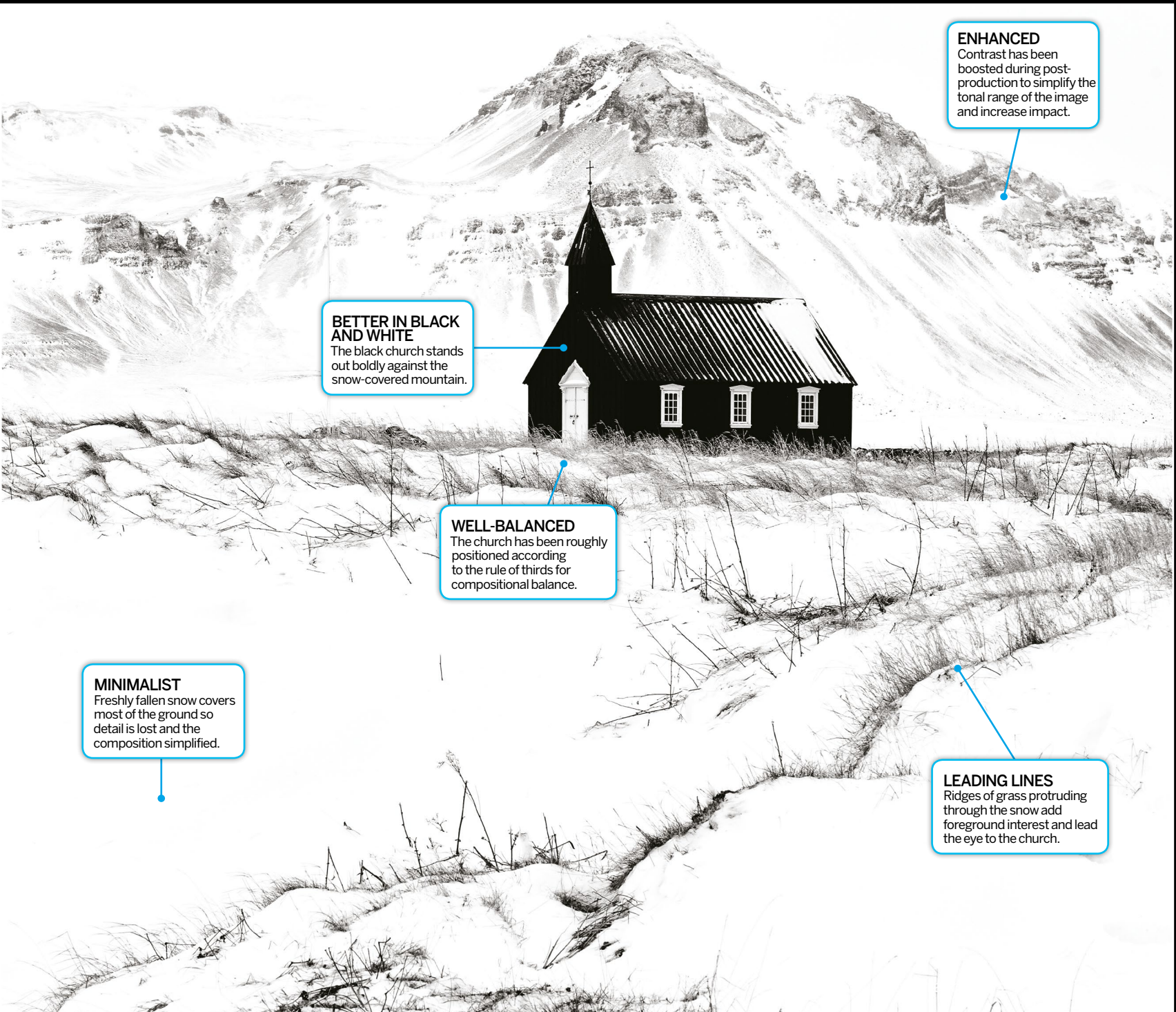


Right
Wide views

Wide-angle lenses add impact to any image due to the way they exaggerate perspective. Use lines to lead the eye into the scene – converging lines work best, and shoot from a low position to really emphasise foreground interest

Opposite
Keep it simple

Simple compositions have impact because they deliver a more direct message. Winter is a great time to shoot minimalist images because snow covers the landscape and hides all but the boldest features



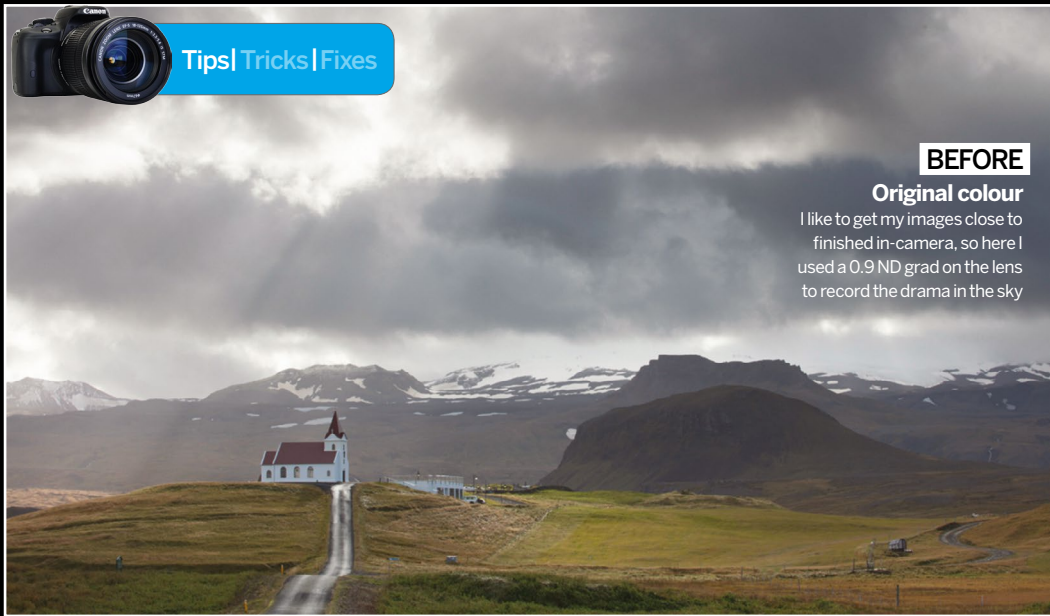
ENHANCED
Contrast has been boosted during post-production to simplify the tonal range of the image and increase impact.

BETTER IN BLACK AND WHITE
The black church stands out boldly against the snow-covered mountain.

WELL-BALANCED
The church has been roughly positioned according to the rule of thirds for compositional balance.

MINIMALIST
Freshly fallen snow covers most of the ground so detail is lost and the composition simplified.

LEADING LINES
Ridges of grass protruding through the snow add foreground interest and lead the eye to the church.



BEFORE

Original colour

I like to get my images close to finished in-camera, so here I used a 0.9 ND grad on the lens to record the drama in the sky

Be bold

Producing black and white images with impact requires confidence, especially when it comes to image editing. Unfortunately, many photographers are too subtle about the whole process and end up with lacklustre results.

What you need to do is forget about realism. Black and white isn't realistic, so your images don't have to be. We're not suggesting that you go over-the-top for the sake of it, but just because a photograph started its life looking rather flat and subdued, it doesn't mean it has to stay that way. Throw caution to the wind. Let your creative hair down. Be brave!

AFTER

Conversion

Only basic editing was required to maximise the drama and impact of the original image. That sky is biblical!

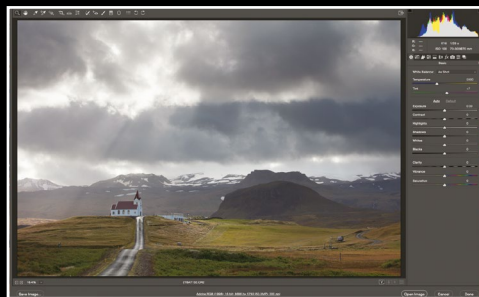




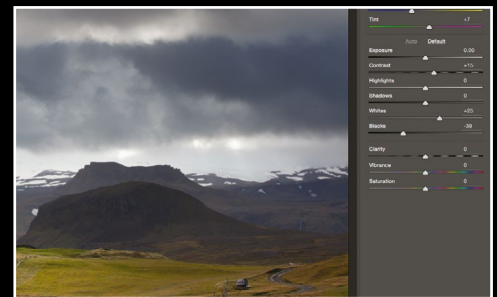
The final image may bear no resemblance to the original, but if it says what you want it to say, then that's absolutely fine!

There are numerous applications you can use to convert colour images to mono at the touch of a button. One of the best is Silver Efex Pro 2, part of the excellent Google Nik Collection (available as a free download from google.com/nikcollection)

The High Contrast and High Structure presets are ideal for producing punchy, dramatic black and white images if you want a quick fix, while the colour filter effects are handy for boosting contrast and changing the tonal relationship in the image.



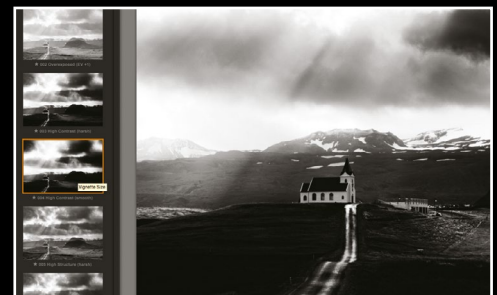
1 Open the RAW file This shot was taken in stormy conditions so the unedited file does show potential for being a powerful black and white image. However, to maximise the drama of the scene it's going to need gutsy editing.



2 Make basic adjustments In ACR, click the Auto tab to see what effect this has on the image. Contrast is given a slight boost, but that's about it. Lens Corrections are then applied and the image opened in Photoshop.



3 Convert to B&W Save the image as a 16-bit TIFF then open in Silver Efex Pro 2 (Filters>Nik>Silver Efex Pro 2). This is how the basic black and white version of the image looks. It's not bad, but lacks 'wow' factor.



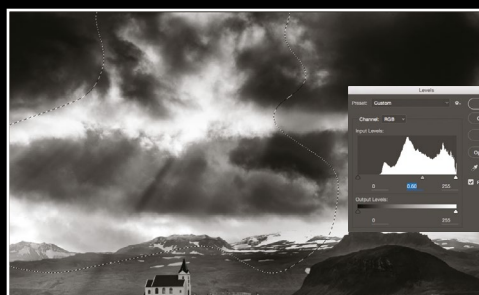
4 Work on the look Clicking on one of the High Contrast presets, you can see the effect is way too harsh, with the bright areas of the sky blowing out. However, there are plenty of other options available to try out.



5 Almost there The second High Structure preset produces a much better result – plenty of texture and tone in the landscape, and those clouds look amazing. Further tweaks can be made using the sliders in the top right.



6 Darken the sky A quick way to add more drama to the sky is by using the Burn Edges tool in the right-hand panel – select the top edge, the adjust Strength, Size and Transition to your taste.



7 Make selective tweaks Select the brighter area of sky using the Polygonal Lasso Tool, feathering set to 200 to give a soft transition. Adjust Levels to darken the area of sky to balance it with the rest of the image.



8 Final touches Make some final tweaks, including lightening the small church using the Dodge Tool so it stands out more against the stormy landscape. The Exposure was set to just 15% to avoid it looking too obvious.



Above

Long-term projects

You don't always have to travel far to capture stunning wildlife shots. Starting close to home can force you to be imaginative and inventive, and you'll learn much more about the subjects and their environment

All images © Damian Kuzdak



Photograph wildlife in your backyard

Learn to create stunning and natural photos of the animals that are right on your doorstep

Although wildlife photography generally conjures up images of exotic safaris and majestic mammals, local subjects can prove just as exciting to capture.

Shooting closer to home also enables you to get to know the local creatures much more intimately, not to mention the advantage of cutting down costs in time and travel. This doesn't necessarily make it the easy option though and the genre still poses plenty of challenges, particularly in learning to capture your subjects without scaring them away in the process.

The good news is that this feature is packed with tips designed to help you make the most of your backyard wildlife. Over the next few pages, you will discover the ideal kit choices for the job, including how to use a motion sensor

for shy subjects. As well as camera techniques, the feature will also explore how to attract subjects, and how to set up a feeding table to get closer with your DSLR. To increase your chances of seeing particularly elusive animals and maximise your shooting opportunities, there's also some simple lighting suggestions to explore.

If you've got a passion for wildlife but always felt like the genre was just out of reach, then read on. Your own garden is the best place to start, but if you haven't got one, local parks, reserves and even streets are also home to countless species of fascinating mammals and birds.

You might be surprised just how much wildlife is on your doorstep, and once you start looking, you'll be hooked.



Pack the right kit

Wildlife photography is a challenge and opportunities are fleeting, so prepare with care

A DSLR is really essential for shooting fast-moving targets and you'll benefit from a model with a fast continuous burst rate and autofocus system. It's an added bonus if your body is fairly rugged, so you can leave it outdoors without worry of weather damage.

In terms of glass, a zoom lens such as a 70-200mm can be a versatile starting option, depending on the size and distance of the subject in question. Smaller creatures such as birds will require much greater reach, but as prime telephotos can cost thousands, a teleconverter such as a 1.4x can be a versatile accessory to invest in, increasing the effective focal length of your existing lens without a substantial loss of light or image quality.

Just because you're staying close to home, that doesn't mean you shouldn't be prepared with spare batteries and memory cards. You won't want to disrupt or miss any wildlife experiences, so select high-speed memory cards that can keep up with fast bursts of continuous shooting.

You'll also need to give some practical thought to your clothing choices before you head outside. Wear materials that don't rustle and opt for muted colours so you blend in. Jackets with a multitude of pockets are helpful in providing easy access to spare memory or food, particularly when you might want to avoid unzipping a noisy camera bag.

Once equipped, it's tempting to head straight outside in the hope of stumbling

across a subject. In reality however, you'll still need to plan, research and hone your fieldcraft skills to have any chance of success. In your own garden, attract the species you want to photograph by providing a suitable food source. Ascertain when they're most active and keep an eye out for their presence.

Alternatively, it's worth getting in contact with local wildlife groups to find out what's been recently sighted in your local neighbourhood. Spend as much time in the field as possible to become familiar with wildlife habits, and always get the permission of landowners beforehand if you suspect a location is private.

Weather-proof kit

Don't just head inside when the rain starts pouring, as inclement conditions can really inject drama and mood into your images. Invest in a decent rain cover to protect your camera body, choosing one that retains full access to change settings.

Use a hide

A well-placed cover can make a big difference in getting you closer to nature

Portable canvas hides are quick to deploy, and will blend you into your surrounding environment effectively, however positioning and patience is key to success. Choose a spot where your intended subject visits regularly, surveying your patch beforehand to determine this. When setting up, take into account the direction of the light throughout the day and avoid any distracting backgrounds. Generally, the longer you spend in the hide, the more you're likely to see.



Above Have patience

After you've erected the tent or hide, leave it in position for as long as possible to allow wildlife to become accustomed to its presence

Top-right Supplementary food

Introduce or stop providing food gradually, and tailor your choice for the species at hand. Peanut butter is a good way to attract badgers, for example

Right Urban opportunities

Be observant and you'll find plenty of wildlife on your doorstep, even without a garden. This wood mouse was captured on Wimbledon Common, London, against road lights behind

Kit essentials

Take a look at our recommended list of equipment for success in the field

DSLR with quiet shutter

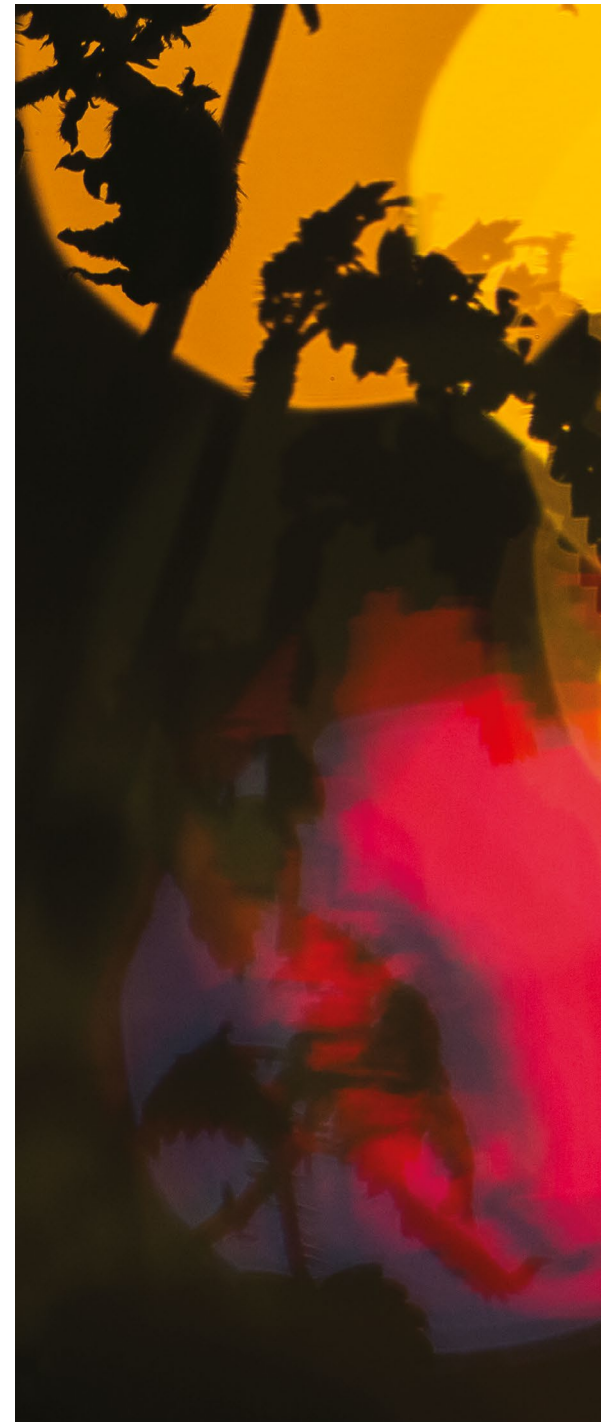
The Canon EOS 7D Mark II has a silent shooting mode to avoid startling subjects. Its 65 focus points and a 10fps burst rate make it ideal for tracking fast-moving targets.

Zoom lens

A versatile telephoto such as Nikon's 80-400mm f4.5-5.6G will suit a range of subjects. For a premium price, a prime lens such as a 300mm can also offer wider apertures.

Sturdy support

Choose a tripod with a ball or gimbal head that can handle the load of your specific camera and lens combination. A beanbag also provides stability in awkward positions.

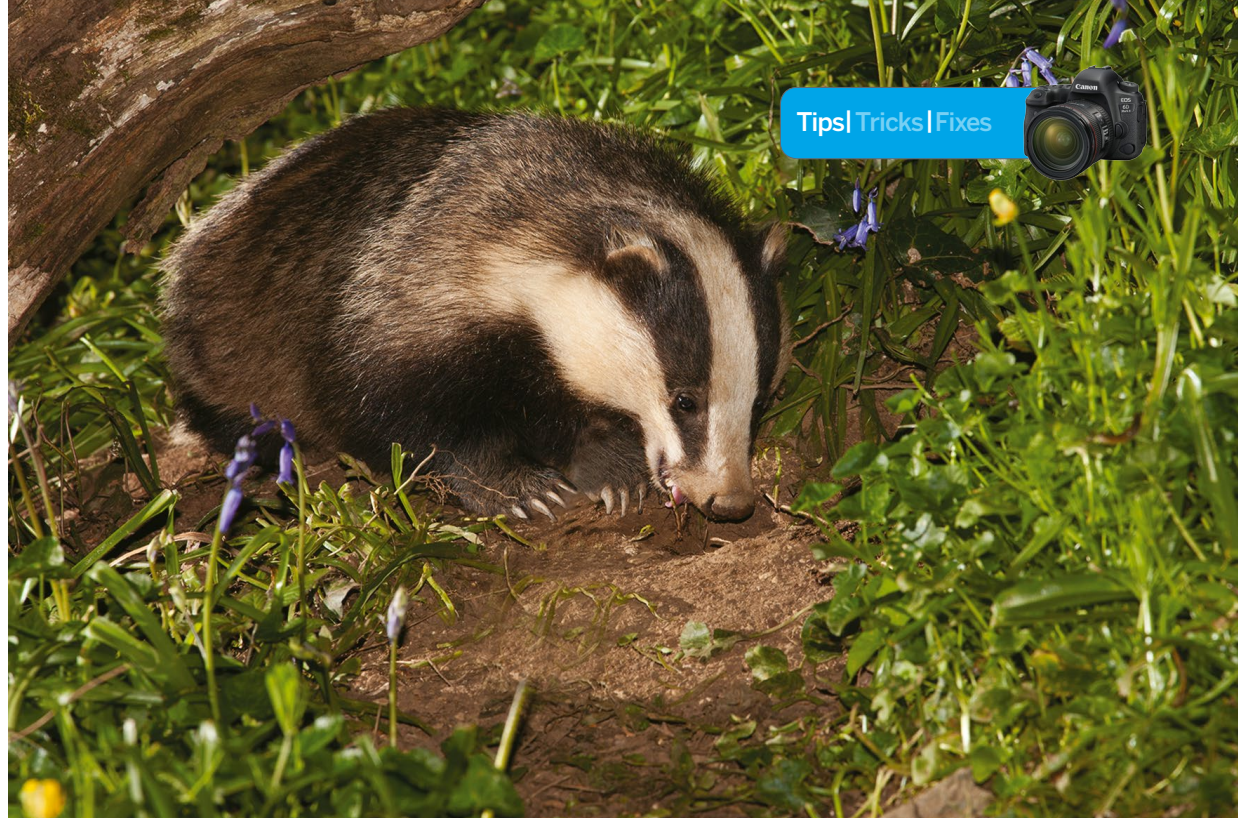


Utilise your own garden

Attract wildlife into your outside space with these simple suggestions

Providing regular food is one of the most obvious incentives to encourage garden visitors. You can easily attract birds by providing feeders and tables, but water is also used by many animals for drinking and bathing.

The best approach is to keep your garden as natural and varied as possible, which means staying away from pesticides and chemicals, and providing a variety of habitats such as log piles, fallen leaves, old walls and sheds.





Suitable settings for wildlife

Consider the camera techniques needed for effective results

Once you've gathered your gear and sussed out the best places to photograph the native fauna, the next step is to get practical and start shooting. Of course, specific camera settings vary widely between subject and time of day, but the same basic principles apply.

Semi-automatic shooting modes enable you to adapt quickly while retaining some control. Choose Shutter Priority for subjects on the move, or Aperture Priority for those that are grazing or immobile. Exposure compensation is useful in overcoming tricky lighting situations, such as backlit birds against a bright sky, but

you can also intentionally underexpose to generate creative silhouettes.

If you know where your subject will appear, such as with bird feeders, you can pre-focus manually on the target spot. Continuous/AI Servo mode will track moving subjects through the frame. If you have time to do so, practice selecting a single Active AF point, and recompose so that this point is positioned across the subjects' eye, ensuring it is the sharpest point in the frame.

Feeding wildlife is one way to predict its appearance, but remember there's a fine

line between producing natural and staged shots. If you're using bird feeders, for example, determine where the birds are flying in from, and aim to capture them on these intermediate perches, rather than the feeder itself. In a similar way, you'll notice larger mammals often use the same pathways to and from a location.

As well as mastering the technical aspects of a shoot, fieldcraft is equally important. The more time you can spend outside observing the wildlife, the more you'll understand its patterns, and the greater your chance of being rewarded with the perfect shot.

Above

Develop your feeder

Once a feeding station has regular visitors, try introducing perches or branches for a more natural result

Set up a feeding table

Attract birds, position your DSLR close and fire the shutter remotely



1 Prepare the setup Position the table and lay out food to suit the particular species you want to attract. Mount the camera on a tripod facing the setup.



2 Alter camera settings Manually focus on the feeder and set the shooting mode to continuous. Attach the cable release, and lead it to a window or hide.

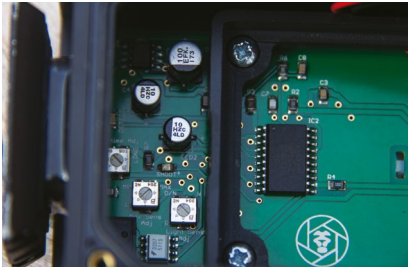


3 Use Aperture Priority Start with your lens' widest aperture and an ISO of around 400, depending on the light. When a subject appears in the frame, fire the shutter.



Work with an infrared detector

Take high-quality camera-trap images with the Camtraptions PIR Motion Sensor



1 Adjust the trigger Set the light sensitivity inside the unit depending on the species' behaviours. D/N means it will fire during both day and night.



2 Position the sensor Use an area with signs of regular movement such as tracks and trails. Mount the unit facing where wildlife should appear.



3 Set the perspective Tripod-mount a DSLR and connect it to the sensor. Compose the shot, paying attention to the height of the camera and viewpoint.



4 Choose camera settings Set Aperture Priority mode with an aperture of f8. Use an ISO of around 640 or 800. Manually focus the frame.



What is good fieldcraft?

Keen wildlife watchers often use this term. It means knowing what to do, where to go and how to behave to maximise your chances of enjoying a particular species or experience. It also covers elements such as timing and weather conditions.



5 Use off-camera flash Set the flash to TTL mode and connect it to your DSLR. Direct it towards your subject, apart from the camera to avoid red eye.



6 Check the setup Turn on the sensor and wait 30 seconds for it to initialise. Test the device by moving in front of it.

Top Think seasonally Photographing nearby enables you to follow the cycles of animals overtime. Create a series to tell a story about a particular habitat or subject

Above Animal behaviour Capturing activity will make your images more engaging. Try to anticipate interesting behaviour and experiment with the shutter speed to suit



Use flash

Master off-camera setups and keep photographing wildlife when the Sun has gone down

Some of the most characteristic animals wake up just after twilight, and though this is a magical time to photograph, the lack of light poses a difficulty. Artificial lighting isn't intrinsic to the genre, but some added illumination is necessary to record the activities of nocturnal mammals such as badgers or foxes.

At dusk, one solution is to crank up the ISO, but as the light levels fall further the use of flash ultimately becomes unavoidable. A setup of two wireless speedlights positioned off-camera can be an effective solution, with one used to light the background and the other the subject itself. Once you've mastered the initial exposure, you'll then be able to manipulate the balance of light to add dimension. Always avoid using the on-camera flash where you

can, as it causes harsh results and can result in red eye.

Position two units a few metres apart at around a 45-degree angle to your point of focus. By setting the second flash or fill light to a wider beam, it'll cover a wider area and generate a more even spread of light across the background.

Any lighting system takes time to perfect, but approach it methodically. Tweak both the camera settings and flash power and spread against the ambient light conditions, as well as the position of flash units themselves.

Below

Simple solutions

Consider how external light sources such as those from inside your house, streetlights and security lights also affect the outcome of your images



“Some added illumination is necessary to record the activities of nocturnal animals such as badgers or foxes”



Above
Backyard encounters
 Using a speedlight not only opens up a wealth of creative options, but also enables you to shoot nocturnal animals

Freeze mammals with flash Larger nocturnal animals can be photographed with two speedlights



1 Take your position Be sure to set up early; use either an established or portable hide, or a long cable release leading into the house. Focus manually while it's still light.



2 Prep the lighting Attach one flash on the camera as a key light. Mount the second unit on a tree or stand to the side of the camera to illuminate the shadows.



3 Set the camera Initiate the silent shutter. Use manual exposure mode, an aperture of f11, shutter of around 1/200sec and ISO 400. Check the system is synced together correctly.



4 Tweak to experiment Set both units on 1/8 power. Take test shots and check the balance of light between the flashguns. Tweak the outputs if necessary, then wait for your subject.



CREATIVE SPORT & ACTION

Fast-paced and adrenaline-fueled, sports photography is an exciting genre. Learn how to create unique shots with our detailed guide



Stroboscopic composition

By correctly timing your subject movement, flash frequency and count, an eye-catching, balanced composition can be achieved
© Ilko Alexandroff



Sports photographers often say that the genre is infuriating, stressful, exhausting and addictively good fun all at the same time. Its ultra-fast-paced nature means a great deal of camera skill is required to capture a perfect moment of order in an otherwise chaotic environment. The main challenges relate to correct exposure, short-enough shutter speeds to freeze movement, composition and accurate focusing of erratic subjects. It's vital to know your camera inside

and out, so that you are able to recognise where it will excel and where it will struggle to deliver the results you require. Even the most advanced cameras can find it challenging to lock on focus and hold it, while tracking a subject at high speed. Add into the mix the need to produce clean, noise-free images at the very high ISO sensitivities that are indigenous to the genre, and a sports shooter's kit is truly pushed to its limits. Yet on top of these challenges, a photographer working

in this area needs to be as creative as those shooting any other subject matter. Simply freezing a football player in mid-air by setting the highest viable shutter speed is unlikely to be enough to draw in a viewer and inspire their imagination, just as a well-exposed shot of an empty landscape will fail to attract attention. In this guide we'll walk through all of the best techniques for capturing creative and innovative action images, following advice from some of the industry's leading photographers.





Create compelling perspectives

Producing dynamic sports compositions is deceptively challenging, but with these pro tips you'll discover limitless possibilities

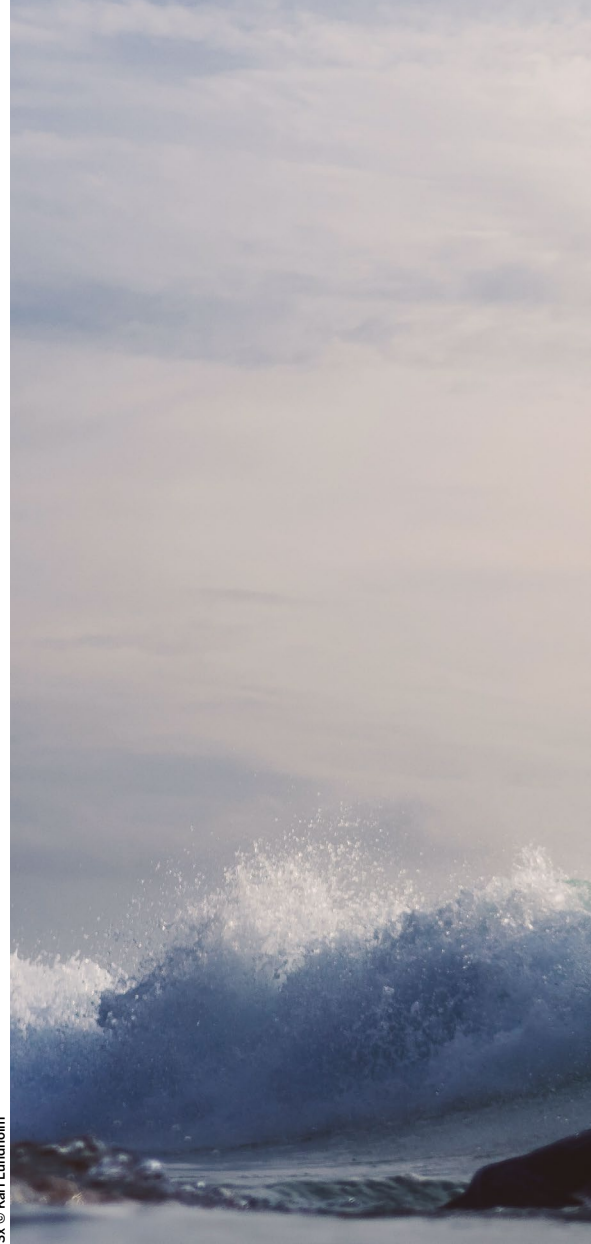
In the heat of the action, as you're trying to capture a correctly exposed, in-focus image, it can be all too easy to forget about the usual rules of photographic composition, to say nothing about actively seeking creative and unique perspectives. It is a perfect example of when a photographer's artistic skill is of greater importance than the technology in their cameras – advanced AF systems can aid anyone in producing a technically correct shot, but the photographer's vision dictates the engagement of the viewer.

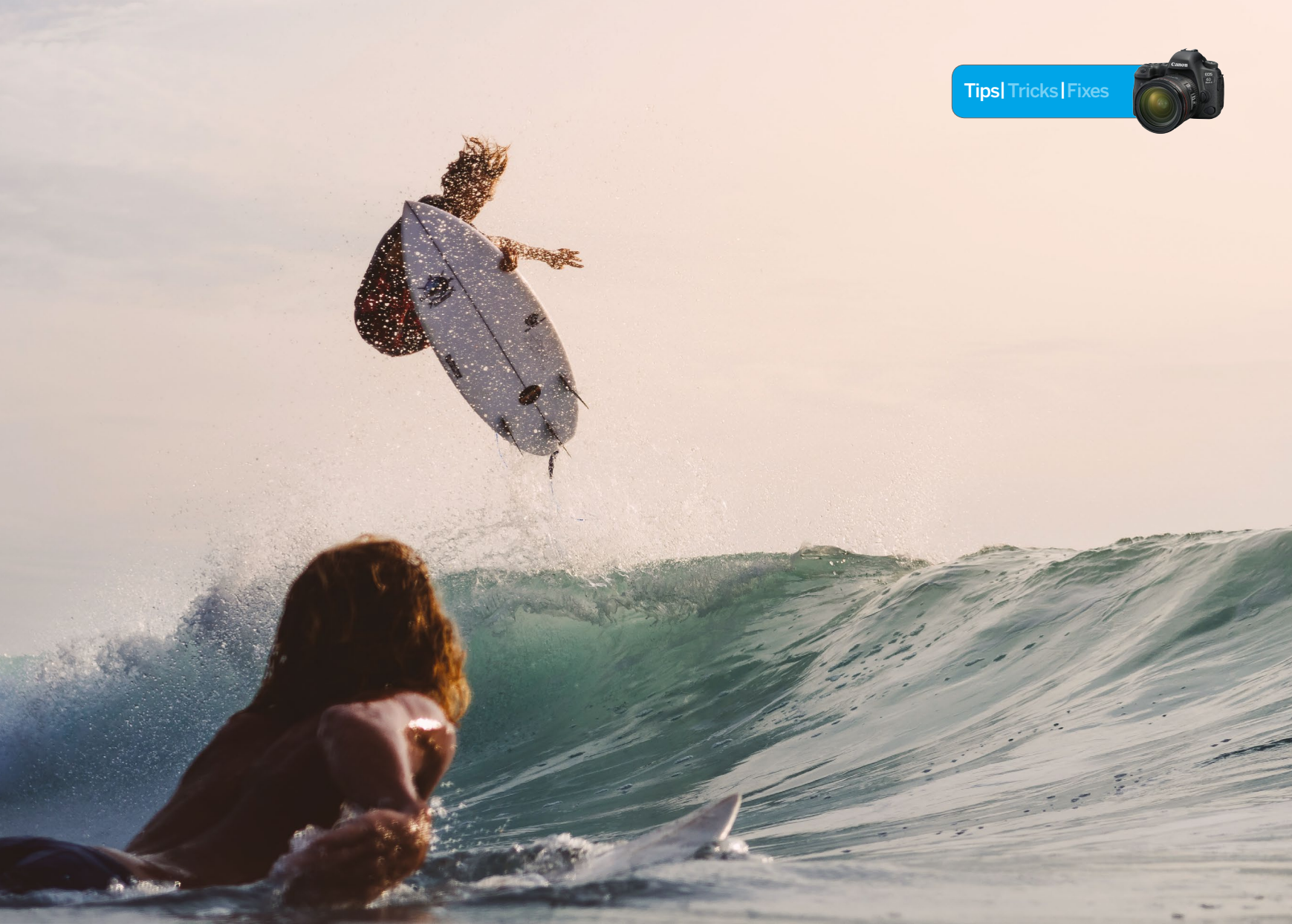
A common mistake is to forget about or ignore the environment in the composition, taking the subject out of the context of the scene. Extreme close-ups of an athlete can be interesting, but portraying them in action tells a more engaging story. Surfing photographer Karl Lundholm (kallelundholm.com) always aims to make the most of his dramatic workplace in his compositions. "I don't think I see surfing as a sport when

I'm shooting, rather a complement to the beautiful environment that [the surfers] are in," he explains. "When I am out in the water, it is hard to get the composition 100 per cent correct because of all the factors the ocean brings. Every wave and surfer is unique and in constant moving water you never know what's going to happen. I am always trying to get a depth in my photos by staying close to the surface, so I get an out-of-focus foreground, then the surfer and the wave in focus and last the sky or land in the background. I think this draws the viewer into the photo and makes it more powerful."

Choice of orientation is also an important consideration, as the frame shape defines how viewers see the subject. Lundholm prefers to shoot in portrait orientation – "I like to get a lot of the ocean and sky in my photos. This format is also really effective when shooting sunsets or sunrises because you get a nice gradient in the sky."

3x © Karl Lundholm





Opposite
Play with perspective
 Shoot from unusual angles, such as these surfers shot from below, to immerse the viewer into the scene

Above
Exposure and colour
 As with any genre of photography, colour themes and gradients are vital in sports and action shots

Gear for action

You don't always need professional kit to capture dramatic action shots, but some kit is on most action photographers' wish lists



© Keri Beal

Sports shooter's toolkit

Sports expert Keri Beal (keribeal.com) shoots using a Nikon D7200 and covers a focal range from 17mm wide-angle to 500mm super-telephoto in four wide-aperture lenses – 17-55mm f2.8, 24-70mm f2.8, 70-200mm f2.8 and 170-500mm f5-6.3. Having all of these focal lengths available is essential for rapid capture of near and far subjects



VERTICAL FRAMING
 Shoot tall to focus attention on the subject

CREATE LAYERS
 A layered composition, with clear fore-, middle- and background produces depth

LOW ANGLE
 Keep the camera close to the ground (or water) to draw the viewer into the picture

CREATIVE DEPTH OF FIELD
 Use a wider aperture to diffuse any foreground distractions



Perfect your panning technique

This is a very popular shutter speed technique for creative, eye-catching sport and action images, but practice is needed to get the correct look and feel



1 Switch to TV mode Set your camera to Shutter Priority mode to control shutter speed. The camera will control f-stop.



2 Change your ISO Set your camera sensitivity to around ISO 100 to 400, in order to allow for lengthened exposures.



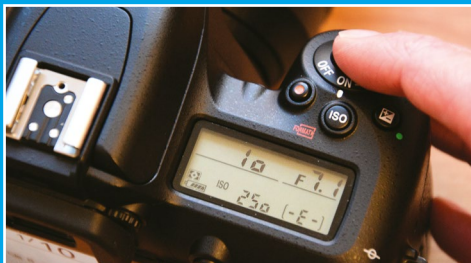
3 Set the speed Lower the shutter speed to between 1/60sec and 1/15sec to judge the amount of blur you want to introduce.



4 Switch to burst mode Use continuous shooting to capture your subject in multiple positions as they speed past you.



5 Take a test shot Pivot around your centre of gravity, tracking the subject as they pass you, keeping them in the viewfinder.



6 Adjust and reshoot Change the shutter speed and ISO if you need more blur. Reshoot until you capture the ideal picture.

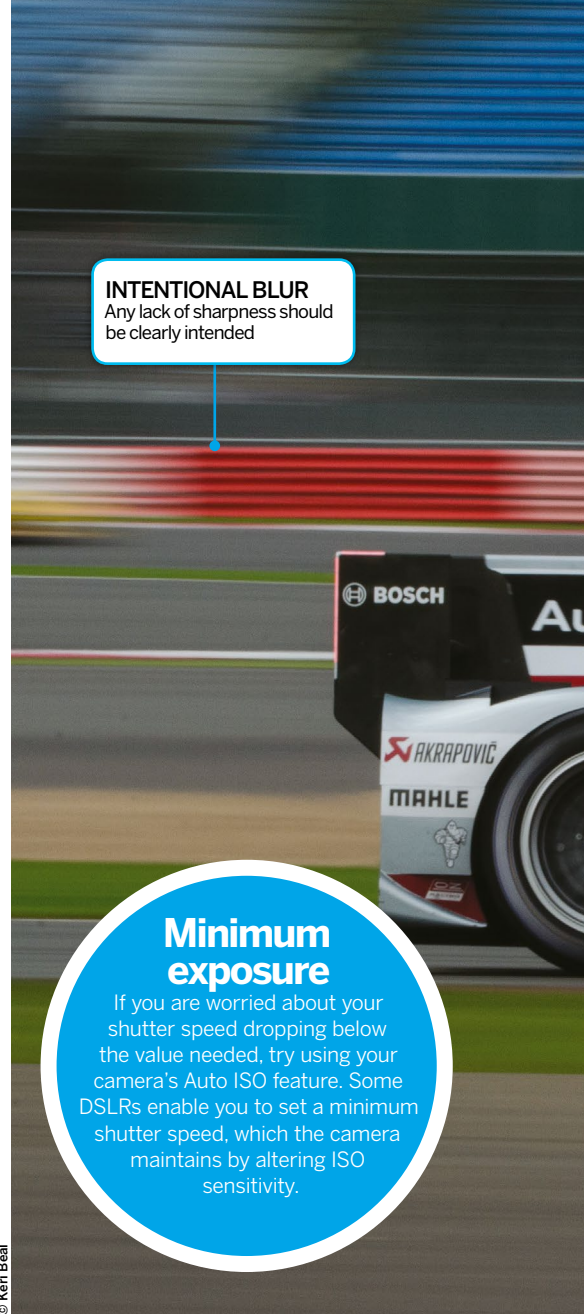
Creativity in motion

This shot by Keri Beal illustrates an ideal blend of artistic background blur and pin-sharp subject. With experience, panning can transform otherwise lifeless scenes

© Keri Beal



INTENTIONAL BLUR
Any lack of sharpness should be clearly intended



Minimum exposure

If you are worried about your shutter speed dropping below the value needed, try using your camera's Auto ISO feature. Some DSLRs enable you to set a minimum shutter speed, which the camera maintains by altering ISO sensitivity.

