

Newsletter

**BRACKNELL
CAMERA
CLUB**

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Editorial

By Ruari Cumming

I recall, when I was still working for the corporate “fat cats”, that my boss continually phoned me asking for “good news stories” for him to include in his reports to his “masters”. This became an onerous task as not all that was happening in my work world could be classed in such a way. The fact that it was “business as normal”, my “profits continue to grow” and “I am substantially up on last year” were, for some inane reason, not considered “good news stories”. So in desperation & attempting to get him off my back so that I could get on with my work I once told him that I was “squeezing the supplier till his pips squeaked”. He thought that just the thing for his report !

But that being said, it is good news to report some eight club members turned out to observe the judging workshop/appraisal day held recently near Winchester. The rallying call from our President had hit the mark & those attending were keen to see what judging was all about & the process that was needed to become a Southern Federation judge. Here, in a later article, Jeff Lawrence explains well what happened and how he coped with the prints he was given to comment on.

Jeff fully intended to be appraised. On the other hand, I was there to observe but had a desire to start ringing the changes in the type of judges we see. In the last issue I quoted “..old and hackneyed judges..”. Well I know I’m no spring chicken but I do want to see a change of attitude by judges, towards the more unusual images. If someone shows a contemporary or “off the wall” image, it should be judged & scored within the context of what message the photographer is portraying & not just given a 4 with words from the judge of “...I don’t understand it”. Let’s try & break out from clichéd images. Let’s give contemporary workers a good & fair run for their money. Whether I can do this in my new role as an accredited PAGB judge remains to be seen, but believe me, my judging style will be more open and I’ll “...squeeze till the pips squeak...” if I have to !!



Your chance to be a judge !
Take part in the
**BRACKNELL CAMERA CLUB
PORTFOLIO
Competition**

Enter one 35mm slide or digital image only. Slides spotted on the left hand bottom corner. You will have the chance to score & comment on every other image entered in this fun ‘round robin’ contest. Simply submit your slide or digital image (maximum size 1050 pixels high by 1400 pixels wide) on any subject, make it well exposed and sharp and to get good comments make it different or a real bit of fun !
As this is now a digital image competition any slides will be scanned and entered as digital images. A cup for the winner and a bottle of wine for the best comment !
Please hand your entries to Chris Bradley on a memory stick or better still send it to chrisandeb@tesco.net

Judge and be Judged

**Notes from the Southern
Federation Judging Workshop**

By Jeff Lawrence

The idea of becoming a judge had never occurred to me but the opportunity of finding out how judges think (assuming that some of them do) and so improving my chances of winning competitions was very appealing. So I took up the call to attend the Southern Fed’s Judging Workshop and, in a weak moment, volunteered to be assessed at the end of it.

The day started well, with a strong representation from our club providing a safe base to explore from and meet the established judges and my fellow aspirants to be Class B judges, eight of us altogether. There then followed a number of encouraging talks extolling the joys of judging including an inspirational one by Ken Scott (judge of our last Exhibition) and a thoroughly practical one by our own beloved President, recently promoted to the rank of Class A (i.e. senior) judge. Finally, a heartfelt message came from Bryan Powell on the cost of being a judge, as he believes that he, and all other judges, subsidise the system due to the inadequate travel expenses allowed. Despite this warning, and with no one withdrawing, there were two more



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volunteers for assessment, including our own Ruari Cumming. Clearly, the potential for power outweighs the certainty of having to pay for it.

There followed some practice sessions, where groups of assessees (and non-assessees) tried our hand at judging some prints under the guidance of established judges. This went well, my biggest problem being to shut up and let other members have a chance to say their piece. This was a cruel irony as when it came to the assessment proper and I was chosen to be first to give my opinions to the audience of around sixty souls, I had some difficulty in speaking at all, let alone being articulate, relevant, congruent and empathic (to use some of the jargon we had learned that morning).

