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SUMMER 2025

Better Photography



Len Metcalf Asks: Are you taking TOO many photos?

JOHN DOODY'S COMPOSITES • STEVE QUIRK'S ASTRO APPROACH

NICK MELIDONIS REFLECTIONS • MICHAEL COYNE'S PHOTO POWER





KEEPERS

PHOTOGRAPHER: Peter Eastway

LOCATION: Outside Bwindi, Uganda

CAMERA: Fujifilm X-H2, 56mm f1.2

EXPOSURE: 1/120 second @ f5.6, ISO 125

SITUATION: Pattern shots are great, especially when you add in a point of difference. When I first walked past this cabbage patch, I loved the repetition, but I thought it would look so much better with a farmer or a person in the field. As I walked further along the road, my guide Mehmet was talking to a couple of women – and one of them was just the person I needed. For a small compensatory gesture, she was only too happy to take a wander.





KEEPERS

PHOTOGRAPHER: Peter Eastway

LOCATION: Manarola, Cinque Terre, Italy

CAMERA: Fujifilm GFX100S II, 20-35mm GF Fujinon zoom

EXPOSURE: 120 seconds @ f10, ISO 80, ND filter

SITUATION: This is the classic Cinque Terre photo of Manarola village clinging to the sides of the cliffs next to the Mediterranean Sea. Everyone takes this photograph and the location is beset with tourists and travellers taking their own version with their smartphones. You have to be patient to get your spot next to the rubbish bin on the second terrace, and once you have it, set up your tripod quickly and ward away all smartphone wielders until your time exposure is finished. Still, it was a lot of fun – and you can check out the ICM version later in the magazine.



Cover photo by John Doody.
See article on page 18.

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Photo by Peter Eastway. See article on page 58.



Photo by Peter Eastway. See article on page 88.

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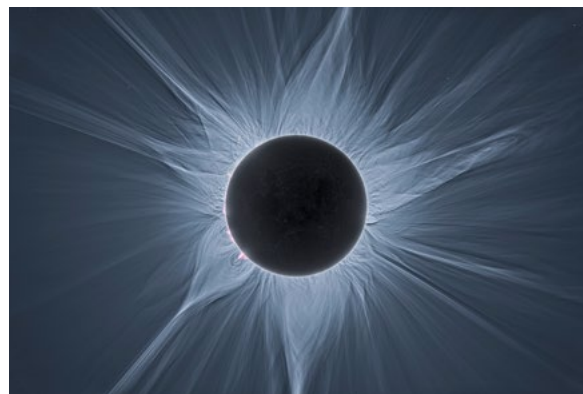


Photo by Phil Hart. See article on page 38.



Photo by Steve Quirk. See article on page 28.

Hasselblad X2D 100C

Possibly the most common 'objection' medium format camera manufacturers have to overcome is the comparative size of their cameras. There's no doubt they have to be bigger to house the larger sensor and while 'full-frame' sensor cameras can obviously be smaller, in absolute terms the latest medium format cameras are not too big at all.

And Hasselblad is going a step further, suggesting a camera kit that is perfect for travel and landscape work. The X2D 100C Lightweight Field Kit includes Hasselblad's latest X2D 100C and the XCD 4/21 and XCD 4/45P lenses. In total, the kit weighs 1,810 g, making it easy to carry on hikes to hard-to-reach places.

The X2D 100C is Hasselblad's flagship mirrorless medium format camera with a 100-megapixel BSI CMOS sensor, 5-axis 7-stop in-body image stabilisation (IBIS), PDAF focusing and a built-in 1TB SSD. The camera body is shaped from a single solid block of aluminium alloy machined with 'Scandinavian excellence' and it certainly is good-looking.

Both the XCD 4/21 and XCD 4/45P lenses feature high quality optics to take advantage of the X2D 100C's 100-megapixels



and support the Hasselblad Natural Colour Solution (HNCS) in retaining true-to-life colours.

The XCD 4/21 is the widest lens Hasselblad has ever produced (17mm full-frame equivalent) and like other XCD lenses, it has an integral central shutter offering a wide range of shutter speeds and full flash synchronisation at up to 1/2000th of a second.

The XCD 4/45P (36mm full-frame equivalent) is the lightest and smallest member of the XCD lens family. At just 47 mm long and 320 g, it has a minimum focus distance of 35 cm and is ideal for travel and street photography.

The Lightweight Field Kit will set you back around AUS \$18,600 and there's also a portrait kit with different lenses that costs just a little more. Distributed by C.R. Kennedy.

Phase One XC 40

In terms of weight and size, Phase One starts with its digital back as a core component, so any size and weight savings have to come with the camera body and lens. And when you look at the XC camera, it really is very small and compact for the imaging power it provides.

While the Phase One XF and XT are considerably larger, the XC is purposely smaller for hand-held work and is now available in two models – XC 23 and XC 40, the numbers delineating the lens focal lengths. In fact, the lens and camera body are integral components, to which you can attach your digital back. So you only need one back, but you will essentially have two camera/body components if you purchase both the 23mm and 40mm models.

The XC supports Phase One's IQ4 150MP 'true medium format sensor', by which Phase One rightly claims its sensor is physically larger than those offered by Fujifilm and Hasselblad. Shutter and aperture controls are integrated into the back's touch screen along with automatic exposure control.

Probably the main reason you'd be purchasing the Phase One XC is your love of image quality and there is no compromise in these cameras. Of course, there's no autofocus or rapid frame advance either, so you need to adapt your shooting style to match the camera's capabilities. However, for Phase One users,



it's an attractive option for travel and landscape photography when you only want to take one or maybe two lenses with you.

And as you're using your IQ4 digital back, you have access to all its great features including frame averaging and seamless integration with your mobile device. Price? Well, the 23mm model (without a digital back) is around \$36,135 from Specular in Melbourne. The new 40mm model we expect to be a few thousand less. It's certainly a camera for the well-heeled, but if you get it, there's no doubting you'll love it!

Home > Camera Lenses > Mirrorless Lenses > Tokina SZ 8mm F2.8 Fisheye MF Sony E Lens

Tokina SZ 8mm F2.8 Fisheye MF Sony E Lens



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Tokina

At a glance

- Lightweight (280g) and compact (overall length 52mm) construction.
- Fast f/2.8 lens for compact APS-C sensor mirrorless cameras.
- High quality built and sophisticated exterior design.
- Clickless aperture ring for smooth operation in video shooting.
- Minimum focus distance of 10cm to include close-up objects in front of a wide background.
- Detachable bayonet type hood to use with full-frame mirrorless cameras for achieving circular fisheye effect.

Related Categories

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Concept

The Tokina SZ 8mm F2.8 FISH-EYE is a compact and lightweight fast, ultra-wide prime, manual focus, full-frame fisheye lens designed exclusively for APS-C sensor mirrorless cameras. The line-up includes models for Fuji X and Sony E APS-C size camera mounts. Emphasized perspective and unique distortion makes this lens attractive for both still photographers and videographers.

The suggested genres are landscape, nightscape, interior, architecture, street snap and pet photography. An ultra wide angle of view, unique perspective effect and a compact design allows this lens to be used for creating viral images for Social Networks such as Instagram as well as Vlogging.

Compact & Lightweight

The Tokina SZ 8mm F2.8 E FISH-EYE features lightweight (280g) and compact (overall length 52mm) construction to fit contemporary mirrorless cameras.

Unique perspective effect

An ultra wide angle of view, unique perspective effect and a compact design allows this lens to be used for creating viral images for Social Networks such as Instagram as well as Vlogging.