Below top Not fast enough

Although the stadium lights at this dog track looked bright, the shutter speed was still surprisingly low at ISO 1600

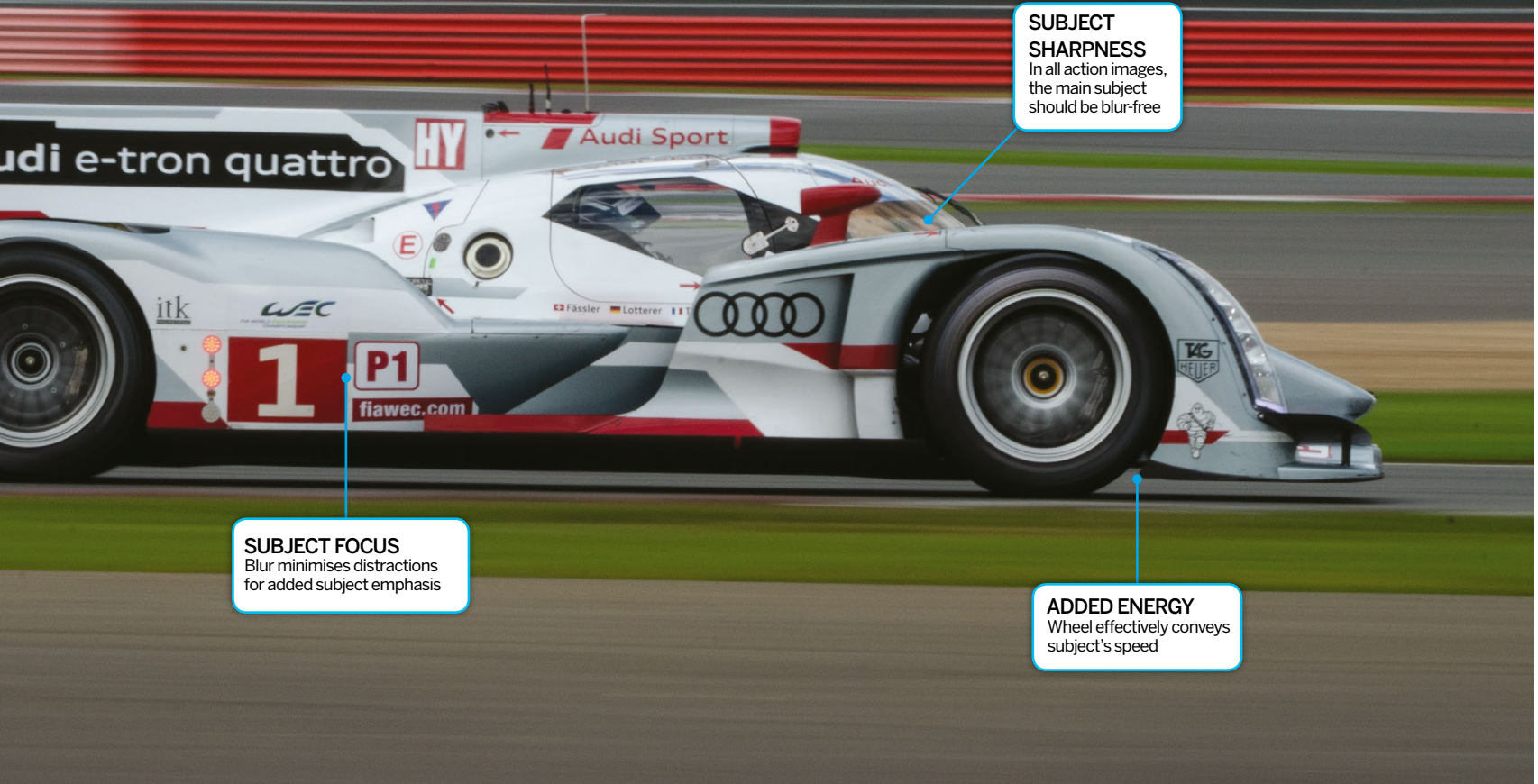
Below bottom Freeze the action

Aim to keep your exposure above 1/1,000sec. An increase in sensitivity to ISO 6400 was needed here



© Keri Beal

2x © Peter Fenech

**SUBJECT SHARPNESS**

In all action images, the main subject should be blur-free

SUBJECT FOCUS

Blur minimises distractions for added subject emphasis

ADDED ENERGY

Wheel effectively conveys subject's speed

Be inventive with exposure

Synonymous with short exposures, action images sometimes benefit from longer shutter speeds for creative effects

Selecting the right shutter speed is essential for action images to work. Whether you choose to freeze action or blur movement with creative longer exposures, you need to commit to one or the other for the effects to appear intentional. Karl Lundholm's area of work requires short exposures by default. "I love to freeze that big incoming wave so you can see every drop and texture of the water. To do this I will not go slower than 1/1,250 of a second," he explains. However, shorter speeds also play a role in his creative workflow: "I love when the sun has set and the surfers are coming to the beach. To get [natural-looking] silhouettes of surfers and a beautiful sky in the background, I do not keep my shutter speed that fast."

"Shutter speeds are a critical consideration when attempting to portray motion creatively"

Beyond essential exposure calculation, shutter speeds are a critical consideration when attempting to portray motion creatively. Professional sports shooters often use slower exposures to convey speeds of subjects moving past a fixed point, such as the use of

panning in athletics or motor sports. When shooting cars or bikes, there is very little about the subject that suggests it is moving when using a very fast shutter speed. An exposure of 1/2,000sec will freeze movement of the

vehicle and the wheels, making it appear as if it is simply parked on the track. By lowering the exposure time to around 1/60sec and tracking the subject with the lens as the image is taken, the important areas of the shot remain sharp, while the background is reduced to a creative blur of motion. When attempting this technique, practice is required to gain the correct balance of subject sharpness and creative blur. By firing a burst of images in continuous shooting mode as you pan the camera, you can increase your 'hit' rate, as you have more coverage of the scene as it unfolds. Variances on this theme include zooming during an extended exposure or moving ahead of the subject, to produce different blurring effects.



Work with flash

Learn how to use speedlights and strobes for high-powered lighting and dramatic action effects

Flash plays a crucial role in the technique repertoire of many professional action photographers. Ambient lighting in sports venues can be significantly lower than anticipated, making it challenging to achieve fast-enough shutter speeds to freeze movement as desired. The short duration of flash bursts, especially from speedlights, means we can generate effective exposures that are much shorter than would be possible with conventional techniques. Often sports photographers will utilise a high-speed sync mode for their flash shots, allowing the use of shutter speeds higher than the maximum flash synchronisation speed their camera offers. There is a trade-off in power, with effective flash distance dropping as the shutter speed is increased, but there is a 'sweet spot' where exposure time and flash coverage is balanced.

At the other extreme, flash can be combined with slower shutter speeds for creative effect. By extending the exposure to around 1/15sec then introducing a fill flash, the subject is frozen but the surroundings are blurred, isolating the key part of the image – the athlete. Another creative flash technique is the use of stroboscopic lighting; ambient light is all but eliminated by using a black background or stopping down the aperture, then a series of high-frequency flashes illuminates the moving subject at multiple positions in the same frame, during an extended exposure. This technique is useful for a range of action photography areas, from track and field to motorsports to dance, and is a artistic method of illustrating the progression of high-speed events, where multiple stages can't be otherwise shown in a single shot. Whenever flash is used, it is important that it is done with the consent of the subject and where it is permitted by the venue – intense flash light can be distracting to athletes.

Capture creative colour

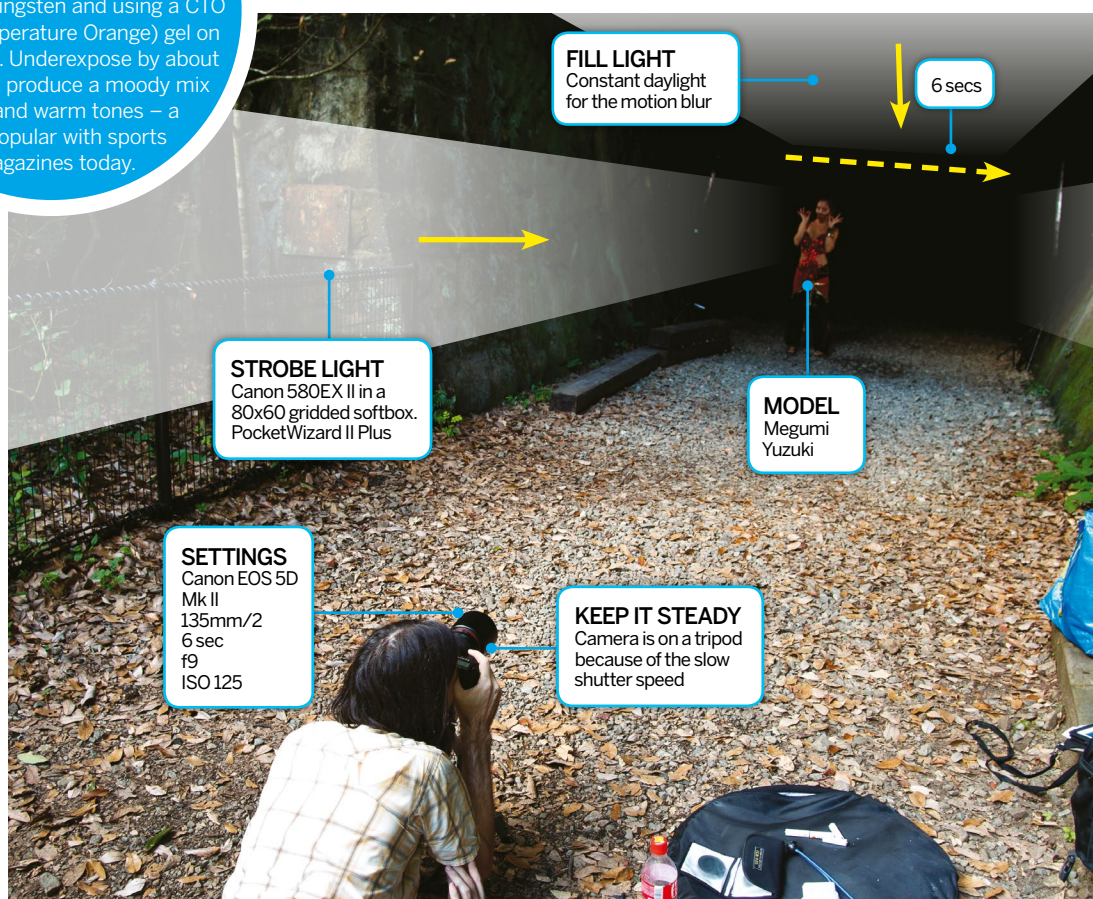
Another technique you may not associate with sports shooting is use of coloured gels. Set your white balance to Tungsten and using a CTO (Colour Temperature Orange) gel on your flashes. Underexpose by about one stop to produce a moody mix of cool and warm tones – a 'look' popular with sports magazines today.



CHOOSE NUMBER OF MOVEMENTS
The flash count determines how many 'stages' are captured as your subject moves across the frame

ARRANGE SEPARATION
Flash frequency (measured in Hertz) determines how separated each stage is in the composition

CAPTURE PROGRESSIVE ACTION
Stroboscopic flash enables us to see how action occurs in stages – impossible to capture in a still image by any other method



FILL LIGHT
Constant daylight for the motion blur

6 secs

STROBE LIGHT
Canon 580EX II in a 80x60 gridded softbox. PocketWizard II Plus

MODEL
Megumi Yuzuki

SETTINGS
Canon EOS 5D Mk II
135mm/2
6 sec
f9
ISO 125

KEEP IT STEADY
Camera is on a tripod because of the slow shutter speed



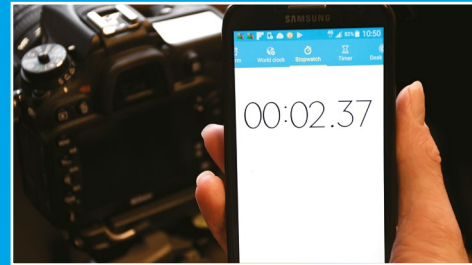
Shoot a stroboscopic sequence

Flash firing rate and output must both be considered for successful images. Photographer Carlos Ramirez (cf-03.com) explains his workflow



CONTROL THE LIGHTING

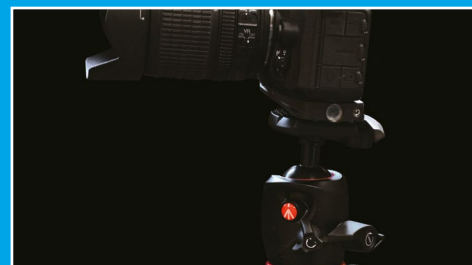
Use a black seamless background or stop down the aperture to cut ambient light and underexpose the environment



1 Calculate movement duration Place the athlete or model on your set, practise their movement and then measure the duration of the action.



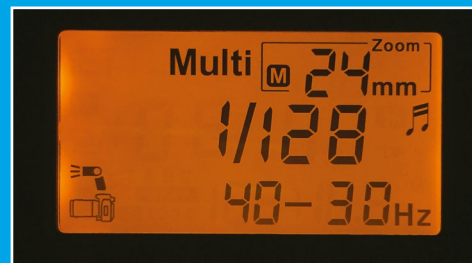
2 Work out exposure Use a meter to set the power of your speedlight or strobes, based on the duration of the movement. Each burst will be perfectly exposed based on that.



3 Keep your shot steady Put the camera on a sturdy tripod and connect a shutter release to avoid any kind of movement and improve sharpness.



4 Arrange subject in image Switch to manual. Set the exposure duration based on the length of the movement you want to capture and f/no based on the meter reading.



5 Create your composition Decide on the number of stages you want to appear in your shot and set the appropriate number of flashes (measured in Hertz) on your flash.



6 Shoot, review and repeat Start shooting and practise the synchronisation with the athlete. It takes both patience and practice to achieve the desired final result.



STROBE LIGHT

Nikon SB-26 in a 90x20 gridded softbox. PocketWizard II Plus

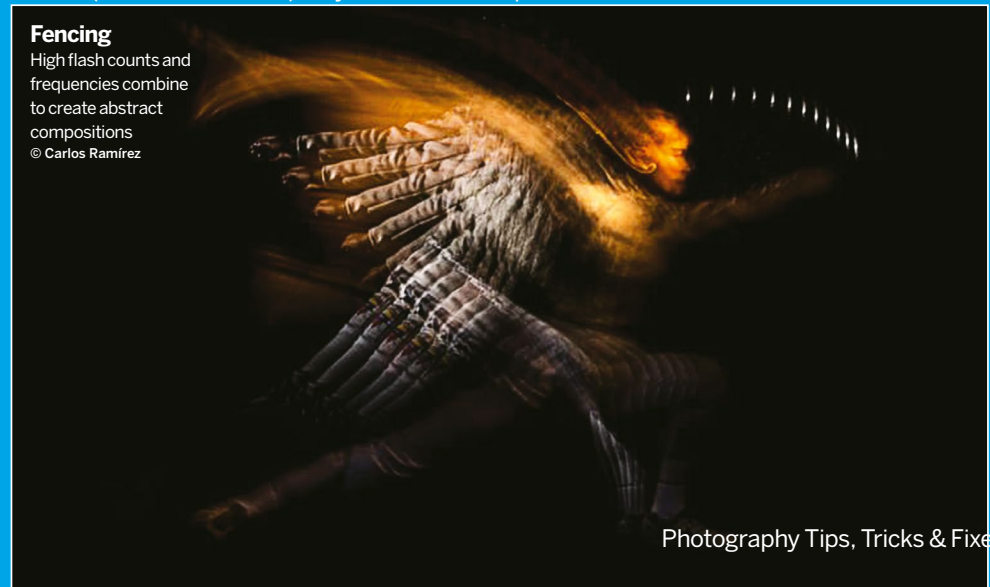
2x © Ilko Alexandroff

Left Setting up your shot

Stroboscopic flash expert Ilko Alexandroff (ilkoalexandroff.com) shooting on location. Here he illustrates his common setup for a multi-flash image

Fencing

High flash counts and frequencies combine to create abstract compositions
© Carlos Ramirez





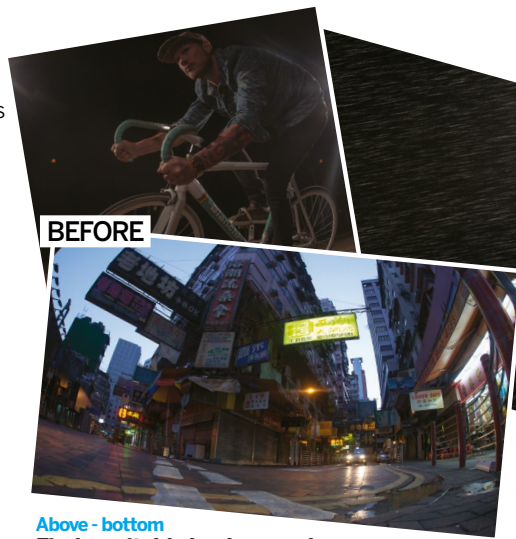
Composite your shots

You can utilise Photoshop and combine all your desired elements into a single image

Having the ability to merge several photo components together in post opens up a vast number of possibilities for dynamic composition and exposure. In a genre where subjects are moving erratically and at high speed, it can be nearly impossible to capture a precise composition in a single frame. Capturing a well-positioned, correctly lit, in-action portrait of an athlete is not realistically achievable as they run around a track, but taking the shoot into a studio, where you can pose the subject and sculpt the lighting, makes it possible. A very common technique is to shoot an appropriate background, edit this separately and overlay a posed, studio-shot, in-action sports portrait in Photoshop.

The key requirement for compositing work is to ensure that lighting is uniform in each component and that the colour temperature of the light on the subject matches the background. It is possible to control the colour of studio lighting by using gels, but in the compositing workflow it is often easier to change the white balance to match each element, as this offers the greatest level of control. Photoshop has several powerful tools that are essential. The Quick Selection Tool (W) is a go-to feature, due to its speed of operation and 'smart' characteristics – the tool remembers when selections are modified and uses this information to generate more accurate selections. Using the Refine Edge feature allows precise selection of detailed edges with a higher Smart Radius setting on the Radius slider corresponding to a more complex and detailed selection. If shooting

the subject in a studio, try using a rim light to highlight their outline against a neutral grey background – this makes it easier for Photoshop to 'find' the edges of objects when forming a selection. In the Output panel of the Refine Edge dialogue, check the Decontaminate Colors box to remove any colour spilling from the rest of the image.



BEFORE
Above - bottom
Find a suitable background

Dave Lehl shot this Hong Kong street early one morning. Often it pays to shoot images with potential future composites in mind

Above - top left
Pose the subject

Shooting your main subject in controlled lighting conditions provides scope for perfecting exposure and composition

Above - top right
Foreground rain

One way to add rain is to create a black Fill Layer, go Filter>Noise>Add Noise, apply a Motion Blur and change blend mode to Screen

AFTER

Final image

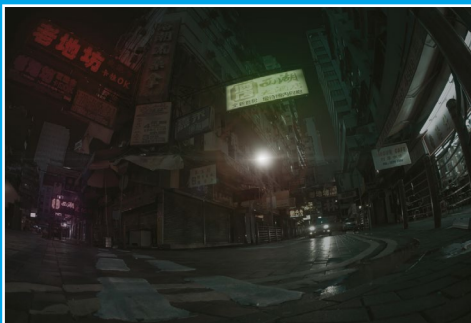
After some final global brightness and contrast adjustments, each element blends naturally in the final composite image

© David Lehl



Put it all together

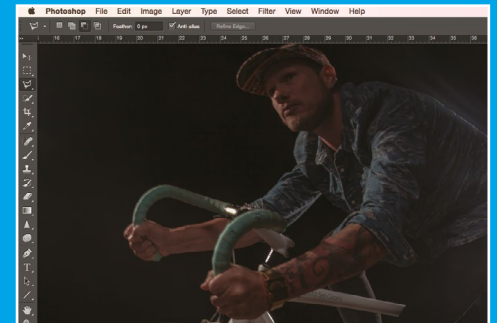
Pro photographer Dave Lehl (davelehl.com) explains how he seamlessly blends each of the composite elements



1 Create mood I painted in a dark-grey sky, altered local brightness and used Color Lookups (Image>Adjustments>Color Lookup) to give the street signs some life.



2 Photograph rider I shot my friend Andy in a Denver parking lot about a month after the Hong Kong background, mimicking the low perspective and lighting direction.

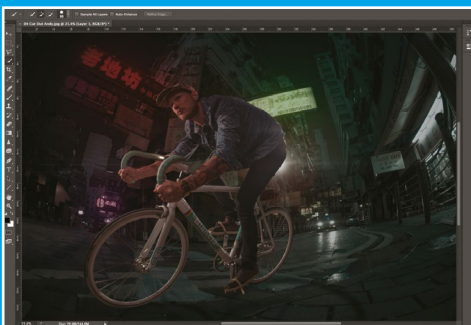


3 Cut out the rider Going back to Photoshop I cut out Andy using the Polygonal Lasso Tool, as I personally prefer this over the Pen Tool.

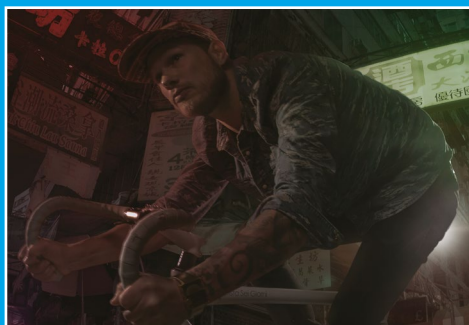


Remember the shadows

David Lehl highlights the biggest aspect that will give away the fact you have created a composite – the subject's shadows on the ground. "It's so easy to overlook, but it can kill the entire shot," he explains



4 Arrange the subject in the image
The extracted rider was then added to the background and moved into the desired position in the image.



5 Add mood to the subject I used similar brightness adjustments and Color Lookups to make Andy believably match the mood of the background.



6 Include fog and rain Some fog and raindrops were added for extra depth. Tip: use the Screen blend mode to remove a black background from a smoke/fog source image.



Master macro on a budget

Delve into this fascinating genre and get great results without breaking the bank

Macro photography is a genre of wonder, bringing to light the intricate detail of our world that often goes unseen by the naked eye. There's great excitement to be had in discovering flora and fauna up close, but this added magnification can be pricey.

All image making benefits from a little investment, and macro in particular is often accomplished with highly specialised lenses and accessories. Fortunately, though, there are plenty of alternative kit options that will enable you to tackle the genre on a budget. One simple way to magnify subjects is by using close-up filters; while a specialist lens might set you back hundreds, a set of these costs little more than £15/\$20.

Over the next few pages you'll discover the differences between specialist kit and budget

options, provide tutorials on adapting your existing lenses and address the challenges you might face along the way. When you've managed to master magnification, you might find yourself facing another challenge; how to ensure subjects are exposed effectively. Of course, macro flash sets are on offer at a premium price, but a standard speedlight can also be used creatively to great effect. And over the next few pages you'll find out how to illuminate even the tiniest of creatures.

If you're interested in trying out this fascinating genre of photography but don't want to blow all your dough in the process, read on. As you'll learn, there are many inventive ways that you can create great macro shots using little more than the gear you've already got.

Above

A whole new world

Macro photography may be a fiddly business but thankfully there are plenty of affordable alternatives to expensive kit

© Siddant Sahu





Make the right kit choices

Explore the benefits of both pro and inexpensive shooting options

The most desirable macro lenses on the market have fairly long focal lengths, offering greater working distances as well as close focusing capabilities. This means that you're less likely to disturb any flighty creatures you're trying to photograph, and also makes it less likely for shadows to be cast over your subject. In short, such macro lenses are an expensive outlay, so you have to be sure that you truly need their benefits.

Having bundles of specialist kit doesn't guarantee better images though, and there are plenty of budget ways to get closer to your subjects if you don't have a macro lens. For example, close-up filters screw on to the front of your lens and enable you to focus closer than usual. Like all the options we'll explore in this feature, they're an economical option if you want to test the waters before spending more money on a

dedicated macro lens. However, these cheaper alternatives can be fiddly to use, negate your camera's automatic functions and in some cases, have a negative effect on image quality.

Of course, however much your kit costs you, the principles of camera settings remain similar. Focusing up-close is one of the genre's biggest hurdles, and manual focus is often the easiest approach. To obtain the largest possible image of the subject in the frame, set the lens to its minimum focusing distance, and move the camera until the subject appears sharp. When using a tripod, you may find it easier instead to adjust the focus ring.

For moving subjects, once you've achieved focus manually, activate the autofocus system to maintain it.

Depth of field becomes very limited at such close focusing distances and you will find

that you will almost always need to use the narrowest possible aperture. If your subject is in motion, you'll need to boost the ISO, increase the ambient light or use flash so that you can retain a fast enough shutter speed, generally 1/250sec or faster, to freeze motion.

It's more than possible to achieve stunning 1:1 magnifications using both specialised macro lenses and their more affordable counterparts, so long as you're aware of the challenges and how to overcome them.

Time of day

If your subject involves outdoor creepy-crawlies, aim to shoot early in the morning. At this time of day, not only are winged insects covered in dewdrops and slower moving, but the light is also softer, enhancing their colours and textures.

Below Professional equipment

Turkish photographer Arslan Uçar used the (500px.com/arslanucar) Canon MP-E 65mm f2.8 lens to obtain this shot of a jumping spider

Opposite-top Capture character

Macro photography lets you see the smallest of creatures in a way that you've never seen them before

Opposite-inset Strive for sharpness

It's often best to focus manually with macro subjects, so turn on Live View and zoom in to check that your intended focal point is pin-sharp

Opposite-bottom Budget solution

Reverse lens techniques can provide a similar level of magnification and image quality as a true macro lens at a fraction of the cost





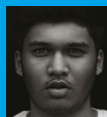
© David Cameronlynck



© Siddhant Sahu



© Anslan Ucar



Meet the pro

Find out how photographer Siddhant Sahu uses affordable kit for high-impact insect captures

There are several ways of doing macro photography apart from using an expensive macro lens, [and] even if you own a dedicated lens there's no guarantee you'll get a perfectly focused shot.

First, [I use] close-up filters that screw in front of the lens, basically acting as a magnifier. The second method is the 'reverse lens technique' – shooting macro by reversing a normal lens. I often start with a 35mm focal length, then change if needed.

When it comes to using a tripod, I personally don't like using [one] because it slows me down a lot.

500px.com/siddhant_sahu
www.siddhantsahu.com

Below Without macro lens

16-year-old Sahu knows firsthand that having the most expensive equipment doesn't necessarily mean better images



2x © Siddhant Sahu



Reverse your lens

This quirky method is an obvious option for affordable macro images

You might be sceptical about using your lens backwards, but in fact reversing rings provide one of the cheapest ways to adapt an existing lens for macro magnifications. Starting at around £5/\$7 each, they take the form of a small metal ring, with a standard filter thread on one side and a lens mount thread on the other. When screwed on, the lens can then be mounted onto your camera in reverse, causing subjects to become impressively enlarged on the sensor at shorter focal lengths. As a rule, wider angle lenses will provide greater magnification. For example, near life-size reproductions can be achieved with a kit lens such as an 18-55mm, or the popular 50mm, on a cropped-frame sensor.

One of the main downsides of using a lens in reverse is the loss of the camera's automatic functions, a problem that photographer Siddhant Sahu knows well. "First, forget about trusty autofocus. Since there aren't any

electronics connecting the lens to the body, autofocus and aperture control won't work. If you own an old lens with an aperture ring you can control it manually, but as modern lenses don't have an aperture ring you have to set the aperture before reversing," he explains.

Another downfall is that there's an incredibly narrow range of focus, even by macro standards. However, if the subject is relatively stationary you can overcome this by focus stacking. Take a multitude of shots at very slightly different focal distances, then combine them together at the editing stage using Photoshop layers.

In absence of the autofocus system, you'll need to physically move the entire camera back and forth, often mere millimetres, until your subject is acceptably sharp. As with all macro, even small movements can make a great difference to your outcome, so hold your breath to steady yourself before and while

taking the shot. Vignetting can also become noticeable if you use a high f-stop with certain lenses, but can be overcome by adding in extension tubes or widening the aperture.

Although the reverse lens technique comes with a few difficulties, most are conquerable with patience. Few of the disadvantages impact image quality, so they make one of the best budget solutions for getting started.

Opposite Enlarged potential

When reversing wide-angle lenses, subjects can be captured larger than life-size on the sensor. Sahu already owned an 18-55mm kit lens, and a 52mm reverse ring costs less than £30/\$40

Below Double the effect

Dedicated macro lenses can also be reversed to provide even greater magnification. Gustavo Restrepo (500px.com/grestrepo13) used a Sony 100mm f2.8 and reverse ring for this shot





Lock the aperture

When you remove lenses to reverse or couple them, they default to their widest aperture. Overcome this by setting your desired aperture and holding the DOF preview button down while untwisting the lens.

© Siddhant Sahu

Use reversing rings

Follow these steps to mount your lens backwards onto your camera body



1 Set the aperture For lenses without a manual aperture ring, the aperture needs to be set in advance. Mount the lens normally first, then set your desired f-stop.



2 Reverse the lens Depress the depth of field preview button and, while doing so, detach the lens from the camera. Screw on the metal ring, then remount the lens backwards.



3 Focus and shoot In manual focus, turn the ring to the closest focusing distance and hone in on the subject until sharp. Review your images by zooming in to check the focal point.

Stack your lenses

Get closer still by using a coupling ring to attach your reversed lens to another lens



1 Prep the setup Choose two lenses, preferably with fixed focal lengths. Set the shorter lens to its widest aperture, then remove it and screw on a coupling ring adapter.



2 Combine the glass Reverse the shorter lens and connect it to the other using the ring. Mount the longer lens to your camera. Switch the main lens to manual focus.



3 Prepare to shoot Set the maximum focal length possible on the longer lens, and the minimum for the secondary lens. Move the camera to focus on your subject.





Use extension tubes

Gain magnification using your existing lens and overcome a few drawbacks

Extension tubes are light, tight cylinders that attach between your camera body and virtually any lens. Because they move the front element of your lens closer to the subject and therefore further away from the focal plane, they enable closer focusing and an even greater magnification.

These hollow tubes are inexpensive when compared to a macro lens and they don't introduce any additional glass elements, so there's generally no significant loss in image quality. The main price difference between extension tubes comes from the fact that some maintain the connection between the camera and lens, whereas the cheaper versions don't. For tubes without electrical contacts you'll still be able to meter effectively, but autofocus will be disabled and you won't be able to change the aperture unless your lens has manual rings. As depth of field is already limited with macro, being forced to shoot wide open is a definite downside.

Another obstacle to overcome is a certain degree of light loss, so ensure you compensate for this when setting the exposure. In terms of focus, it's best to do so manually, checking Live View and gently turning the focusing rings until your desired area is acceptably sharp.

Although it's possible to handhold the camera and still retain a sharp result, always use a tripod where possible. Aim for a minimum shutter speed of 1/250sec to minimise camera shake, and if you need to boost the exposure, increase the ISO instead of widening the aperture.

How close you can get depends on the lens used and the width of the tube, and a rough way to calculate the added magnification is to divide the length of the extension tube by the focal length. As an example, this means that a 25mm tube and 50mm lens would yield a 0.5x gain in magnification.

Shorter lenses such as a 50mm can actually cause you to get too close to your subject so that shadows are cast across it, but also bear in mind that a telephoto lens only provides minimal gain. A medium zoom such as an 85mm is ideal for striking a balance between magnification factor and breathing room, and keep in mind that you can combine several tubes at once for greater effect.

Choose your product

You'll find both single and double element close-up filters on the market. Although the second element versions are slightly pricier, they tend to yield a superior image quality with less chromatic aberration. Budget filter sets such as those by Polaroid are particularly cost-effective, as dioptres can be combined.

Opposite-top Shift the lens focus

Extension tubes increase the distance from the back of the lens to the camera sensor, which enables closer focusing and greater magnification

Opposite-bottom Vary the effect

You can combine several extension tubes and experiment with varying focal lengths to suit the size of your subject at hand

Try close-up filters

Attach these extras to your lens and extend its focusing reach

Attaching a close-up filter (also called a close-up lens) to the front of your existing lens is a simple way of reducing its minimum focusing distance. Sets of different strength filters start at around £10 (approx \$13), which makes them a worthy tool for macro experimentation without great investment.



Simple but effective

The longer the focal length used, the greater the magnification you'll achieve. Screw on the close-up filter, use manual focus and set the lens to its minimum focusing distance. Move the camera until the subject appears sharp

Mount and magnify

Increase the focusing capabilities of your existing lens with extension tubes



1 Choose your setup Position your subject, attach the selected tubes onto the lens, then mount the setup to the camera body. You should always use a sturdy tripod where possible.

2 Expose the shot If using tubes with electrical contacts, select Aperture Priority mode and start with a narrow aperture of f8. Boost the ISO if needed, and experiment with different combinations of tubes.

3 Focus and capture Focus manually, physically moving the camera or subject closer if necessary. Use the histogram to check the exposure, and add in artificial light if you're casting a shadow on the subject.



Learn to light effectively

There are plenty of different solutions for brightening your close captures

Many lighting approaches exist for macro photography, and while natural light is a simple and affordable option, alone it can't always be relied upon. Even in the brightest conditions such as broad daylight, the intimate working distances needed in the genre often cause shadows to be cast on your subjects. When you also factor in the use of narrow apertures to retain detail at such close proximity, boosting the exposure with artificial sources of light often becomes necessary.

Fortunately, even lighting setups can be found to suit a modest budget, and the most common specialist macro options are ring lights and flashes. Circular ring flashes attach to the front of your lens, enabling the light to remain close to the subject. Starting at around £30/\$40, they're generally cheaper than off-camera flash options, but they're also less powerful. Bear in mind that higher-end twin flash units can cost into the thousands, making them unfeasible unless you're really serious about the genre.

While these dedicated macro options offer professional results, a standard speedlight can also be used to stunning effect. Handhold the speedlight,

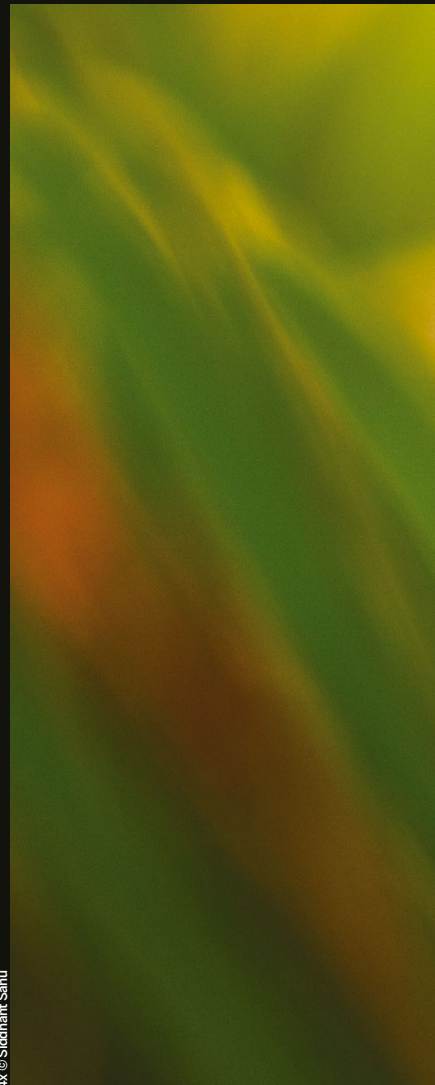
or use a bracket to attach it directly to your camera's tripod mount, ensuring that the light isn't going to be obstructed by your lens and that the boost in exposure doesn't look unnatural. When using his speedlight, Siddhant Sahu uses a power of around 1/128, "just to add a little more light, freeze the motion and to prevent images from looking too 'flashy'."

Most specialist macro flashes offer two separate lights, which can be individually powered and positioned to add depth to subjects. In the same way, you'll improve your shots even further by introducing a second flash unit, positioning the two either side of your subject.

Sufficient lighting is critical to macro photography, but that doesn't mean you have to splurge on fancy setups for success. Whatever your light source, experiment with its direction and power to ensure you use it in a way that flatters your subject.

If there isn't enough available light to work with and you don't have artificial options, don't be disheartened. Purposely using a shallow depth of field such as f5.6 or wider can create a dramatic composition and hone in attention to specific elements in the scene.

4x © Siddhant Sahu



Work with sunlight

When shooting outdoors, aim to use natural light when it's plentiful enough. Shooting slightly into the Sun and making use of backlighting will highlight intricate details such as hairs on insects. Experiment with the angle until you find the best position.

Above Utilise daylight

Sunlight can yield dreamy results. It's generally best to avoid using on-camera flash as it casts a harsh light and has limited reach

Inset Diffuse the light

Sahu uses a Yongnuo YN560-III Speedlite (£48/\$64), wireless trigger set (£23/\$33) and homemade diffuser in his setup

Opposite-top Position the light

Using your flash off-camera will enhance image quality. Angle the light until it creates the dimensional effect you're looking for

Opposite-bottom Cast no shadow

Lighting can be tricky in macro photography because you are generally working very close to your subject and so casting a shadow

Left Dedicated flash results

Uçar uses a Canon Macro Twin Lite MT-24EX (£950/\$830) in his work. Specialist units offer great flexibility, but come at a cost



© Arslan Uçar



Light with a flashgun Forget specialist flash units and use a speedlight to boost the exposure



1 Mount the kit Find your position, mount the camera and handhold the flashgun. Connect the flashgun via a trigger or wire. Perfect the composition and focus on the subject.



2 Set colour temperature Set the camera's white balance to Flash or Daylight. Shoot in RAW mode, as this will provide more room for tweaking the temperature when editing.



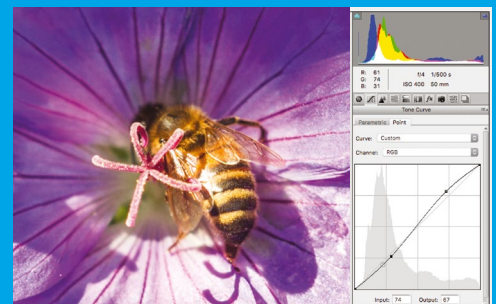
3 Prepare the flash Switch the flash to Manual mode, and start with a power of 1/32. Outdoor shots may require a lower power, so be prepared to adjust again later.



4 Select settings Use Manual mode, start with an ISO of 400 and minimum aperture of f8. Exact settings will vary, but ensure your shutter is less than your flash sync speed.



5 Experiment for effect Hold the flashgun to one side of the subject and tilt the head, starting with a 45-degree angle. Take a test shot and review the histogram.



6 Edit to finish Import the image into Camera Raw and boost the exposure if needed. Use the Tone Curve and add in contrast by creating an S shape. Sharpen images last.



Learn how to shape the light

Master modifiers and take your studio lighting work to the next level with our expert guide

Light is at the heart of photography, but getting to grips with how to create and control it in a studio environment is rarely easy. There are so many different lighting products on the market that it can be difficult to know what you need to have access to, when you should be using it and how to use it to best effect. Pro photographers with plenty of experience appreciate when soft light will flatter and when hard light will define. They understand how the nuances of where the light falls and where it does not can make or break a photograph and they can employ the correct techniques to diminish or create a shadow.

Trial and error is invariably an integral part of the learning curve, but this detailed guide to the lighting skills you need to capture portrait and product images with that professional touch will certainly help you on your way. From shadow control to incorporating multiple lighting elements in one image, the next few pages will attempt to demystify some of the complexities of studio lighting and have you creating your own masterpieces. You'll discover how specific modifiers can be used to manipulate the light so that it does precisely what you want it to, and you'll find out why professionals choose one bit of kit over another.

All images © Double Exposure Photographic

Right Magic with modifiers

Creating impressive images in the studio is largely down to your ability to shape the light





Work with soft light

Discover how modifiers can banish harsh shadows

All light sources can show themselves in different forms, whether it's sunlight or studio flash units; direct sunlight is very hard but softens with cloud cover and in the studio a bare reflector is hard like the Sun, but you can put things over it to soften or diffuse it.

Soft light is achieved when the light output from a flash (or a continuous light source) is interrupted in a way that breaks its direct line of sight to the subject. This is often literally achieved with fabric in the form of a softbox – an enclosed lighting modifier that helps break up and evenly diffuse the light before it hits the subject. Increasing the size of the diffuser will inevitably help to spread the light further from its original point source, thus increasing the 'wrap' of light around the subject. In portraiture this means the light can fall around the face, filling in areas that might typically be in shadow. Other ways you may wish to soften a light include a diffuser panel or a sheet of Perspex – these do the same job as a softbox in terms of how they affect the light waves, but will enable greater control over direction of light and reflections, as the light can be moved independently to the diffuser.

Another fantastic modifier to consider is the beauty dish. As the name suggests, these are mainly used for portraiture and they do deliver a lovely spread of light across the face. Although generally considered a modifier that delivers soft light, the beauty dish (especially without a fabric diffuser) does provide an appealing balance between soft and hard light. The centre cap located in the middle of it covers the bulb and stops direct light from the flash tube hitting the subject, sending it instead back into the modifier to diffuse out

evenly in a circle. Another benefit of this is the circular and soft catch-light reflection it puts into the eye.

Soft 'fill' can be achieved by bouncing light off nearby walls or ceilings, or just by holding in white card or fabric surfaces. Soft light is also your best option if you need to evenly increase the overall exposure of an image.



Top Indian spoons
A reflector softened up using a piece of Perspex helped to control the reflections on the spoons

Above Lipstick
These were shot with a strong backlight and two strip softboxes double-diffused with Perspex

Softbox or beauty dish?

Choosing a modifier for your main soft light



Simple softbox portrait Shot using a medium-sized 60-80cm softbox; the highlights are soft and the light wraps nicely. On this example, the softbox material added a small amount of tint to the light.



Simple beauty dish portrait This image was shot using a 21-inch white beauty dish. The skin definition is lovely and you can see that the catch lights in the eye are indeed more attractive. It's a very clean light.

Attach a softbox

Place the softbox face down on the floor, carefully line up your mounting points, then slide the light in and twist. Once the head is back up on the stand, swivel so that the softbox is over one of the legs and is properly supported.