The four prints I was asked to pronounce on were a landscape, a portrait, an architectural image and a wildlife one (as were the sets to all the other applicants) with only a minute or so to look at them before holding forth. Now in my life till now I must have given a hundred talks and taken almost as many exams but I swear that this was the most nerve-wracking of any, at least since my teenage days. Fortunately, I started with the portrait, more of a street scene actually, and the wildlife print – a beautiful shot of a sea eagle (perhaps) flying low over a lake with a salmon (probably) in its talons. These were straight forward to understand and offered plenty of opportunity for praise and a little constructive criticism.

The difficulties began with the architectural image – a scene of a building interior in soft greyscale with an elevator and walls making a pleasing pattern of intersecting lines and planes - taken from an unusual angle and printed at an angle to the mount. It was part way through my explanation of the effect of this original approach to an essentially linear geometric construction that I realised there was an ellipse in the image with a small figure at its focus and I had to peer closely at the image and try to modify my assessment on the fly. Even worse was the final print, a landscape comprising half of a line of grey trees (aspens?) in the Ansel Adams mode above a field of brightly coloured grass (I think). In principle I dislike these bare tree shots, which I think are mostly poor copies of the Adams original, but bearing in mind the morning's enjoinders to be positive, I struggled to find something good to say about it.

The relief at the end of this drama was great, supported by kind words from my friends, and only slightly diluted by watching the performances of the other aspirants, most of whom gave themselves better introductions than I had and many (including Ruari) appearing to be supremely confident in themselves and their presentations. The whole exercise certainly made a strong impression on me, to the point where I

suffered flashbacks for the following week, dreaming of the images and finding things I ought to have said, particularly about that wretched landscape. I would say that this constitutes the hitherto unknown condition of PDSO, or Post Dramatic Stress Disorder.

After nearly two weeks of agonising uncertainty (how do A-Level students cope with their 2-month wait ?) I finally got the letter to say I had been accepted and would go on the list at the next printing, probably next Summer. This means that by the time it comes to judge for real, I'll have forgotten everything I learned on the Workshop so if you see me at our internal competitions sitting in a corner and muttering to myself, it's not the early signs of madness, only me trying to keep in practice.



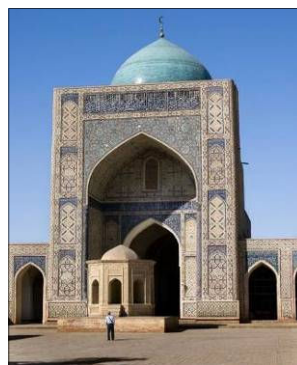
Bukhara & Khiva

By Peter Ellis

Peter concludes his trilogy of travels in Central Asia

The journey to Bukhara, including a stop in Shakhrisabz, the birthplace of the

emperor Timur, took the best part of a day and driving into Bukhara the domes and minarets were silhouetted against the deep blue and orange of the evening sky. The town originated as an oasis in the surrounding Kyzylkum Desert and, with a history stretching back to the sixth century BC, Bukhara was once deemed to be Central Asia's holiest city and the old town still has a warren of streets and alleys that lead to mosques, minarets and domed bazaars. The 48 meter high



Kalon Minaret dominates the area and is next door to its tranquil namesake mosque and the twin domes of the adjacent Mir-I-Arab madrassah, one of the few religious schools still open and taking students. The Kalon minaret so impressed Genghis Khan that he spared it whilst all around was destroyed. The area around these buildings is patrolled by young teenage girls whose command of languages and ability to extract and remember the first name of every tourist in the square is extraordinary. Having viewed the mosque and minaret/contd

you are then politely cajoled, by name, into viewing their souvenir stalls where some good-natured bargaining can take place.