Fast f/2.8 aperture

The Tokina SZ 8mm F2.8 E FISH-EYE is a fast f/2.8 lens that incorporates Tokina exclusive multi-coated optical elements for effective light intake and as a result, for increased shutter speed in low light conditions.

Close-up shooting

Minimum focus distance of 10cm to include close-up objects in front of a wide background.

Detachable hood

The Tokina SZ 8mm F2.8 E FISH-EYE adopts detachable hood to use with full-frame mirrorless cameras for achieving circular fisheye effect.

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The Tokina SZ 8mm F2.8 E FISH-EYE is equipped with clickless aperture ring for smooth operation in video shooting.

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Fujifilm X-M5

Fujifilm has announced its latest X-series camera, the very stylish Fujifilm X-M5. Weighing 355 g, and measuring 111.9 mm in width, 66.6 mm in height and 38.0 mm in depth, it's currently the lightest camera in the X-series, yet is equipped with a full range of functions, including subject detection AF that can detect moving objects such as animals and cars using AI, and a 6.2K/30P movie recording function.

The X-M5 is equipped with a back-illuminated X-Trans CMOS 4 sensor with 26-megapixels and the latest high-speed image-processing engine X-Processor 5. While there are no compromises with still image quality, it's true the X-M5 is aimed at the video segment of the market. Its powerful digital image stabilisation is effective not only for minor camera shake, but also for large shaking that occurs when shooting video while walking.

And sound is an incredibly important component of video, so the X-M5 has three built-in microphones and four microphone directivity options: surround, front, back or front and back, depending on the situation. The X-M5 is also the first Fujifilm camera to feature a steady-state noise reduction



function, which reduces noise that continues to sound at a certain frequency, such as the noise from an air conditioner.

In Vlog mode, you can control the camera by touching the LCD screen (although the two dials on the top of the camera are really stylish and useful) and there's a "9:16 short movie mode" allowing users to easily shoot vertical videos which are popular on social media.

Two new bit rates, 8Mbps and 25Mbps, have been added to shorten the transfer time to external devices such as smartphones and the time required to upload captured video directly to social media.

For more information, visit <https://fujifilm-houseofphotography.com.au/pages/fujifilm-x-m5>.

Epson Pano Award Winner 2024

The winners of the 2024 Epson International Pano Awards have been announced and the overall winner of the 2024 Open Photographer of the Year and also the Nature/Landscape category is Kelvin Yuen from Hong Kong for his entries *Power of Nature*, *Wilderness* and *Mountain of Divinity*.

Describing *Power of Nature* Yuen said, "The primary goal of this trip was to capture the iconic mountains of Guilin, renowned for its karst formations. On the day I took this photo, I woke up at 3 am and was supposed to hike up for the sunrise. However, a heavy thunderstorm struck out of nowhere, so I decided to shoot the thunderstorm.

"I flew my drone to wait for the lightning due to safety concerns. The drone surprised me by being functional after 30 minutes of downpour. I took 700 photos with the same



Power of Nature by Kelvin Yuen, winner of the 2024 Open Photographer of the Year and also the Nature/Landscape category.

compositions, of which more than 40 were lightning shots.

"This photo is my favourite as the lightning flashing in the middle illuminates the layers of the mountains."

The Curator's Choice Award went to Tom Putt for his photo *Storm Dump*. Tom said, "The Kimberley in far north Western Australia comes alive in the wet season. For that reason, I had scheduled a seven-day helicopter safari to hopefully capture the incredible rainstorms. As we refuelled at a nearby regional airport, we had no idea of this approaching downpour. We took off and were immediately confronted with this menacing beast. The twisting and turning bends of the King River provided the ideal foreground for this panoramic image – one that will remain in my mind forever."



The Curator's Choice Award winner, Storm Dump, by Tom Putt.

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Photoshop Elements 2025

Not everyone is happy with the subscription model for Photoshop which can only be purchased as a monthly subscription. If you're surfing the Adobe website, be careful what you buy because Photoshop alone is offered for (at time of writing in November 2024) AUS \$32.99 per month, but you can grab a 'Photography plan' for \$14.29 per month which includes Photoshop, Lightroom (both flavours) and Bridge. This is much better value and equates to \$171.48 annually and for three years that would be \$514.44.

Why is this important? Because Adobe has another, supposedly simpler product called Photoshop Elements which has possibly slipped off our radar. As we understand it, the 'engine' running Elements is the same as Photoshop, so there is no difference in the quality of the editing processes, but Elements has a different (supposedly simpler) interface and not all of Photoshop's features are available. However, for photographers reading *Better Photography*, we think all the essential features you need (such as layers and composites) are there for the taking with a single three-year licence of \$145.19.

New features include object removal with the new AI-powered Remove tool and the Object Removal Guided Edit. You can choose your focal point and the new AI-powered Depth Blur filter automatically adds blur just where it's needed. Then adjust



details like blur strength, focal distance and focal range for the perfect look.

You can use the automatic selection tools to choose what you want to change, pick your new colour and refine the tonality to suit your style. And you can blend a subject from one, the background from another and elements from many more sources to create a never-before-seen image with the new Combine Photos Guided Edit.

And if you're not sure quite how to do something, you can learn how to make simple adjustments, custom creations or eye-catching effects with 59 step-by-step Guided Edits in Photoshop Elements 2025.

Epson Surecolor P20560

We think very few readers will be purchasing Epson's latest large format inkjet printer, simply because most of us will have only an occasional need to print 64-inch wide prints. However, given it's been a little while since Epson's last printer update and the fact that technology often flows down to smaller models, the latest Epson Surecolor P20560 64-inch printer is of interest! Epson states, "This printer meets the demanding needs of professional photography, fine art productions and graphic design, representing the pinnacle of professional printing technology across various markets."

It uses a 2400 x 1200 dpi PrecisionCore Micro TFP printhead with VSDT for consistent output in ultra-high resolution with 'superior half tones and optimised ink density'. A very wide colour gamut is provided by a new UltraChrome PRO12 inkset with three levels of black and a violet, producing colours with up to 99% coverage of the Pantone Formula Guide solid-coated standard.

While not such an issue for photographers, it does demonstrate a huge colour space to work in.

After claiming for years it couldn't be done, Epson has real time Photo and Matte Black ink switching with dedicated nozzles for both black ink types and there's increased black density with a Black Enhance Overcoat, providing improved



D-max for a wider contrast ratio with enhanced clarity and increased sharpness on glossy papers.

Prints dry quickly to become water and scratch resistant and the P20560 supports a wide range of media with fast print speeds. It handles roll-based stock up to 64" (1626 mm) wide and sheets up to Super B0 and above (including A0). It also supports board stocks up to 1.5 mm thick, can print edge-to-edge and full borderless printing is supported by a new media feeding system. Epson says production costs are reduced thanks to reduced power consumption and a newly designed bulk ink solution using large 1.6 litre pouches. Priced from \$23,799, contact Kayell Australia for details.

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Are SMARTPHONES Worth It?

Ninety-nine per cent of cameras used are found on smart phones,

so why do we bother with 'real' cameras? What are the advantages

and are they worth the effort? Peter Eastway muses.

Photography is a wonderful mixture of art and craft. And since craft requires tools, we're given permission to dabble in new and exciting equipment. I often wonder if Michelangelo agonised over the cut of his brushes or the handle on his spatula in the same way (most) photographers drool over the latest cameras and editing apps.

Is it healthy to drool?

I think it must be if we give the curators of our public galleries and libraries any credence, because I have seen several exhibitions following the development of photography based on the technology being used. As we transferred our attention from glass plates to film to digital, new photographic opportunities arose. We didn't move to film only because it was easier to use, we also designed smaller cameras which could be used in situations that weren't possible with a plate camera. Similarly, look at how today we photograph in near darkness, capturing images with mood and emotion that simply escaped the technical capabilities of film. And when the one technology isn't enough, combining several technologies may provide the solution – such as shooting at night with our smartphone, the camera capturing multiple images and merging them together to produce a very respectable result.