Understand softbox shapes

These come in many shapes and sizes – here's a quick look at a few of the most useful ones



Rectangular softbox This is a fairly common medium-sized softbox, a reliable modifier for lots of applications where you need an even spread of soft light.



Strip softbox Perfect for when you're shooting long, thin objects and standing portraits as it channels the light (normally) vertically, rather than spread like a wider softbox.



Octobox softbox This is a small example of an octobox. The more rounded shape can look more natural than a square or rectangle.



Soft beauty portrait on pink

The main light used for this image was a beauty dish. The model was flanked by two strip softboxes to add fill and separate her from the background. Some white card was also added to bounce a little light back into the shadows under her chin.



The Dance

This image was made using a variety of hard light modifiers. The main light is a Fresnel spotlight; the highlights down the left of the body are intense and not wrapping like soft light does, and it's also casting shadow. There is also a square-gridded reflector up high lighting the fabric, and a small round-gridded reflector on lower power adding a bit of fill-in on the body.



Adding grids to softboxes

Create different effects



Strip softbox with fabric grid
This works the same as any type of grid and makes the light waves travel straighter. It will also cut out a little bit of exposure, but you can compensate by turning your light up.



Without grid
The grid has been removed, meaning the light will spread more. The fabric grid can be easily attached using Velcro.



Use focused and hard light

Learn how to create an edgier result for added drama

Focusing the light produces the opposite effect of soft light – it's often purposely directional; 'channelled' toward the subject creating very dark contrasting shadows.

There are various ways to focus light into an area, and perhaps the most widely used is the Fresnel light modifier – this is a glass lens that sits in front of the light and can be adjusted to deliver either a flood or a spot of light. It's been used in the main image to create a focused hard light, which can even give the visual effect of working in sunlight.

Another popular method with a more basic kit is a reflector with a honeycomb grid placed in front of it. These come in many different densities, with medium through to small holes – the smaller the holes, the straighter the light waves penetrating through. You can get grids for softboxes and beauty dishes too, so although they are still regarded as soft light modifiers, the grids can just tighten up the spread of light they omit and stop it from hitting areas it isn't intended for.

Snoots are another key modifier. They are cone-shaped and shrink down from a standard size where the light enters to a much smaller hole, creating a smaller spread of light. Snoots are ideal for putting spots on backgrounds or small pools of light in precise areas.

It is possible to create very focused light using a unit called a Focus Spot – larger flash units can then produce a very concentrated light on the subject or background. You use them by adjusting controls on the side of the unit to soften or sharpen the flash, and to either increase or decrease the size of light emitted. When used in conjunction with a set of Gobos, the photographer can create special lighting effects, which if used subtly are still relevant and interesting!

When you want an obvious direction in your lighting or want to make a feature of the shadows, focused hard light is the type of lighting you should be considering. It is usually more sculptural, very good if converted to black and white and especially useful for highlighting relief, texture and material surface.

Sometimes focused light and hard-gridded light is not particularly flattering for portraiture or reflective objects when used directly, so generally it is better when used in conjunction with other modifiers.

Modelling Lights

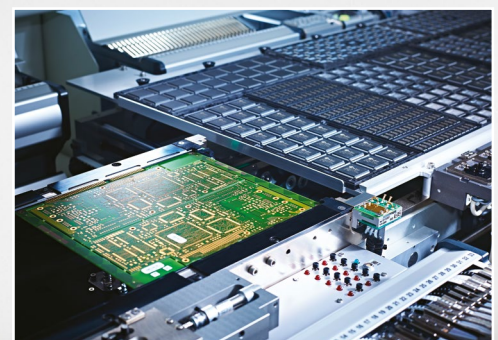
These are rather underrated. They provide sufficient light to enable you to focus effectively while you work and for some applications they can even be used as a continuous light source for your final images.

Below With added grid

This is now more dramatic than on the previous page. Compare the colour rendition

Bottom Inside the machine

You can see the directional light from behind, enhancing the contrast of the components



Honeycombs and snoots

Take a look at the different light-shaping qualities of a reflector with a honeycomb grid and a snoot



Using a honeycomb grid only
The highlight on the curve of the vase shows you where the light is most intense, and the rest of the light is how much (or how little) the honeycomb is allowing the light to spill. The shadow is hard and there's very minimal light hitting the background.



Using a snoot only
The most intense highlights tell you that the light hasn't moved, but you can see that the spread of light is slightly reduced and a sharper effect is the result.



Consider shadows

Don't overlook their importance

The art of flagging and shaping light after it has left the bulb is a great skill to have. Often a modifier on its own isn't enough, and more physical items are required to adjust the light further. Controlling your light with things such as barn doors, grids and flags can really add depth and interest to your photography. Detail counts for a lot in photography, so if you can add little pockets of light here and there, rather than always using a big spread of light, then the viewer is likely to be captivated without necessarily knowing why.

There are lots of different types of flags and accessories for controlling light – there are many off-the-shelf products that work very well, but it's often the case that you may end up making things over time. It's not unusual to use a combination of objects and accessories when trying to 'build' the lighting around a subject, and this is because there are so many different ways to achieve the look you're after.

Generally solid, flat, dark surfaces make good flags – objects that can literally stop light from hitting a certain area. These work best when used to keep light from reaching a background, or by being placed near items that need to reflect something dark rather than be lit whole by the flash light, for example glassware. When a less-structural object is desired, 'on-light' barn doors are very useful to close down the aperture of the light bulb and reflector – this helps the photographer to direct light in a slit or smaller area. Gobos used in focus spot lamps also allow very precise directional light that can be extremely effective – they can often produce detailed hard light and are very controllable.

Sometimes it's necessary to lift the light levels in areas that are in shadow, and this might be required if the image has too much contrast. A solution is white card; it is versatile and produces clean coloured light that bounces back in the direction of the main light. It will very subtly lift the light levels near where you place it, and you can expect to see more detail as a result. If even more detail is needed, usually some soft light from a softbox will work well.

Solve a problem

Restrict the reach of your light using simple flagging



1 Start with a softbox

After consideration, a softbox was chosen for the main light as the sculpture was slightly shiny, and it's doing a very good job of lighting the object.



2 Add a snoot for shadow

More interest was added to the base using a snoot at the back left. The shadow it creates is great, but the bright highlight on the sculpture itself is less appealing.

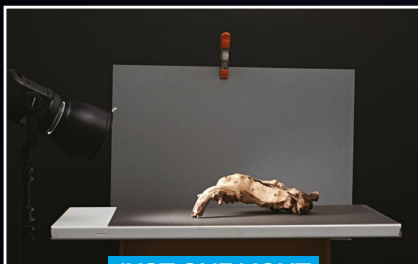


3 Add a flag

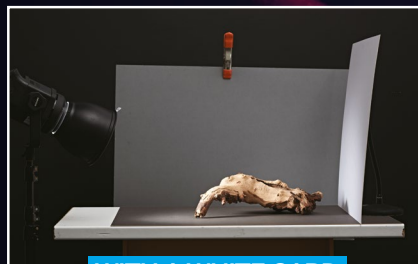
Here, some black card has been added to control and refine the light omitted from the snoot, therefore eliminating the bright highlight but keeping the extra interest from the shadow.

Lifting detail

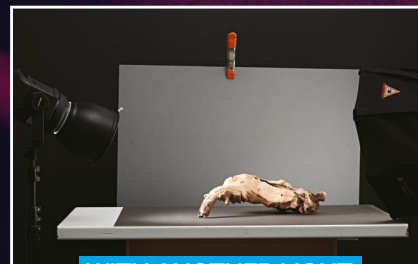
A look at your options for controlling shadows precisely



JUST ONE LIGHT



WITH A WHITE CARD



WITH ANOTHER LIGHT



A very directional gridded reflector is being used to cast hard shadow – there is very little detail in the shadows on the right-hand side of the object.



In this version, simply bouncing some light back into the object using an everyday piece of white card brings out a good amount of detail.



For this shot, a small amount of soft light has been added. The original light was still very much the key light, overpowering the fill-in for the shadow.



Light and Shadow Control

A main shaft of light from behind has been created, running through and over the model. A flash light placed behind two large polyboard flags has been used. Unlike barn doors, the distance from the light is important in focusing the light on the model. The second main light in this image is from a focus spot, which produces an intense spot of directional light that can be enlarged or reduced, and softened or focused. A grid over a reflector was used to put a small amount of focused light onto the hair, and to finish the image some clip-on barn doors on a reflector dish were used – this served in adding a slit of fill light along the body which gently lifted the shadows.

Shoot Tethered

Tethering to a computer is great. It gives you such a good view of what you're doing compared to looking at the back of the camera. You can see more detail, which helps to inform how much more light to add or take away.





Mix it up

Bring everything together for more impactful images

To master lighting you need to understand that various materials respond to light differently – for example wood can be very forgiving under hard light, whereas a metal surface is likely to kick up unattractive reflections. Usually the greatest differences are seen between matte and reflective surfaces.

Experimenting either in or out of the studio will help with this understanding, given time, and most of the modifiers discussed in this feature can be hugely versatile – softboxes can deliver a really punchy light if placed very close to your subject on high power, and the light from a reflector at a distance will eventually soften. Often the best lit images are achieved with a combination of lighting modifiers and techniques chosen for specific reasons.

The most important thing is to have a good idea or concept in your head before you begin to build your lighting setup, and the clearer this is the better. Good images don't just appear out of thin air, and a bit of thought normally yields great lighting.

The best way to start is to keep it simple and build your shot up one light at a time – look at the image with one light, then another, then another and try to be critical each time – constructively! If something isn't working, then just change it. There are lots of amazing lighting kits out there, but you can get great results with simple flash guns and even just the Sun and a bounce reflector! Basic things like black-and-white card can be hugely useful for channelling light and adding darker areas to images.

With portraits, the beauty dish as the main light modifier is often the best choice. These can be supplemented by strip softboxes, as these complement a human's shape more effectively than a rectangle. Strips are also really good when gridded, as this focuses the light and can be extremely attractive as a rim or kicker light from behind. Harder and more focused light can then be added in to pick out certain areas, for instance to enhance hair and furniture shadows. Snoots can be used to put spots and gradients on walls.

As mentioned earlier, with products you can usually ditch the softbox and use Perspex or diffuser paper – the main advantage with this is being able to move the light source independently and change the modifier behind the panel. Use smaller flags and reflectors with most still-life setups, to increase contrast and lift shadows at the same time. Also try to add top light, which always helps produce object shadows and ground items.



Above
Dessert

This was created with a diffused but strong light from the left rear, behind Perspex. A softbox filled in from the right and the rear slit of light is from the focus spot

Below
EB watch

This advertising image was a combination of lights behind Perspex and a harder focused gridded honeycomb, enhancing the detail on the rear of the case





1 Black wall portrait This image uses a variety of hard and soft light, with lots of components to help control the light further. In doing so, you can draw attention to the parts of the image that you feel are most important.

2 Mixed light setup This photograph shows the main

setup for this image with the beauty dish and clip-on barn doors, the overhead snoot, the hard light from the left with grid and the gridded strip softbox on the right.

3 Adding fill This is the large silver reflector with flash head mounted behind the camera, filling in for the main exposure.

Tricks

Create unique compositions with these fun photo projects and expert techniques

- 94** Create a woodland sunburst
- 96** Create a time stack
- 102** Shoot stitched panoramas
- 104** Shoot stunning urban abstracts
- 110** Blend flash with natural light
- 112** Use ND filters for flash
- 118** Shoot food in the studio with flash
- 124** Master the Moon
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- 132** Create captivating cinematic effects



Get artistic!
Use creative techniques to produce stunning results

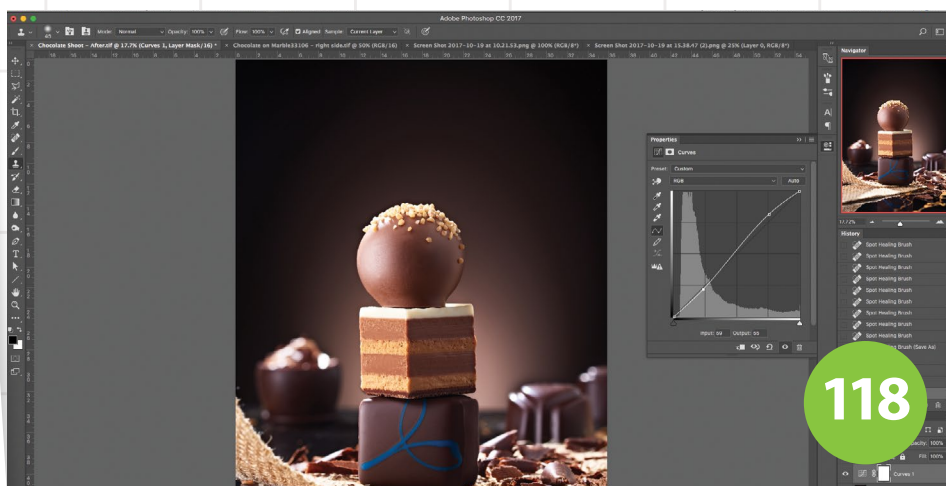
Studio projects

Create portraits like a professional

TOP TIPS

- ✓ Creative portraits
- ✓ Super sunbursts
- ✓ High-speed photography
- ✓ Lunar photos

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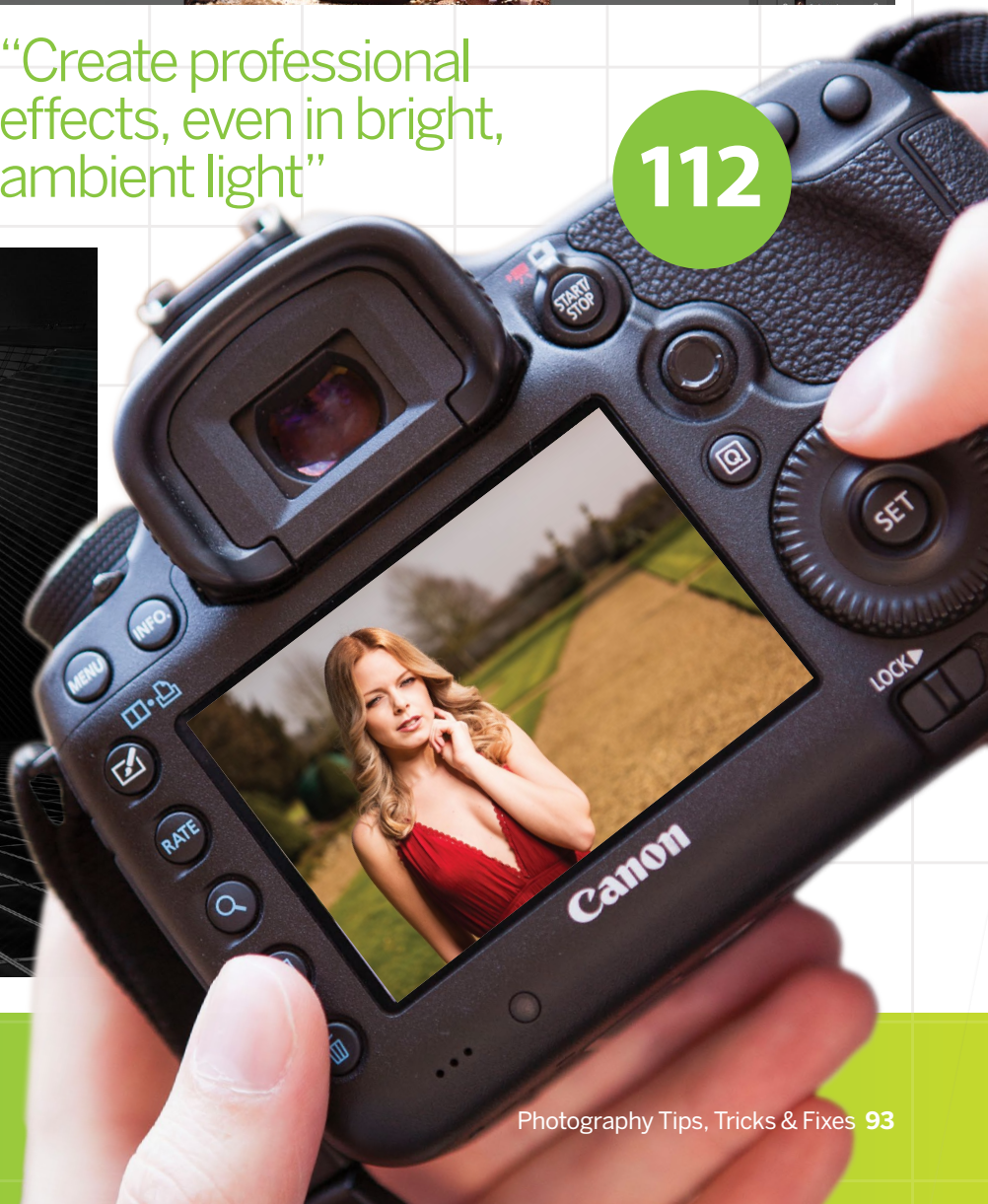
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“Create professional effects, even in bright, ambient light”

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Shoot abstracts

Capture and edit eye-catching urban images



112

Create a woodland sunburst

Head for the woods on a misty day and shoot into the Sun for truly atmospheric results

This is one of those images that photographers dream of creating. We see similar shots in books, calendars or magazines and wish that we could be lucky enough to encounter such amazing conditions. Well the good news is, you can, because they're not nearly as rare as you'd imagine. All you need is a damp day followed by a clear, cool night so moisture rises through the trees and is

trapped by cool air to form mist, then a sunny morning. Autumn is the best season to shoot woodland sunbursts as you have the added benefit of beautiful foliage colour, but you can also get the right conditions during winter and spring, too.

The key is to locate suitable woodland. Ideally, choose a location close to where you live – the image here was shot just two minute's

away from the photographer's home – so you can get to it quickly, then keep an eye on the weather. If you wake to misty conditions, head to the woods with your camera. Technically, shots like this are easy to take because everything's there. You don't need to use filters or employ fancy techniques – simply mount your camera and start shooting. It's as easy as that!



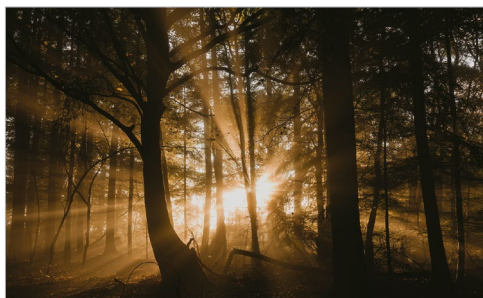
All images © Lee Frost



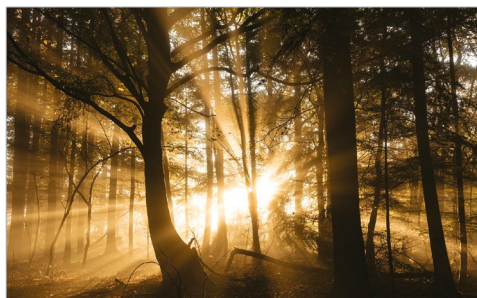
1 Set up your equipment Once you reach your location, find a suitable spot to shoot from. Next, mount your camera on a tripod, attach a wide-angle zoom and fit a lens hood to reduce the risk of flare.

2 Alter camera settings Set your DSLR to multi-pattern metering and Aperture Priority mode. Stop the lens down to f8 or f11 to give you sufficient depth of field, then compose your shot and focus using AF.

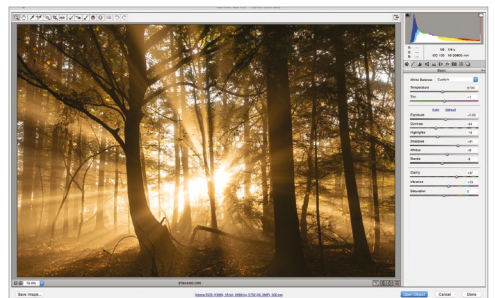
3 Take the shot You're now ready to shoot. Use a remote release to trip the shutter or, as here, set the self-timer to a ten-second delay and press the shutter release. Check the preview image and histogram.



4 Get the exposure right This shot is underexposed due to the bright area in the centre of the frame fooling the camera's metering. Increase the exposure by +1 1/3 stops using Exposure Compensation mode.



5 Re-take the shot With the exposure adjusted, re-take. Once you've got the first image spot-on, shoot some alternatives by varying your viewpoint, lens focal length and camera format.



6 Do some post-processing Increase Clarity a little to emphasise the sunbeams and Vibrance to boost the colours. If any areas are too dark, use the Lasso tool to select them then Levels or Curves to brighten them.



FINAL IMAGE

Backlit beauty

With the Sun fairly low in the sky and partially hidden by the trees, shooting directly into the light produced this stunning photo





Create a time stack

Give your landscapes a painterly feel with this creative technique

Imagine if you could create a picture conveying a sense of motion and time passing, created by clouds that move through the sky during the course of minutes, or even hours. You can use a time-lapse technique and combine the images together to capture this cloud movement – cloud-stack. A time-stack sequence creates a painterly look that is much different to a long exposure, which blurs the clouds together over several minutes.

The first step is to identify what type of conditions work best for a time-stack sequence. Look for well-defined clouds with lots of contrast against a clear, blue sky. Sunsets can also be fantastic and colourful, but avoid overcast days or dull light. Using a graduated neutral density filter can help to balance exposures if the sky is brighter than the rest of the composition. The second step is to set your camera up to record the action using an intervalometer, shooting every two to three seconds as the clouds move across the sky. Once you've recorded your time-lapse sequence, you are ready to take your resulting images through the post-processing stage to create your wind-painted clouds as a single image. Photoshop is a great tool for combining your sequence in post-production, but any editing software that features layers and blend modes will work just as well.

Left Cloud-stack

The final epitomised image represents 130 time-lapse sequence images combined into a single image using the Lighten blend mode in Photoshop to create a unique painterly effect

What you'll need

- 📷 DSLR
- 📵 Tripod
- ⌚ Intervalometer
- 🌫️ Graduated neutral density filter
- 🖨️ Photoshop

Shooting steps

1 Set up your shot Mount your camera on a sturdy tripod. You will benefit by using a wide lens to take in all the action of the clouds. It is good to use a wide-angle lens that accepts a variety of filters. The more sky you can show, the more dramatic the image will be.

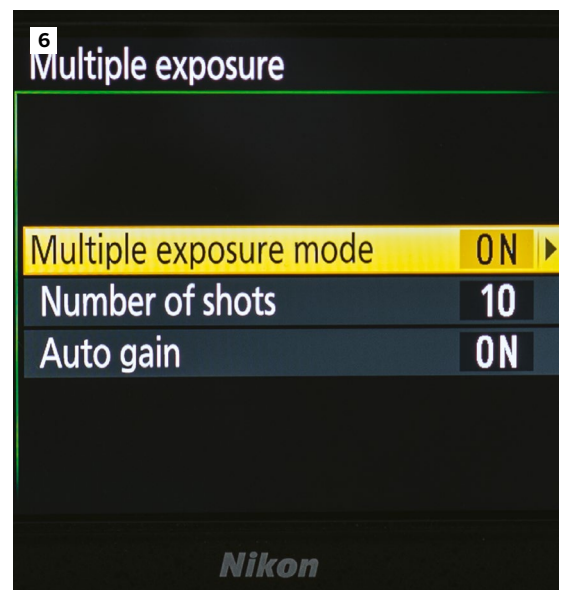
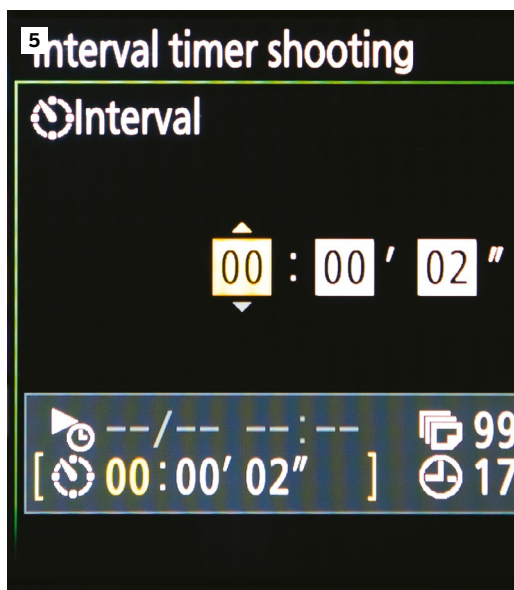
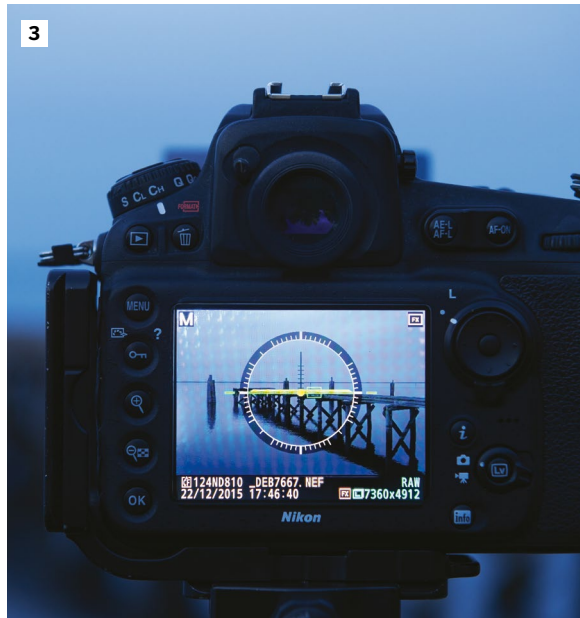
2 Find your composition Find a composition that will be easy to combine. A static landscape (with no foreground movement) or seascape where the water will be blended as a unique texture. Here, the composited image results in a fascinating texture of the rippled water with the unique cloud structure.

3 Determine correct exposure Take a test shot to determine the best exposure and make any adjustments if necessary. Use caution not to overexpose the cloud area. Once the correct focus is determined, turn off autofocus to prevent the camera trying to refocus during the time-lapse sequence.

4 Use a neutral density filter A graduated ND filter helps balance the overall exposure, toning down the unevenness of a bright sky compared to the darker foreground elements. Use a soft graduated ND filter, or reverse ND filter. A two-stop graduated ND works beautifully for balancing exposure.

5 Choose the image sequence interval Set up the intervalometer for two to three seconds, depending on how fast the clouds are moving. Set the duration to the maximum number of shots, and stop the time-lapse sequence when desired. You can create a time stack with 100 to 200 images.

6 Alternative process: multiple exposures If your camera can record multiple exposures, you can create a short time stack in-camera. This works in a very interesting and beautiful way if you use ND filters and long exposures for the short 10 image sequence. This creates a long exposure cloud-stacked look.





The setup

IDENTIFY THE BEST CLOUDS

To identify the best clouds for this type of composited imagery, look for strong contrast between the blue sky and moving clouds that will create painterly streaks across the sky. If the day is overcast, the clouds may not have enough definition for dramatic results. Experiment with this technique at various times of the day for different results. Clouds leading to a colourful sunset create a vivid and fascinating image. You should shoot in RAW to have flexibility in adjusting your white balance settings in post-processing. With middle-of-the-day shots, and clear contrast between your clouds and blue sky, a sunny white balance setting can be stunning.

NEUTRAL DENSITY FILTERS

After you determine the elements in your composition, take a test shot, and make any adjustments needed to the exposure. In some cases, a graduated neutral density filter will help balance the exposure, like toning down the bright sky compared to the darker foreground elements. Use either a soft graduated neutral density filter, or reverse graduated neutral density filter. During the day, a solid neutral density filter is good to use for a long exposure to soften the clouds and to create more of a blurred painterly look that accentuates the evolution of the clouds. This can be quite dramatic and beautiful, and creates a very painterly look compared to exposures that freeze the action.

Take your time stacks further

Find new, creative ways to use your time stack

Shooting a time stack gives you lots of creative options! You can create a short movie from your time-lapse sequence. Simply set the interval for two seconds, shoot for 40 minutes or more to render a short video in Photoshop. You can also use an app like Sequence to create your video. Once you've created a video, you can also create a cinemagraph, which is a still image that has parts of the image that move (try animating the clouds).

SET THE INTERVALOMETER

Mount your camera on a tripod, find a pleasing composition, and set your in-camera intervalometer to record several hundred exposures. Many Nikon cameras have this feature built in, but other cameras require an external intervalometer for this function. Dependent upon how fast the clouds are moving, here we chose two or three seconds to record the action. Fast clouds get two seconds. You can set the duration of time to record images in advance, or control it yourself in case the clouds become more interesting and you need to extend the time so as not to miss the best action. Any hesitation between exposures will create a noticeable gap in your clouds (just as if you were shooting stars).

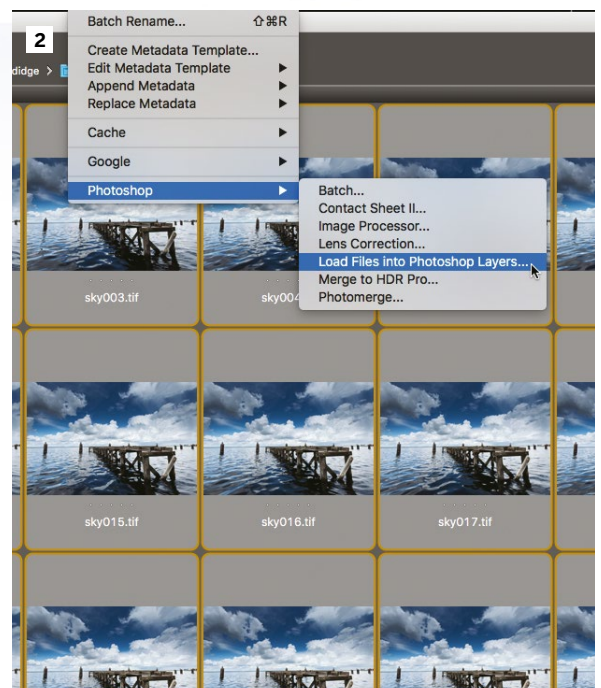
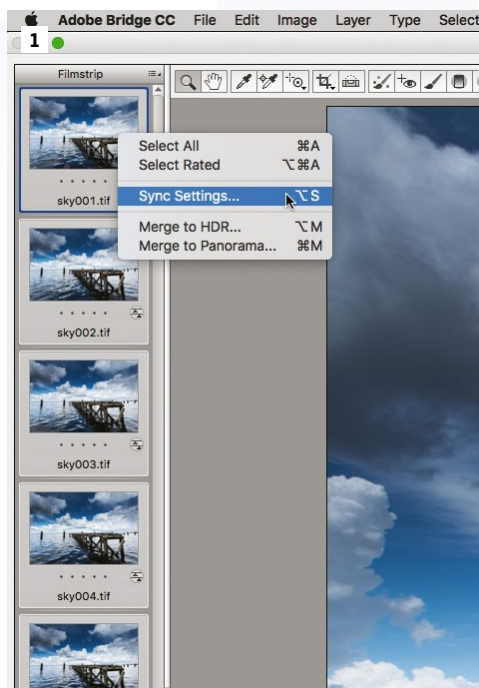




Editing steps

1 Optimise and synchronise
Make basic adjustments and corrections to the RAW files with your image-processing software. Synchronise adjustments to all of the images. Renumber images with a simple numbering system, and save to a new folder.

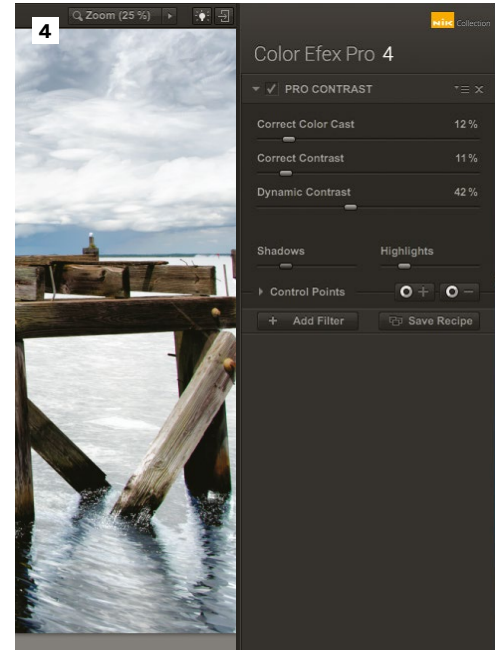
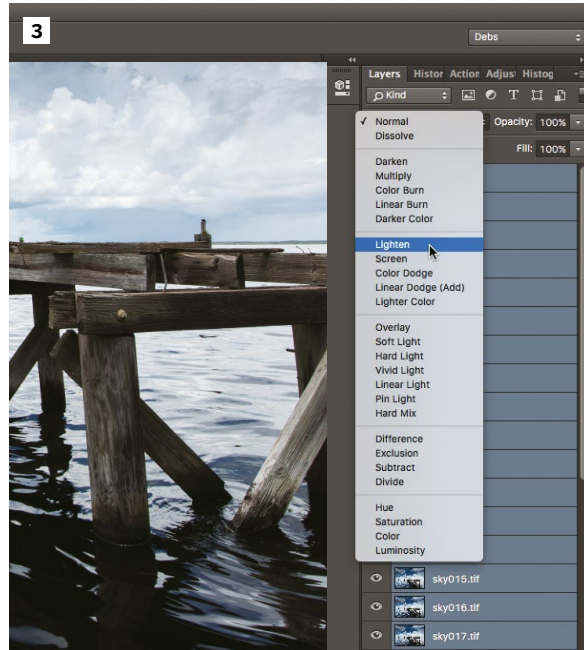
2 Load images to Photoshop
From Bridge, load the image files into Photoshop as a layer stack. Go to Tools > Photoshop > Load Files Into Photoshop Layers. Then, from Lightroom, select the images and choose Photo > Edit in > Open As Layers in Photoshop.





3 Create the blended effect
 Select all layers in the stack, and change the Blend Mode to Lighten. You can fine-tune the result by showing or hiding various parts of the stack. Flatten the layer stack into a single image.

4 Add finishing touches
 Make final adjustments to the flattened image. You can use Photoshop or Lightroom. Make contrast, colour, and texture enhancements, and experiment with various filters.



Below Painterly clouds

The cloud positions from the time stack are visible in the final image. This creates beautiful patterns as if the wind painted clouds throughout your photo

“You can fine-tune the result by showing or hiding various parts of the stack”





Shoot stitched panoramas

Turn a series of digital files into a stunning panoramic image by following our simple step-by-step guide

How many times have you downloaded a set of new landscapes onto your computer, only to be disappointed because they just didn't fully capture the drama and beauty of the scene? It's not that you're a bad photographer, but simply because your brain took in far more of the scene than your camera did. When we look at a beautiful view we pan across it from left to right, but as a single image only captures part of this view, we're often left feeling short-changed – it's kind of like looking at a jigsaw with lots of the pieces missing!

Panoramic photography gets around this problem by enabling you to capture scenes in the same way that your eyes scan and your brain interprets them.

This elongated 'letterbox' format forces the eye to scan across the image, taking it in bit by bit rather than in a single hit, which psychologically feels much more like looking at the real, full scene.

Specialist (and expensive) cameras were used in analogue days to produce panoramic negatives and transparencies, but in the digital age you can create stunning panoramas using the camera you already own, simply by shooting an overlapping sequences of images then using software to 'stitch' them together.

This may sound time-consuming, but it's actually quicker and easier than ever thanks to vast improvements in stitching software. The key is planning and consistency – get the source images right and the rest is child's play.



BEFORE

Straight shot of the scene

This image is pleasant enough but it doesn't really capture the sense of open space or show the lighthouse in its surrounding environment





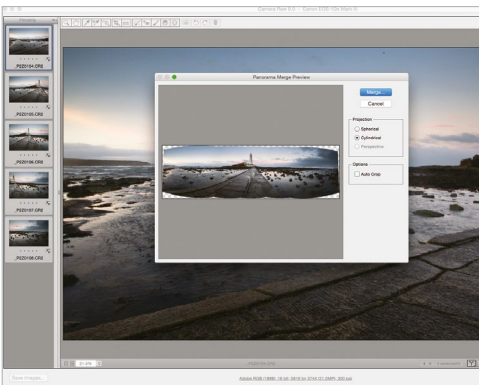
1 Set up your equipment Mount your camera on a tripod in landscape or portrait format. Make sure the tripod head is level on the legs and that the camera is level on the head by using a spirit level.



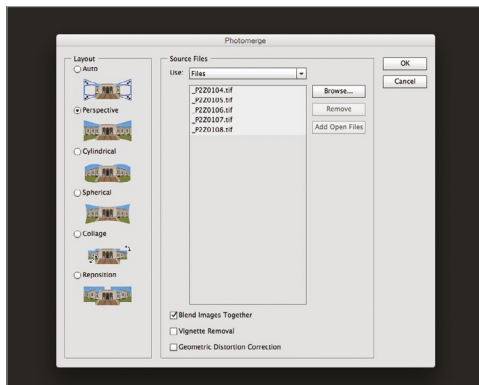
2 Take a test shot Take a shot of the scene at f8 or f11 with focus set to manual. If all looks okay, set that exposure on your camera so that you use the same exposure for each frame. Also set white balance to daylight.



3 Shoot the sequence Swing the camera to the left and take your first shot. Next, move the camera to the right a little and take the second shot, ensuring it overlaps the first by about 40 per cent. Repeat as required.



4 Process the Raw files If you are using the latest version of Adobe Photoshop or Lightroom, you can create a panorama in ACR (Adobe Camera Raw) from the Raw files and save it as a DNG file for processing.



5 Stitch the images together If you have an older version of Photoshop, first batch process the Raw files, then in Photoshop go to File>Automate>Photomerge. Click on Browse, select your images and click OK.

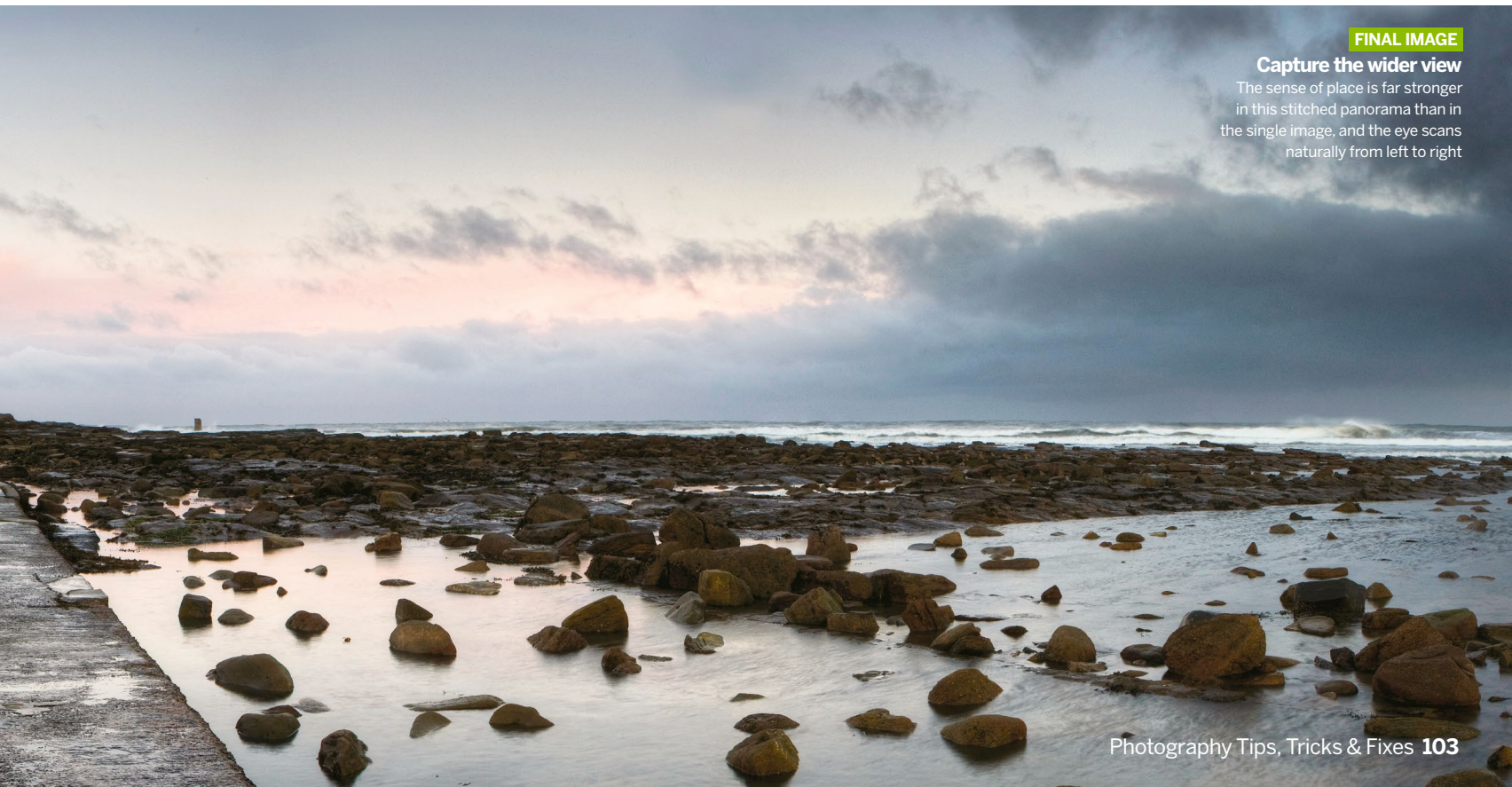


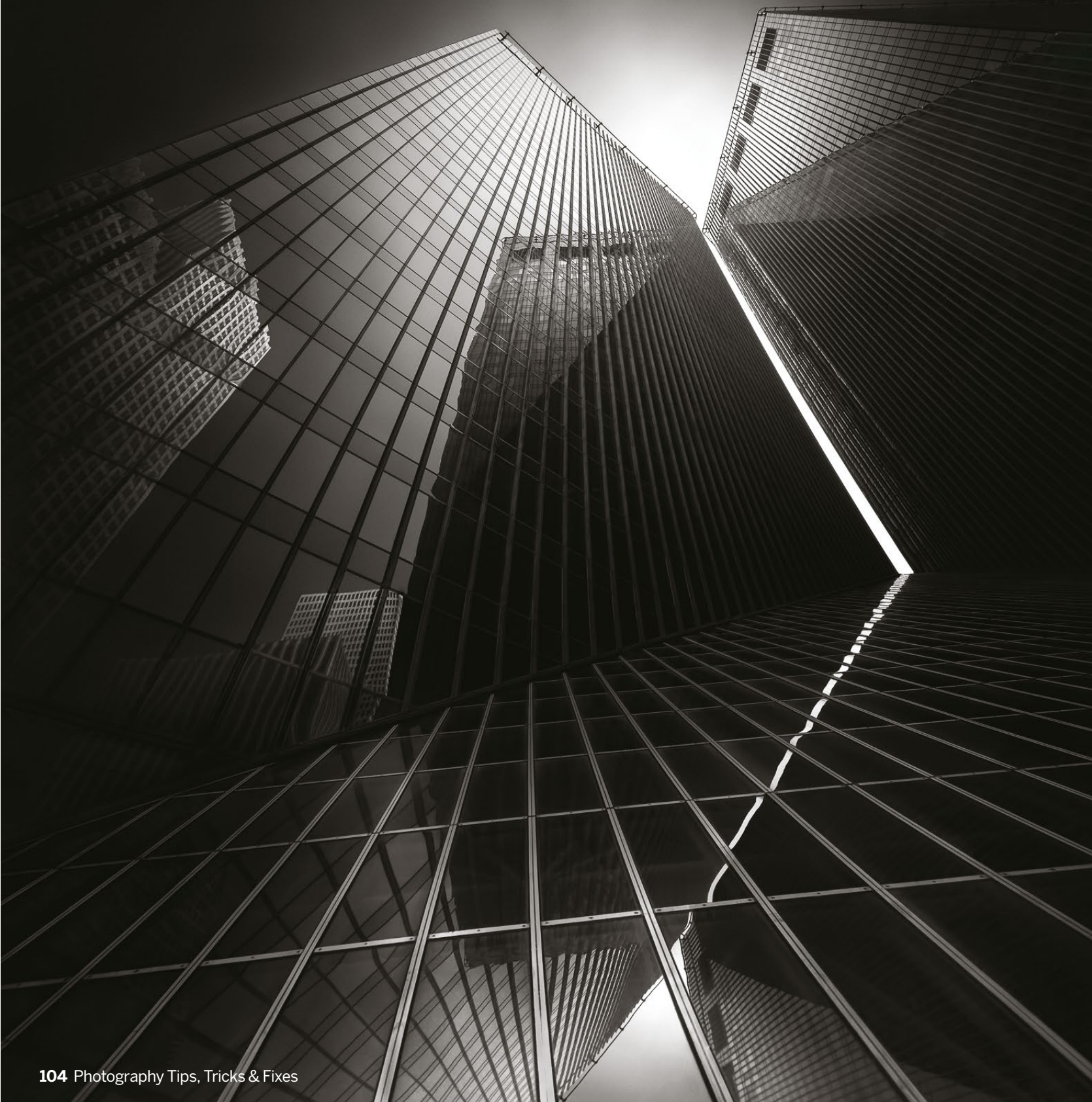
6 Finish off the panorama After a few minutes, Photomerge should finish stitching the images and present you with something like this. You can then crop the edges, remove sensor blemishes and carry out any final editing.

