



Newsletter

**BRACKNELL
CAMERA
CLUB**

Issue
Number

53

May
2006



Editorial

By Ruari Cumming

I'm just back from photographing 7 Hebridean islands over the last 3 weeks & find it just as wet down here as it was up there ! I have to admit that this year the weather was not good for extended periods of snapping & when it was it became a frantic rush to record everything whilst the light held out. However I did realise that a digital camera could have saved me from wasting film on shots subsequently retaken later. I am now, more than ever before, committed to going 'full frame' 35mm digital.

This is helped by my good wife offering a substantial sum, as my 60th birthday gift, for me to purchase the right camera. So far so good, until I came to read the user manuals, downloaded off the Canon NZ website. These tell me I have to set the white balance, tinker with the colour temperature, adjust the ISO speed, select a shooting mode & meddle with picture styles. Phew - whatever happened to just bunging in a roll of film & shooting away ?

Strikes me I have a good chance of cocking it all up before I even press the shutter button ! But then we are told that's progress. At least a roll of Fujichrome Velvia 50 will reproduce the image faithfully & with vibrant colours - it "does exactly what it says on the tin !" So which camera do I go for ? The EOS 1Ds Mk II at £4,600 & the nearest rival to my EOS 1 VHS or the EOS 5D at £1,600. Or I could take a leaf out of John Bickerdike's book & wait to see what the Photokina show in Cologne has to offer in September. Perhaps the rumoured EOS 3D ?

In the meantime I may just have bought the last 10 rolls of Fujichrome Velvia 50 left in the UK !

During the summer many of us meet up every Thursday evening (8 p.m.) at the White Horse, East-hampstead Road, Wokingham (Tel: 0118 978 1025), just east of Star Lane level crossing. As we buy our own drinks, no one is expected to buy a round ! Chat is usually about photography & some personal experiences, often humorous, thrown in for luck. We would love to see anybody who can make it.



Times they are a Changing

By Graham Panton

I imagine most people in photography are surprised at just how quickly the change to digital has been. This has clearly taken many manufacturers by surprise too. Big names such as Kodak, who were into digital very early on, have found it a tough market place. Even with their considerable 'clout', have recently pulled out of the digital SLR market although they are still a major player in sensor manufacturing as well as other areas of digital photography. So I guess it is no surprise that some of the smaller camera manufacturers are beginning to disappear or at least get swallowed up by larger companies. Contax has now disappeared with no one appearing to be interested in buying the name and Pentax have been taken over by Samsung. They have just released the first Samsung DSLR although this appears to be just a badge change. How long will it be before the Pentax name disappears I wonder ?

Minolta, who were taken over by Konica a couple of years ago, have now said that after their merger with Sony they are going to cease using the Minolta name on any cameras. Any future DSLR will have the Sony name on it. This might not be such a bad move as Sony have had a tie up with Zeiss for some years using their lenses on top model stills cameras and camcorders. As Zeiss have now said that they are going to release their lenses to fit Nikon cameras then I guess they will find their way on to future Sony (Minolta) DSLR's which would be no bad thing. However will these future Sony DSLR's come complete with the technology that has made Sony famous ? Perhaps they will include a built in MP3 player or digital radio or even allow you to surf the internet. With a large enough rear screen perhaps you will be able to play solitaire or the latest games whilst waiting for that break in the weather or sunset to materialise.

.../contd.

Everyone expects quality camera phones to be the next best thing so why not have phones in cameras ! Although walking around with a DSLR held to the side of your face whilst talking might be a step too far.

So where does this leave the other smaller manufacturers. Olympus appears to be ok at the moment having just released two DSLR's (E-500 & E-330) and extra lenses. They also have a pretty good back up system of lenses (some expensive) etc. so perhaps they will survive. Recently Leica very nearly disappeared but seem to have managed to restructure so perhaps their future is also assured. Fuji still has their Nikon clone although the latest Mk3 version has had a rather lukewarm reception. Mamiya and Hasselblad are still with us but Bronica are not and Rollei seem very quiet. The larger format and specialist camera makers (like Sinar) appear to be still going but I guess theirs was always a niche market anyway.