The Remarkable Smartphone

I can remember lugging an 8x10 inch view camera and heavy duty tripod over sand dunes north of Perth with Lyn Whitfield-King. The quality of the black and white contact prints was stellar, but it wasn't something that was easy for us to do. I dreamed of the day you could shoot large format quality with a camera the size of a 35mm SLR – and of course, today we can.

However, I wasn't smart enough to dream of owning a phone that not only took photos, but let me instantly view and process them as well. Back last century, we loved the street photography of masters like Willy Ronis and Henri Cartier-Bresson. They used a single camera and lens (usually a Leica rangefinder) and there's no doubt that same approach can be taken today with a smartphone.

Would these photographers have used smartphones? Well, in their day they were using the most advanced equipment they could find, so I think they most certainly would be using a smartphone: small, light, inconspicuous and incredibly easy to use, giving them plenty of time to concentrate on what was important to them: the decisive moment.

But would they be happy with the quality? I think they'd be delighted! Back then, 35mm film wasn't all that crash hot



In this example, I have been unfair to the iPhone – I have enlarged the iPhone file (above) to the same size as the Phase One 150-megapixel file. In the iPhone file, you can see all the sharpening and contrast control going on behind the scenes. Look at the smaller, full-frame version (below) and the left hand side of the image looks very serviceable – in fact, you’d possibly think it looks better than the Phase One file because, in many ways, it has been processed to be viewed at a smaller magnification.



compared to the quality contemporary cameras achieve today. Of course, back then, the quality was the best that was available in a small camera. Sure, they could produce much better quality using a view camera, but a large 4x5" press camera wasn't going to let them work quietly and unobserved. Every decision involved compromise on one level or another.

So, how did the public see these photos? Mostly in magazines like *Time Life* and when they were printed for exhibition, often they were no larger than 8x10 inches, maybe 12x16 or 16x20 inches. They didn't need huge prints – although when huge prints were made, no one complained about the grain or the noise. The general public is looking at the image, not the technique and that's something as photographers we have to remember.

Do smartphones provide enough quality? Given 99% of photos are displayed on the small screens of the same devices, yes, of course. And if you want to make a print (like less than 1% of the market), it can be done. We featured New Zealand professional photographer John Crawford a couple of years ago who uses his phone to photograph street people in Auckland and then exhibits them as A2 prints for sale as a fundraiser. John has been a high-end advertising photographer all his life and well understands the quality debate, but he was more than happy with his iPhone images.

So, why do we need 'real' cameras?

Is it a Significant Difference?

The best camera is the camera you have with you. And most of us always have a smartphone with us. You really wouldn't consider travelling without a smartphone for capturing both stills and videos. It might not be the only camera you take (although we now have a couple of workshop photographers travelling with us who only use their smartphone and maybe a tablet for editing), but it might be the only camera you have access to for capturing those wonderful little cameos.

Smartphones are capable. Very capable. But, let's talk about image quality. Is it important for you? Does it need to be so important? And how much image quality do you really need?

Another workshop participant was paranoid about shooting anything higher than ISO 100 because she was worried about noise. This is old advice and with most current cameras you can shoot at ISO 1600 or even 3200 and not see the difference. Okay, so you can see the difference, but you have to look hard and I'll bet most of your viewers don't give it another thought. I told the participant there was an easy way for her to find out: do some test photos. I suggested she photograph the same subject exposed from ISO 100 to 6400. She couldn't see any difference up to ISO 1600 (and I realise this also has to do with lighting and your subject, but the point was made).

So, if you're worried about the quality of your smartphone images, how worried are you? Have you done a few tests? Do you need to be worried or can you more comfortably use your smartphone as a second camera? Or even your prime camera?

The Remaining Advantages

So, quality differences aside, what are the limitations of a smartphone camera compared to a real one?

Let's start with lens choice. I can shoot with wider and longer focal lengths on my real camera, so I have more

creative choices. True, I can add all sorts of accessory lenses to my iPhone, but now I have a bunch of extra 'things' to lug around and set up. The reason I'm using my iPhone is because it's instant and immediate. As soon as I'm using iPhone accessories, I might as well use a real camera. And yes, accessory lenses on smartphones are limited optically (look in the corner of the images), but we're not looking at quality differences just now.

Next, what about differential focus – throwing the background out-of-focus. With such a small sensor, depth-of-field makes this inherently difficult and often the aperture isn't that wide either. Of course, my iPhone will digitally blur the background and it's doing an increasingly sophisticated job too, but I'm an old Luddite and I prefer 'the look' I get with an f1.2 lens. So, generally speaking, smartphone photos are sharp from front to back with little differential focus – and that's exactly what the manufacturers want for their snapshooter market.

Shutter speeds? The smartphone is going to struggle with really long and really fast shutter speeds, so not ideal for birds on the wing or star trails. So a real camera is certainly more versatile.

Less noise? I said quality wasn't an issue, but I think we have to agree that it's hard to reduce noise on a small sensor without doing all sorts of other stuff to the image. AI technology has greatly improved noise reduction, but my medium format files don't have any noise in the first place. Just saying.

Knobs and dials? I still find these much easier to use than a menu on a screen, so ergonomics is important, but I agree for many this will be a moot point because we're probably using our smartphone in point-and-shoot mode anyway.

Your Choice

One of the things I enjoy about photography is loading my images onto my computer and viewing them on my EIZO monitor. And when I get a good capture, there's nothing I like better than enlarging the image to 100 per cent and enjoying the sharpness and the detail (assuming I got it sharp, of course)! I get the same thrill with a Fujifilm X-series, a Fujifilm GFX and Phase One, but in varying degrees of course. Whatever the camera you're using, you'll get the point. But when I do the same with an iPhone 15 file, the image falls apart. I can see the remarkable processing Apple has done to the image in terms of colour, contrast and sharpness, but this processing limits what I can do. Sure, I can work with what Apple has done, but if given the choice, I'd prefer to start with a 'clean' raw file.

So, why don't I capture raw files on the iPhone? I do! There's still a lot of processing going on under the skin. It's not how I would choose to process the file, but I won't for a minute deny that like Willy Ronis and Cartier-Bresson, I could work with these files and generate a result I was happy with.

So what's my conclusion? Photography is all about choices and if you choose to use a smartphone for your photography, you can produce images that will satisfy all but the most difficult critics. However, the only critic you really need to satisfy is yourself.

On the other hand, look at where technology has taken us. Look at how beautiful our file and print quality has become. Sure, technology is being used to overcome the shortcomings of a smartphone sensor, but still nothing beats the sublime quality of a modern sensor on a real camera.



The weather was not great with low cloud and light snow. You can see how the iPhone has highlighted the snowflakes, perhaps more than necessary. The algorithms know there's something there, but as yet are not discriminating in what they 'fix up' (I wouldn't enhance them with sharpness, for example). Also, look at the difference in image quality, especially in the background. The iPhone is making stuff up so it looks good! And in this case, the Phase One 150-megapixel file has been downsized to match the iPhone – and to my mind is the superior rendition at both sizes.



THE VARIED PORTFOLIO OF PHOTOGRAPHER



Shielding

The immensity and harshness of the Australian landscape is represented in this composite photograph. The textured rock, embedded in millions of particles of sand, looms in the sky overhead. The trees' delicate tracery of branches cower under the weight of the rock and sand, but also draw strength and protection from it.