FINAL IMAGE

Capture the wider view

The sense of place is far stronger in this stitched panorama than in the single image, and the eye scans naturally from left to right







Shoot stunning urban abstracts

Julia Anna Gospodarou on how to capture and edit a monochrome architectural photograph that wins awards

Most of the photography tutorials you can find are about the technical and processing aspects of photography, but for fine-art photography this is often not enough. Fine art is not only about gear and software, or even about having a good eye for the subject, but about how the photographer interprets the world in an artistic way. This is why, before even going out shooting, it is important to define your intentions for the image you will create, and work on your personal vision that you want to be transmitted through your image.

Of course, the way you shoot and process your images is important because it is how

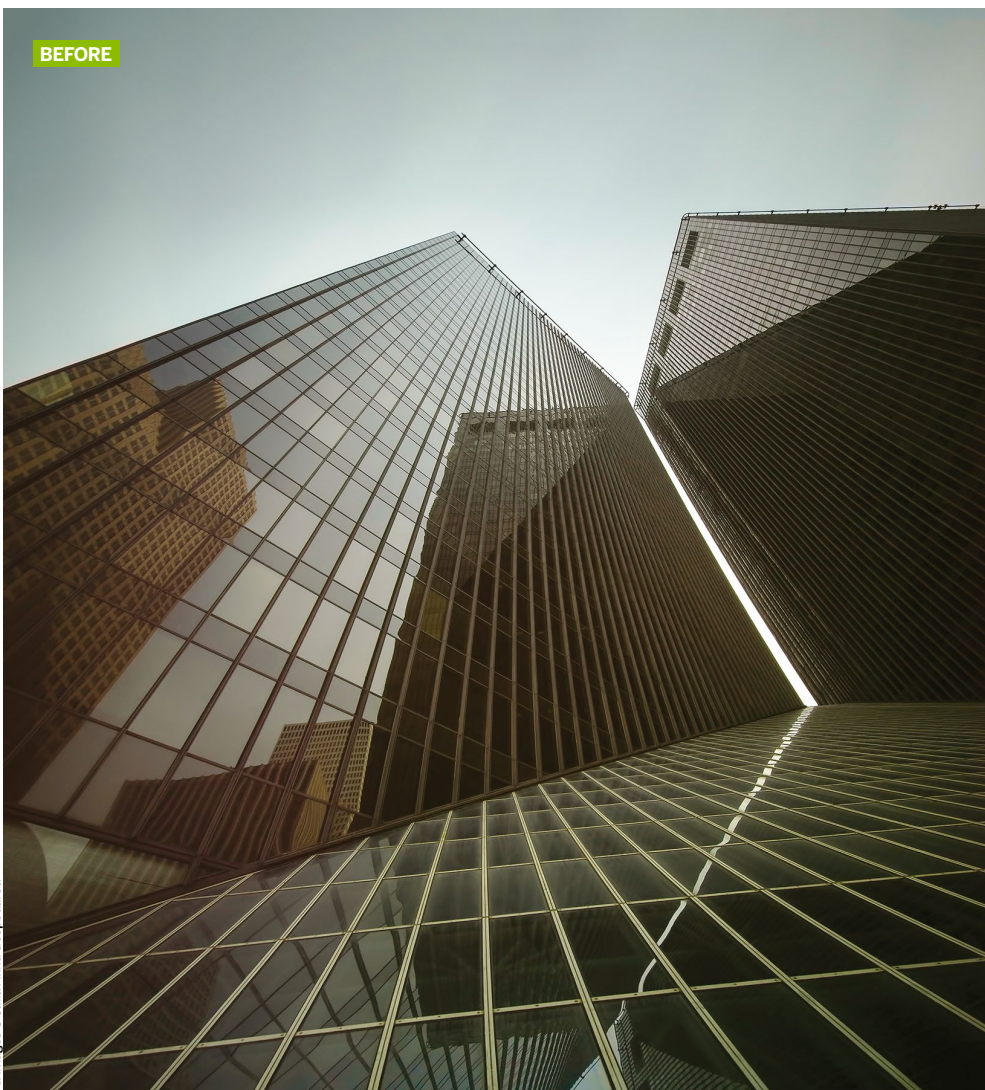
you create the actual image, but what you say to the viewer has to do with your vision, so defining it is important. Start from the idea you want to convey, then find the right subject and the right way of processing that will transmit your idea. I am calling this process and the photography born from it (en) Visionography (envisionography.com) and I see it as an evolution of photography that gives the photographer the chance to create more personal and original work. This is one of the qualities that can guarantee your work will win awards, and ensure your images stand out at competitions among thousands of other images.

During the entire image-making process, always stay focused on what you aim to communicate with it. This will give your image authenticity and make it stand out.

Keep in mind that architecture means first and foremost geometry, so when you create an architectural photograph you are dealing with lines, shapes, volumes and intersections.

When you work in black and white you are also dealing with the nuances of light interacting with the volumes and shapes that you shoot. You are working with space and depth, revealed by light. For more information on Julia Anna Gospodarou and her work, please visit juliaannagospodarou.com.

BEFORE



All images © Julia Anna Gospodarou

What you'll need

- 📷 DSLR or mirrorless camera (or any other camera with Bulb function – such as medium format).
- 📷 Wide-angle lens, regular or tilt-shift (the 24mm tilt-shift lens is recommended for architecture).
- 📷 A sturdy tripod.
- 📷 Neutral-density filter: 16-stop filter or 10+6-stop stacked filters.
- 📷 Cable release or remote control.
- 📷 Lightroom (alternatively DxO OpticsPro).
- 📷 Photoshop + Topaz Labs plug-ins.
- 📷 Optionally: Wacom tablet and pen for more accurate processing.

Left

Equivalents I - Insidewards

This image is of the Pennzoil Place in Houston TX, a famous building designed by Philip Johnson, and is a 252 seconds long-exposure shot with a 16-stop neutral-density filter. The series Equivalents is a homage to Alfred Stieglitz, the one who used this term for the first time in the beginning of 20th Century to create the first abstract photography series, with the intention of communicating emotion.

The aim was to create a hierarchy in the importance of the elements in the frame, so they culminate with the most important point in the image: the subject. The split between the two sides of the building separates them but also brings them together. The meaning of the title is the idea of the artist turning towards himself to find inspiration



Shooting steps

1 Choose the angle that best shows your vision Depending on your idea and the subject you're shooting, you will find that a certain angle is better than others to convey your vision. Walk around the subject and choose the best angle while taking some test shots.

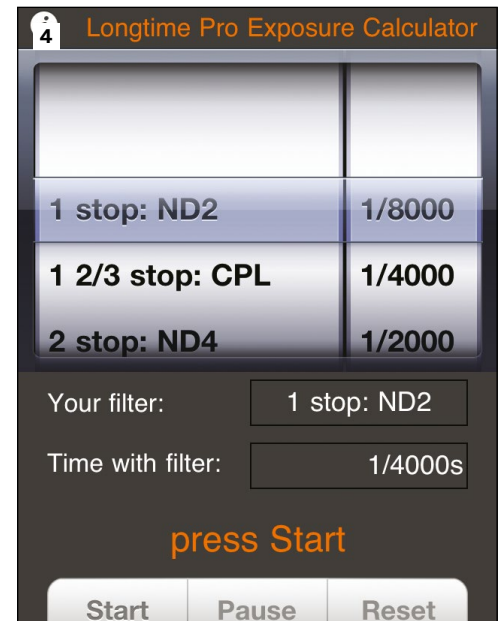
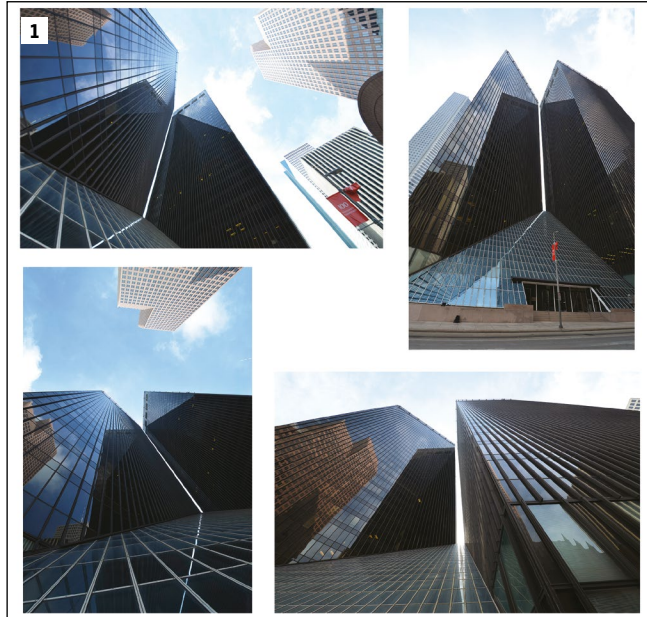
2 Set up tripod and camera Having a good sturdy tripod when you shoot architecture, and especially long exposure, will pay off, so be generous when you invest in your tripod. Make sure you place the tripod on a steady surface and double-check how securely the camera is attached to it.

3 Change camera settings Switch to Bulb and keep your ISO as low as you can – 100 would be the best. Keep your aperture as close to the sweet spot of your lens as possible. An aperture between f8 and f13 will give you the best results for the clarity of your image; f16 and higher may create diffraction in your image.

4 Calculate the long exposure The best way to do this is to use a long exposure calculator on your smartphone. There are various apps to help with this; state the number of stops of your ND filter and the shutter speed you would use if you took a short exposure. The app will calculate the long exposure you need.

5 Apply the lens filter To avoid light leak during the exposure when shooting with a square filter, you can use a special holder designed to protect from light leak, like the Formatt-Hitech Firecrest holder. After the exposure time has ended be sure to check the result carefully so you know that the image is sharp.

6 Attach the cable release Be sure to switch off the camera when you attach the cable release, otherwise it can interfere with the correct functioning of the camera during the exposure. Alternatively you can use a remote control with the same results.





The setup

STUDY THE LIGHT

If you can, do not shoot in very contrasty conditions, with strong Sun creating dark shadows. Strong shadows and intense light are useful in black-and-white photography if you want to focus on the relation between light and shadow, and if you want to emphasize this or create patterns, silhouette-like images and so on. Otherwise, opt to shoot when the sky is partially overcast or when there are clouds in the sky. Even if you do not shoot a long exposure, this will give you a softer light so you will have more freedom in processing. If you do shoot long exposure, make sure the direction of the clouds works compositionally in your image.

USE STRONGER ND FILTERS FOR SOFTER CLOUDS

Keep in mind that when shooting long exposure, the stronger the ND filter you use, the softer the clouds will be in the final image. If you want more dynamic clouds go with a shorter exposure, and a lower intensity filter, 13-stop ND or less.

Use a tilt-shift lens

For professional results, be sure to invest in this key tool for shooting architecture

The tilt-shift lens is one of the best investments you can make if you want to shoot architecture at a high level of quality. This lens enables you to control perspective and correct the verticals so you can see parallel between them and perpendicular on the ground. The tilt-shift lens is first of all a prime lens, which will guarantee a high-quality image. This is due to their construction, and the tilt-shift lens follows this pattern. You will also have better quality on the edges of the photograph where most lenses are delivering a softer image, plus virtually no chromatic aberration. This means sharper images, which is important in architecture, so if you can, invest in the tilt-shift lens and you will get even more quality from your camera. One thing to keep in mind when you shoot with the tilt-shift lens is to focus and meter the light before you shift or tilt the lens so you get correct results, otherwise they may be altered. The tilt-shift lens may need a little bit of practice to handle well, but once you learn to use it it's an invaluable tool for architectural photography.



CHOOSING LENSES

When you shoot an architectural subject, think if you want your image to present the object from a frontal view or an eye-level view, or if you want to shoot it in a more abstract way. If you intend to shoot at eye level, try to compose it so the verticals of the object are straight and parallel to each other. A tilt-shift lens will help you control this. Otherwise you can use software to straighten the vertical lines in post-processing. If you want to approach the subject more abstractly you have the freedom of disregarding the parallelism of the verticals and using converging lines instead of verticals. This approach can give your image more dynamism.





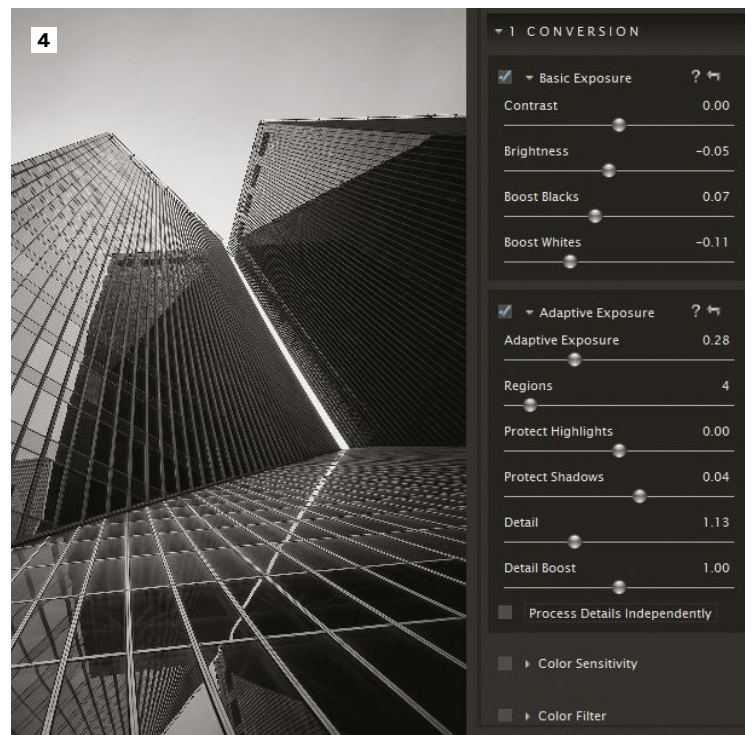
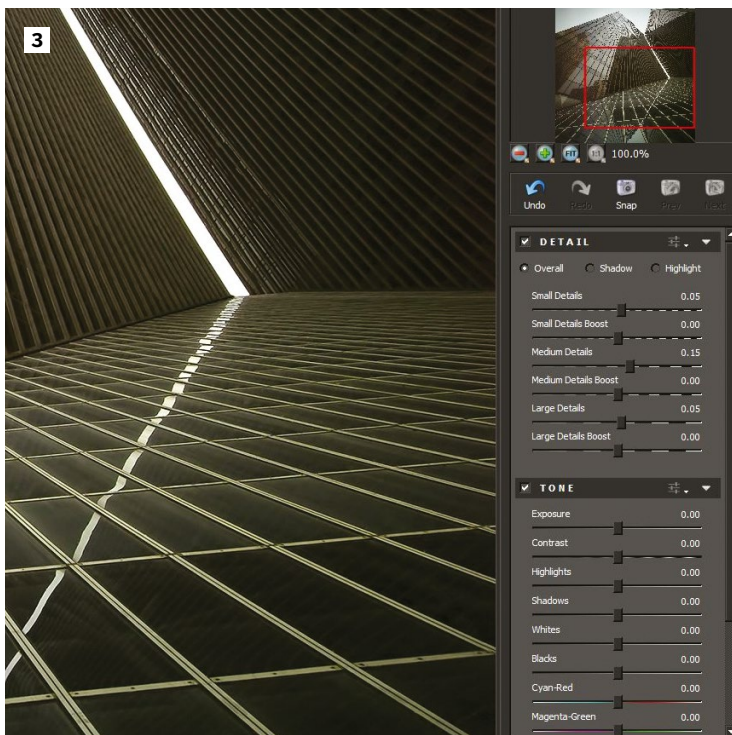
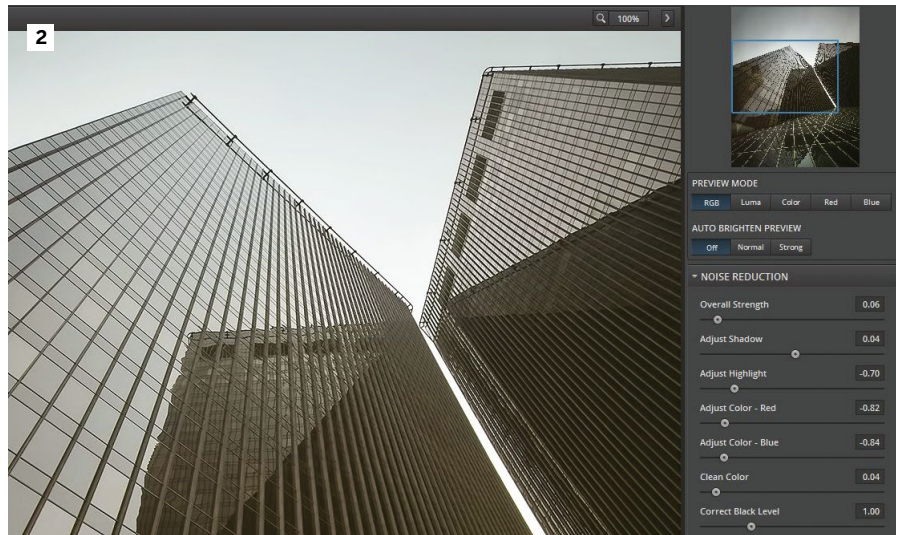
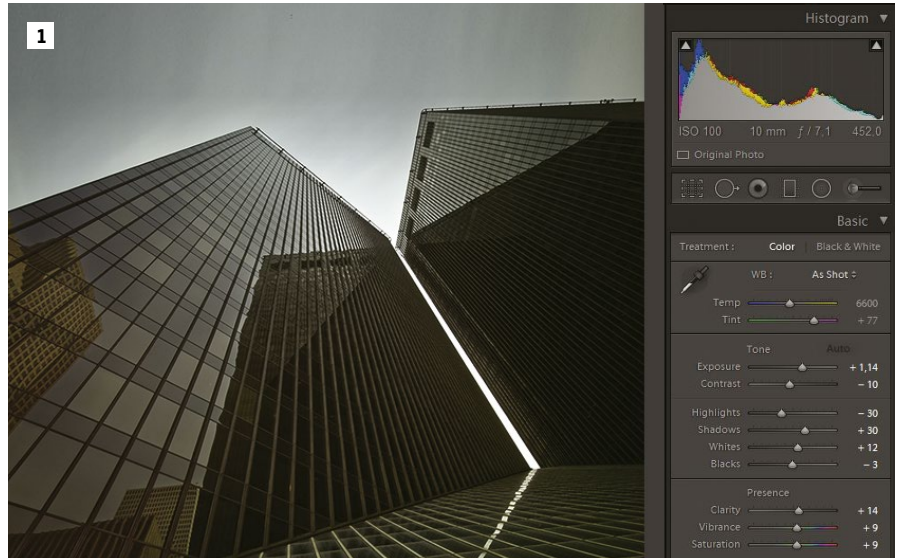
Editing steps

1 Make general adjustments Start in Lightroom or DxO OpticsPro with general adjustments on white balance, exposure and contrast. The main sharpening will be done later, and do not increase the contrast too much as this will be done in a more controlled way in Photoshop.

2 Remove noise in Photoshop A recommended solution for this is to use the Topaz Labs DeNoise plug-in. Use the Light and Moderate presets, but where you have increased noise use the Strong preset. You may need to apply different levels of denoising in the sky, which has less texture compared to the rest of the image. You can do this by selectively masking the areas in Photoshop.

3 Sharpen with Topaz Labs Detail plug-in This processing method is based on working selectively on different surfaces and volumes, which is why it is important to work with an image that has well-defined shapes. Sharpening tends to slightly modify the outline of the objects by applying contrast and this may interfere with the initial selections when done later.

4 Convert to Black and White with Topaz B&W Effects To have more freedom in Photoshop you need to create a black and white conversion that covers as many tonal ranges as possible and that is not too contrasty. In case the file you start with has areas that contrast intensely to each other you may need to make more than one black and white conversion and use different areas from each of them. Do not try to finish the image in this phase since you have more tools to work with in Photoshop.

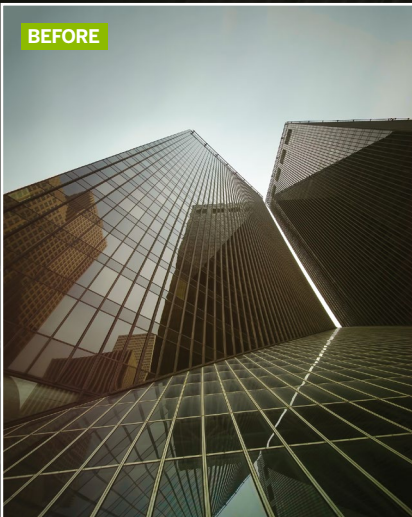
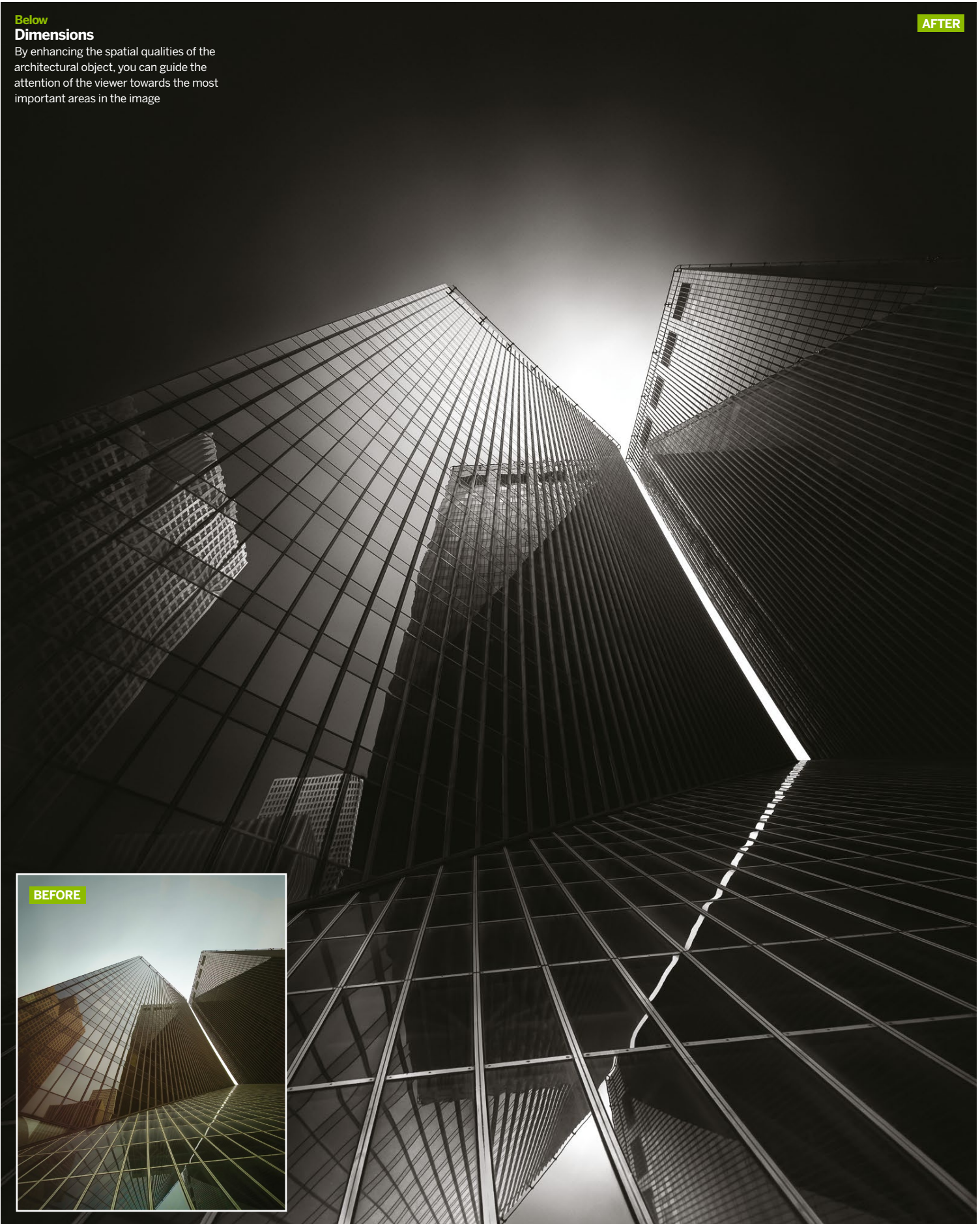




Below
Dimensions

By enhancing the spatial qualities of the architectural object, you can guide the attention of the viewer towards the most important areas in the image

AFTER





Blend flash with natural light

Seamlessly complement the existing light to create evenly lit portraits

Natural light can be beautiful and plentiful, but often to create well-balanced portraits that are flattering for the sitter we need to infill with a flash.

Even in rooms that appear flooded with light, using flash alongside the ambient light can help infill the shadows, even the light between the foreground and background and provide beautiful catchlights to the eyes. Flash can be used purposely to create dramatic and moody images, with shadows and contouring, but it can also be used to mimic the natural light and

create portraits that look as though they don't use flash at all. Creating natural-looking portraits is easy if you apply a few simple rules; make sure you add the flash from the right angle, use the natural light to your advantage and balance the ambient light with the flash. Ideally if you can use a large softbox to soften the light the shot will look more natural, but that doesn't have to mean spending lots of money on high-end flash systems; you can just as effectively use speedlights with modifiers to the same effect.

It's important that you find the right location to create this look, so make sure you try and pick somewhere with lots of windows, ideally no tungsten light and with light-coloured walls that will help to reflect the ambient and added light.

Inset Dull and unflattering

Shot using the available light this image is underexposed. The model's eyes look dark and her skin doesn't glow in the way it should for a commercial beauty portrait



1 Pick your location Choose a location indoors with plenty of natural light, but no harsh direct sunlight creating patches of light. Preferably near a window, where you can position yourself in front of it.



2 Use a large softbox Set up your off-camera flash using a large softbox, the bigger the better. The light should be positioned so that the flash comes from the same direction as the natural light.



3 Position your model Face the model towards the direction of the natural light entering the room. Place the part of them that will be in frame in the shadow or flat light, away from any direct sunlight.



4 Set camera Set your aperture to f5 or less, as this will give greater balance between ambient light and flash. Take a test shot and check the image is even but slightly underexposed on the model.



5 Add your flash You should only need to use a low power to create a well-exposed image. Check you are not overexposing the face or foreground, and that the light looks soft and balanced with the rest of the image.



6 Review exposure Natural light means constantly changing exposures as the sun dips behind clouds. Keep checking and alter the ISO and flash as required. Shooting on an overcast day can help minimise this.



AFTER

Naturally bright skin and eyes

Using flash adds a sparkle to her eyes and brightens up her skin, creating a well-exposed image with minimal shadows



BEFORE

2x©Hollywren.com





Use ND filters for flash

Create professional shallow depth-of-field effects, even in bright ambient light

Professional portrait photographers generally favour underexposing the ambient light by two stops or more whenever they are using off-camera flash for outdoor portraits.

However, this makes it very difficult to simultaneously achieve shallow depth of field, which is also often preferred. Underexposing the ambient light requires apertures of around f11 or smaller, so the background behind your model will be in reasonably clear focus.

Though ND filters are often associated more closely with landscape photography, professional portrait photographers and videographers often make use of them to enable wider apertures to be employed when the ambient light is bright.

The only thing you need to keep in mind is that the ND filter will also limit the effective power output of the speedlight, so you'll need to set it to a higher value and this will in turn cause the recycling time to increase. Fresh batteries will help with this, however.

If you'd like to apply this technique to your own photography, keep reading as we reveal the steps involved in the next few pages.

Left

Dramatic flash effects

Combining off-camera flash with a neutral density filter allows you to create images where the ambient light appears to be darker than the subject, even on a bright, sunny day

What you'll need

- DSLR
- ND filter
- Speedlight
- Wireless triggers
- Light stand
- Light modifier



Shooting steps

1 Switch to full manual mode

With your camera activated, start off by turning the Mode Dial to 'M' to activate the full manual shooting mode. Next, set the shutter speed to 1/100sec, the ISO to the lowest value (usually 100) and finally dial in the widest possible aperture value – for our lens, this was f2.8.

2 Setup your flashgun

You'll want to use your speedlight in its Manual mode, usually indicated with an 'M'. There's a good chance you'll end up on full power (1/1) in order to correctly expose your model, but start on half power (1/2) to see if that's sufficient.

3 Attach the triggers

To shoot wirelessly, you'll need a radio trigger unit for both the speedlight and the camera's hotshoe. You must ensure that both devices are set to the same group and frequency values or the system won't work. Take a test shot to check that everything fires correctly.

4 Set-up and position the flash

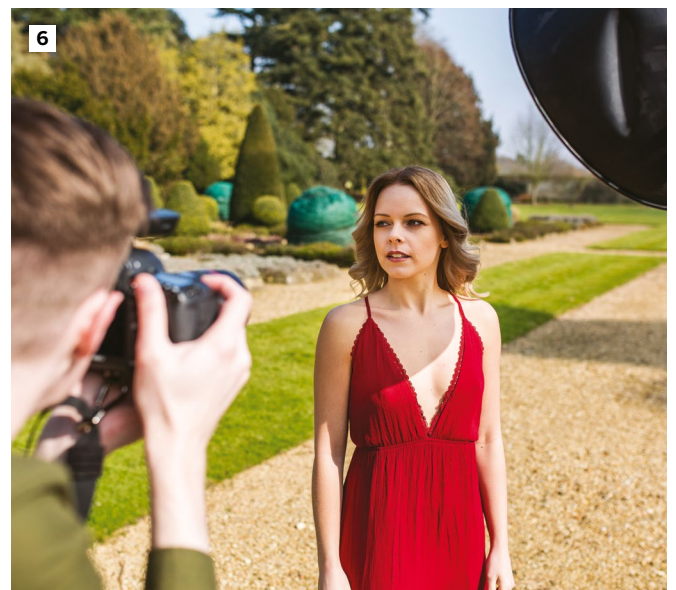
Secure the flashgun to the bracket on the lightstand. If you're using a modifier, attach this now. Having the speedlight near your subject makes it more efficient in terms of power and makes the light softer, but don't get it too close or it may be visible in your images.

5 Pre-focus the portrait

If you are using a stronger ND filter, composition and focusing may be difficult to do once it's been attached. If so, frame the portrait and focus on your subject's face beforehand. Be careful not to move position, switch the lens over to MF and then attach the ND filter.

6 Take some shots

Review your initial results using the LCD screen on the back of the camera. If they're too dark, either move the flash closer to your model or increase the power of the flash. Another option is to increase the ISO sensitivity to 200 or higher. Carefully review the focus, too.





The setup

OFF-CAMERA FLASH
In order to light our model, we fired a flashgun off-camera using a set of wireless radio triggers.

SHOOT LONG
To ensure the background was thrown out of focus and into an attractive blur, we shot with a 70mm lens set to f2.8.

NOTE THE SUN'S POSITION
Shooting directly into the Sun is likely to prove challenging from a flare and exposure point of view, while if it's behind you the model will be squinting. Having the Sun slightly to either side of you is ideal.

Use a modifier

For that professional studio-style lighting, a light modifier is essential

If you're serious about achieving pro-quality lighting effects then investing in a light modifier for your off-camera flash setup is an absolute must. A light modifier allows you to soften the light generated by the flash and create a much more pleasing light with less harsh shadows.

Modifiers come in a host of shapes and sizes, including photographic umbrellas, softboxes and beauty dishes. For this tutorial, we opted for a beauty dish as it's perfectly designed for portrait headshots and is a great way of creating a softer, directional light. It's worth bearing in mind that in order to start shooting with a light modifier you may need to invest in a flash bracket that offers support for the attachment of a light modifier.



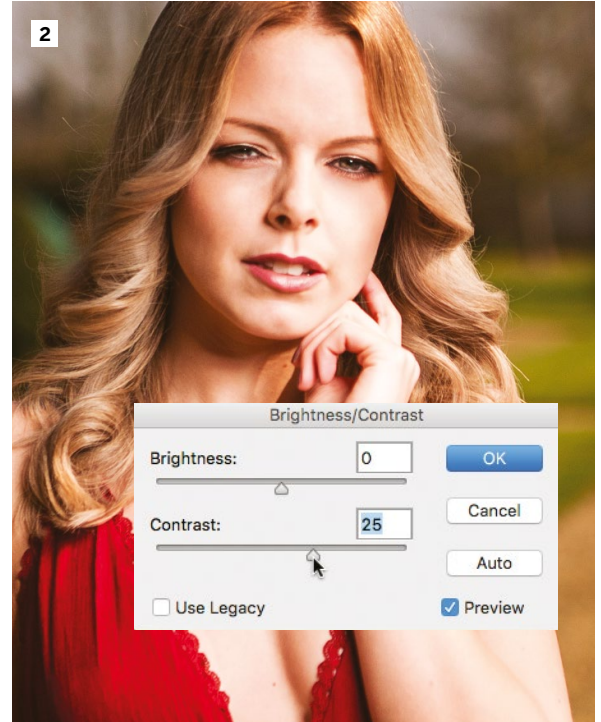


Editing steps

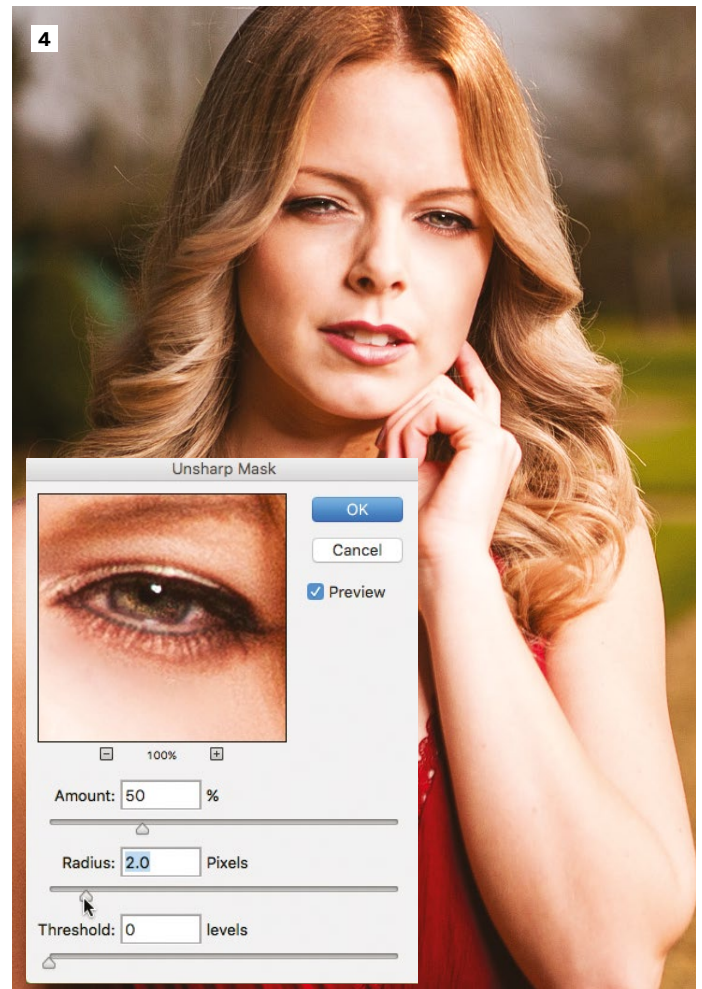
1 Remove blemishes With your image opened in Photoshop, grab the Spot Healing Brush tool from the toolbox and with a soft-edged brush carefully brush over any spots or blemishes on the model's skin to swiftly remove them.

2 Boost the contrast Head up to Image>Adjustments>Brightness/Contrast and in the window that appears, increase the Contrast slider to a value of around 25 to give it a boost. Click OK to confirm the changes.

3 Brighten the eyes Grab the Dodge tool from the toolbox, then at the top of the screen set the Range to Highlights and the Exposure to around 5%. Now, gently brush over the model's eyes to brighten them.



“Grab the Spot Healing Brush tool [and] carefully brush over any spots or blemishes”





4 Sharpen and finish

Go up to Filter > Sharpen > Unsharp Mask. In the window, start off by setting the Amount to 50%, followed by the Radius to 2.0 pixel. Leave the Threshold at 0 Levels, but adjust this to suit the image.

Below

The final portrait

After a few simple adjustments in Photoshop, our image has been successfully cleaned up, sharpened and is now bursting with colour and contrast





Shoot food in the studio with flash

Follow our simple guide to shooting and editing an enticing food image with the help of flash

Difficulty level: Intermediate/Expert

Time taken: 6 hours

In this tutorial we're going to explain how to shoot luxury chocolates in the studio, using flash.

The most important part of a food shoot is deciding on the styling and concept of the image/project. This includes considering the composition of the shot, the overall feel and mood to be created with the lighting, and the styling and timings when you add in the food. Chocolates are quite small and they will melt easily, so it can be tricky to arrange them well. It is also worth thinking about what props you might want to use to complement the finished

food. After these decisions have been made, you need to set up the studio. Using flash in food photography is really useful because it means there isn't a continuous (hot) light source pointing at your subject, which could potentially cause the food to wilt, melt or generally deteriorate – something you don't want in your beautiful imagery! That said, with LED technology you could easily work with a constant light source if you find flash tricky. We used four separate light sources in this shoot to achieve the finished piece, with each light adding something to the final image.

What you'll need

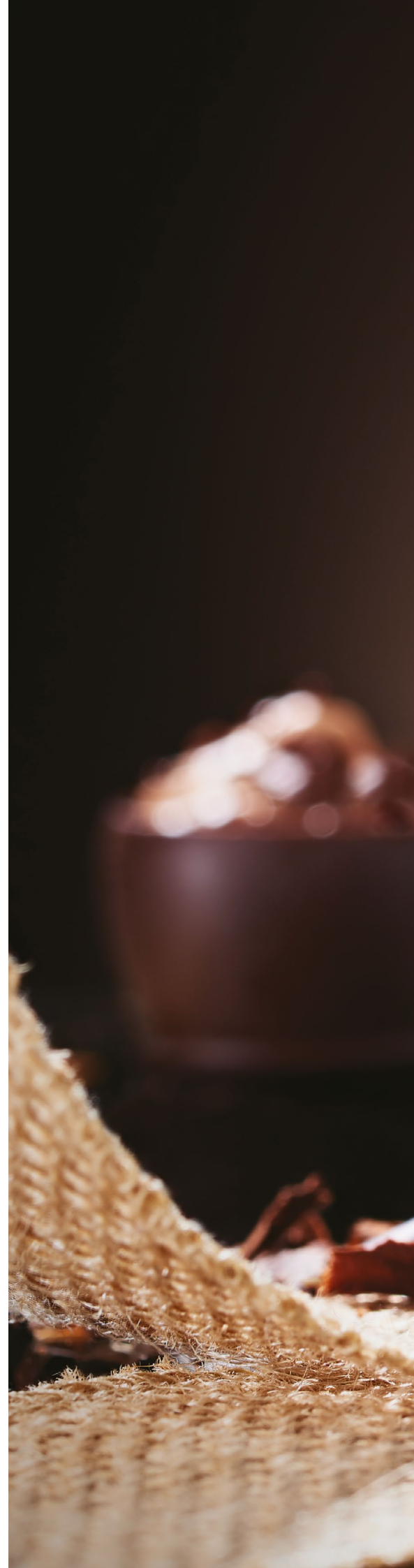
- 📷 Camera.
- 📷 85mm tilt-shift lens or similar.
- 📷 Capture One or similar.
- 📷 Tripod or studio stand.
- 📷 2 flash heads with strip light boxes.
- 📷 Flash head with snoot.
- 📷 Fresnel for backlighting.
- 📷 Diffusion panel (e.g. tracing paper or Perspex).
- 📷 Lots of stands.
- 📷 Choice of material for base (e.g. marble).
- 📷 Brown card for background.
- 📷 Selection of chocolates.
- 📷 Items for propping (e.g. chocolate shavings, ribbon).
- 📷 Photoshop.