Other photographic destinations in Bukhara include the peaceful, poolside Bolo-Hauz Mosque with its slender, elegantly carved wooden pillars and, very nearby, the somewhat forbidding Ark Fortress. As old as Bukhara itself and home to the rulers of Bukhara for over a thousand

years, its dark history contains many references to the mad rulers, the cruelty and the beheadings that have taken place here behind its massive walls



Ark Fortress

during its long existence. In complete contrast is the mulberry tree-shaded Lyabi-Hauz area with its poolside *chaikanas* or teahouses, its old men playing checkers and backgammon while the wives gossip nearby sitting on wooden divans. The four sky-blue towers of the quirky Chor Minor building (one of the town's younger buildings of interest) and the Ismail Samani Mausoleum, the town's oldest Muslim monument, are also deserving of the photographer's time. The khaki-coloured brick and stonework of these and the other Bukharan buildings mentioned were complimented by the cloudless blue skies that we experienced throughout this journey.

The final destination on our tour, Khiva, required an eight hour bus ride through the Kyzylkum Desert, close along the eastern frontier of Turkmenistan. Khiva was one of the most remote of Central Asia's Silk Road cities and its walled old town, Ichon-Qala, is preserved almost in its entirety. Some guidebooks complain of its museum-like feel but I found the place to be atmospheric & fascinating, and photographically interesting. Many families still live in the narrow streets and alleys and walking the

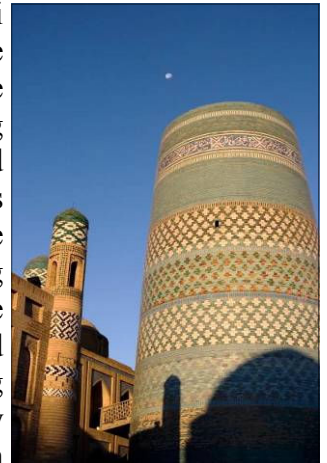


Khiva backstreet

quiet streets at dawn you come across the women sweeping doorsteps and drawing water from the many wells that are located under the streets. In common with Bukhara but much smaller, Khiva has an Ark or citadel dating from the first millennium but extensively expanded throughout the 17th to 19th Centuries. The building complex contained an arsenal, jail, mint, throne room, harem and the beautiful open-air Summer Mosque

decorated with superb tile work. Back in the old city, relief from the heat can be found in the dim, coolness of the Juma Mosque, renowned for its forest of 213 wooden roof pillars, some from the 10th century.

The Tash Hauli palace contained the Khan's harem with the cooler north facing apartments being reserved for the four legal wives and offspring whilst the female relatives & serving girls of the wives were housed in the hotter and more austere south-facing quarters. Here, as in many of the other palaces in Khiva, intricately carved slim wooden pillars on carved marble bases decorate the buildings.



Kalta Minor Minaret

So, when not sightseeing & photographing, what can the traveller do in Uzbekistan? Shop, of course. Best buys? Wood carvings, silly ethnic hats, silk scarves I was informed are very good value and, of course, there are carpets and rugs. With export taxes paid, a good silk rug was approximately half the price you would pay in the UK. Better brush up on those haggling skills, though.

Uzbekistan's weather? Cold winters and very hot summers so spring and autumn are the best times to visit. For us in late September the weather was perfect. The food? If you like lamb kebabs/shashlik, pilaf and chewy bread you'll be in heaven. Personally, I didn't find the cuisine to be the highlight of the holiday but the beer was O.K. and at least there weren't any sheep's eyeballs. So in summary, great weather, stunning architecture, friendly people & few tourists - that sounds good to me. And it really was.



My Favourite Photoshop Tip

By Bruce Collins

The number one rule in Photoshop is to make changes with "adjustment layers" rather than make permanent changes to the underlying image itself. Unfortunately the "Dodge and Burn" tools in Photoshop don't work this way. Instead, I have adopted a method advocated in "Digital Photo"

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magazine which has the effect of creating a “dodge and burn” adjustment layer. It works equally well in Elements as in full Photoshop.