JOHN DOODY



Looking through the window

I am fascinated by the distorted shapes seen through a rain-soaked window. The colours of the land and sky become patterns in this abstract interpretation with the only recognisable detail being the rain drops on the window.

Like most readers of *Better Photography* magazine, John Doody is a passionate amateur! As author and photographer Peter Adams says, the 'amateur' label is something to be proud of when used correctly, referring to a love and a passion for the artform. Yet while not professional, the standard of John's photography certainly is.

Insight

John is no newcomer to photography. While his first qualification was a Masters Degree in Applied Science with a major in Medical Physics and a Diploma of Education, this has been followed later in life with a string of photographic accolades: AAPS, AFIAP, CAPS/b, PSQA. He is a qualified photographic judge for the Queensland Photographic Society and is often asked to speak to photographic clubs and societies on topics ranging from the art of photography to processing landscape and seascape images, colour management in the photographic process and astrophotography.



Dreamtime Tracks

In central Australia life flourishes across the land. Walking out in the early morning onto the red sand dunes in the areas around Uluru and Kings Canyon, you can see the tracks of the animals that live there. In this work an image of early morning sand with its tiny sand tracks is superimposed over a photo of the magnificent cliffs of Kings Canyon. The minute sand tracks continue over the rugged cliffs, and a ghostly creature from the past is imagined to be crawling over the rocks, bringing a constancy to life in the desert.

However, he practises what he preaches and has three exhibitions under his belt, including *A Legacy of Light, Five Generations of Photographers 1863 – 2012*.

Explains John, "This exhibition was shown at the Warwick Art Gallery in 2012. A special coincidence is that the Warwick Art Gallery is on the site of my great-grandfather's photographic studio. The exhibition was then taken on tour around Queensland in 2013 by the Queensland Council for the Arts.

"*Layers in the Land* was my first and only (so far) solo exhibition and was held at the Richard Randall Art Studio at the Mt Coot-Tha Botanical Gardens in Brisbane in 2021." This was followed by a joint exhibition with Stef Dunn titled *PALYA – Reflections on Landscape* and place and was also held at the Richard Randall Art Studio.

"I describe myself as a landscape photographer and digital artist – a landscape photographer as that is what I mainly photograph, but I add 'digital artist' because of the importance that post-processing and manipulation of the image plays in my work.

"I take photographs because I find it both relaxing and challenging, the challenge being to find a great composition and convert it into a piece of art. I want to achieve enjoyment, but I also appreciate the recognition which comes if other people in turn appreciate my work.

"When making a landscape image, I aim to give the viewer a sense of what it was like to be there. I have an emotional

response to the scene and I want to convey it. This could, for instance, be a sense of grandeur, beauty or tranquillity. Good composition and technique are very important, but much of the art of photography depends on how the image is processed. With the images I work with, I look for simplicity, a theme or a story, an expression of emotion or the communication of an idea. A good image focuses attention on the main elements of the story and minimises distractions.

"In altered reality and abstract images, I usually have a very specific story or idea in mind. In multi-layered landscapes, it might be about giving the viewer a more in-depth sense of the beauty in the environment. When you walk through an environment, you do two things: you study what is around you and you look down to see where you are walking. The combination of the scene and the ground on which you are walking is a common theme in my altered reality images. I

Opposite: Kings Canyon Trees and Rocks

The environment of Central Australia is very harsh, yet trees grow out of rocks in an environment where it seems life cannot survive. Flourishing despite the pitiless heat and dry, trees maintain a gracefulness and simplicity that underlines their beauty. This work is a melding of two images - the trees are almost black as they raise their limbs to a sky that has been replaced with an image of a rock from the ground over which human feet walk. The textures in the rock continue into the tree landscape, joining together the human experience of touching the ground with our feet and the natural experience of the trees drawing life from the same ground.



The Land We Love

A severe drought had ravaged the Darling Downs west of Brisbane, so intense that even the hardy gum trees were dying. This image shows one of the many trees that succumbed, surrounded by the harsh yellow of dry, dead grass. Yet at the base of the tree a small shrub was starting to shoot, its greenness heralding hope. To emphasise the memory of a rich land and the hope of a rich future, the background is layered with an image taken of the bark of a healthy gum tree. Its clean colours and gentle lines are both a reminder and a promise of good rains and better times to come.





Remembering Jeffrey Smart

I developed a project to produce a collection of images in the style of Jeffrey Smart. This project is ongoing and this image is the only one I am, so far, happy with.

also combine images to tell a specific story, maybe about the animals that inhabit an environment, climate change or land degradation.”

Inspiration

“I have been exposed to photography from a very early age. I still have memories of watching my father, a keen amateur photographer, in the darkroom when I was about four-years-old. The images magically appearing in the developing tray was amazing to me. I had an old Kodak bellows camera in my early teens and bought my first SLR, a Ricoh XR2, when I was about twenty. So I have been taking photographs for about 55 years. I prefer landscape and seascape photography, but sometimes branch out to bird photography, portraits and recently, deep sky astrophotography. The challenge of producing strong images and being out in beautiful locations keeps me in photography.

“I take inspiration from the beauty in the environment as well as other photographers, including John Paul Caponigro for his digital artistry and Australian landscape photographers such



Above: Is the Land Burning?

Is our thirst for energy destroying our environment? This work is a composite of two images taken in the Western Downs region of Queensland. High voltage power lines stride across the land, testament to our need for power. In the sky the colours and patterns of the bark of a tree growing in the nearby town of Dalby become raging flames, representing the catastrophic bushfires of early 2020 that devastated Australia’s native animals. The effects of human-induced climate change could no longer be dismissed. How do we reconcile our need for power and our responsibility to the natural world and its creatures?

Opposite: Coral Cay

Two of the defining elements of the coral cays dotted along the Queensland coast are the white coral sands made up of the remnants of thousands of years of coral life and the colour of the lagoon.

as Peter Dombrovskis and Murray Fredricks. I really like the peacefulness and simplicity in Murray Fredricks’ series, *Salt*.

“Ideas come from looking at the work of others, studying the techniques that they employ and experimenting to see if their ideas and techniques can be used to enhance my work. I find going to art galleries, especially galleries of modern art, stimulates my creative thinking.

“Still, my creative approach is to start with the beauty in nature and combine it with inspiration from other sources.”

Mechanics

John uses Canon equipment. “My main camera is a Canon EOS R5 which I have recently upgraded from a Canon EOS 5DS R. I have a number of Canon L Series EF lenses. I can’t really remember the reason for choosing Canon in the first place, other than it was the best deal at the time. Although I was happy with





the results from the EOS 5DS R, I changed to the Canon R5 for the better dynamic range and video performance."

For post-production, John relies on Photoshop and Lightroom. "In past years, I have used Lightroom only for the initial processing and relied on Photoshop for the more detailed artistic image control. However, with the improved tools I find that I am relying on Lightroom more often for quite complicated tasks.

"I use an Apple MacBook Pro with an attached EIZO monitor. I like the EIZO for its good colour range and the ability to

calibrate it for different conditions and different printing papers."