Right

Luxury chocolate stack

A selection of luxury chocolates photographed with studio flash. Styled using hessian ribbon, veined marble and chocolate shavings to give extra interest

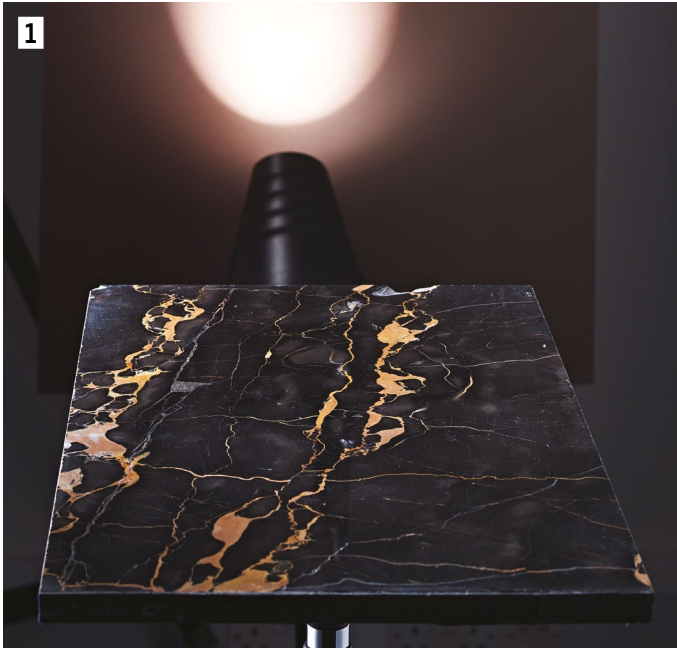
© Double Exposure Photographic







Shooting steps



Food stylists

Enlist the help of a food stylist or home economist

Although we didn't use a food stylist for this shoot, we strongly recommend doing so because they will have the expertise to know what looks good very quickly, leaving you to concentrate on the camera, lenses and lighting. Typically a stylist will be in charge of shopping and prepping for a shoot, which means they will be able to pick the best-looking food for you. They will also have lots of tricks to make the food look as appealing and delicious as possible. For example, a food stylist might use a toothpick to help stack the chocolates and keep them in position, or cut items and arrange them in a very structured and harmonious style. If the budget allows, try to get a home economist onboard – they will prepare recipes and cook the dishes for larger projects!





1 Choose a base and background

This first decision can be a little tricky, as you need to choose something that mirrors the atmosphere you want to create in the image. Marble would be ideal for something luxurious, whereas weathered wood might work well for a rustic approach. Here we chose black marble with gold veining, a real showstopper from our local stonemason!

2 Select any props

Keep it simple. You don't want to use too many props in an image like this because it is all about the chocolates. Since chocolates are small in size you want to choose props that won't be too imposing within the frame; you want the chocolates to be the hero. Think about complementary props and check your colours work together!

3 Preparation before the shoot

Ample preparation is key in a shoot like this. You need to make sure you have everything you need before you start, as this will really slow you down otherwise. Make sure you have spares for any chocolates (or other food) you plan to use – it's likely you'll want a few attempts at the composition and styling. Fingerprints are an issue as the chocolate melts, so having spares means you can swap them in.

4 Composition

Take your time on this step, as you want to make sure you get it right. Choose the camera angle carefully, keeping in mind that you want the chocolates to be the main attraction. The positioning of the chocolates can be difficult, so try moving one piece at a time and taking a shot in between to critique the adjustment.

5 Set up the lighting

Place your lights and make a test shot. You can change the power as you wish and keep moving them until they are in the right positions. The power settings and positioning will make all the difference here. You're looking for a main light source, fill that complements that light, a rim light and then something in the background. Don't be afraid to add a final light in later to pick out a detail if the shot needs it.

6 Add the finishing touches

Now it's the time to apply any final touches. Any chocolate shavings can be added now as they will lose their shape and potentially melt if you don't work quickly. We also take multiple images with light in different areas at this stage, which we can later composite together in Photoshop – just make sure that you don't move the camera between the shots!

The setup

BACKGROUND LIGHTS

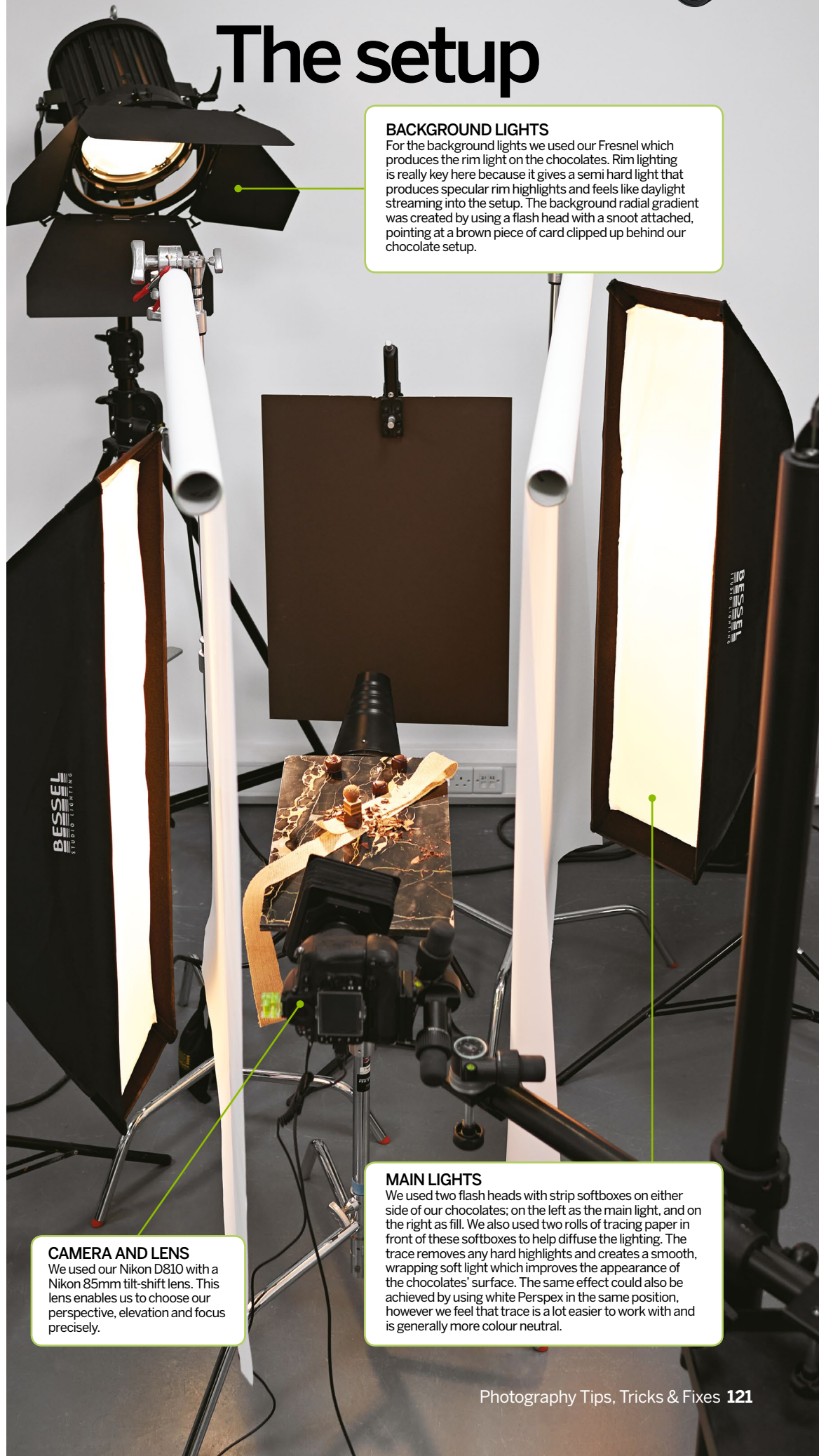
For the background lights we used our Fresnel which produces the rim light on the chocolates. Rim lighting is really key here because it gives a semi hard light that produces specular rim highlights and feels like daylight streaming into the setup. The background radial gradient was created by using a flash head with a snoot attached, pointing at a brown piece of card clipped up behind our chocolate setup.

CAMERA AND LENS

We used our Nikon D810 with a Nikon 85mm tilt-shift lens. This lens enables us to choose our perspective, elevation and focus precisely.

MAIN LIGHTS

We used two flash heads with strip softboxes on either side of our chocolates; on the left as the main light, and on the right as fill. We also used two rolls of tracing paper in front of these softboxes to help diffuse the lighting. The trace removes any hard highlights and creates a smooth, wrapping soft light which improves the appearance of the chocolates' surface. The same effect could also be achieved by using white Perspex in the same position, however we feel that trace is a lot easier to work with and is generally more colour neutral.

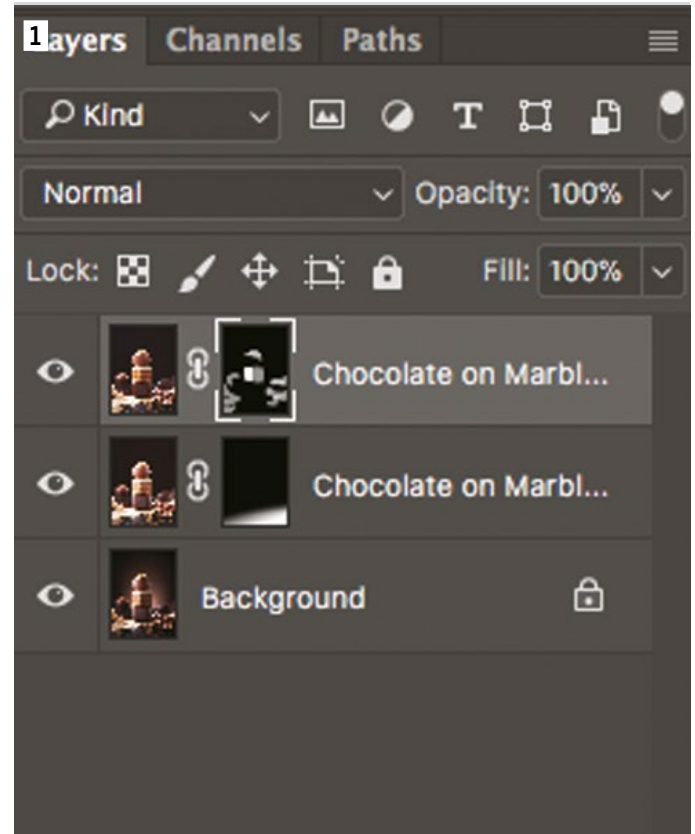


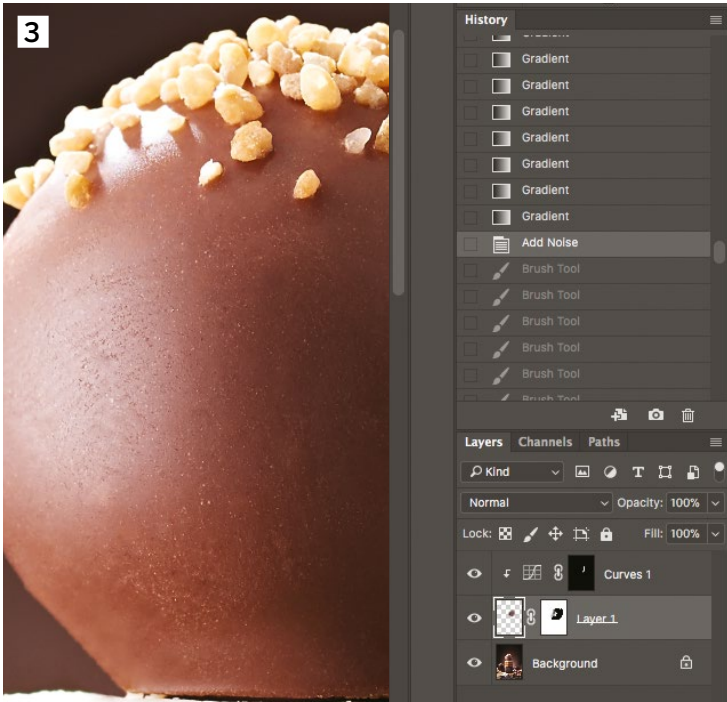
Edit the shot

1 Layers in Photoshop We load our photos into layers in Photoshop, with the main image at the bottom. This way we can use masking to brush through the areas that we want to see.

2 Spot retouching Remove any specs of dust, fingerprints or general blemishes from the chocolates using the Clone Stamp Tool or Spot Healing Brush Tool. Overuse of these tools, however, will cause the image to look mushy and lose detail. The base and background will probably also need some work too.

“Remove any specs of dust, fingerprints or general blemishes using the Clone Stamp Tool”



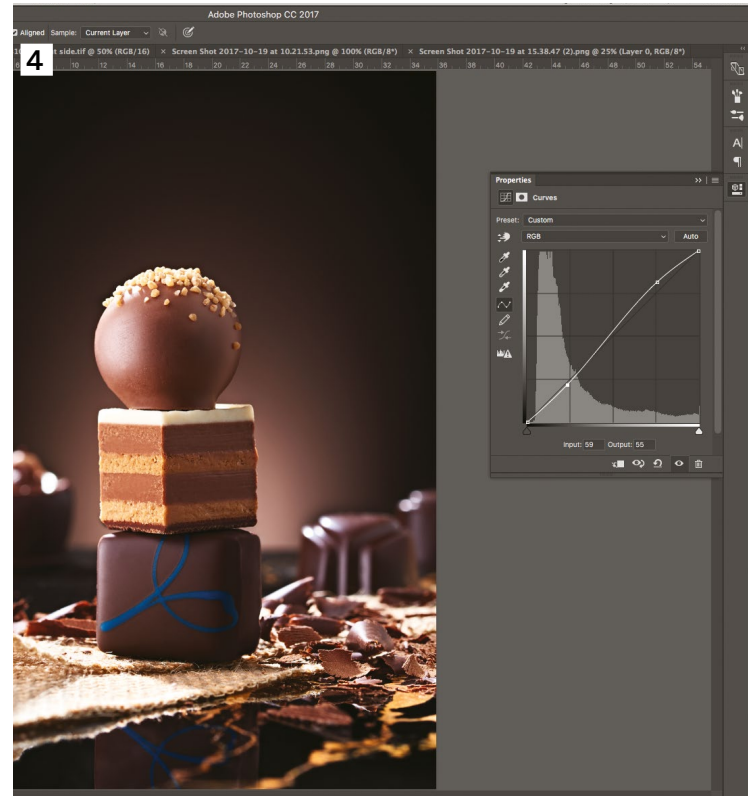


3 Fixing and airbrushing On the top chocolate we picked a colour from its edge and used the radial gradient tool to add in some colour where needed. Choosing multiple areas of colour will make it look more realistic, then you can mask out any areas that you don't need. Remember to add noise to the gradient in order to avoid banding.

Below Editing steps

Once we're happy with what we have shot, we then export images from Capture One to Photoshop for some final retouching and airbrushing

4 Adjustment layers You may want to desaturate some areas, like any areas of black that might be slightly coloured. To do this add a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer and take down the Saturation slider. Brush it off areas using the mask. Adding a Curves layer will exaggerate the contrast.





Master the Moon

Capture amazing images by attaching your DSLR to a reflector telescope

This is one of the most popular subjects in night photography – the Moon is beautiful to look at but also very challenging to capture in a photo. Anyone with a long zoom lens or a point-and-shoot camera can get a decent photo, but it most likely will not have the same impact as an image with detailed texture of the Moon’s surface without any further processing. By using the wrong camera settings, poor focus or an unsteady tripod, the result will be a photo that may look right at first sight, but upon zooming in the errors will become evident. The longer the focal length, the more attention is needed in order to get a sharp photo. The method that you will learn here uses a T-ring adaptor coupled with a DSLR camera and a reflector telescope. This method produces stunning photos of the Moon that are rich in detail, and at a very low cost. For this example, a Sky-Watcher Newtonian telescope with a focal length of 650mm has been used, along

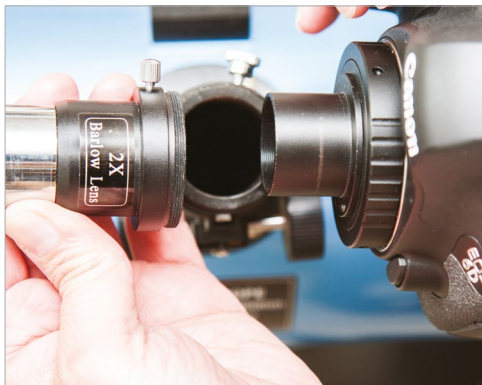
with a 2x Barlow lens that came with the kit. The total magnification is similar to a 1,300mm zoom lens (it also depends of the length of the T-ring). The camera settings are also applicable when using a zoom lens.



BEFORE

Poor focus

Shooting speed is correct but the focus is poor. At first glance the photo looks decent, but is not sharp enough to keep detail when zoomed in



1 Prepare the camera Attach one end of the T-ring to the camera and the smaller end to the Barlow lens of the telescope. Use the extension tube of the T-ring if you require bigger magnification.



2 Place camera in telescope In order to reduce vibration due to the wind, the camera strap must not be hanging freely. Tidy up the strap around the telescope or remove it completely. Ensure the telescope is in balance.



FINAL IMAGE

Up close and personal

This final image is rich in texture; the surface detail invites the viewer to explore the lunar landscape. Apply the techniques to get the same results



3 Alter settings Select mirror lock-up and set the timer to ten seconds even if you have a remote release. Select Manual mode and an initial shutter speed of 1/180 sec and ISO 800 for a half Moon.



4 Point telescope at the Moon Use the viewfinder or Live View to centre the Moon in the frame. In Live View, set the camera to one of the automatic modes like Aperture Priority, so the Moon will show in the display.



5 Get in focus In Live View, magnify the image to the maximum allowed. Find lunar features (like craters) in parts far from the centre of the Moon to help with the focus. It may take a few attempts to get this right.



6 Shoot away Switch back to Manual mode and recompose the Moon in the frame. Play with the shutter speed and ISO for the right exposure. Try to never go below 1/120 sec. If the Moon does not fit in the frame, take a panorama.



Creative high-speed photography

Capture product images using the TriggerSmart and speedlights

In this tutorial you will discover how to drop an aftershave bottle through a pane of glass and freeze the motion just after it hits with some high-speed flash. The most important thing when making an image like this is imagination – don't even touch your camera until you have a clear idea in your head of how you want your image to look. After that, it's all in the setup. If you're going to make a mess, start with a clear studio, then put some things in place in order to protect your floor, walls, camera kit and so on. You'll be grateful you did later, and if you are going to break glass do take it seriously and be careful not to injure yourself. This tutorial demonstrates the use of speedlights to show that you can achieve high-speed shots using fairly everyday kit.

In terms of studio lighting, there are lots of options on the market that are capable of freezing motion and PocketWizard can help you sync to older, slightly slower lights, too. There are lots of options and a bit of research online will help you to understand flash duration and high-speed sync.

Right Aftershave glass smash

Shot using speedlights. The rear light accentuates the opacity of the bottle and there's a cool white balance to complement the glass and liquid

What you'll need

- Camera
- Lens
- Tripod or studio stand
- 3x speedlights
- Wireless transmitter
- Wireless receivers for the flashes
- TriggerSmart unit
- Diffusion panel, paper or Perspex
- Lots of stands
- Glass panes
- Bottle of aftershave
- Plastic sheets for floor
- Stepladder





Shooting steps

1 Roughly frame your shot

Although the image you want to make will happen in a split second, you will roughly know where the action is going to take place. Clamp up a sheet of glass and put the product on it. After choosing our camera and lens combo, we could frame the shot up and move the background and lights into place.

2 Get your lights in place Set up and take a test shot. From here you can turn the lights up or down in power, change their position and sort out any syncing issues. You'll notice the two off-camera flashes are being triggered with wireless receivers.

3 Time it right The TriggerSmart will fire your camera or an auxiliary device (a flash, for example). It can do this in three different ways: using a sensor for light intensity, a sensor for sound intensity or using both sensors to create an infrared beam which triggers when the beam is broken.

4 Measure twice, cut once! Here is the sound sensor connected to the TriggerSmart. This is close to the action and will be really sensitive to the sound of the smashing glass, which will trigger the flashes. Make sure you know what setting you have dialled into the TriggerSmart and your camera.

5 Get smashing Your studio needs to be pitch black so that when your shutter is open nothing will expose. We fired our camera and quickly dropped our bottle. Once the sensor picked up the sound it sent a signal to the TriggerSmart, which sent a signal to the PocketWizard that fired the speedlights.

6 Clean up in the studio This is where that early prep really pays off! The cleaning up is really quick if you can simply whip it up. You can also see we laid down some fabric and polystyrene – this was to soften the blow for the bottle, which did still take a few knocks but not nearly the damage a concrete floor would have!





The setup

FLASH 2, FLASH 3, POCKETWIZARDS AND PERSPEX

Here we have two stands with super clamps to hold a pane of glass, and above that is our main light. It's just behind where we were anticipating the bottle to drop, so it was out of the way but also added contrast. A PocketWizard receiver is attached to that. At the back we have clamped up a large Perspex sheet that has another speedlight behind it, creating backlight in a nicely controlled spot.

TRIGGERSMART, LADDER, PROTECTION

Next to the glass there's a stepladder to enable sufficient height on the drop to smash the glass. On the white table you can see the TriggerSmart unit, which will trigger the lights once the bottle hits the glass. On the left side you'll notice that there is a large diffuser panel. There's no light behind it but it's doing two jobs: firstly, it's bouncing some light back in and cleaning up some reflections in the glass, and secondly it's acting as a shield and preventing some glass spreading into the studio. You can see that there is some plastic and cushioning down, but after just a few test drops the glass is spreading out.

CAMERA, LENS AND FIRST FLASH

We have a Nikon D810 with a Nikon 85mm t/s lens, which is a staple for product work in our studio. We have a Nikon flash on top of that, which enabled us to push a little light into the front of the image.

The TriggerSmart

Time it right and get the shot you want every time

Timing is always important when it comes to photography, but when you're dropping an aftershave bottle from a metre and a half onto a pane of glass, the bottle and the newly formed glass fragments aren't hanging around waiting for you to press the shutter! Once you're set up you can play with the sensitivity of the sensors and the delay of the trigger whether you're firing a camera or flash. When your happy with the settings the unit is really reliable, but test it and be sure you're happy before breaking anything.



Editing steps

1 Edit levels and white balance

In Capture One, start by tweaking the contrast, clarity and white balance. This image really lends itself to a contrasty feel, and we're also running the white balance around 1,000 Kelvin cooler than white to create a modern, sophisticated look.

2 Tidy up the product

The aftershave needs to be the star of the show. Spot retouch anything off of the bottle that detracts – dust, glass, fingerprints and so on. If the glass is flying

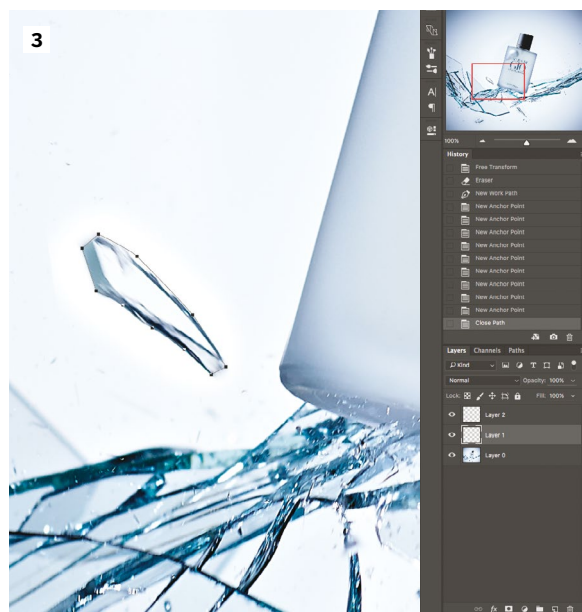




over it and looks purposeful then leave it there; it's nice to keep some reality, which is why the air bubbles inside the bottle have been kept.

3 Add more shards Adding a few extra pieces of glass to enhance the shape of the break can be nice. You can't influence how the pane will break, but you can use the Pen tool to clip a few shards and move them around.

4 Sharpen the glass Some extra sharpening was added to the glass to give it a bit more presence. Photoshop has lots of sharpening options to experiment with, but the Unsharp Mask did the trick here.





Create captivating cinematic effects

Learn how to inject detail and drama into your images using the Develop module in Lightroom

Cinematic' can mean many different things, but here you will learn how to create a dramatic, high-contrast result. We have to look to Lightroom's detail and colour adjustments to create this faded yet crisp dramatic style.

On the one hand you want to avoid losing detail, but on the other hand you want to create a subtle softness that reduces the appearance of an image fresh out of the camera. To do this, you can combine adjustments such as Dehaze and Clarity, and then Sharpness, to give you a good starting point. It's about keeping colours bright without applying too much saturation, because this type of effect is not so much about drawing

attention to colour, but more about making the action a focal point.



© <https://pixabay.com/en/bike-motocross-speed-outdoors-1164927/>

Above Action shots

This effect works great with outdoor action shots that feature overcast skies, interesting colour and movement



1 Tweak exposure Load up your image into Lightroom and head to the Develop module. Under the Basic tab, boost up the Exposure slider to +0.44 and Contrast to +53 to increase the overall brightness and impact.



2 Expose the detail To control the brighter regions, reduce the Highlights slider to -55. Set Shadows to +46, Whites to +40 and Blacks to -17. This will create a certain amount contrast and add detail to midtones.



3 Colour and clarity In order to boost the detail further, increase the Clarity slider up to +70, Vibrance to -28 and Saturation to +9. This will help give a cinematic appeal to the overall image.



4 Vignette for impact Inside the Effects section of the Develop module, add a vignette by setting the Amount slider to -20 under Post-Crop Vignetting. The options can be altered to reshape the vignette if desired.



5 Dehaze for depth The Dehaze slider gives this effect further strength by boosting it up to +22. Going too high with this slider will reduce the shadows to a solid black. Going in the opposite direction will add a mist effect.



AFTER

Cinematic appeal

Using colour and contrast adjustments, and Lightroom's Detail and Effects options, you can really bring the subject alive



6 Sharpen up To add a dose of sharpness, head to the Detail tab, slide Amount to 41 and then set Radius to 1. Set Detail to 15. The image should appear sharper and more refined as a result.



7 Adjust details Under Noise Reduction, set Luminance to 43, Detail to 73 and Contrast to 25. To smooth out any colour distortion, slide Color to 23, Detail to 50 and Smoothness to 75.



8 Colour corrections If a particular colour is overpowering, such as the greens or the yellows, go into the HSL section and reduce the Saturation of the colours down to between -30 and -40. This helps create a cinematic style.

Fixes

Follow these simple tutorials to improve and enhance your problem photos

- 136** Perfect your processing
- 148** Intensify specific tones in Lightroom
- 150** Use clipping warnings in Lightroom
- 152** Colour correction in Lightroom
- 154** Enhance portraits in Lightroom
- 156** Retouch mature skin
- 158** Use High Pass skin softening

- 160** Rescue shiny skin
- 162** Banish blotchy skin tones
- 164** Control colour with Camera Raw
- 166** Use Content-Aware cloning in Photoshop
- 168** Edit with clipping masks in Photoshop
- 170** Create a tilt-shift effect
- 172** Add a sky with more drama



Add drama
Turn your landscapes
into something special

TOP TIPS

- ✓ Retouch skin
- ✓ Enhance your favourite portraits
- ✓ Enrich skies
- ✓ Intensify tones

Boost colour

Bring out the best in your images with our top tips

154



170

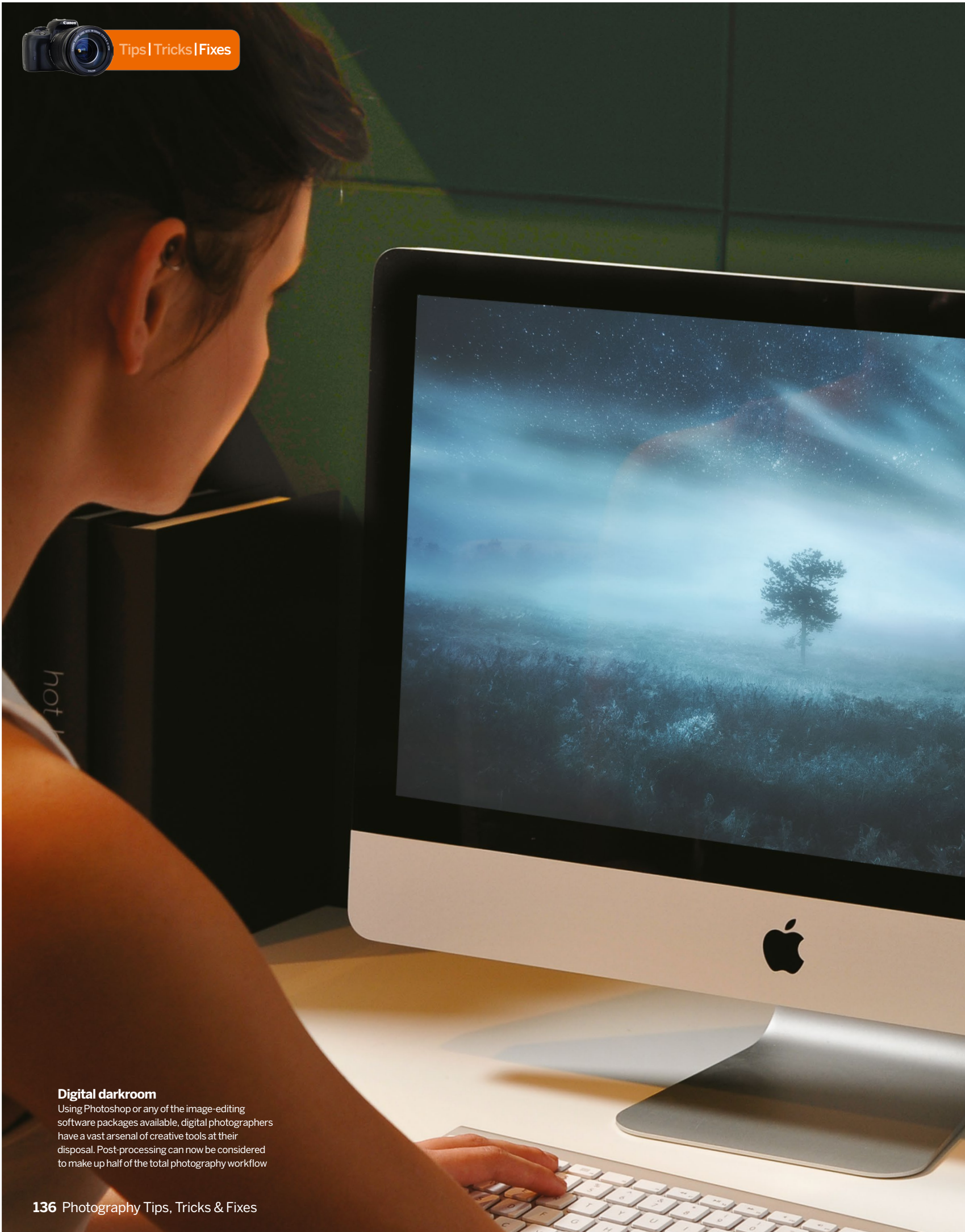


162



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Digital darkroom

Using Photoshop or any of the image-editing software packages available, digital photographers have a vast arsenal of creative tools at their disposal. Post-processing can now be considered to make up half of the total photography workflow



Perfect your PROCESSING

There is a photo-editing application to suit every photographer. Learn to get more from yours

Post-processing of images has become an essential part of the digital photographer's workflow. There are a vast array of photo-editing software packages available, from highly simplified programs for beginners, to high-end specialised tools used by professional photographers and retouchers. Of these options, some clearly lead in terms of popularity and number of users. While choice is often attractive, it can be daunting when it comes to choosing a package to start with and because of the sophistication and variety of tools found in the professional software, it is possible to be left feeling a little overwhelmed. In this guide, we will cover all of the key areas of post-processing in an effort to help you build a structured and effective workflow, from the essential

adjustments such as exposure control and contrast, through colour correction and on to effective image database organisation. Then, once you are confident with the baseline editing techniques we will move on to those 'tricks of the trade' that will make your shots stand out from the crowd, including noise control, next-level sharpening policy and professional-grade RAW file handling. This will give you the confidence to work with any of the most-used software and more importantly, teach you how to make the most of the powerful features at your disposal, without the danger of taking things too far and potentially jeopardising the quality through over-editing.





Why process your images?

The key reasons for editing and how it fits with your workflow

While digital camera technology is constantly improving, people's perception of image quality evolves in equal measure – even non-photographers are now able to recognise when a shot has been 'Photoshopped' and are even aware of when an editing technique has failed. It is therefore vital that photographers recognise the need to develop their post-processing skills, so that they have a rounded skill set and are able to produce quality images in-camera and intelligently process these files with an end product in mind.

In most cases we will start our image editing with basic adjustments such as brightness and contrast, simple colour correction and sharpening. These are often referred to as 'essential' adjustments, since errors in these areas are the most noticeable if left uncorrected and should be applied to every digital image as standard. Beyond these, most software offer tools to precisely control colour via colour profiles, remove unwanted lens distortions and apply localised edits, which affect only part of an image. Next you might consider using a third-party plug-in – 'satellite' software which can apply further bespoke effects and correct highly specific technical defects. These are optional edits and some of the effects they provide can be created manually, however they are often very powerful and offer great advantages in speed and versatility.

BEFORE



© Peter Carr



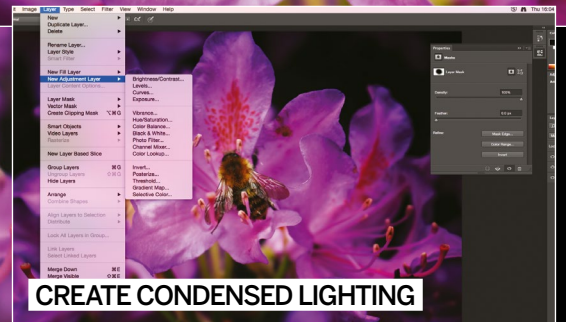
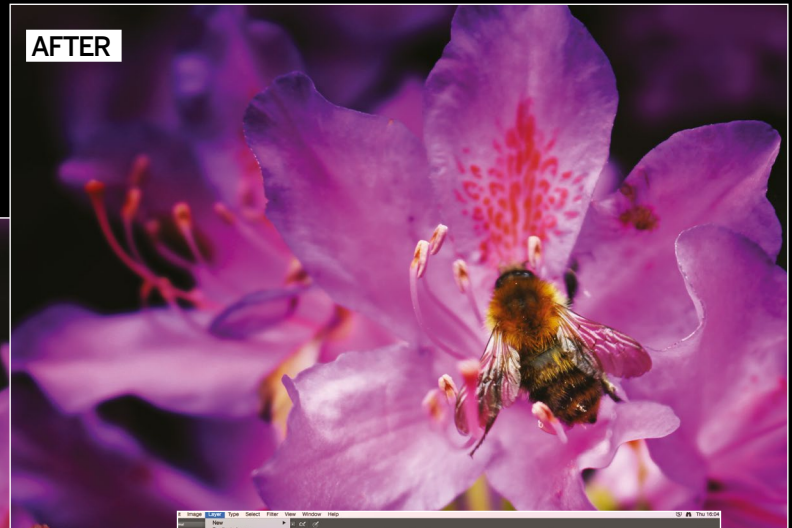
ADJUST GLOBAL CONTRAST

Above
Dramatic sunset
While composition is good, the original image lacked contrast and colours are not vibrant enough. With some careful exposure and contrast adjustments, this scene now shows its full, colourful potential

Below
Washed out

Lighting was too uniform in this macro shot. With a crop, curves adjustment and a layer mask, the eye is now drawn to the insect

AFTER



CREATE CONDENSED LIGHTING

BEFORE





AFTER



Adjustment versus manipulation

Image editing has long been steeped in controversy, but is it justified?

There can come a point where more of an image is created in software than in-camera. For some genres like photojournalism, this raises moral questions regarding authenticity, while some argue this is more digital art than photography. However, there is a distinction between adjusting and manipulating an image – creativity should never be discouraged.

Photographer Vladimir Kochkin says, "Photoshop is only one of the photographer's tools – if you opened a photo on a computer, analysed and decided that processing is not required, that means so be it. If you think that the treatment is needed, then it should be imperceptible to the viewer."

Right At the extremes

Sometimes creative use of effects produces images that are more impactful than those treated with 'safe' editing techniques. Here, Ronny Garcia wanted to create a surreal scene with a fairytale look



© Ronny Garcia



Correct your contrast

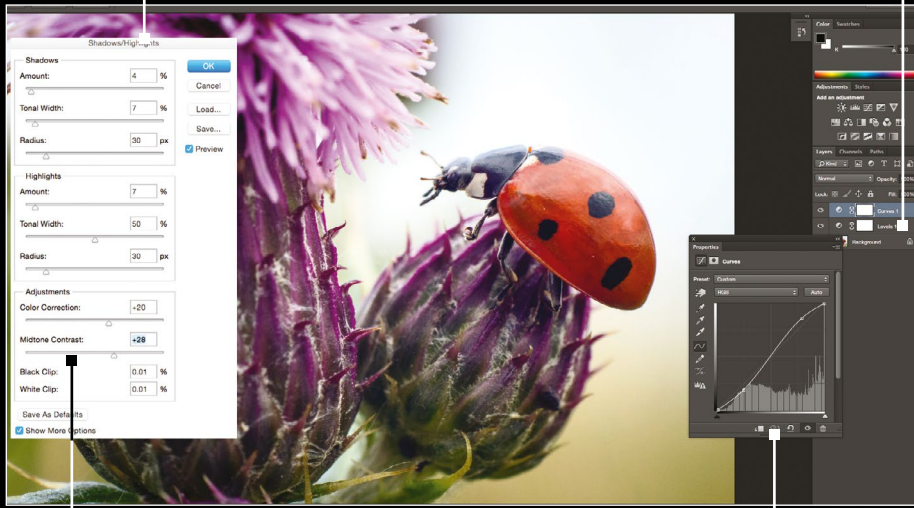
Contrast determines depth and mood in an image – highly important for drama in a two-dimensional photograph

SHADOWS/HIGHLIGHTS

Similar to Lightroom, these sliders in Photoshop can lift shadows and darken hotspots. Tonal Range dictates which tones are affected.

ADJUST LEVELS

More versatile than Brightness and Contrast, pull the input sliders until they touch the histogram for a quick contrast boost.



MICRO CONTRAST EXPLAINED

Global contrast is the difference between brightest highlights and darkest shadows. Micro contrast defines detail, controlled by Midtone Contrast here.

ADJUST CURVES

Highly powerful, Curves allow precise tonal edits. A classic S-shaped curve boosts contrast, while the centre adjusts the midtones.

Control exposure and contrast

Brightness and contrast control can really make or break an image

It is desirable to achieve an accurate exposure at the shooting stage, as this minimises post-processing work and generally reduces the chance of software-induced artefacts like image noise and banding. It also encourages the photographer to be mindful of overexposure and loss of highlight detail, which cannot be recovered at the computer. It is almost always necessary to tweak exposure and contrast, however – contrast is often lacking in out-of-camera shots, while an image that looked accurate on a 3.5-inch LCD screen may seem slightly too bright or dark when enlarged. Furthermore, an 'accurate' shot – one that produces a perfect histogram and ticks all of the technical boxes – may not be the most punchy and attractive image possible; correct does not always mean exciting or dramatic. There are multiple ways of making these edits and often you'll find two or three methods in any given software application, from simple work with the Brightness/Contrast control in Photoshop, to complex Curves adjustments in Capture One and advanced work in Lightroom using the Shadows, Highlights, Whites and Blacks sliders. In addition to this, it is possible to use tools such as the Brush and Gradient tools in Camera Raw/Lightroom and layer masks in Photoshop to perform local adjustments, thereby solving problems or enhancing an isolated image area. This is a vital stage as often an effect applied globally can spoil areas that do not benefit from that change.

Professional photographers often shoot in RAW format, as these files contain all of the image data captured by your camera's sensor. So, unlike JPEGs, which are compressed files, more editing can be carried out before quality begins to suffer. While Photoshop offers more tools for fine retouching work, RAW processing applications now offer enough tools to perform most of your workflow on your RAW files, the other benefit being that this style of editing is non-destructive. This means it is possible to revisit an image at any time and easily alter the exposure again, without degradation.

Whatever software package you use, an appropriate exposure and contrast will define the success of your image.