- 1) Create a new layer above the image, and change its blending mode from “normal” to “overlay”.
- 2) Make sure your foreground and background colours are black and white (press ‘D’)
- 3) Use the paintbrush tool (‘B’), and set the opacity to a very low level; 4 to 8% works well. Select the size and softness of the brush, and perhaps the air-brush option too.
- 4) In this new layer paint black over the parts of the image you want to darken (“burn”) and white over the parts you want to lighten (“dodge”). Pressing ‘X’ will swap between black and white.

The great part of this is that you can study the effect by switching the layer off and on; moderate the impact by reducing the opacity of the layer, and backtrack by using the eraser (press ‘E’) on the bits you don’t like.

The weaknesses are that it won’t work well on burning-in almost white areas, and it lacks the ability of the Photoshop tools to selectively act on shadows, midtones or highlights. Try it and let me know what you think.

(approximately 6 microns square). The imaging area on a CCD sensor is generally 15.6mm by 23.7mm which is the same format as a 35mm film but only 2/3 the size. This means that with a standard 50mm lens on such a CCD sensor, the effective focal length of the lens will be $50\text{mm} \times 1.5 = 75\text{mm}$. (This does not apply to DSLR’s fitted with a “full frame” sensor such as the Canon EOS 5D range and 1Ds range ..*Ed*)

In front of the CCD sensor is a filter with an array of layers called the low – pass anti aliasing filter – this is a bit of a mouthful but firstly ensures that if you take images that contain very close lines or very fine detail those lines will not coincide with the sets of pixels in the sensor causing strange patterns known as moiré effects. Although not visible to the human eye, a CCD sensor can detect infrared light, this can cause loss of sharpness, reduced contrast and colour shifts so an anti-reflective IR layer is included to eliminate IR light passing to the sensor.

A CCD sensor is most efficient when light is striking it perpendicular to its surface so a range of micro lenses is included in a layer to direct the light in this fashion.

As a CCD sensor can only detect levels of brightness and not colour, a Bayer Pattern Filter is introduced, this layer has series of minute red, green and blue filters arranged in an alternating pattern of red/green on the odd numbered rows and green/blue on the even rows. The final image thus contains 50% green, 25% red and 25% blue but is reconstructed by interpolating the values at each pixel.

This is how the Nikon CCD sensor works but I am sure the basic theory should apply to all CCD sensors. Other manufacturers may use different terminology or have sensors of differing sizes. If in doubt, then do read your camera’s user manual. (if they gave you one !!*Ed*)

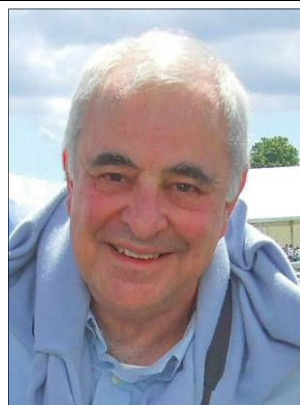


Know more about your digital camera sensor

By Chris Bradley

The sensor that detects all the information for your digital images is better known as a Charge Coupled Device (CCD) sensor and has somewhere between 5 million and 13 million “photosites” or pixels which are very small

and finally a poem,
brought to us
by Tony
Moussalli,
entitled



Why am I so fabulous ?
What makes me truly great ?
What would life be without me ?
It’s hard to contemplate.

No snaps of Brangelina or Paris hard at play,
No photo books of models’ looks, their nipples on display,
No pages in the glossies of retouched wannabes,
No sexy ads in foreign mags to make you wish ‘Yes please!’

No entourage, no autographs, no contracts by the score,
No makeup vans in sunny lands or studio hands galore,
No billboards straddling city streets with body parts gigantic,
Nor me with glass in premiere class crisscrossing the Atlantic.

So why am I so famous ?
What makes me highly sought ?
Let’s call it art, but ’cause I’m smart,
I’m happy to be bought.

PHOTOGRAPHER

by Michael Roberts

From "The Catty Catalogue of Stylish Casualties"
(published by Collins Designs 2008)