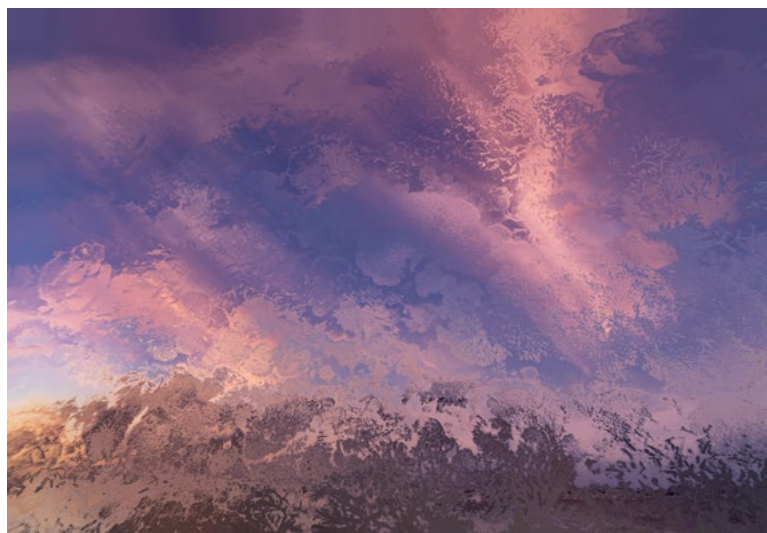
John processes his work to focus the viewers' attention on the most important elements and to minimise attention on the less important. "I do what I need to, which is somewhere between minimal impact and no holds barred – and admittedly for abstract and altered reality images, I have more of a no holds barred approach!

"For me, capture and post-processing always work together. It is very rare to take a photo that does not require some form of



processing. There are two important elements in taking a photo, composition and data collection. Good data collection is about getting the exposure and focus correct to support your vision. There is no point post-processing an image if these elements are not done correctly. Then I put my interpretation on the image through post processing. All steps in the process are necessary parts in producing the final image."

And with his interest in exhibitions, it's not surprising to learn that John considers the final product to be a photographic print.



Above: The Lagoon

The colours and textures of Heron Island are combined in this abstract. The colours of the sunset at Heron Lagoon are convolved or folded together with the textures of the coral, resulting in an abstract image that tells a story of the colours and textures of the reef.

Left: Fire at the Boat Harbour

Some images have a life of their own. My initial intention was to produce a calming abstract of a boat harbour at sunset. The result was anything but! This image combines the colours of a spectacular sunset with an in-camera movement image of a boat harbour and the textures of water.

"Exhibitions force you to focus your attention on a particular project, producing work that you are happy to display to the public. They also have the added benefit of providing an avenue to sell your photographs to the public."

Layers in the Land

John's exhibition, *Layers in the Land*, comprises multilayered photographs in the form of altered reality or abstract images. "I am not sure if 'altered reality' is the correct term for these images. They are multi layered images that use various aspects of the same or nearby environments, combined to give the image impact. All the images are derived from the landscape or nature, but are designed to create questions in the mind of the viewer.

"The idea is to tell a more complete story of the environment and the impact that we have had through climate change.

"The images include the detail and colours of nature, without the distraction of looking at a scene. I think of the technique as a convolution or folding together of two images - the colours of one image with the detail of the other.

"The inspiration begins with the beauty of the natural world. Then there was a conceptual photography project "Water, and the complex interplay of forces in nature" that I completed in 2020. This work focused on water, one of the most basic elements of life and explored its relationships with the natural environment. To achieve this I combined landscape photos of clouds and ice and details of moving water, resulting in abstract images that are a metaphor for the complexity of nature, the difficulty we have in understanding natural systems and our ability to live harmoniously within this system.

The *Layers in the Land* photographs follows on from these and are layered in more ways than one, at times referring to the way the images were processed with multiple layers from the



same landscape, but it is also about our varied relationships with the land and the effect of climate change, farming and other human interventions on our environment."

John suggests there was nothing particularly complex or challenging about photographing the images and that all the complexity lay in the way the photos were put together in post-processing.

"Basic processing was done in Lightroom and then the images were transferred to Photoshop where they were combined using filters, especially the displacement filter."

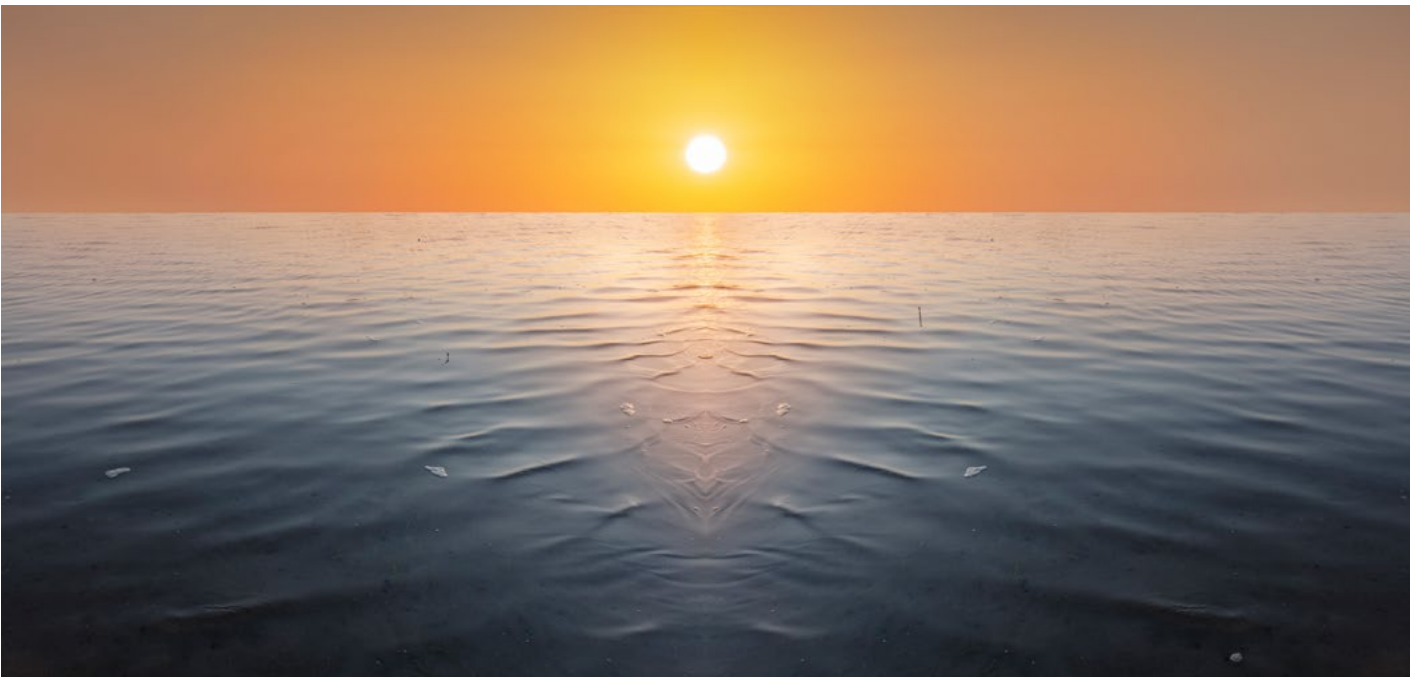
John maintains a social media presence through Facebook and Instagram where he regularly posts his latest photos. He also has a website <http://www.johndoodyp photography.com.au> where portfolios can be viewed and photographs purchased.

Above and opposite top: Water Textures 1 and 2

These images are designed to focus on water in our environment and the complex relationships that sustain our world. The images, although abstract, contain natural water elements. Clouds, waves and rain are merged into a metaphor for the complex relationships that we must understand if we are to live in harmony with the environment.

Opposite below: Dawnings

In the beginning, the Earth was pristine and life was beginning to develop in the newly created seas. In this image, the reflected shapes in the waves take on the form of the bones of a newly awakened creature. The image speaks of a time when life was emergent, pure and unscathed. Today, the natural world is challenged by ruthless environmental pressures. Is it possible to return to the pure original state of nature?



Capturing the NIGHT SKY

Steve Quick co-authored "Atlas of the Southern Night Sky", so we thought

who better to ask about getting involved in astrophotography?