Achieve a perfect exposure

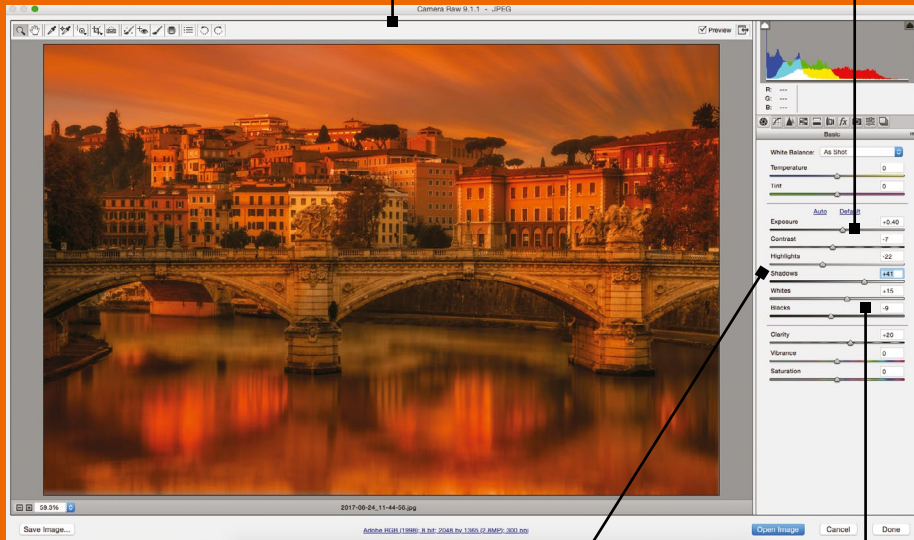
Adobe Camera Raw is a versatile RAW editor, capable of making essential edits to exposure

FAMILIAR LAYOUT

Both Lightroom and Camera Raw share sliders for adjusting exposure and contrast, with both creating similar 'looks'.

EXPOSURE SLIDER

This simple slider adjusts overall brightness, useful for minor changes for the sake of atmosphere or quick exposure fixes.

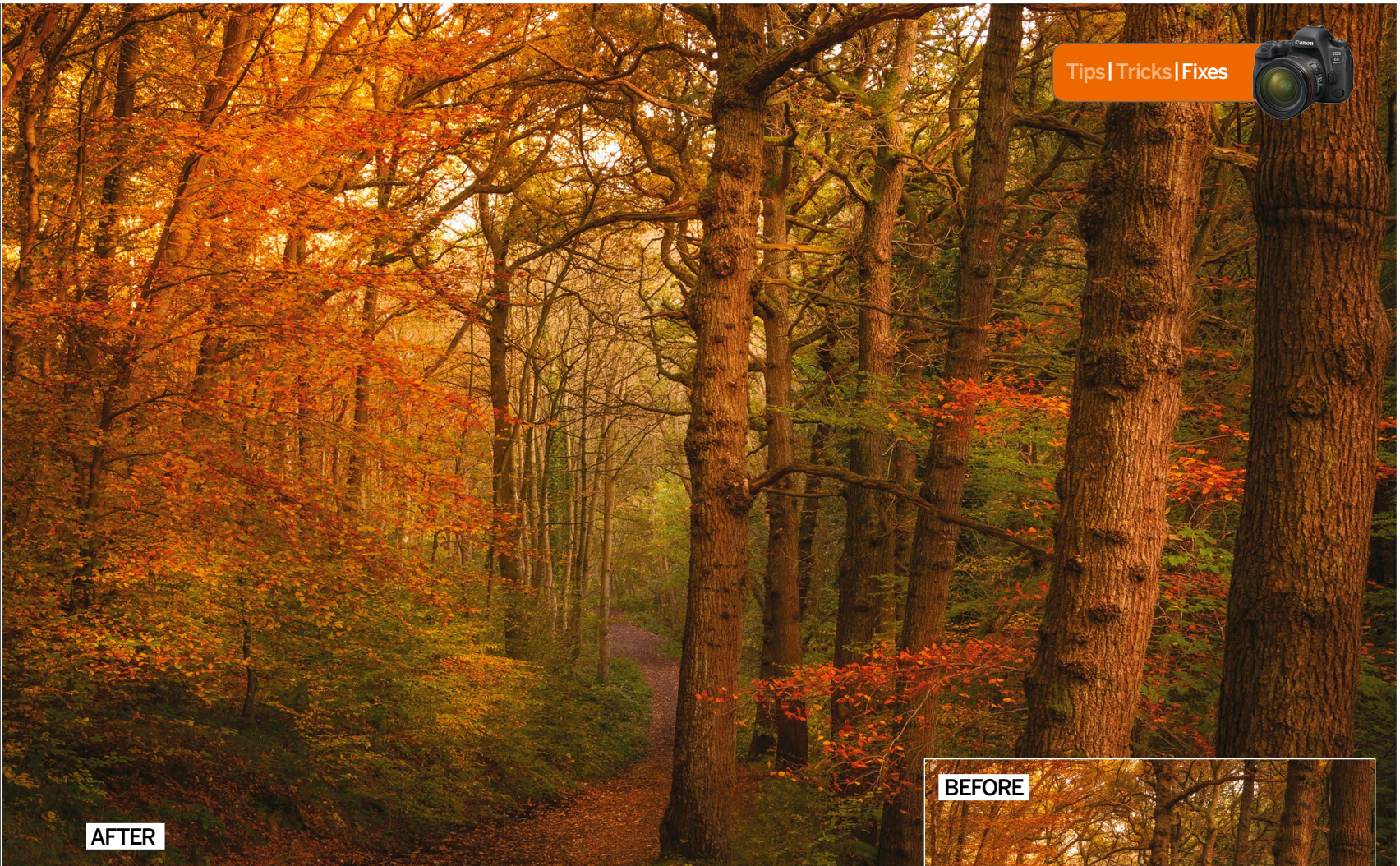


HIGHLIGHTS AND SHADOWS

Detail is revealed in overexposed areas by dragging Highlights to the left. Drag Shadows to the right to lift dark areas.

WHITES AND BLACKS

Use these to set Black and White points – areas of true black and white that ensure a full tonal range.



AFTER



BEFORE

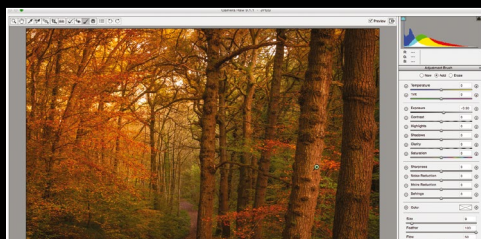
Why local adjustments matter

Make your editing more precise with adjustments to exposure and contrast

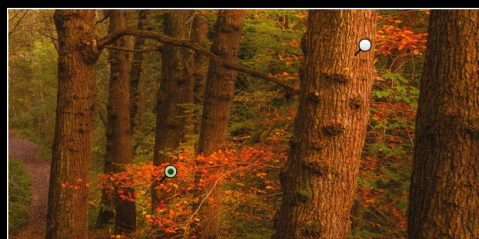
Global adjustments enable us to correct major image-wide issues, but in many cases you'll want to look closer at individual areas that might be lowering the shot's overall impact.

In this image the overall exposure is good, but there are some small shadow areas that need brightening and the scene would benefit from some localised lighting effects to add depth.

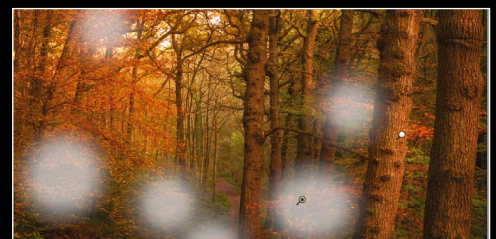
© Peter Fenech



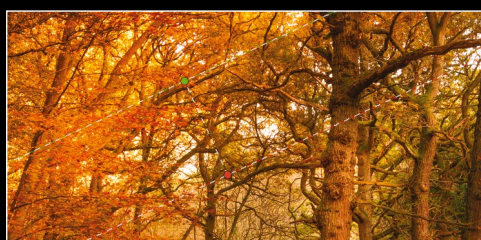
1 Open in Camera Raw Try to perform as many adjustments as possible on your RAW files to future-proof your editing decisions. Capture One also works in a similar way.



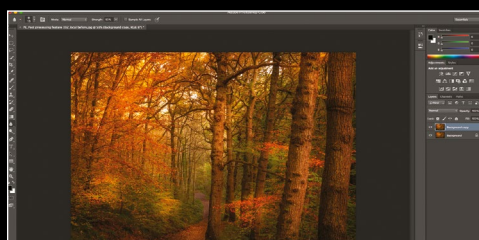
2 Use Adjustment Brush (K) Available in both Camera Raw and Lightroom, drag the exposure slider to the right a little and paint with the brush in areas you want to brighten.



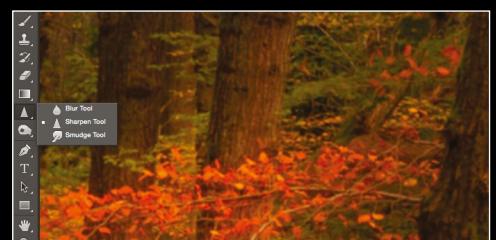
3 Check your adjustments Tick the Show Mask box to see if you've spilled over into other areas of the image. Select a pin and click Erase to undo brush strokes.



4 Use Gradient tool (G) The top left of the scene needed a little added exposure and warmth. The Gradient Tool was selected and a gradient drawn down over the area.



5 Finish in Photoshop You will often find it necessary to move into Photoshop for more complex edits. Working on a duplicate layer maintains a non-destructive workflow.

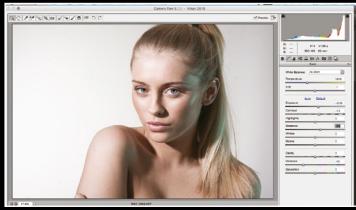


6 Apply local sharpening The edges of the frame are slightly soft. On a duplicate background layer, use the Sharpen Tool to extract detail.

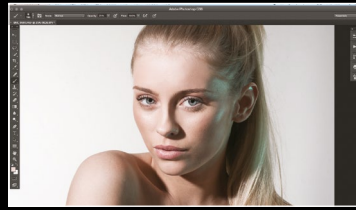


Advanced portrait post-processing

Photographer Adrian Dewey guides us through the processing of one of his portraits



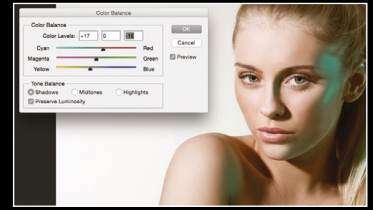
1 Camera Raw The first stage of my editing process is to open the image in Adobe Camera Raw and make the initial changes. Using the simple sliders I have altered the exposure, shadows, contrast and vibrance.



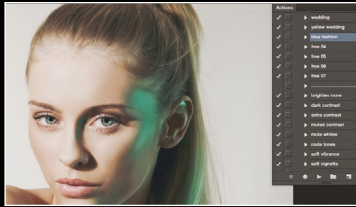
2 Open in Photoshop Next I will open in Adobe Photoshop (CS6 on my MacBook, or CC on studio Mac) and using the Spot Healing Brush Tool I take time to tidy up the skin without losing the skin texture.



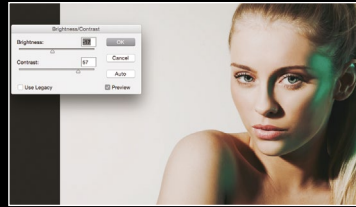
3 Gels As I had used gel lighting I now enhance where the colour hits the skin. Using a soft brush set to Soft Light at 30% opacity, with a colour similar to the gel colour, I go over these areas to make the colour stronger.



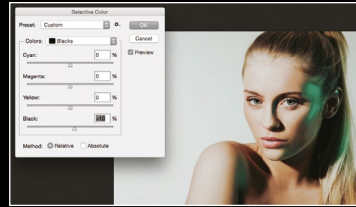
4 Colour balance In Image > Adjustments > Color Balance I use the sliders until I'm satisfied. In this case, with Midtones selected I moved towards the cyan levels, and then for Shadows I went for red and yellow.



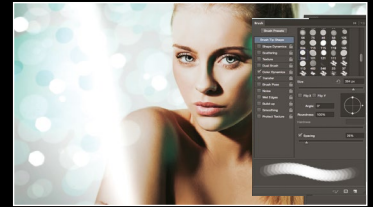
5 Actions I use a lot of Photoshop actions, some that I recorded myself, some that I have bought. Here I ran one of my actions, called 'blue fashion', for colour, tones and contrast. It's often a case of experimentation.



6 Brightness and contrast The previous action did take some of the contrast out, so I will go back and alter the brightness and contrast from the Image > Adjustments > Brightness/Contrast option.



7 Selective colour At this stage I just used Selective Color to make the whites more blue and the blacks darker. As a portrait I am happy with the image now, although the photo as a whole needs more punch.



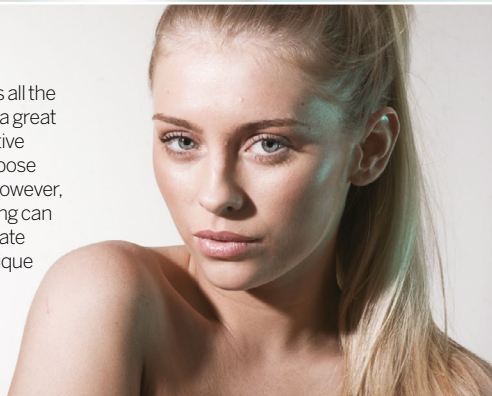
8 Brushes I felt the background was looking a bit dull. Using some 'light' brushes I downloaded, I added some white and blue lights in the background and overlaid the model to make the image stand out a little more.

BEFORE

Potential

This image has all the ingredients of a great portrait: effective composition, pose and lighting. However, post-processing can be used to create something unique

© Adrian Dewey



AFTER

Enhanced in post

I finished by using Unsharp Mask to make the image even crisper, as on portraits I like to see skin texture



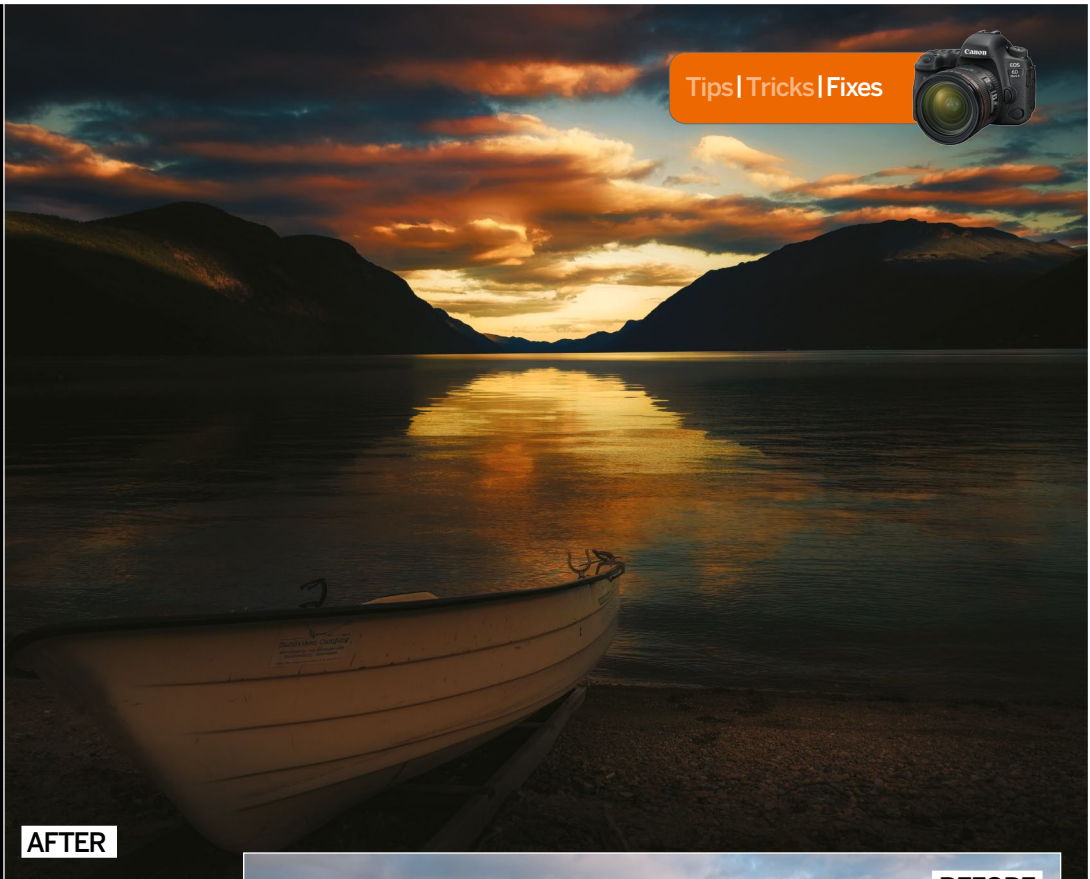


Craft colour and tone

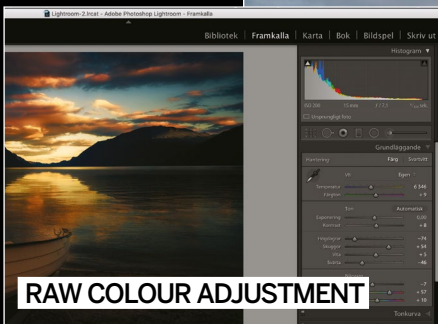
Produce special effects while avoiding the common pitfalls

Colour correction is one area where shooting in RAW provides arguably the greatest advantage, as applications like Camera Raw and Lightroom have the option to change the white balance of an image at any time, just as it is possible to do in-camera. Presets are available that mirror most camera white balance settings, including Cloudy, Daylight, Tungsten and Shade for rapid one-click adjustments, and for more precise alterations sliders are present for colour temperature and tint selections. It is also possible to eliminate colour casts easily using the White Balance selection tool – simply click once with the tool on an area of neutral grey to remove colour bias. Beyond this, highly advanced colour and tone adjustments can be made using Curves, where each of the RGB channels can be manipulated individually. By controlling each of the Red, Green and Blue Curves, the dominance of each colour can be varied to either remove or apply colour casts, for correction or creative effects respectively.

Tone refers to brightness values found in an image (luminosity) and the warmth of the colours present (temperature). When editing either the colour or tone of a shot, it is important to remember that in most cases one affects the other and so they should be considered in unison. When making contrast adjustments (altering tonality) colour saturation is often increased, emphasising any temperature bias. In Photoshop it is possible to avoid this by using the Luminosity layer blend mode on an adjustment layer.



AFTER



Above Mood lighting
Using a RAW processor like Lightroom, it is possible to greatly enhance colour and tone. In sunset images, these colour edits are required to retain the mood of the scene

© Johan Lennartsson



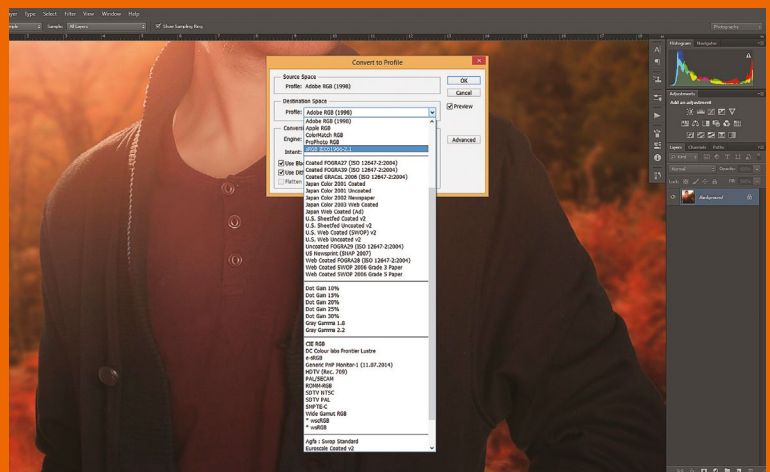
BEFORE

Colour spaces demystified

When outputting an image you can choose several colour spaces, but why do they matter?

A colour space represents the breadth of available colour in an image, with each one having a slightly different gamut – the total number of colour values that can be effectively reproduced. The sRGB colour space has a smaller gamut than Adobe RGB (used by most cameras as default) or ProPhoto RGB (Adobe Lightroom's default). However there are exceptions; when sharing images online it is better to use sRGB for consistent colour, since this is the only space supported by most web browsers.

Choose your space
In Photoshop go to Edit>Convert to Profile and select a new destination colour space. In Capture One follow Export>Variants and choose an ICC Profile under Recipe. sRGB is a good multi-purpose choice





Know when to stop

Part of developing a professional post-production workflow is recognising when you've gone too far

There is a disadvantage to having so many editing packages at your disposal, each with a vast number of tools. Sometimes it is useful to combine effects for creative reasons, but you have to be able to define the point where further adjustment will

degrade the final image. A useful technique is to lower the opacity of any effect you've applied or even turn it off completely, then gradually increase it again to see how or if it benefits the image. If you're unsure, you've probably reached that critical point.

Top In need of improvement

The tones and colour of this image are pleasant, but could do with some boosting. There is little depth and the colour doesn't accurately recreate the real-life hues

Middle Over the top

This shows unrealistic saturation, introduced partially through aggressive Curves adjustment and an unnecessary application of Vibrance. The changes have also accentuated noise

Below A correct balance

In the final shot there is an equilibrium of depth, drama and realism. The clouds have added shape and impact, but the colours are easier on the eye and noise is less pronounced



© Peter Fenech

Add the finishing touches

Take these final steps to guarantee viewers see your work at its best

If you shoot in JPEG format it is possible to select the level of sharpening that is applied to your images in-camera. This is quite limiting however, since these changes are non-reversible and so any over-sharpening is difficult to eliminate. This is an especially inconvenient problem because the amount of sharpening an image requires is influenced greatly by its output destination – images bound for the web often don't need as much sharpening applied than those destined for print. The same principle is applicable to noise reduction, in that it is better to have full control at the post-processing stage. In Adobe Lightroom and Camera Raw, the level of sharpening is controlled by the Amount slider, Radius handles the softness of the effect and Detail enhances fine textures. Capture One has a similar set of sliders, but the Threshold slider determines how pronounced an edge has to be before it receives sharpening – low values include more flat tones and higher settings limit sharpening to high-contrast edges. This is useful for minimising noise in flat areas. This equates to the Masking slider in Lightroom and ACR. The Unsharp Mask tool in Photoshop is effective when sharpening for print; try sharpening a duplicate layer (Layer > Duplicate) and changing the blend mode to Luminosity to prevent any colour shifts.

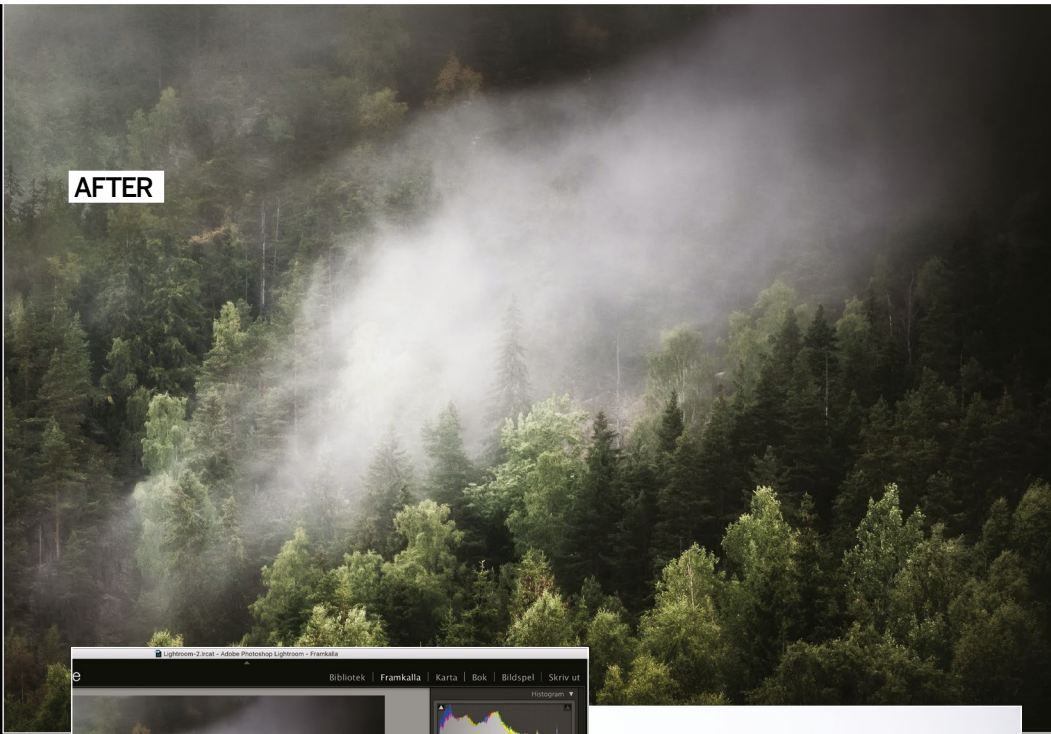
Regarding noise, there are two types: Colour and Luminance. Use the respective sliders in Lightroom/Camera Raw to reduce both, visiting the Detail sliders and Contrast slider to compensate for detail smoothing and flatness introduced by removing noise.

Meanwhile, lens corrections are a staple adjustment to most images. In Lightroom you can apply a lens profile under the Profile tab and customise distortion and vignetting removal for your image, before switching to the Colour tab to remove distracting chromatic aberration (coloured fringing) from high-contrast edges. In Photoshop you can apply lens corrections from the Filter menu, choose a camera and lens profile and apply custom tweaks to all other factors.

While noise reduction, sharpening and lens corrections may be subtle, they can make the difference when submitting your work for commercial use.

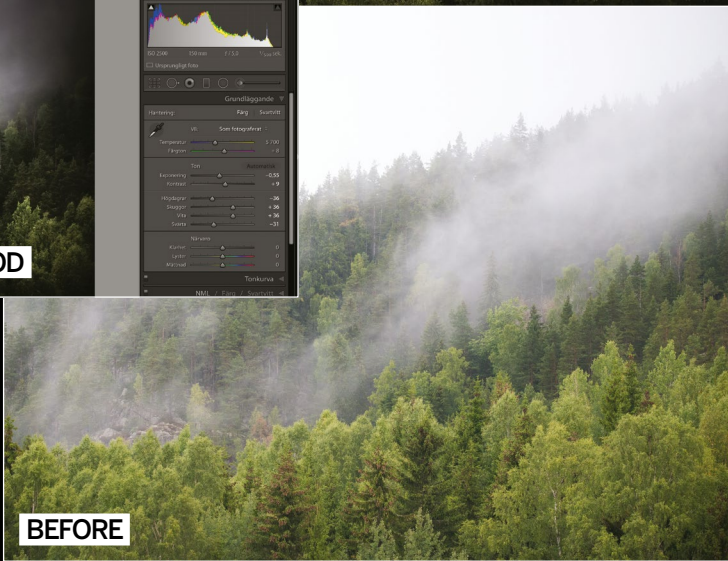


AFTER



ENHANCED MOOD

Above
Added realism
Controlling colour temperature ensures scenes appear realistic – unnatural colour creates emotional barriers between an image and the viewer
© Johan Lennartsson



BEFORE

The perks of plug-ins

Plug-ins can really expand the capability of your software, so here are some recommendations

There is a plug-in for almost every adjustment you could need to make to an image, and they are often hugely beneficial because they are designed for specific functions – they do a small number of things very well.



HDR EFEX PRO

HDR can be used for artistic effects or versatile exposure balancing. Photoshop has its own HDR feature, but HDR Efex Pro is one of the best third-party options.



SILVER EFEX PRO

The main advantage of this plug-in is the wide array of film simulation presets, capable of producing stunning analogue-like effects for dramatic black and white conversions.



TOPAZ ADJUST

This plug-in is used for enhancing detail and colour in your images. It's a quick and intuitive route to stronger colour and depth, where you can create gritty artistic looks or realistic 'pop'.

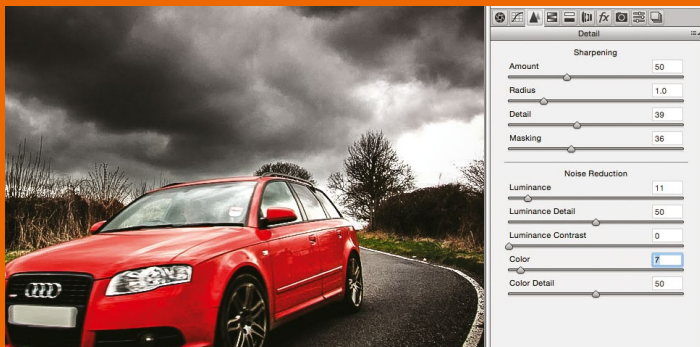
When should you sharpen?

When you sharpen during your workflow is as important as how much you apply

RAW processing offers the greatest flexibility when sharpening as, once again, it is non-destructive and unfixed. Camera Raw, Lightroom and Capture all offer tools to perform precise sharpening and even make

selective adjustments using brushes and masks. Another useful aspect is that each one allows sharpening and noise reduction to be performed from adjacent panels, so it's easy to find a balance between the two.

When upscaling an image or preparing for print, it also advisable to apply a further round of sharpening, either in Photoshop or by selecting a preset in your RAW application. This ensures crisp final results.



Sharpen for the web

Since online resolution is limited by your computer monitor, less sharpening is generally needed for uploading to online galleries. A simple sharpening application using the settings shown here will suffice for most web purposes.



Sharpen for print

When printing, you want to make the most of your camera's resolution and reproduce as much detail as possible. Sharpen twice in this case, once in Camera Raw/Lightroom then in Photoshop using Unsharp Mask.



Keep your images organised

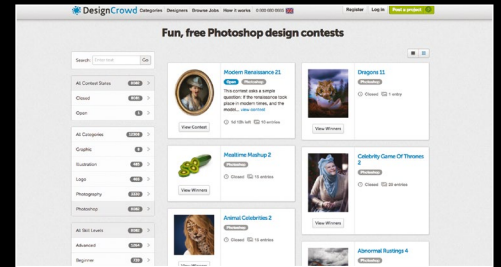
Devise a logical and structured archiving workflow

It is critical that you keep an organised and structured database. This should be backed up to ensure you have redundant copies of every shot should your main storage location be compromised. It should be easily searchable, so that you can quickly find images later. It is important to remember that once you start with an organising workflow, it is helpful to stick to it from that point on to minimise the chance of misplacing files and creating searching conflicts. For example, when utilising Lightroom to organise your work, it is a good idea to store all images for that collection in a single folder; this feels counter-intuitive if you have been manually sorting files into folders based on date or genre on your hard drive, but it will make it easier for Lightroom to keep track of your photos. If you have some images stored on an external hard drive and others on your

desktop, you may find that Lightroom has missing photos if you remove the external drive from the system. Being sure that all your images are available in synchronisation can help streamline your workflow.

When importing images or outputting an edited version it is useful to add keywords to the files so that you can find them later in your database. If you hope to sell work to publishers or stock image sites, intelligent tagging will make your work easier to find, giving you an advantage over the competition. Add tags in Photoshop by visiting File>File Info, where you can also embed descriptions and copyright information into your files.

Keep your edited images alongside your originals at all backup locations, so you know that you have both safely duplicated and available. With ACR, remember to back up the XMP files, generated when you edit a RAW file.



Above-top Other software options

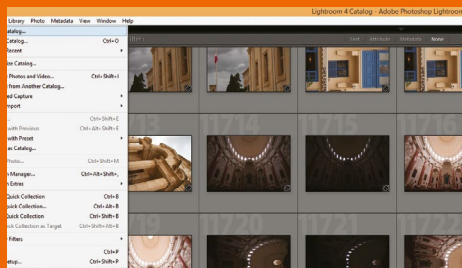
There are lesser-known editing options to consider. The free application Gimp is surprisingly powerful and offers many features found in high-end packages

Above-bottom Endless creative options

Professional digital photographers have learned to make the most of what the medium has to offer. To motivate yourself to creatively experiment, try entering a post-processing contest

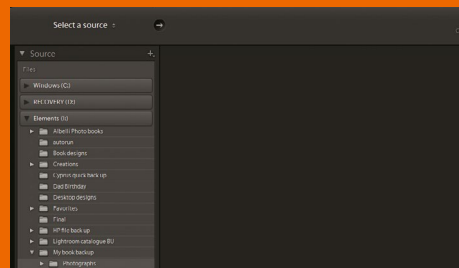
Master the Lightroom catalogue

Use Lightroom to efficiently store, organise and find your images



Lightroom archives images in directories called catalogues. You can create as many of these as you need, so it is possible to have a different catalogue for every group of related images you have, such as personal

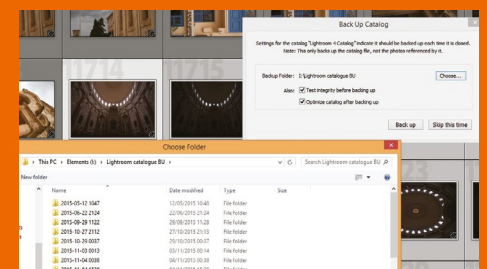
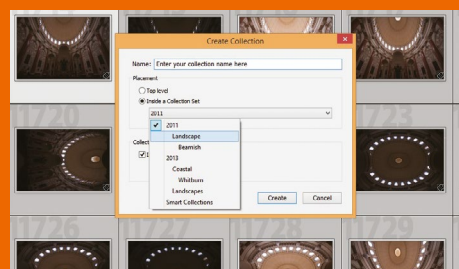
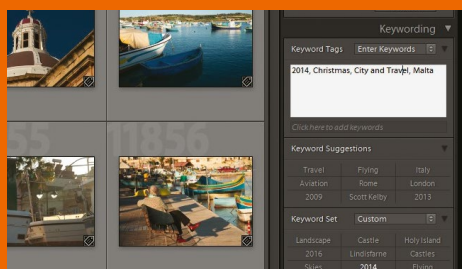
and professional, photography genres or year. Once you've started using Lightroom, it is highly advisable that you continue to do so for all your image sorting; moving files manually creates synchronisation issues.



1 Create a catalogue Create a new directory for your images and select its destination on your hard drive. This file doesn't contain your images, simply catalogue information.

2 Import images Click Import to begin. Choose a source folder, such as an external hard drive or your memory card. Tip: keep all photos for the catalogue in a single folder so Lightroom doesn't 'lose' them.

3 Copy, move or add Lightroom can copy or move your images to a new folder on your hard drive, or you can simply add the images to the catalogue, leaving them in their source folder.



4 Duplicate and add keywords If copying from a card, select a destination and tell Lightroom to make a second copy to another drive by ticking the box. Add keywords to be applied on import to aid with searching.

5 Create Collections Further organise your images by grouping them into Collections. Select your images, go to Library>New Collection. Collection Sets can group similar collections for convenience.

6 Back up your catalogue Go to Edit>Catalogue Settings and choose to have Lightroom back up whenever you close the program. Select an external destination for the backup.



Intensify specific tones in Lightroom

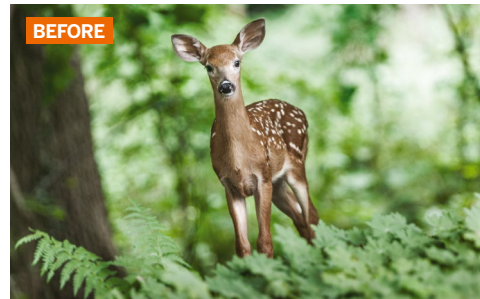
Use the Adjustment brush to convincingly enhance colours in a matter of minutes

Whether you are boosting saturation or altering tone and temperature, editing colour needn't take hours

to do. That's why the Adjustment brush in Lightroom is rightly the go-to tool for improving an image that's lacking impact. Instead of adjusting the image globally, which is what the Basic set of adjustments is there to do, the Adjustment brush gives you the freedom to make edits as locally as you need to. What's more, you can apply different settings to different areas of the image according to how you need them to look.

Here you will discover how to boost the tones and warmth of the main subject, as well as increase the saturation of the foliage in the foreground, to make this image a touch more appealing. There's also a look at setting up the

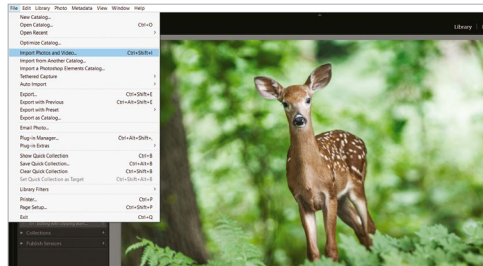
brush and applying new brushes to control different areas, techniques that you can apply to any image.



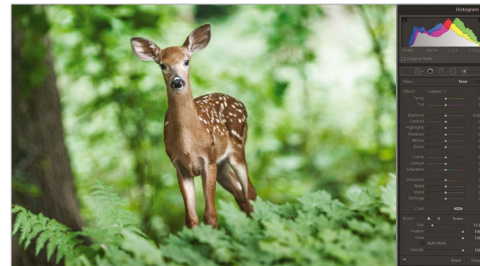
© <https://pixabay.com/en/wildlife-young-mammal-animal-wild-1367217/>

Above Before editing

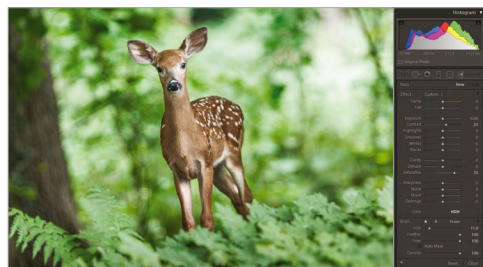
A good composition with plenty of natural light makes for a strong shot, but flat colour lets this image down



1 Load image In Lightroom, head to File>Import Photos and Video. You'll need to locate the folder and then tick the image before pressing Import. Once imported, click on the Develop tab along the top.



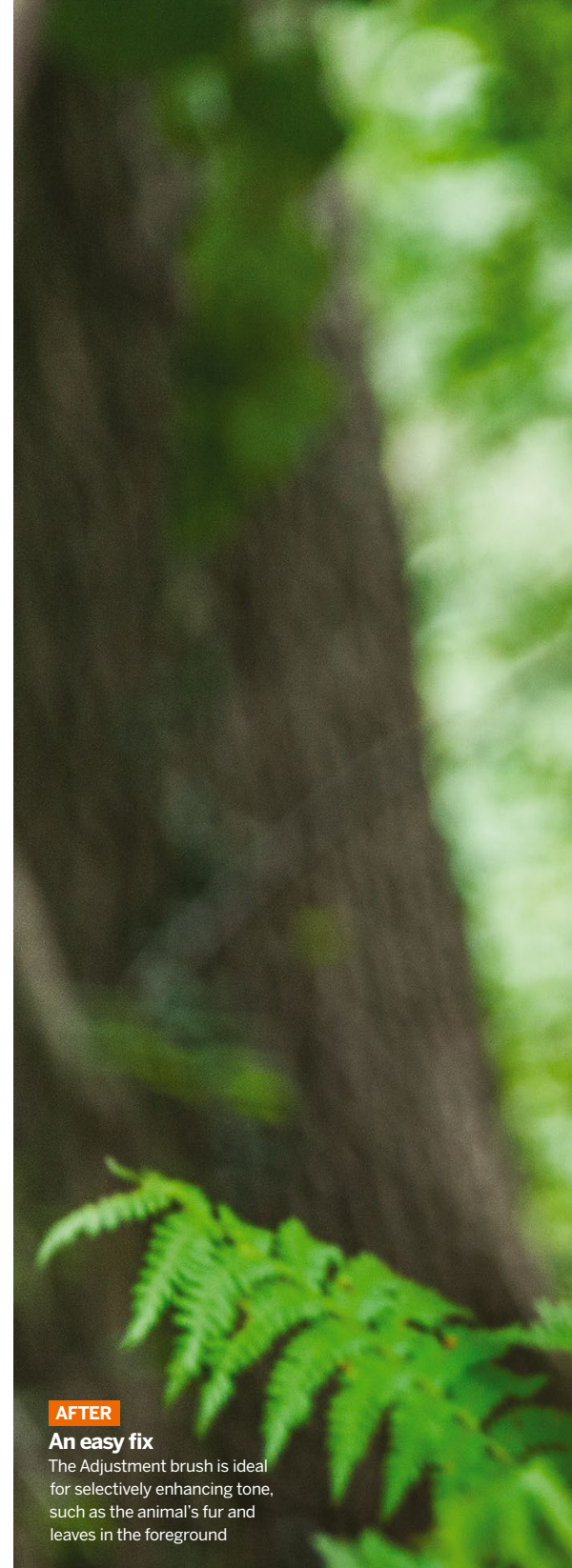
2 Alter brush settings Find the Adjustment brush tool underneath the Histogram panel. At the bottom of the brush's adjustments, set its Size to 11 and Feather to 100. A Flow of 100 will give maximum effect.



3 Prepare adjustments Before applying the brush, set the Saturation slider for the Adjustment brush to 70 and also Contrast to 20. This will tell Lightroom that whatever is brushed over will be given those changes.



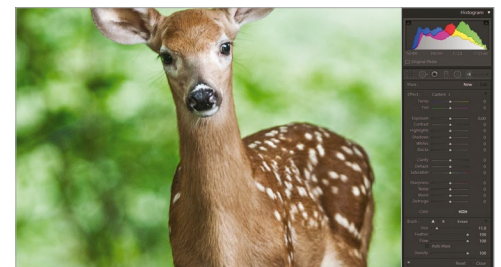
4 Brush on colour Pick an area of colour, such as the grass in the foreground, and brush over the area to apply the settings from the previous steps. If you find the saturation is too high, simply lower the Saturation slider.