Meanwhile Canon and Nikon go from strength to strength trading upgrade for upgrade. I feel however that it would be a shame if we are only left with these big two as it is usually the smaller manufacturers that come up with the interesting innovations. Minolta (Sony !) have their very useful image or sensor stabiliser system built into the camera body allowing hand holding at much lower shutter speeds on ALL their lenses. Leica have their interchangeable back system for swapping from film to digital (and back again if you want) using the same camera body and lenses. Olympus has their sensor (CCD) cleaning system (a problem highlighted by Chris Bradley in Newsletter 51) and is the only manufacturer to address this rather important and potentially expensive problem so far. Olympus has also just released their E-330 DSLR which gives a live view on the rear screen which also tilts. This is very useful for candid photography and can also be used for critical focussing as the live image can be magnified up to 10 times ! Very clever. (This differs from the Fuji system where the mirror has to be locked in the up position). Meanwhile Sigma uses a totally different 'Foveron' CCD which is very good but ultimately a little noisy at medium and high ISO settings and could do with a few more pixels. Perhaps a newer version (in a different lens mount ?) would give Sigma greater recognition as a camera manufacturer.

Canon & Nikon appear to lack this type of flare but do have the edge with regards camera software and processing know how together with the ability to produce a true range of cameras, lenses, accessories & CCD's (CMOS) in Canon's case.

As always you pay your money.....

I do wonder just where we will be in say another two years time and just how many of the current familiar names in photography will have gone the way of Agfa (and very nearly Ilford) to become a distant memory. Will anyone really care ? By then perhaps anyone wanting a new film SLR will be disappointed and have to buy second hand or perhaps a 'Far East' copy. In our throw away society how many of today's D200's and D5's will still be in use in say five years time ? Anyone have any thoughts ?



Workshops, cold winds, books and bridges

By Janice Bradley

After so many kind and encouraging comments about my article in the January newsletter, I thought it was time to write another, about what I have been doing photographically over the last

few months – you only have yourselves to blame !

January saw me attending the much awaited 'picture critique' workshop on the 10th. This was an extremely enjoyable evening spent with about 12 members of the club, not least because at last someone other than myself sees the point of taking photographs under the A329M !



Before Workshop

As a new member, it was very interesting matching images from some of the competitions with their photographers, and seeing which style of photography belonged to which member.

During the evening we split into 2 groups (which shuffled around for the later part of the workshop) and took it in turns to show the group one of our photographs for comments.

Comments ranged from how composition may be improved (either by cropping or re-shooting) to suggestions on whether exposure/printing was too dark/light, and if lighting could have been improved in any way. All comments were constructive & positive,



After Workshop

.../contd.

and I certainly came away feeling I had gained ideas on how to improve both the photographs I had taken for discussion, and future shots. I thoroughly enjoyed myself, and am hoping Peter Handford will repeat the workshop soon. I promise not to bring quite so many prints next time !

In the last article I wrote, I mentioned learning my lesson about making sure I had saved my digital photo files correctly before deleting them from my camera.

Well, this time I have learnt another lesson (again, the hard way). The lesson this time was not to try and take photographs outside when it is freezing cold and blowing a gale, because you get the most dreadful camera shake, especially when you try to do it without a tripod. This is mainly due to violent shivering or being blown over (the tripod would probably have suffered the same fate in that instance !)

It took a family outing to the zoo in late February to learn this lesson. Having shot about 100 frames of various animals, despite the camera trying to seize up several times due to the icy cold winds whipping around us, I ended up having to delete two thirds of them, as despite various fleecy layers and woolly gloves, I was incapable of holding my camera steady. I do possess a tripod, but had decided it would be too much of an encumbrance, especially with my lively 7 year old in tow, and always feel uncomfortable and very conspicuous carting a tripod around.

Despite all this, I did manage to get some reasonable shots of the penguins, and the

white rhinos were a good excuse to use my telephoto lens to take some lovely textural shots of their leathery skin, caked in mud. Sadly, a lot

of the photos are still on the soft side and not up to competition standard in my opinion. And I have to tell you, my husband thinks they are all out of focus anyway – if the entire picture is not completely sharp from front to back, he thinks it is out of focus - the philistine has no idea about depth of field !

So, having realised more outdoor shots were out of the question until the weather warms up by at least 10° Celsius, I decided to venture to the library instead and read some photography books.

Since moving over from film to digital, I have been struggling to get correct exposures.



of the photos are still on the soft side and not up to competition standard in my opinion. And I have to tell you, my husband thinks they are all out of focus anyway – if the entire picture is not completely sharp from front to back, he thinks it is out of focus - the philistine has no idea about depth of field !



I never seemed to have any problems with my old Cannon AE1 program – it was as though the camera knew instinctively what I wanted – backlit subjects were perfect silhouettes when I wanted them, and correctly exposed when I didn't. However, my 20D doesn't seem to be quite as clever, and often burns out highlights and under exposes all backlit subjects, no matter what effect I am after. I have been trying to use exposure compensation with some success, but it all seems a bit hit and miss.