There are ways and means for everyone!

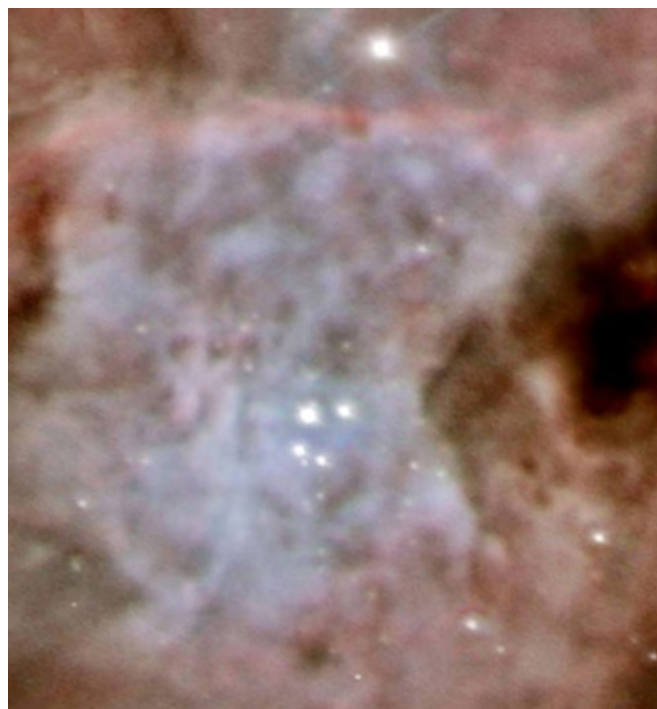
To take photos of the night sky, you just point your camera up, right? Not quite! Not only is there a real science to taking astrophotographs, you need to know exactly where to point your camera and this is where Steve Quirk and Steve Massey joined forces to write "Atlas of the Southern Night Sky, Updated Sixth Edition". *Better Photography* asked Steve Quirk how he became involved in astrophotography and what he considered the essential skills and equipment required.

Jon Nally, Editor for Australian *Sky&Telescope*, introduces Steve as an amateur astronomer for over 40 years. "Steve Quirk gained his reputation for excellence in astrophotography during the 1980s and '90s, producing many inspiring photographs of the night sky, many of which have been used in magazines and books in Australia and overseas.

"Not satisfied with obtaining images of only the most famous celestial bodies, he has built up an impressive photo library of many difficult and less-frequently observed objects, using self-taught skills.

"He has built his own telescopes from scratch (including polishing and figuring several primary mirrors) and does his astrophotography from an old wheat silo that has been converted into a private observatory, near Mudgee, NSW. He is currently involved in a meteor observation program that aims to survey intermediate sized particles in the Solar System over several years.

"Steve was the winner of the 1988 Skywatch Bi-Centennial Astrophotographic Competition and also received an award at



Zooming into the heart of Messier 42. Star group The Trapezium.
31cm Diam. Telescope at f10, GSTAR-EX Video camera, 400 x 2.56 secs.

Reflection and Emission Nebula, Messier 20.
31cm Diam. Telescope at f5, GSTAR-EX Video camera, 6 sector mosaic – each 400 x 2.56 secs.





the Central West Astronomical Society's AstroFest in 2005 for a 20-year-long sequence of images showing the movement of the star Proxima Centauri."

And if there are any doubts left about how involved Steve is in astronomy, the asteroid 18376 Quirk (1991 SQ) was named after him.

Insight

Explained Steve, "From early on, getting into astronomy, I wanted to show others what I was seeing through the telescope. The

best way was to take a photo. This of course opened a huge can of worms as to how exactly I could do that. Some early attempts were comical to say the least. But I kept them anyway to remind me of the journey."

Steve still describes himself as an amateur astrophotographer, even though he has been paid for his images appearing in magazines and books.

"I started taking astronomy images mainly for myself, but also as a challenge to try to record certain lesser known targets. Over the years, I built up a large collection of astronomical images,



Left: Pointers, Southern Cross and Carina.

Canon EOS 6D, 50mm lens at f4.8 x 10 second exposures, ISO 12800. Untracked.



Reflection Nebula IC 2220. Unsharp masking steps.

Top: Original image: 31cm Diam. Telescope at f5, GSTAR-EX Video camera, 400 x 2.56 secs.

Middle: Tone levels boosted to show faint areas, but bright areas become overexposed.

Bottom: Unsharp mask of original onto enhanced image shows detail across the whole image.

which led to selections of them being used in many magazines and articles such as *Southern Astronomy* (Aus), *Astronomy Now* (UK), *Sky&Telescope* (USA), *Astronomy* (USA), *Sky and Space* (Aus) and *Australian Sky&Telescope* (Aus). Many have been used in various astronomy books such as the *Australian Guide to Stargazing* (Gregg D. Thompson), *The Night Sky* (S.Massey), *Deep Sky Video Astronomy* (S.Massey and myself) and eventually the *Atlas of the Southern Night Sky* (S.Massey and myself)."

Steve began taking astronomy images in 1982 after buying his first telescope, a 60mm diameter refractor. Starting



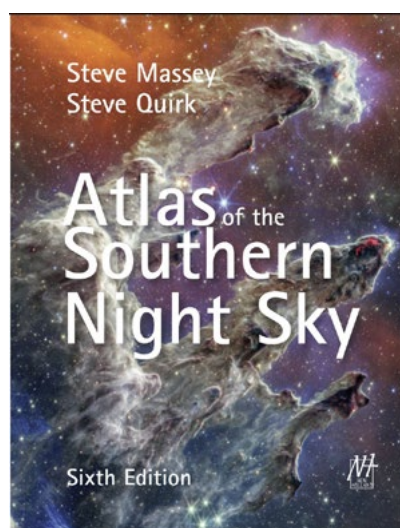
Globular Cluster, Omega Centauri, NGC 5139.

31cm Diam. Telescope at f5, GSTAR-EX Video camera, 30 sector mosaic – each 200 x 2.56 secs.

with the moon and brighter planets, he quickly got a case of aperture fever and bought a bigger reflector type telescope which was also able to track the stars. Then he ventured into deep space imaging.

"In the early days, I used various films in very basic SLR type cameras. I then started getting the film treated to make it more sensitive to light and reduce reciprocity failure. After pushing film to its limit, in 2006 I moved over to a low-light video camera to produce images. I really enjoy how the hobby evolves, each new technology opens up new challenges as the cameras become more sensitive. But rather than simply throwing money at new tech, I really enjoy getting the most out of my gear on a limited budget."

Steve says he feels more methodical than creative in his approach to photography. "Luckily, these days I live in the country away from city light pollution and only have to walk into



the backyard to see a myriad of stars in the night sky. That is all the inspiration I need.

"In the past, there have been many amateur astrophotographers I've met in astronomy clubs who have inspired me to get out and try it for myself. So today, my personal motto is, 'You will never know, if you don't have a go.'"

Mechanics

Steve uses various telescopes from 50mm up to 315mm diameter and a range of camera lenses including 28mm, 50mm, 135mm and 300mm. "For the bulk of my imaging over the last 17 years, I have used a low-light integrating security video camera on the largest telescope. It has a fairly low resolution chip with only 0.5 megapixels, but its sensitivity is 0.0001 lux. It can integrate up to 128 half frames and outputs the live signal to the computer screen every 2.56 seconds. This allows objects and



Face-on Spiral Galaxy, Messier 83.

31cm Diam. Telescope at f5, GSTAR-EX Video camera, 4 sector mosaic – each 400 x 2.56 secs.

stars 2.5 to 3 times fainter to be viewed on-screen than can be seen with a fully dark adapted eye in the same telescope.