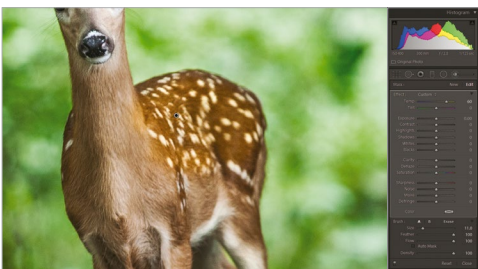
AFTER

An easy fix

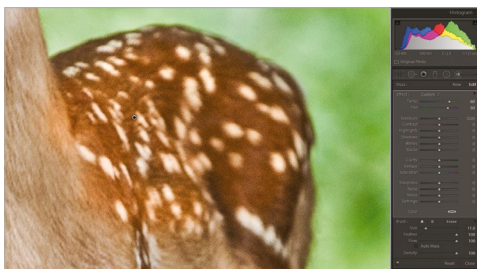
The Adjustment brush is ideal for selectively enhancing tone, such as the animal's fur and leaves in the foreground



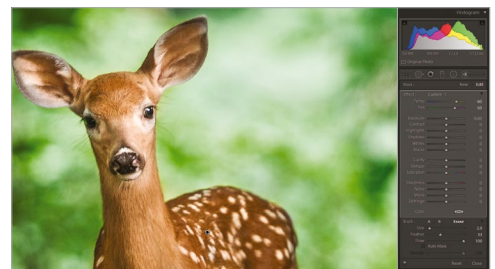
5 Reset brush settings Now that we've adjusted colour, we can boost tones for the main subject using a new brush. Click on New at the top of the Adjustment's panel, and then double-click Effect to reset the brush.



6 Set up for warmer tones Slide up the Temp adjustment to 60 to give us a starting value. Brush over an area of the image that needs warming up, such as a person or animal, to see how the brush affects that area.



7 Add more red If the tones appear too yellow or orange after brushing, slide up the Tint adjustment to 50 or more to add warmer colours. In this image, the fur of the deer should look a warm, orangey-brown colour.



8 Complete the effect Continue to brush over the entire subject, lowering the brush's Size for smaller areas such as legs and ears. If you make a mistake, click the Erase option in the brush settings and brush over those areas.

Use clipping warnings in Lightroom

Discover how to adapt lighting and contrast using Lightroom's clipping warnings

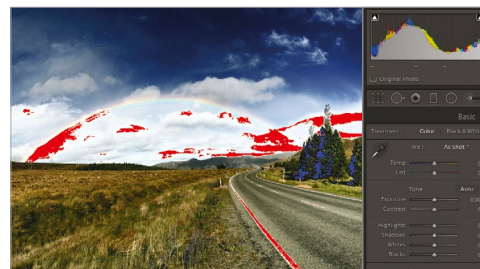
Clipping warnings are found throughout photography, from your camera's image review function to post-production software. It's a feature in photography that informs us about the areas of the scene that fall outside of the dynamic range that is accurately rendered in the image. In Lightroom, the histogram reveals the

distribution of light across any one image, from the darkest regions, which show up on the left of the histogram, to the lightest areas over on the right. With the clipping warnings feature active, we can greatly improve the way we adjust exposure and understand light in general. Knowing the practical applications of clipping warnings will ensure that we don't lose out on any details across an image, whether it's at the time of capture or post-editing in Lightroom. Follow these steps to find out how to perfect exposure using brushes and adjustments using clipping warnings as a guide.

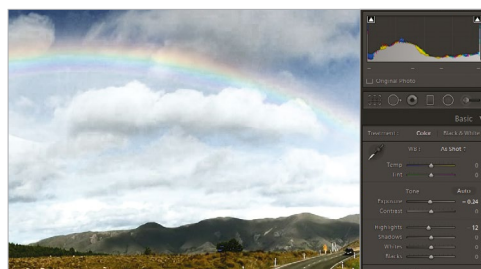


1 Observe the histogram Open up an image with high contrast so you can get a better feel for how clipping warnings work. Go into the Develop module and make sure the histogram is open in the top right of the screen.

Left
Look out for clipping
Clipping warnings help to avoid loss of detail, whether it's due to very high contrast or a generally over or underexposed image



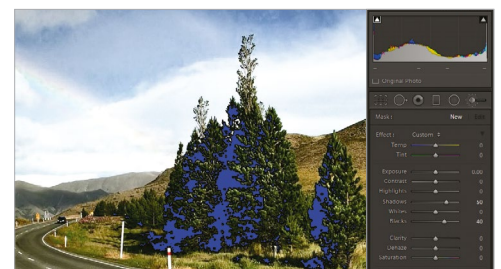
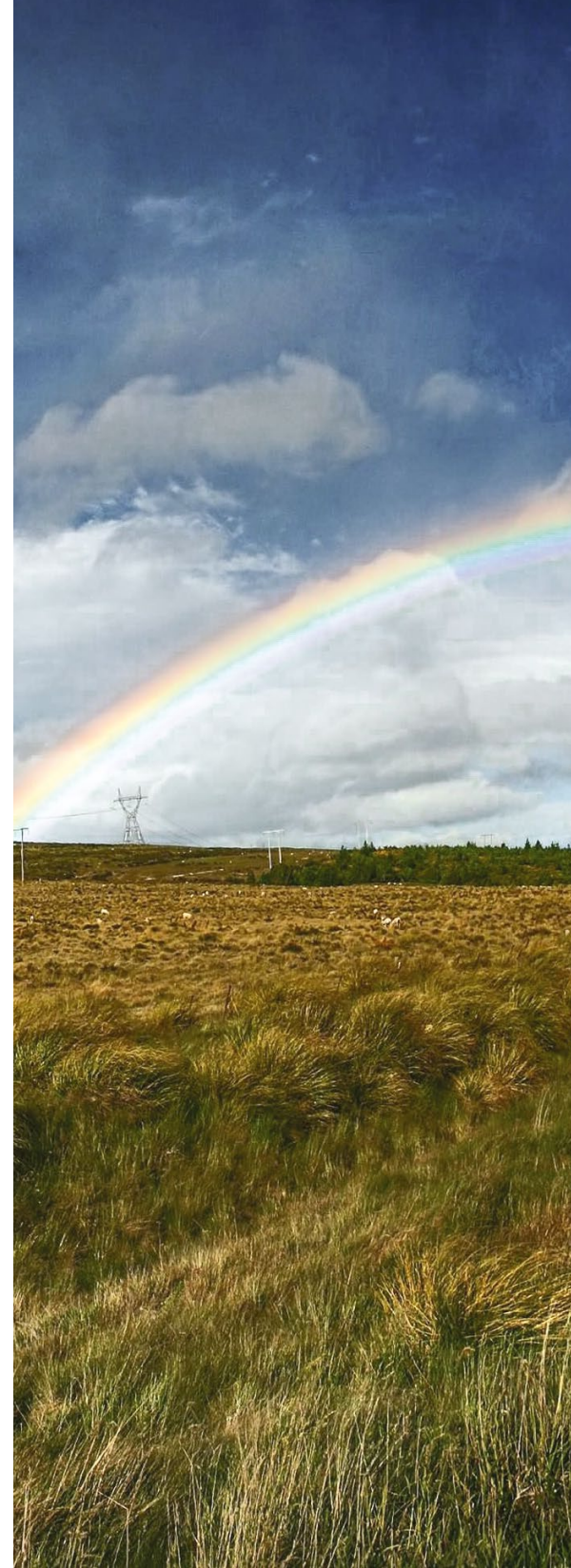
2 View clipping Clicking on both the two small arrows in the histogram will activate the clipping warning. Any completely black areas will show up as a blue mask, and any areas completely overexposed will appear red.



3 Control the highlights To fix the clipping in the overexposed regions, decrease the Highlights slider until the red mask disappears. If your image shows a lot of clipping, you may need to decrease the Exposure slider by 0.30.



4 Rescue the shadows To retrieve the shadow regions from clipping, boost the Shadows and Blacks sliders together. If your image gets lighter overall without retrieving the clipped areas, click on the Adjustment Brush.



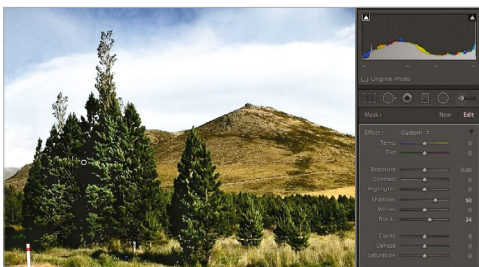
5 Set up the Brush Set the Adjustment Brush settings to 100 Feather and a Size large enough to fit over the shadow regions. Increase the Shadows slider to 50 and set Blacks to 40. Ensure all other sliders are on 0.



AFTER

Rescuing the exposure

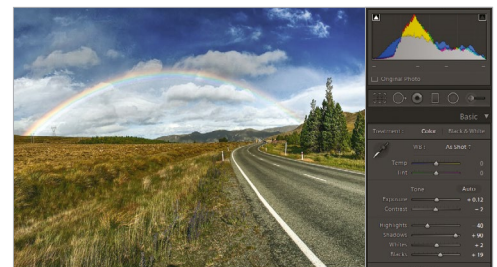
We were able to identify the clipped areas and bring back details that were there but invisible to the naked eye



6 Brush over the blacks Paint over the clipped shadows in your image to apply the Adjustment Brush settings. You should see the blue mask from the clipping warning gradually fade away.



7 Alter exposure The clipping warning feature is also useful so that we don't stray outside of the visible spectrum when altering exposure from a low-contrast image, keeping the detail in important areas.



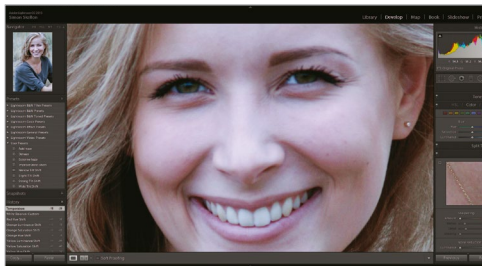
8 Keep active To make sure you always have the clipping warnings active while editing, press J to load them instantly. If you ever stray outside the visible spectrum, the overlays will be there to warn you.

Colour corrections in Lightroom

Learn how to use Lightroom's essential tools to tackle colour correction head-on

White balance is a part of photography that many of us now take for granted. Letting your digital camera take care of everything is just fine, right? Well, 'not really' is the quick answer. Set to Auto mode, it's hit or miss whether the correct white balance has been accurately calculated. Even setting a camera's white balance mode manually to match that of the

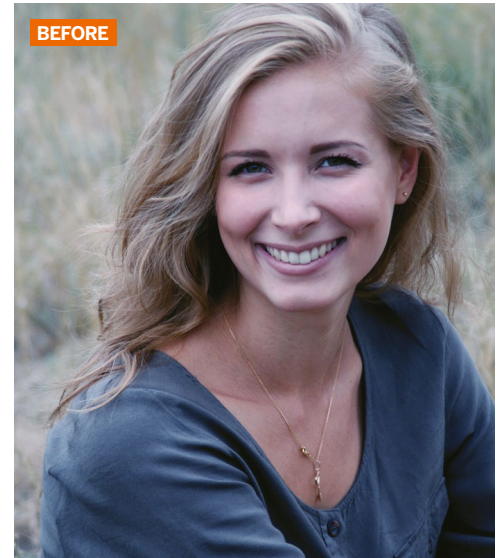
primary light source can produce inaccurate results. Very often, we need to count on post-production techniques to correct the white balance in our images, whether that's warming things up or cooling them down. This technique uses Lightroom's principal colour correction tools, along with more accurate tools at hand, such as the Adjustment brush, to adapt colour in shadows to get a better correction.



1 Focus on the eyes Load up your image into Lightroom and head to the Develop module. Press Space to zoom in to 100% and then drag the image to bring the eyes – which are a good starting point – into view.

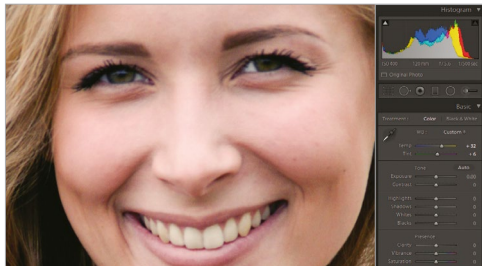


2 White Balance Selector Under the Basic set of adjustments, click on the White Balance Selector tool (W). For correcting white balance, we need to tell Lightroom what areas are supposed to be white.



**Above
Too blue**

Due to poor light, blue tinting has started to appear, which the camera has struggled to compensate for



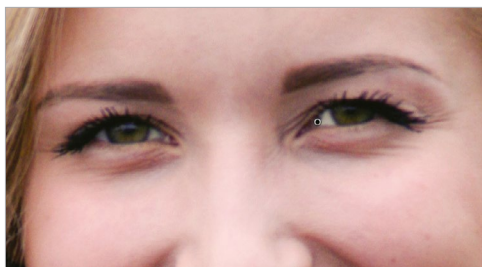
3 Warmer colours Hover over the whites of the eyes and click once. These should be close to white and will adjust white balance to normal. The image will warm up considerably, which works well for this outdoor portrait.



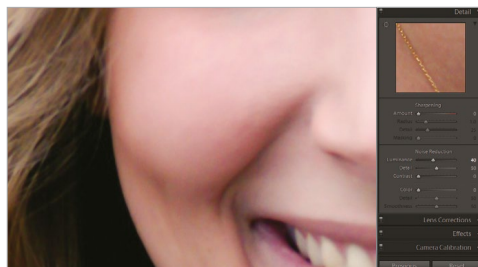
4 Tone down colour If the image is now too orange at this point, try reducing the Temp slider by approximately 5. Push up the Vibrance slider to around 30 to bring more colour to the model's hair.



5 Adjust colour temperature If you notice a slight blue tint still visible in some areas around your shot, click on the Adjustment brush option just under the histogram and set Temp to 25 with all other sliders at 0.



6 Remove blue tint Brush over the model's eyes to reduce the blue tint that remains. Be careful not to go over their edges and affect the skin. Press Close at the bottom of the adjustments to confirm these changes.



7 Smooth skin Go into the Detail section and boost up Luminance to around 40. This will soften the image and smooth skin, and reduce the noise created by the white balance corrections we've applied.



8 Sharpen details Boost up the Amount under Sharpening to about 90, Radius to 1.5 and Detail to 5. This will make the details seem crisper. View a before and after using the small boxes along the bottom left.



AFTER

Warmer tones

It's better to edge towards the warmer tones for outdoor portraits, as these look more natural and are more pleasing to the eye





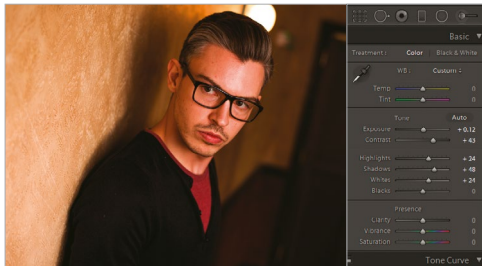
Enhance portraits in Lightroom

Take inspiration from Dave Hill, a photographer whose style made him synonymous with drama

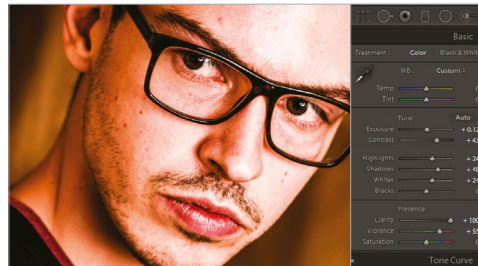
Although Dave Hill is an accomplished all-rounder when it comes to photography, it's with his classic portrait work that he has made a name for himself. He's managed to make his name become an adjective – the 'Dave Hill' look is commonly referred to online to describe an effect that focuses on skin tones and lighting. Good lighting is essential so skin appears soft yet dramatic. A colour scheme is also applied to help place more emphasis on skin tones and atmosphere, and it's this combination of lighting and colour that makes the whole scene appear surreal yet natural. We're going to show how you can imitate this style using Lightroom. Despite not having Layers, Lightroom provides the tools required to get the Dave Hill look.



Above Light source
A tungsten lamp gives us an orangey yellow hue to work with, which we can use to emphasize the tones of the skin



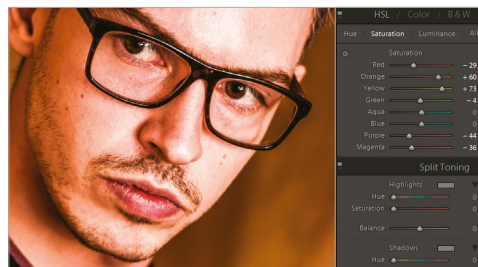
1 Apply basic edits With your image in Lightroom, head to the Develop module. Boost Exposure to +0.12 and increase the Contrast and Shadows adjustments to +40, Whites and Highlights to +25.



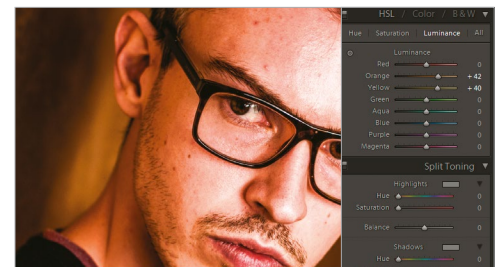
2 Adjust colour and detail Under the Presence section, set Clarity to +100 and Vibrance to +55, or until you see an increase in colour. The Clarity will make skin look overly textured, but this is easily restorable.



3 Check the Tone Curves Go down to the Tone Curve and lower the Highlights and Lights to between -40 and -50, and Darks slider to -10. This will flatten the image's tonal range. Set Shadows up to +80 to retrieve detail.



4 HSL colour tweak In HSL, select Saturation and reduce some of the colour saturation of non-dominant colours. Emphasise colours similar to skin tones. Make sure the main colour is the strongest one.



5 Exaggerate colour Click on Luminance and increase the values of the strongest colours to brighten them even further. The idea is to draw attention to the person as much as possible through the use of colour and light.

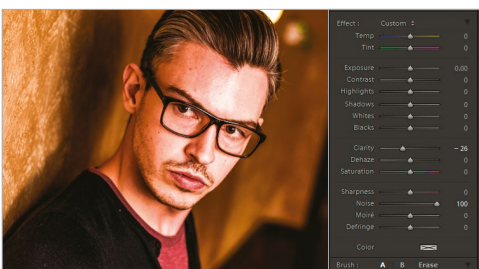




AFTER

Inspired effect

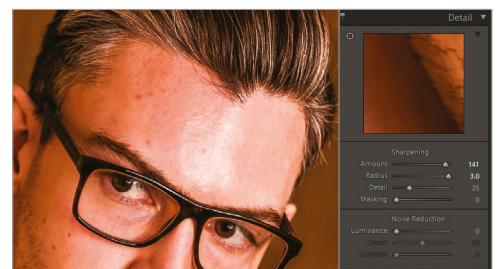
A strong vignette, subdued colours and strong tones all go towards making this portrait stand out from the rest



6 Set up Adjustment brush To counteract the Clarity, we can soften skin. Select the Adjustment brush and set all sliders to 0 apart from the Clarity, which needs to be about -26, and Noise which needs to be 100.



7 Softer skin tones Brush over the areas of skin to apply the Adjustment brush settings. Notice how the skin softens and almost blurs. This helps to replicate the look of the images created by Dave Hill.



8 Sharpening and detail Set sharpening high to 100 and Radius to maximum to get the most out of the image. Add a post-crop vignette to finish the effect off and make it more dramatic.

Retouch mature skin

Discover how to use Photoshop to convincingly lessen the appearance of skin imperfections in older subjects

Retouching skin is rarely simple. Unless you are retouching a portrait from a high-end advertising or fashion shoot, you invariably need to retain a sense of realism, which means you walk something of a tightrope while you work. Do too little and the result may not look professional; do too much and the retouching may be all too obvious, undermining the effectiveness of the portrait.

This becomes all the thornier when faced with retouching a mature subject. Whereas it's plausible for a younger model to have relatively flawless skin, we associate wrinkles and age spots with older subjects, so their removal will destroy the credibility of the image.

Discover how to ensure your retouching is subtle enough to retain believability while also diminishing blemishes in mature skin.

BEFORE

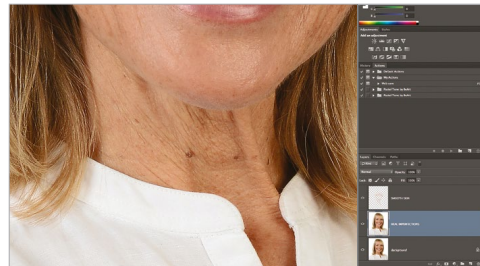


1 Create a blank layer Zoom in on your subject's face. Begin by creating a new blank layer. It is a good idea to name each layer to make it easier to know what each is for – for instance, name this one 'smooth skin'.

2 Smooth the skin Select the Brush tool (B) and hold then click while holding down the Opt/Alt key to choose a skin tone. Using a low opacity, 20% or less, paint the model's face to even the skin tone.

Above
Mature model

It can be challenging to retouch a mature model's skin, as you need to ensure that the result is plausible



3 Retain realism The secret to retouching mature skin convincingly is in bringing back some of the original detail of the image. To do this, simply lower the opacity of the layer slightly. Between 80-90% works well.

4 Remove skin flaws Click back on the Background layer and duplicate it, naming it something like 'heal imperfections'. Use the Healing brush set to either Replace or Normal to banish obvious skin flaws.

5 Deal with skin creases The next stage is to reduce wrinkles and skin creases: duplicate the heal imperfections layer, rename it suitably, then use the Patch tool, set to Destination, to get rid of the majority of these.



6 Bring back detail As in Step 3, it's time to reveal some of the wrinkles you removed in the previous step. Take the opacity of the layer down to about 60 per cent so that your model's appearance isn't anachronistic.

7 Reduce teeth discoloration Flatten the layers and make a selection of the mouth. Press Cmd/Ctrl+J to copy this to a new layer. Use the Sponge tool (O) set to Desaturate and a low Flow to reduce teeth discoloration.

8 Brighten the teeth Use the Dodge set to Midtones and a low Exposure to brighten the teeth. If you feel you've gone too far, lower the layer's opacity. You can also apply these techniques to the whites of the eyes.



AFTER

Subtle Photoshop

The secret is to ensure that you work with layers and reduce the opacity at key points while you work



Use High Pass skin softening

Utilise Photoshop's filters to retouch your portraits with this alternative technique

Ask a group of portrait photographers how they go about skin retouching and you'll probably get very different answers. The truth is, there are a variety of ways to retouch skin and smooth out blemishes in Photoshop, but they all have their own

advantages. It's all about finding a method that works for you, and one that you can comfortably fit into your workflow. This particular technique puts the High Pass filter to good use, but not in its usual way. By applying it and inverting the layer, a reverse effect to sharpening can be achieved. By combining the filter with a layer mask and Photoshop's Color Range selection method, you can single out everything that isn't skin and soften everything that is. The advantage of retouching skin in this way is that you reduce the risk of leaving behind any signs of heavily retouched pixels, resulting in an image that appears very natural.

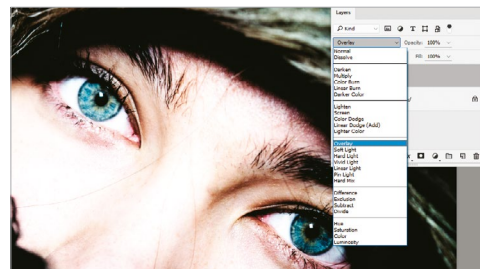


Left
Eye-catching portraits

This is a strong portrait image, but notice how the skin texture is not quite blemish-free

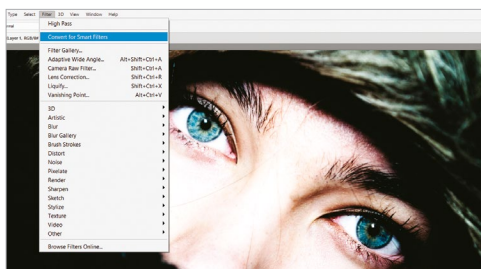


1 Set up layers Open a portrait image that needs skin softening into Photoshop. Make sure you look for an image that hasn't been processed or retouched. Duplicate the Background layer by pressing Cmd/Ctrl+J.

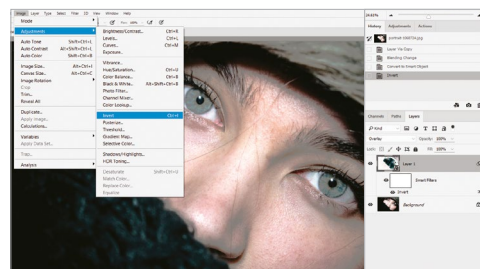


2 Blend your layers To blend the exposure of the duplicate layer into the background, change its blend mode from Normal to Overlay. The contrast will appear very heavy at this stage.

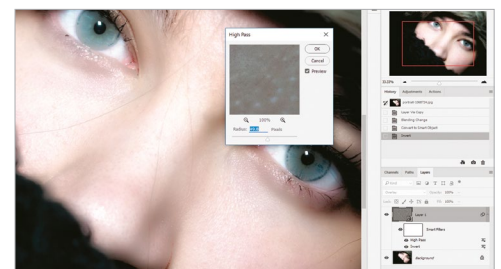
AFTER
A softer complexion
Using an inverted High Pass filter creates a softening effect that retains much of the original skin texture



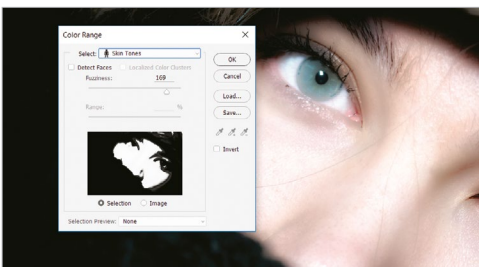
3 Convert for Smart Filters Before applying any filters in Photoshop, we need to convert the layer for Smart Filters so that we can re-edit them at any point. To do this, click Convert for Smart Filters in the Filter menu.



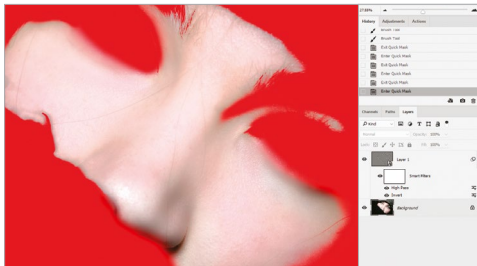
4 Invert image Head to Image > Adjustments > Invert (or press Cmd/Ctrl+I) to invert the first layer. Because of the Overlay blend mode, you'll notice some grey areas appearing around the skin.



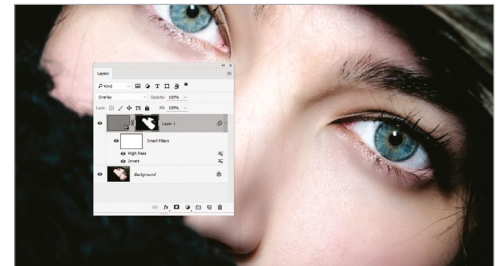
5 Use High Pass filter Head to the Filter menu again and go down to Other > High Pass. Start by reducing the Radius slider to its lowest value and then gradually increase it until the skin appears softer.



6 Select the skin Click on the Background layer. To select just the skin, go to Select > Color Range. Set the Select drop-down menu to Skin Tones. Slide the Fuzziness adjustment up until all the skin is white in the preview box.



7 Edit in Quick Mask Press Q to load Quick Mask mode. Use the Brush tool (B) set to black to add red to areas of the face other than skin. Press X to add areas to the selection, then Q to return to normal mode when done.



8 Mask the edges Click on the High Pass layer and add a layer mask. If the edges of the face haven't been included in the mask, use the Brush tool set to white and an opacity of 30% or less to blend in the High Pass effect.

Rescue shiny skin

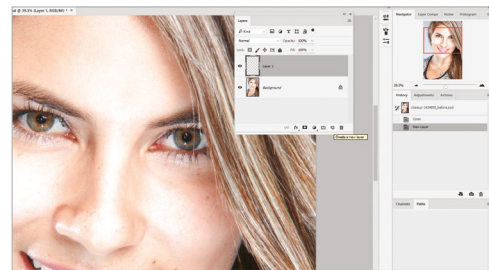
Get to grips with Photoshop's brushes and adjustments to tackle flash hotspots in portraits

Flash is never an easy one to get right, and even the most experienced photographers get it wrong some of the time. Much like everything else in photography, it's trial and error, but fortunately for us Photoshop is at hand to give us the freedom to correct problems such as blown-out skin post-shoot. Using a combination of brushes and layers, shiny foreheads and noses can be

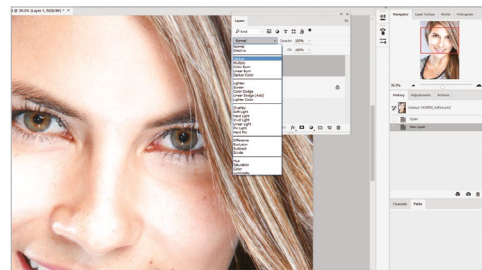
brushed back to a normal exposure. However, we're not directly editing exposure. By applying a similar skin colour over these areas and blending them in, it's more as if we're applying make-up in the form of digital paint. By the end of this tutorial, you'll learn the skills required to use Photoshop to save your images from a bright flash exposure, saving you the time it would have taken to arrange a reshoot.



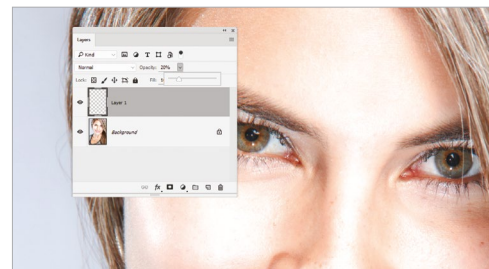
© <https://pixabay.com/en/closeup-beautiful-female-face-434850/>



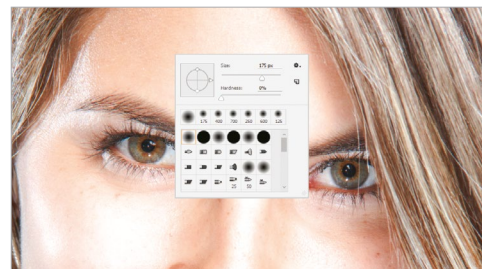
1 Add a layer First we need to set up the Layers palette. Add a new layer above the Background by clicking on the Create New Layer button that can be found at the bottom of the palette.



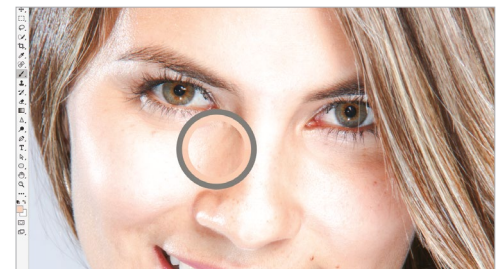
2 Set blend mode We'll be applying all the edits to this layer so we can work non-destructively. Change the blend mode of the new layer from Normal to Darken using the drop-down list.



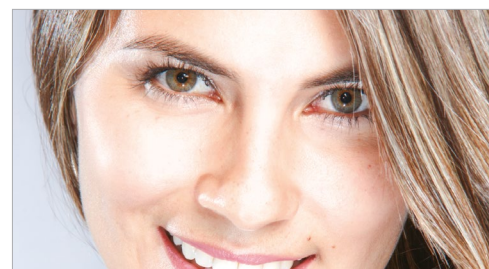
3 Change layer's opacity Lower the opacity of the new layer to 20% using the controls in the Layers palette. Changing the layer's opacity instead of the Brush tool's opacity lets us boost the strength of the effect later on.



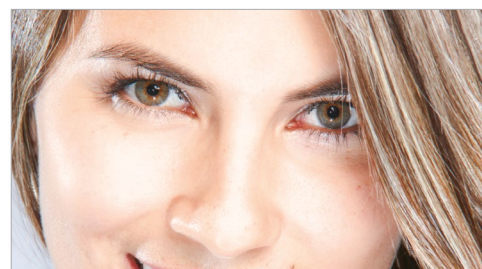
4 Set Brush's opacity Now press B for the Brush tool. Set the tool's opacity from the Options bar to 80% to help reduce the strength. Make sure the Brush's Hardness is set at 0% so the edges are soft.



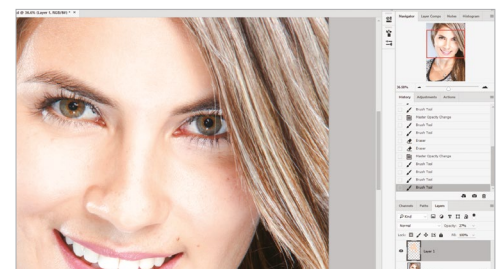
5 Sample from skin Before applying the Brush tool to the skin, press and hold Opt/Alt. A small eyedropper will appear. Use this to sample an existing skin tone colour. Sample a colour that's neither too dark nor too light.



6 Bid highlights farewell Brush over the highlights on the portrait to reduce the shininess. Because we're using a colour similar to the skin tones, the results will look as natural as possible.



7 Increase effect If you don't see any reduction in the highlights, you may need to increase the opacity setting of the Brush tool up to 100%. If still no changes appear, you might need to select a darker skin tone.



8 Boost visibility To see a significant change, boost up the layer's opacity setting to 40-50%. This should get rid of all highlights. Use the Eraser tool (E) to remove any brush marks, over eyebrows for example.

Above
Great shot, poor exposure
This image has been slightly overexposed and the subject's skin looks rather shiny as a result



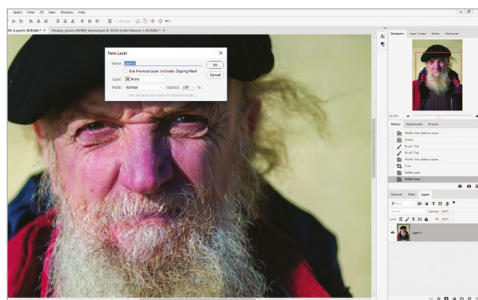
AFTER

Effective brushwork
A subtle application of the Brush tool in Photoshop has resulted in a more even skin tone, making the image look much better in general

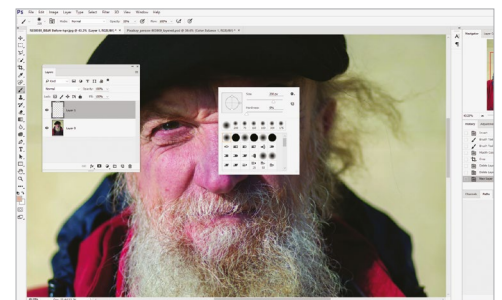
Banish blotchy skin tones

Use Photoshop's brushes and blend modes to deal with uneven complexions

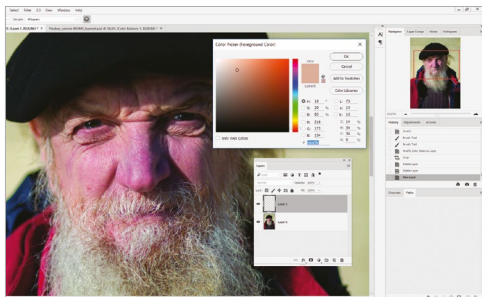
The question of how much we should be editing portraits has always been a topic for contention. How far from the truth should we change someone's natural appearance? The answer will be in part down to the model, just as much as it is decided by the photographer. The model may actually request their skin be retouched to improve complexion or reduce redness. Importantly, making these corrections doesn't take years of experience, as Photoshop makes this a fairly painless process that anyone can put into practice. Using soft brushes combined with colour-sensitive blend modes and adjustment layers, we can disguise unwanted colour tones in minutes.



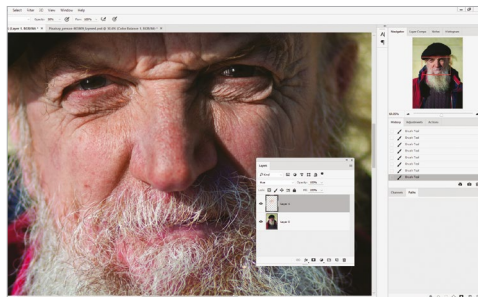
1 Add a layer Open up Photoshop and load your portrait. We're going to be working with brushes and adjustments, so it's important to create a blank layer on top of the background layer first by pressing Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+N.



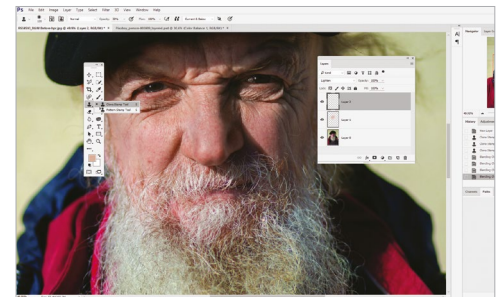
2 Set up tool Set the new layer's blend mode to Hue, as this will help us adjust the colour with any brushwork. Select the Brush tool (B) and make sure its Hardness is set to 0% and its Opacity is 20%.



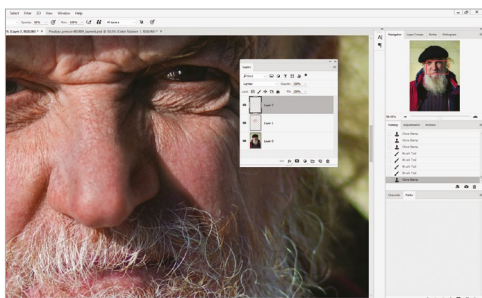
3 Sample the skin Select a colour of unaffected skin tone by pressing Opt/Alt. If there isn't any normal skin tone to sample from, input '# daad9a' into the Color Picker palette for a skin tone colour to use instead.



4 Fade the red Start to brush over the red blotchy skin to apply the new colour. You should start to see the redness fade. Increasing the Brush tool's Opacity up to 30% will help to apply more colour.



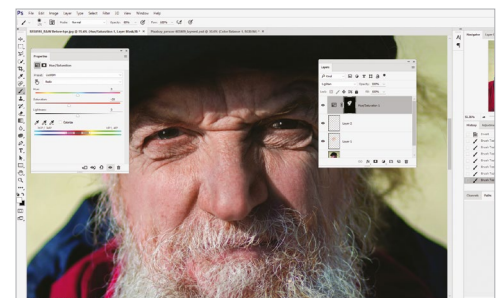
5 Utilise Clone Stamp Set this tool's Opacity to 30% and add another new layer. Set the blend mode of that new layer to Lighten in order to prevent removing the highlights on the face.



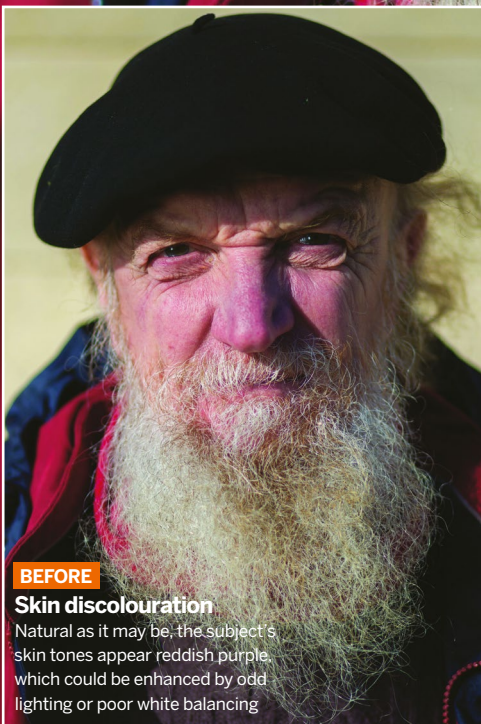
6 Retouch uneven tones Use the Clone Stamp tool to sample areas of blemish-free skin by pressing Opt/Alt. Gradually brush over uneven skin tones to fade out any heavy blotches that still remain.



7 Create new adjustment layer Add a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer from the bottom of the Layers palette, and set its blend mode to Lighten. Inside the adjustment, change Master to Red.



8 Reduce saturation Lower the Saturation slider to -20, then click the adjustment's mask and press Cmd/Ctrl+I to invert it. Use the Brush tool set to white to brush over any leftover red areas to remove them.



BEFORE

Skin discolouration

Natural as it may be, the subject's skin tones appear reddish purple, which could be enhanced by odd lighting or poor white balancing

AFTER

The end result

Working with existing skin tones, we can create an effect that's natural and still maintains the lighting



Control colour with Camera Raw

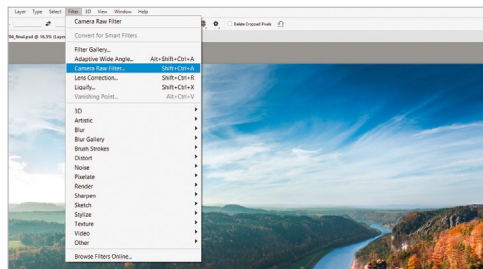
Dig deep into ACR's adjustments for the ultimate control over hue, saturation and luminance

When we talk about editing colour in an image, it's not just a case of simply pushing up the saturation slider to achieve better tones. The Camera Raw software from Adobe lets us take our images straight from the camera and process them to perfection. The HSL adjustments (Hue, Saturation and Luminance) enable us to adapt

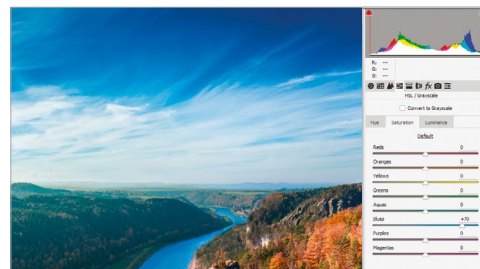
colour so that we can create realistic, eye-catching results. Instead of tweaking the Color Balance, Temperature or Tint sliders, which will modify the image as a whole, the HSL sliders allow us to adjust specific parts of the image depending on their colour information. This means that we can achieve brilliant blue skies, luscious green grass and soft, glowing reds all in one image, completely independently of each other. Start with the Saturation adjustments and then move on to the Luminance sliders to create a better balance. Finish with tweaks to the Hue sliders and your landscapes will never look the same again.

Left Where's the colour?

This may be a beautiful landscape, but it lacks depth and colour. The HSL sliders enable us to alter the trees, river and sky separately



1 Locate HSL If using the Camera Raw Filter in Photoshop, convert the image to a Smart Object first. If you are importing RAW files, this won't be necessary. When inside ACR, head to the HSL/Grayscale section.



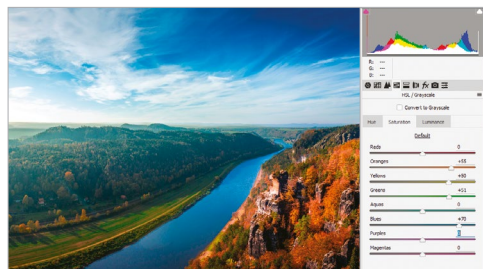
2 Start with Saturation The best place to begin in HSL is with the Saturation adjustments. Increase the Blues slider to +70 or above to deepen the sky's colour. It should look like a graduated filter was used.