Anyway, I found the perfect book:-

'Understanding Exposure (revised edition)' by Bryan Peterson. This book starts with the basics (probably a good thing for me), working through what exposure is and how to use it creatively. It moves on to how to use aperture and speed to achieve various different effects, and most importantly for me, talks about the different types of light, where it comes from, and how or where to meter to get the exposure correct.

Throughout the book it reiterates what most photographers already know - that the best light is available when you don't wish to get up out of bed, are trying to feed the family the evening meal, or are putting the kids to bed.

Another subject discussed in the book that I found interesting was that of 'hyper focal distance' (which I have seen mentioned in a few magazines, but not understood what it actually was), where you use the aperture and distance settings on the camera to get maximum depth of field (my husband would probably like me to use this all the time !)

Depth of field extends beyond the point of focus as follows:

- One third in front and two thirds beyond.
- For macro, one quarter in front and one half beyond.

This means when focusing at infinity, you are wasting two thirds/one half of your depth of field.

To obtain the hyper focal distance you



should focus on infinity, set the appropriate aperture, then read the near limit from the depth of field indicator, and re-focus to that distance.

For example, with an aperture of f8 and focusing at infinity, the depth of field indicator shows that depth of field begins at 10m and extends beyond infinity. .../contd.

If you then reset the focus to 10m, focus will extend from 5m to infinity.

(When set at the hyper focal distance, the near limit is always half that of the hyper focal distance and extends to infinity).

However, having discovered this gem, I can't work out how to put it into practise on my 20D. Not only does it lack a depth of field indicator, it doesn't appear to have a means of telling me at what distance I am focusing !

Between the time it took for me to start writing this article and reading the draft on the computer (several days), something strange happened.



Following a cycle ride with our 7 year old, my husband returned to tell me he had seen something I might want to photograph. He suggested I went with them the next day to have a look. Now, either he knows me better than I thought, he is humouring me, or he just wants me to go cycling with them. Whichever one it is,

he was right.

Later that day (just before the evening meal !) I dragged my reluctant assistant (daughter Amy) out to the spot. Yes, you guessed; it was underneath another road/bridge.

I took a whole array of shots, trying out some of the suggestions from the afore mentioned book.

The bridge is very near to a building with a spiral staircase on the outside, which I often drive past and had wanted to photograph for sometime. So off we went – conveniently there was a high grass bank that I could climb for a better view point. Now imagine the look of horror from my daughter when I tell her there is a bank of crocuses on the other side, promptly lie on the ground and take a few shots of the bridge from this new view point.



It's official – I am totally weird and completely embarrassing ! But I'm very pleased with the shots I took.

A message from your Editor

I would also like to thank all those members who have contributed to our newsletter this year with articles and items of interest. I am sure you have had as much enjoyment reading them as I have in collecting & publishing them. Many of you have told me how much you enjoy reading our newsletter.

I am always looking for new ideas for this newsletter, so if you want to see something in particular, you have only to ask. However, the newsletter can only survive if we have a steady flow of items to publish. You may not believe this, but you are all "budding" authors. Writing is not as difficult as you think, so here are a few pointers as to what I am looking for to get you into black & white, and read (!)

Articles can be any length you like. A page here is about 800 words, but more or less is always welcome. If it is long, then I may want to serialise it over a couple of publication dates, providing this doesn't ruin the story line. Ideally they ought to be related to photography & should be your own work, not "lifted" from somewhere else, as if you would !

Normally, items are in Microsoft Word, but if not don't worry, we'll find a way around it. Don't bother to try & format your article into columns etc as I will do that for you. It can be put on a floppy disc, or a CD or e-mailed to me – which ever is easiest for you.

We do like to see some photos too. One of the author is really a must so that readers know who he or she is. I can quite happily come & take your photo for you, if it will help. Ideally, if you do provide me with any electronic photos please don't bother reducing their physical size or pixel dimensions as I will do that for you and they can be any format you like. Alternatively, I could do any flatbed or film scanning for you. Naturally, you will need to have full copyright of any photos published & if you want them displayed in any particular positions, to illustrate your article, you have only to tell me.

So delivery can be on e-mail to: ruari@hebridean-island-images.com or by 3½" floppy disc (holds 1.4 Mb of data – enough for the written words anyway) or by CD or DVD, if you are able to burn the data & images onto one. If you need to call me during the summer months, then please do, on 01344-779509 (ex directory)

Photo Sayings Taking pictures is like panning for gold - you do it again and again, and sometimes you find a nugget.....*Raghubir Singh*

Have a good sunny summer & see you all again in September !