"I also use a Canon 6D for other projects and recently I have purchased a small "smart" telescope. The technological advances in such a compact unit are quite astounding – and a lot of fun.

"Using video resolved several problems that were encountered during the film era.

1. Cost: Buying and processing film was an ongoing cost. Video requires a single purchase of a camera and video capture device.

2. Sensitivity: Video is 10 times faster than even treated high speed films.

3. Focus and composition: Film was always a challenge because you didn't know if it was right until you had processed it! Video is live focus on-screen, WYSIWYG, so good every time.

4. Tracking: Using film, the telescope had to be tracked precisely otherwise the stars would be trailed. With video this did not matter as much because stacking software compensated

for small amounts of drift. This in fact helped image quality by dithering the image over different pixels, reducing noise.

5. Processing: Film had ongoing costs of processing and printing. With video, all processing is done on the computer and generally the output is only required for electronic mediums.

"And I'm still using the same set-up after 17 years, so reliability is excellent.

"The video capture hardware came with its own software to control the capture process. I also used custom software in GSTAR-EX Capture, which was tailor-made for my particular brand of video camera. Stacking software called Registax was freeware and I used Photoshop CS2 for many years, but of late, it won't function on the latest OS, so I'm now using GIMP, which is free open source image-processing software.

"A commonly used routine I used in Photoshop was to do proper layered unsharp masking of certain objects. Because some objects have a great range of brightness, when bringing out the faint areas it tended to overexpose the bright parts."



Planetary Nebula, Messier 27.

31cm Diam. Telescope at f5, GSTAR-EX Video camera, 400 x 2.56 secs.

"Unsharp masking allowed a copy of the brightest parts to be left underexposed and grafted onto the faint areas that have been pushed up in brightness (see examples). Earlier versions of



Zooming into the core of Messier 20.

31cm Diam. Telescope at f10, GSTAR-EX Video camera, 400 x 2.56 secs. Shows multiple star group HN 40 and HN 6.

GIMP did not have this functionality, but in the latest version, I spent several hours figuring it out for myself and now it can do the same. I put the routine on my webpage for anyone wanting to use it. I don't use a special PC or monitor, but I make sure the screen is calibrated to give a balanced output.

"Apart from localised blemish repairs, I use a global method of processing on my images. Most astronomical images require various amounts of boosting of tone levels, brightness/contrast, colour balance and some noise reduction. I tend to shy away from dead black backgrounds, as this has a detrimental effect on the faint objects you are trying to image. So a deep grey, I find, is still pleasing to look at and shows the target of interest at its best.

"Basically, getting a good signal to noise ratio will make processing easier. Otherwise, you have to deal with extra noise in the image."

Steve's images are processed for a web-style output. He has his own personal catalogue where he documents every object he can, including image data and object data. "The catalogue has over 900 images, many with multiple objects in the field of view, many of the larger objects are covered by mosaic images and some specific targets have high magnification images.

"As for images destined for magazines or books, I scale them to 300 dpi, which is the standard for publishing and they print



Reflection and Emission Nebula, Messier 20.

31cm Diam. Telescope at f5, GSTAR-EX Video camera, 6 sector mosaic – each 400 x 2.56 secs.



Open Cluster, Messier 7. Seen in front of the dense starfield of The Milky Way.

31cm Diam. Telescope at f5, GSTAR-EX Video camera, 4 sector mosaic – each 200 x 2.56 secs.

fine at sizes up to half A4 page, bearing in mind I'm only using a 0.5 megapixel sensor. I also brighten them up a bit, as publishers tend to print them a bit darker!"

The Atlas

The photos used in *Atlas of the Southern Night Sky* are intended to show what amateurs can achieve with readily available equipment and are a better representation of how the objects would look through a telescope.

"They are all home-grown images and not the typical "Hubble" or professional observatory shots that most books seem to use.

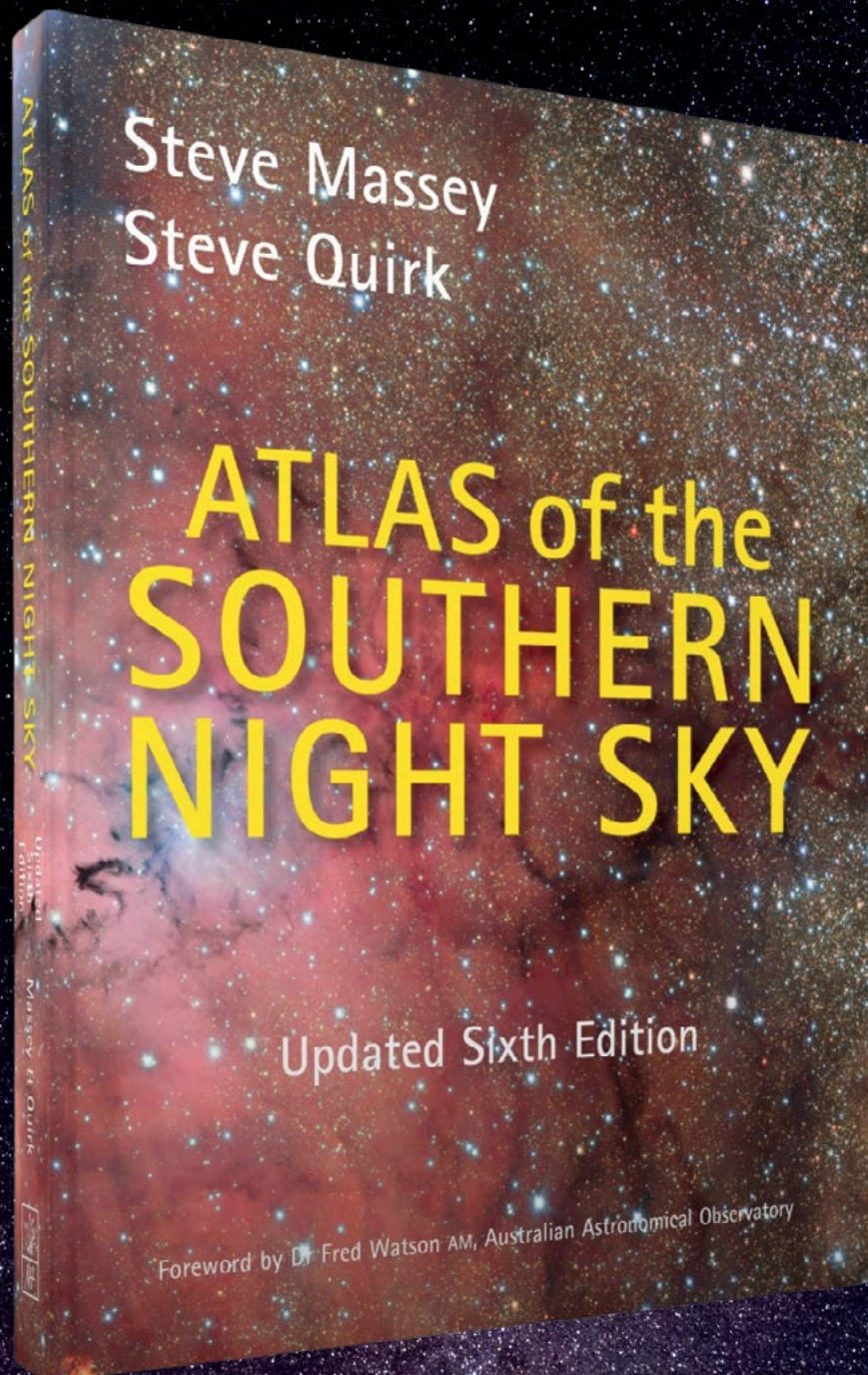
"When I started out in astronomy, I wanted to learn all I could on the subject. Exhausting several libraries of their astronomy books, I noticed a northern hemisphere bias in most of them. They had under-represented the southern night sky, yet we have the best views of our galaxy, The Milky Way, clusters, nebula and the Clouds of Magellan satellite galaxies outside our galaxy. My co-author Steve Massey had written other titles and was well aware of this too.