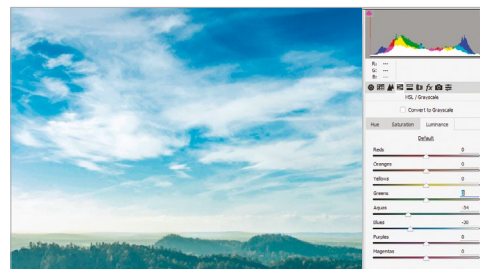
AFTER

HSL to the rescue

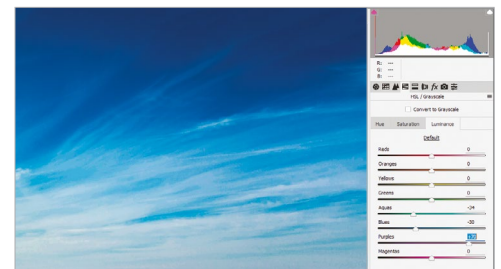
Using the HSL sliders in Camera Raw, the image is replenished with colour and saturation and it appears natural and bright



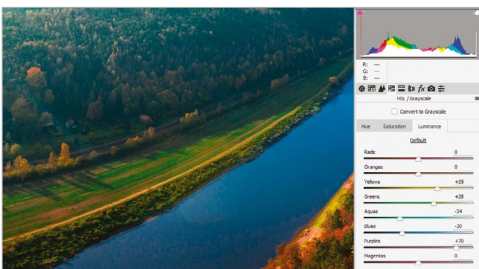
3 Improve colour throughout Observe other prominent colours and push up the relevant ones inside the Saturation section to between +50 and +70. You may need to do this for Oranges, Yellows and Greens.



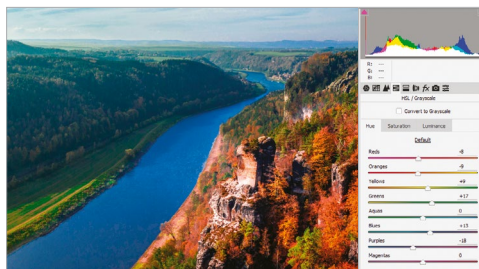
4 Control Luminance Click on the Luminance tab. These sliders control the brightness of colour. If you wish to enhance a blue sky, decrease the Blues slider to -30. To reduce colour noise, decrease Aquas to -3.



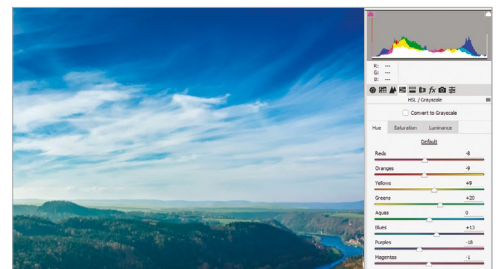
5 Eliminate colour noise Take a look at the darkest blue areas of the sky. If you notice any noise distortion, you can increase the Purples slider to +70 under Luminance. This will help to offset any noise.



6 Adjust slightly You may not want to boost the Luminance sliders for all the colours in your image, as things can quickly turn pale. Usually, boosting the Greens and Yellows is sufficient to get natural results.



7 Intensify colours By tweaking the Hue colour sliders by no more than +/-20, colours such as blue, green and yellow can be intensified. Adjusting them any more than this could alter their natural colours.



8 Improve colour transitions If you notice that some colour distortion or noise remains at this stage, head to the Detail tab in ACR and boost the Color slider up to 40-50 in order to combat this.



Use Content-Aware cloning in Photoshop

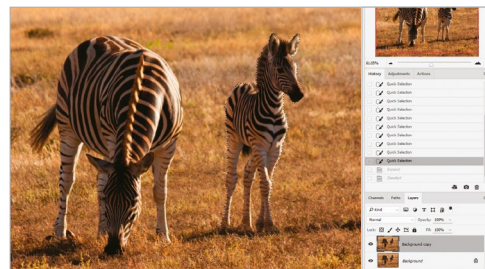
Learn how to completely remove a distracting subject in your landscape and travel images

The tools used for cloning pixels have come a long way over the years, and they are now well and truly part of the Adobe Photoshop experience, providing a way to remove or reposition objects with the software making an effort to take into

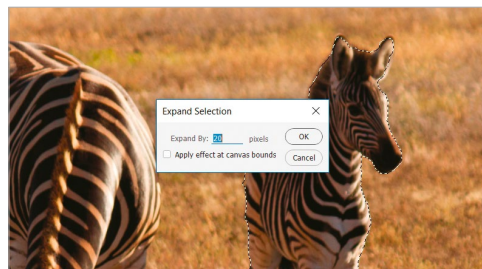
account the surrounding pixels to assist you in creating an accurate result. Don't get too carried away, however, as the Content-Aware method of cloning pixels isn't perfect every time. Here we'll show you how to use the Content-Aware Fill and Move tools, along with some basic cloning, to get great results. As with all cloning projects, we want to reduce the appearance of repeating pixels in order to make the final image as believable as possible. We're starting off with the Quick Selection tool because it gives us a straightforward way to select the pixels we want to clone.

Left Changing composition

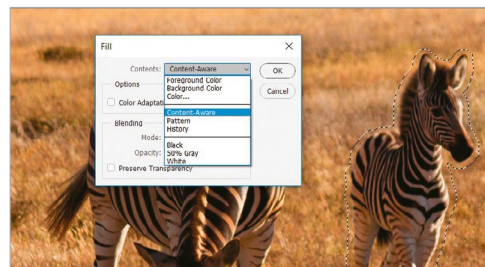
The Content-Aware tools work best on images that have similar pixels to reduce repetition, such as grass or sky, for example



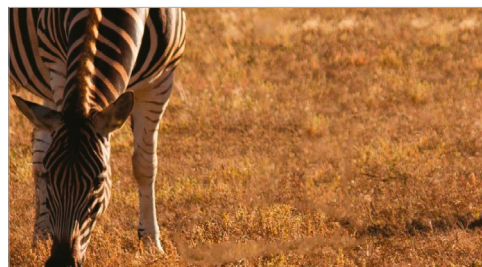
1 Select the subject Start off by duplicating the Background layer (Cmd/Ctrl+J) and going to the Quick Selection tool (W). Form a selection over the subject you want to remove. Lower the tool's size to select smaller areas.



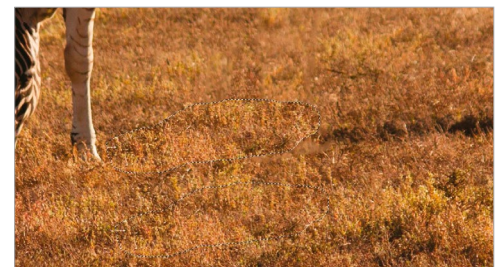
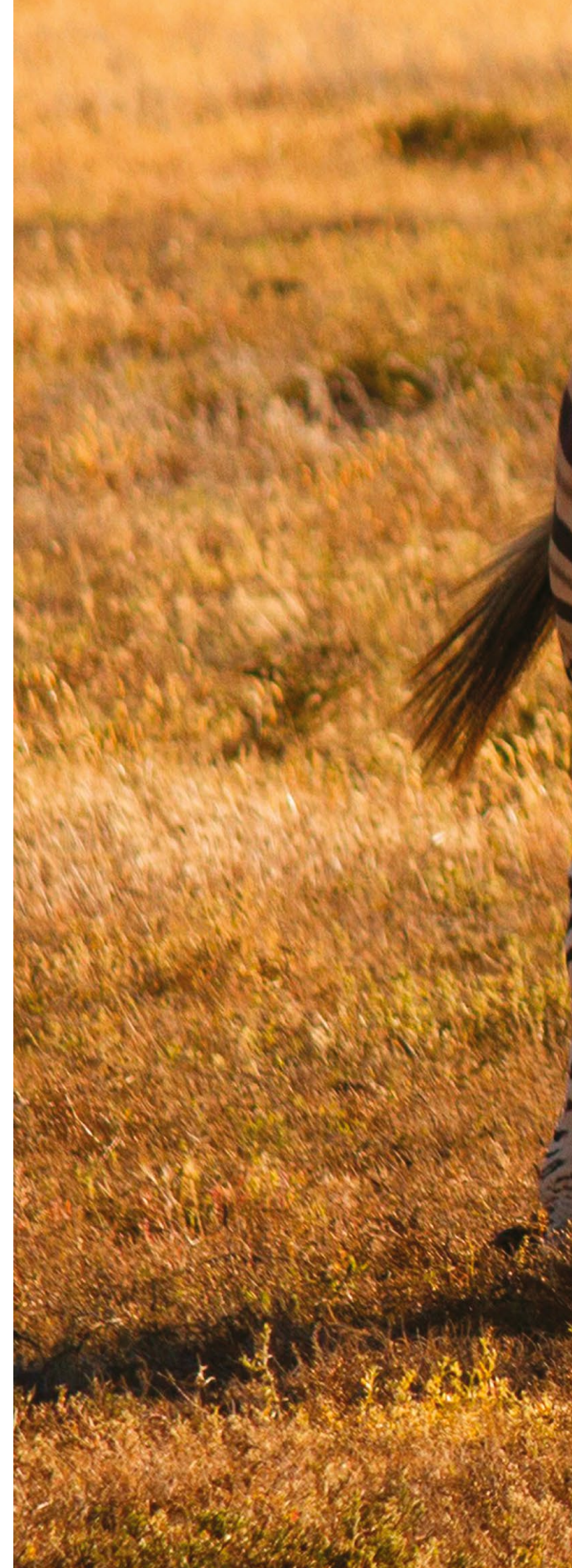
2 Modify selection area With the selection complete, go to Select>Modify>Expand. Set Pixels to 20 and hit OK. This will push the boundaries of the selection outwards to include more of the background.



3 Content-Aware Fill With the selection active, go to Edit>Fill. Set the Contents menu to Content-Aware. Untick Color Adaptation and hit OK. The selected subject should vanish, but may leave a blurry edge.



4 Patch tool settings Press Cmd/Ctrl+D to remove the selection. To remove anything left over from the subject, locate the Patch tool (J). In the Options bar, set Patch to Content-Aware, Structure to 5 and Color to 0.



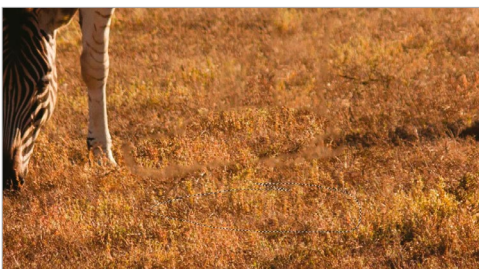
5 Patch things up Use the Patch tool to draw around an area, such as a shadow. Try to select just the shadow with as little background as possible. Drag this selected area over neighbouring pixels to replace.



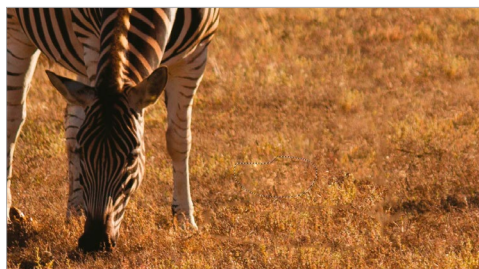
AFTER

A big difference

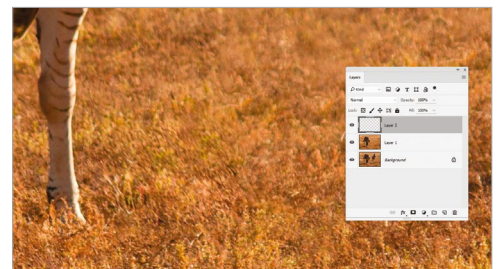
Using a number of Content-Aware and cloning tools, you can patch up areas that are left behind after the removal of a large subject



6 Content-Aware tool The Content-Aware Move tool does a good job at cleaning things up. Set it to Extend, with a Structure of 7, and select an area of 'good' pixels, similar in size to the area being removed.



7 Retouch the scene By dragging and dropping new areas over the fuzzy areas with the Content-Aware Move tool, the image can be retouched. Using the Patch tool set to Normal also helps remove repetitive pixels.



8 Healing pixels If any small areas look fuzzy, add a new layer and use the Clone Stamp tool (S), set to Sample All Layers, to retouch those areas away. Press Opt/Alt to sample good pixels over the bad ones.

Edit with clipping masks in Photoshop

Learn how this often overlooked function can aid your retouching and editing work

Clipping masks play a key role in Photoshop's ability to combine the contents of two layers. They function as a sort of visual image wrap. In this tutorial, you will learn how to combine adjustment layers with clipping masks to make sure that the adjustment only alters the layer underneath. This means you're able to split the image into layers, separate the objects and apply independent adjustments non-destructively to each one.

To illustrate the techniques, here you'll learn how to select one colour in an image and make it the centre of attention by converting the remainder of the image to monochrome. This effect can be produced in many ways in Photoshop using layers and adjustments, but

this is one straightforward example of how clipping masks can be applied with help from selections as well.



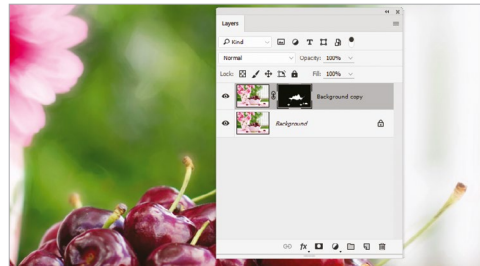
© Pixabay.com (773021)

Above Colour clash

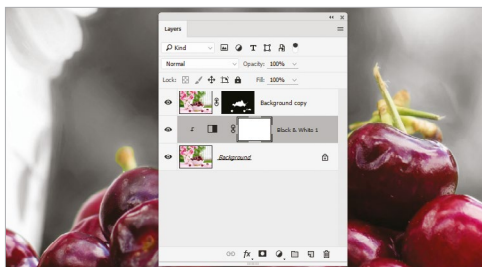
You may have an image with multiple colours that just don't work, or don't have enough colour impact overall



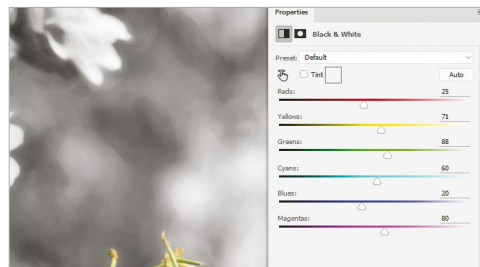
1 Make selection To create this effect with clipping masks, we need the main object in colour on a separate layer. Use the Quick Selection Tool (W) to make a basic selection around the object that'll remain in colour.



2 Apply layer mask With the selection complete, drag the Background layer onto the New Layer button in the Layers palette. Then click the Layer Mask option to apply the selection as a mask.



3 Convert to mono Click the Background layer (the bottom layer), then go to Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Black & White. In the pop-up box, tick the option 'Use Previous Layer to Create Clipping Mask' and hit OK.



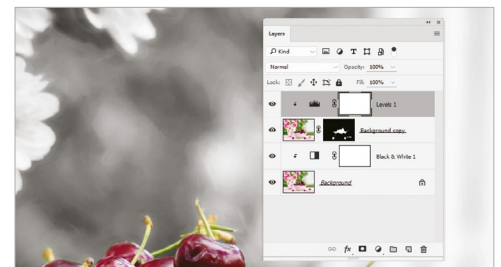
4 Adapt mono effect Alter the colour sliders in the Black & White adjustment layer to create the desired look for the background. We can adapt the colour of the main object separately in the next step.



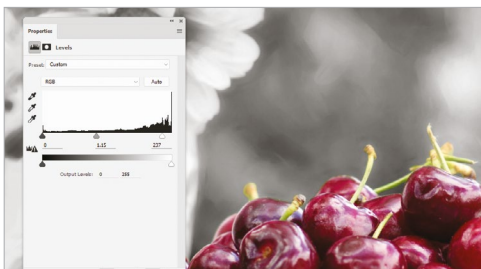
AFTER

Clipped colour adjustments

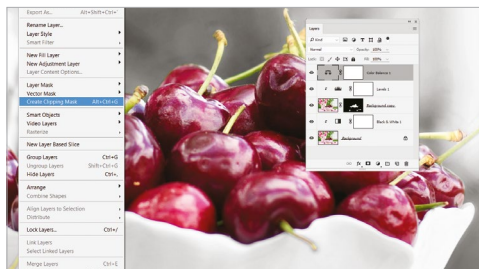
A selective colour effect is ideal for separating the strongest colour from the rest of the image using clipped adjustments



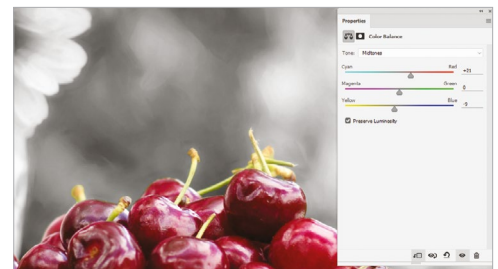
5 Clip an adjustment Click the topmost layer and go to Create New Fill/Adjustment Layer in the Layers palette. Add the Levels adjustment, hold Alt/Opt, then click the line between the adjustment and object layer.



6 Alter Levels adjustment With the Levels adjustment clipped to the layer below, we can edit the brightness and contrast of the main object without affecting the background or any other part of the image.



7 Apply more adjustments Now add the Color Balance adjustment and clip it to the layer below (you can also go to Layer>Create Clipping Mask). Both adjustments should be stacked up with clipping masks applied to both.



8 Edit colour balance Use the Color Balance adjustment to enhance and strengthen the colours of the main object so they stand out. Because it's been clipped to the layer, it won't change the background tone.

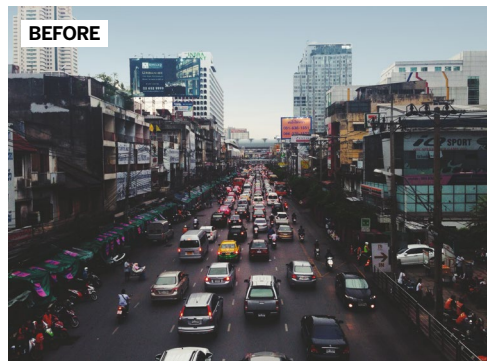
Create a tilt-shift effect

Give your captures a unique perspective twist in Lightroom with this simple tutorial

A style that's become renowned through perspective-control lenses, the tilt-shift look is an increasingly popular effect in photography, with many compact cameras now embracing the effect through creative filters. Yet not all cameras can produce it, and that's when we have call upon Lightroom to re-create this style accurately.

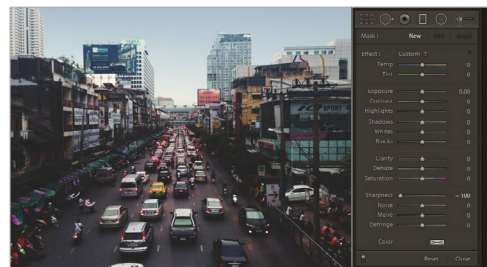
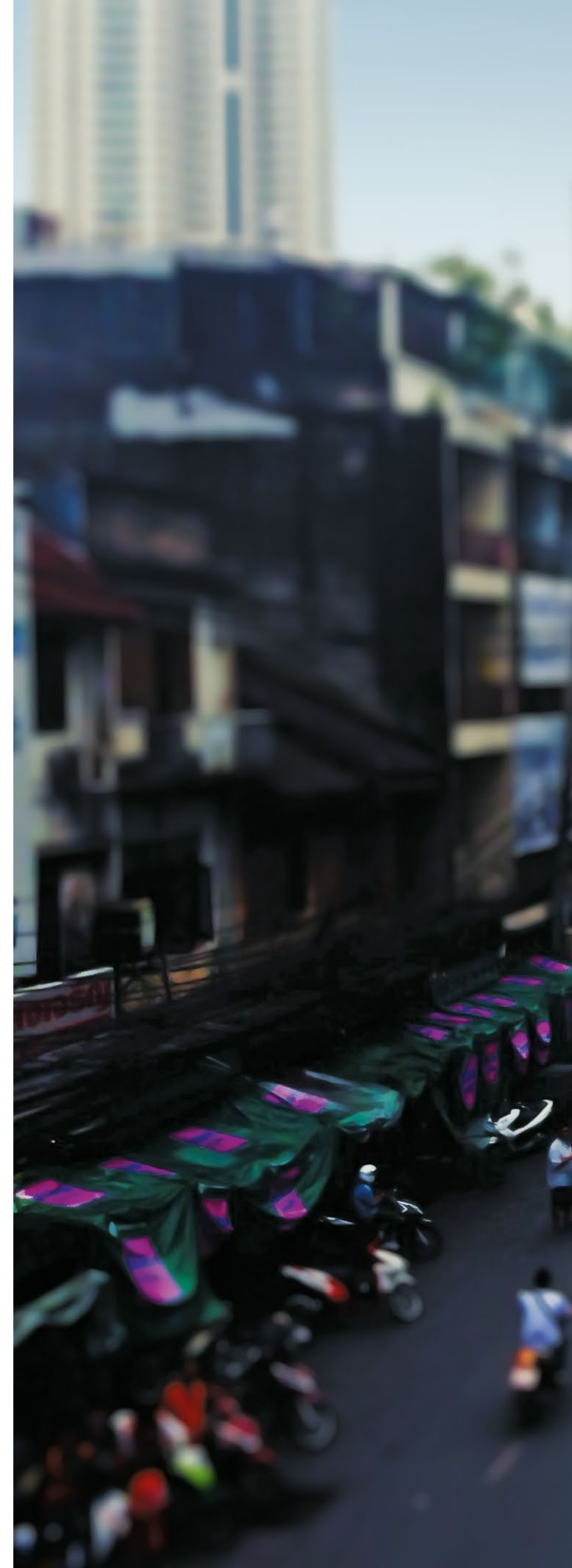
At first glance, it appears impossible to create the tilt-shift look using Lightroom, because there are no blurring adjustments to make the extreme depth of field required. But, fortunately for us, there is a workaround, and this involves using the Sharpness adjustment with the Graduated Filter tool. In fact, it's only possible with Graduated Filters, because we do this by sliding the Filter's Sharpness adjustment into the negative figures, creating an effect opposite to sharpening – blurring!

So go ahead and try this out on your images. Be sure to pick one with a bird's-eye perspective and a busy environment for the most interesting tilt-shift masterpiece.



Left The perfect setup

A good image leads to an even better result – make sure you have an image with an angle similar to this



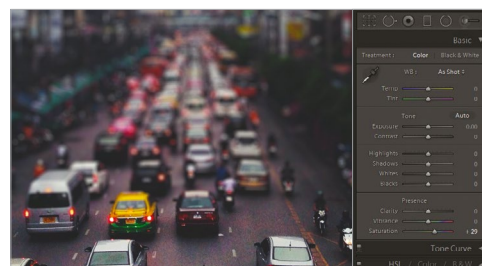
1 Set up Grad filter Load up your image into Lightroom and go to the Develop module. Click on the Graduated Filter tool just the under the Histogram graph. Set the Sharpness slider to -100 inside the list of adjustments.



2 Apply Grad filter To apply the filter, click and drag from the centre of the image downwards. Apply a second Grad filter just below the first and drag it in the opposite direction to make a strip of in-focus pixels.



3 Double up Grad filters Place another set of Grad filters on top by repeating Step 2. Make these larger so as to create more blurring over the background and foreground areas to replicate a perspective-control effect.



4 Boost colours Close the Grad filter's adjustment panel. Inside the Basic adjustments panel, boost the Saturation slider to +30 to increase colours across the whole image for the characteristic toy-camera look.



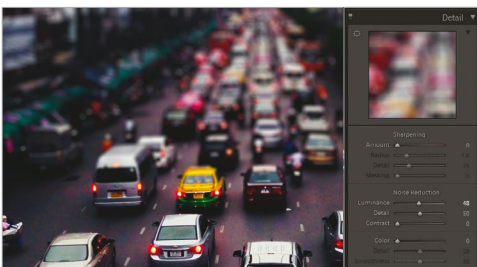
5 Alter Contrast In most cases, the image can do with having more contrast and brighter highlights. Increase the Contrast slider up to about +40 and lower the Blacks and Shadows sliders for deeper contrast still.



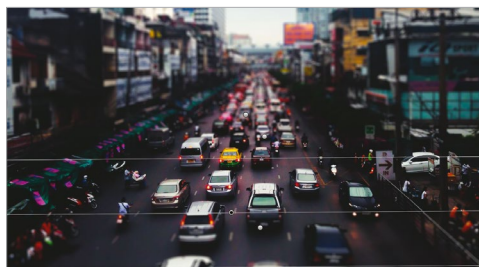
AFTER

More contrast and less detail

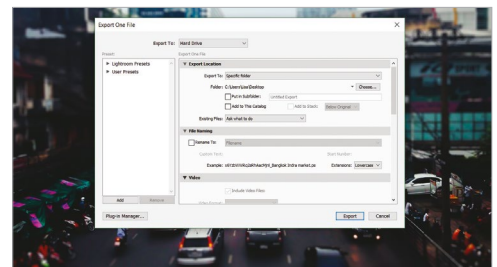
Street objects such as people and cars are made to look artificial by reducing their detail and boosting colour and contrast



6 Noise reduction With these adjustments, you may find your image has acquired noise. Go to Detail adjustments and set the Luminance slider under Noise Reduction to +50, or until the noise begins to disappear.



7 Tweak blur position Now we have the colour and detail looking right, click back on the Graduated Filter icon and carefully position the gradients so that they reveal just enough of the image for the best possible effect.



8 Export To quickly save out the image, right-click on the image and go to Export and select the location on your PC to save it to. Choose file format and set up the various parameters for next time using the presets.



Add a sky with more drama

Give your landscapes atmosphere with moody storm clouds

How often do you arrive at an amazing location, only to find the atmosphere and mood isn't what you wanted?

Perhaps the Sun is too high or the sky is just clear and bland – should you put up with this, or is there another option?

Adding a cloudy or moody sky in post-production is a great way to introduce more drama into your scene, but there are a few tricks to keep in mind.

First, start collecting cloud and sky photographs as soon as possible. Keep a camera with you at all times. Many photographers build a library of potentially helpful skies, ready to make use of them in post-production when the need arises.

If you want the sky to look natural, as though it were really there at the time of capture, use the same lens and approximately the same camera angle to photograph the sky as you did for the landscape. When you're building your cloud and sky library, consider the focal lengths and shooting angles that you most commonly use.

Photographs with complex horizon lines and fine detail are more challenging to edit, unlike a photograph such as the one shown here, which has a relatively simple horizon line.

Right **Ani, eastern Turkey**

The Church of the Holy Redeemer was photographed on a blue-sky day, but this isn't the mood that the photographer wanted to convey. The solution: add in a more impressive sky



BEFORE

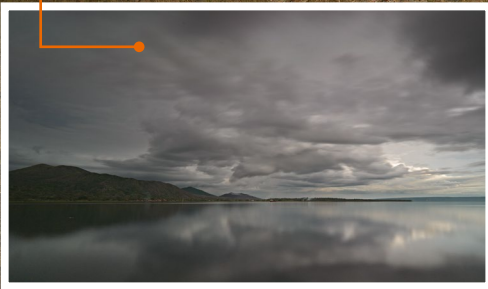
All images © Peter Eastway





PICK A GOOD SKY

Try to match your new sky to the landscape below, both in terms of light, colour and lens angle.



WATCH FOR FINE DETAILS

It can be easy to miss little areas like windows when dropping in a sky – but avoid doing so or you will give the game away.

MATCH THE HORIZON TONES

If you look at real landscapes, the sky is often (but not always) lighter towards the horizon. You may wish to lighten the sky just above the horizon to complete your edit.

BEFORE

1 Open both files in Photoshop

There are many ways you can combine two photographs into a single file. If you're new to layers, begin by opening both the files so you can see them on the screen.

2 Copy sky file

Click on the image of the sky, select all of it (Select>Select All or Ctrl/Cmd+A). Copy it (Edit>Copy or Ctrl/Cmd+C). At this stage you can close the photograph of the sky if you wish.

3 Paste in the sky

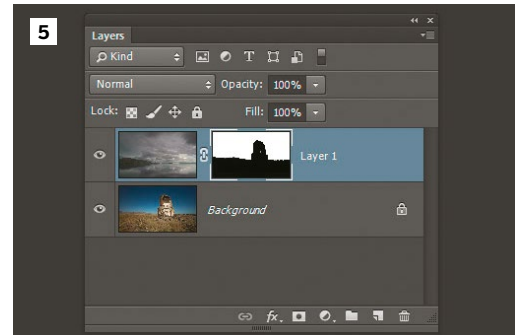
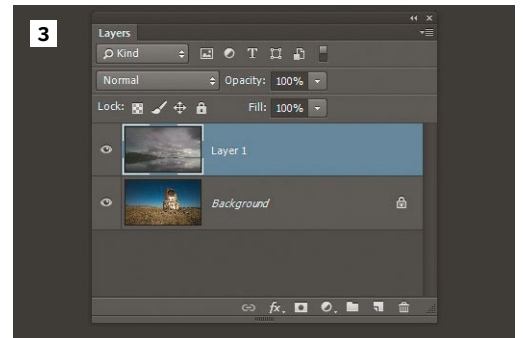
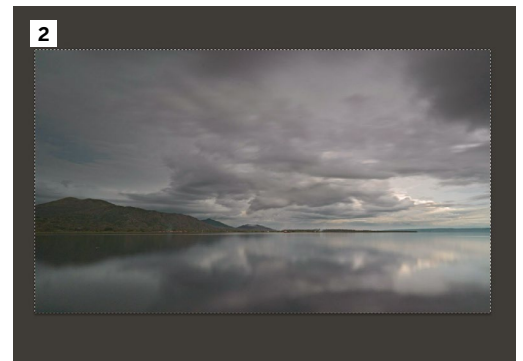
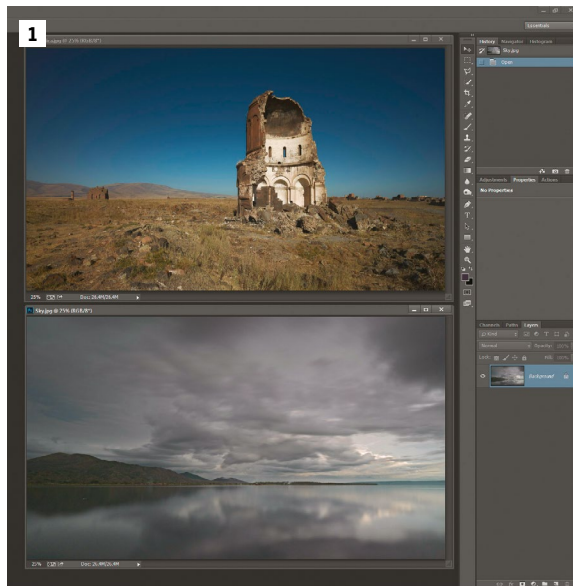
Open the Layers panel (Window>Layers) and ensure the landscape layer is active (click on it). Paste the sky on top (Edit>Paste or Ctrl/Cmd+V). You now have two layers. Hide the sky layer by clicking on the eye icon.

4 Select the sky to remove

Click the landscape layer in the Layers panel and make a selection of the sky. With a blue sky like this, the Quick Selection Tool worked well. It is important to make this selection as accurate as possible.

5 Add a mask

In the Layers panel turn on the sky layer (click the eye icon) and make it active. Now click the Add Mask icon at the bottom of the Layers panel or Layer>Layer Mask>From Transparency.

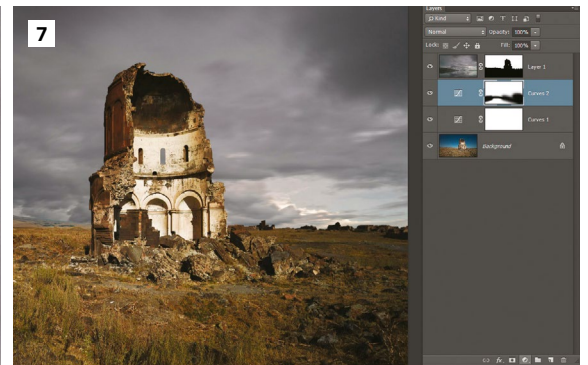
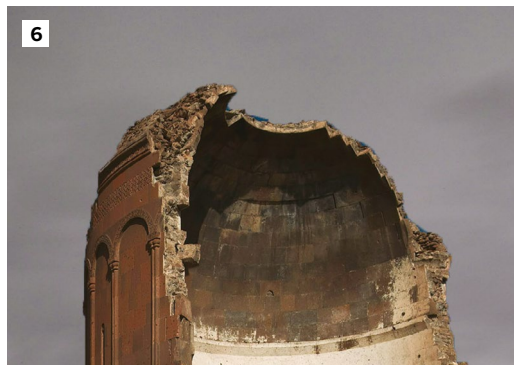




AFTER

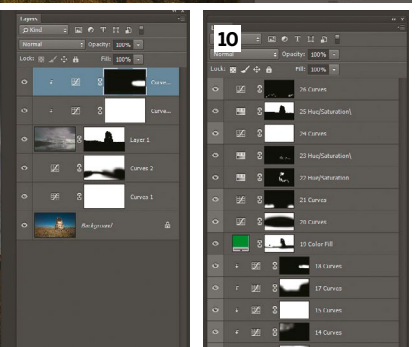
An atmospheric improvement
While not ideal for a travel brochure, the final rendition is much closer to the feeling and atmosphere the photographer had in mind

6 Refine the mask Enlarge your image view up to 100 or 200% and look carefully along the edges where the sky meets your landscape. For a perfect result, you may need to adjust the mask by painting on it with a small white or black brush.

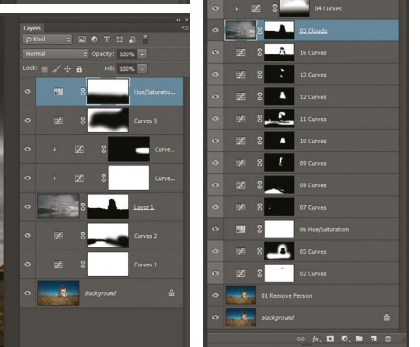


7 Add interest below Use adjustment layers to add colour, contrast and interest to the landscape below. Place the adjustment layers below the sky layer and the adjustments will not affect the sky.

8 Add interest above To add colour, contrast and interest to the sky, add your adjustment layers above the sky layer, but then create a Clipping Mask (Layer>Create Clipping Mask) so it only affects the image layer directly below.



9 Refine the edit To edit the image as a whole (both the sky and the landscape below), just add in adjustment layers at the top of the Layers panel as normal, and don't create a Clipping Mask.



10 No limit with layers The final image uses a total of 27 layers and adjustments layers, but each layer is just a small adjustment, refining and perfecting the rendition. How many layers you add is up to you!

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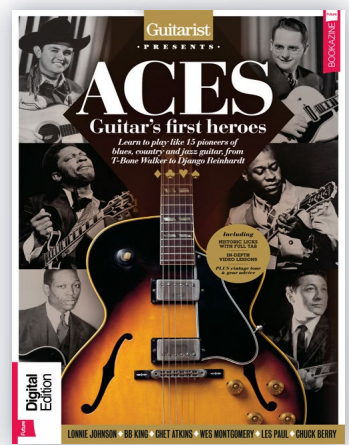
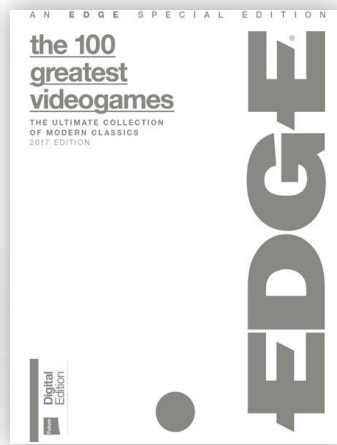


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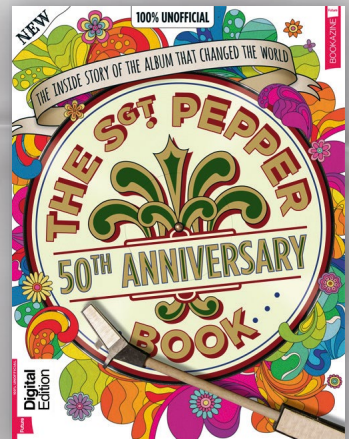
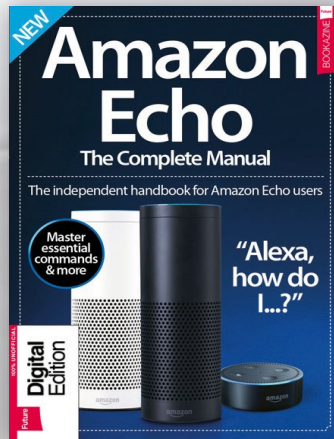
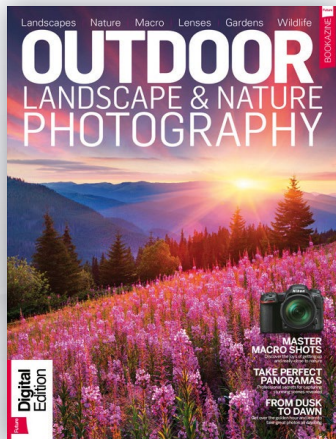


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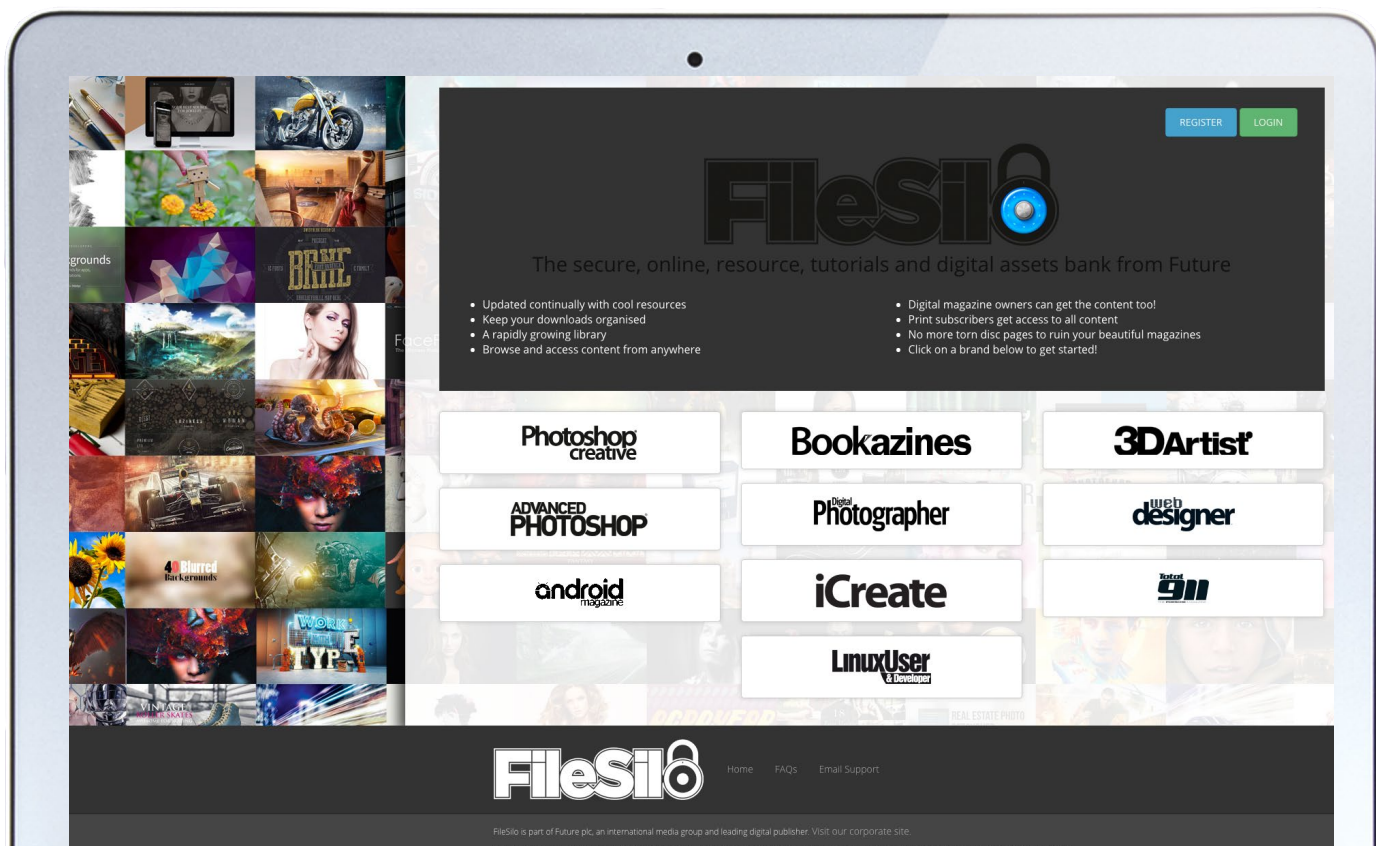
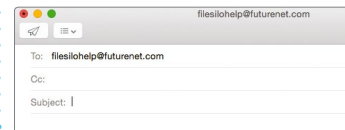
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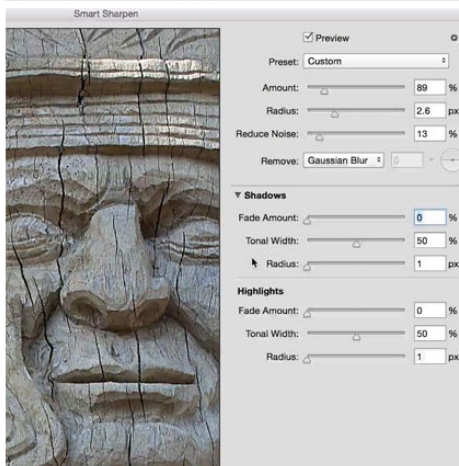
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