"Hence, we created a southern-based book, made by amateurs (with a lot of experience), for amateurs and it must have fit the bill nicely, going into a sixth edition.

"Astroimaging is different to most other forms of photography. Light capture is the biggest issue with many targets giving out very little light, so exposures tend to be minutes to hours long. You are also imaging from a moving platform – the Earth. As it rotates beneath us, the stars appear to move, so this has to be compensated for by using special mount systems. Usually, an equatorial style telescope mount or a smaller tracking mount for camera and lenses is required to smoothly move the telescope or lens in the opposite direction to hold the stars steady. The bigger the aperture telescope, the more light it can capture. The trade-off is cost and the physical size of the telescope that your tracking mount can handle.

"For those living in the city or built-up areas, all your gear needs to be transportable to get to a dark sky. Although with specific narrow band filters, light pollution can be cut significantly, it's not as good as a dark sky.

"Nothing beats experience with this type of imaging. It's more complicated than simply point and click. Astronomy clubs and like minded groups are the best place to learn what is required. These days, we have enormous online resources to glean information from as well, but having said that, the new generation of compact smart telescopes is doing a lot of the complicated stuff for you, straight out of the box."



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2024 Astrophotography *Prize*

**From four categories, Phil Hart has been named the
2024 Astrophotography Prize's Photographer of the Year.**

There's a huge interest in astrophotography these days, brought about by modern digital cameras and even smartphones being able to capture things which are often invisible to the naked eye. Certainly, those close-ups of distant nebulae and striking panoramic views of the Milky Way, have become a part of the still photography vernacular.

Andy Campbell, a passionate and successful astrophotographer in his own right and his wife Robyn Campbell, the photographic powerhouse behind the Australian Photographic Prize, have introduced the Astrophotography Prize with four categories: Deep Space, Solar System, Remote Imaging and Astro Landscapes. It recognises the art and creativity behind the main genres of astrophotography in a competition environment where aesthetic impact and the degree of difficulty combine to produce a score.

Australian photographer Phil Hart was named Astrophotographer of the Year for his breathtaking capture of the 2023 Solar Eclipse over Exmouth, Western Australia. Hart's winning image, which he claims to be the highest-resolution (white light) image of the solar corona ever recorded, mesmerised the judges and stood out among hundreds of entries from across the globe. It was celebrated for its technical precision and artistic brilliance, earning him top honours in the Solar System category and the prestigious Grand Prize: a Stellarvue SVX 102 Telescope.

Judging Process

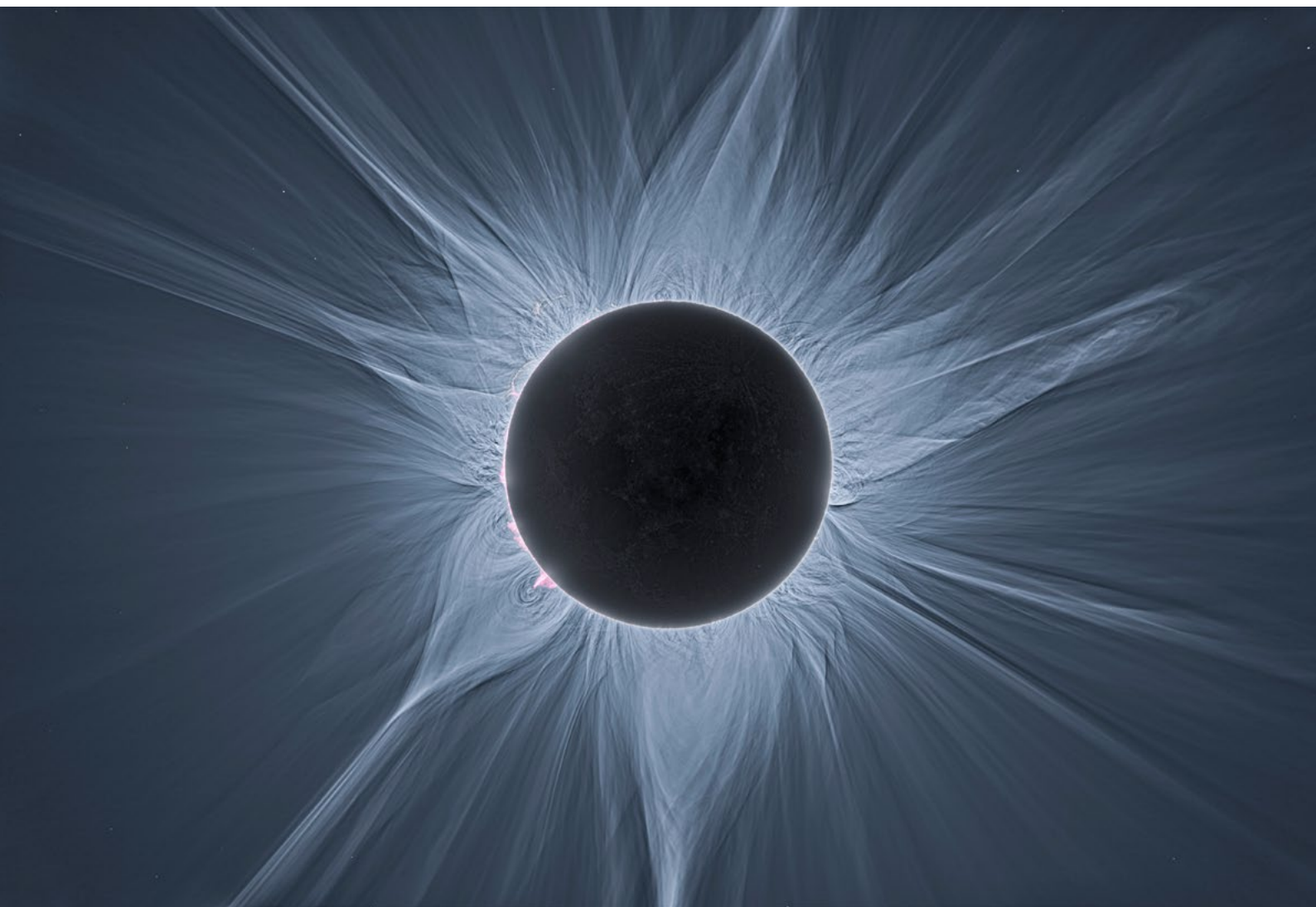
The judging began with each image being scored out of 100 by three specialist astrophotographers. The top 25 images from each category were then judged in a second round by a panel of five world-class astrophotographers.

Judges included Wolfgang Promper, Christopher Go, Marcel Drechsler, Bray Falls and Rogelio Bernal Andreo and astrophysicist Dr Tanya Hill and the final round of judging was conducted live and broadcast on YouTube. This unique, transparent judging process offers valuable educational insights for all participants. The highest-scoring image in each category was named the winner and Phil Hart was selected as the overall Photographer of the Year from the category winners.

"This year's competition featured some of the most impressive astrophotography we've ever seen," said judge Dr. Tanya Hill. "Phil Hart's image was a masterclass in technique, creativity and dedication, showcasing faint lunar details alongside the petal-like streams of the solar corona."

"Judge 'Strongman' Mike Sidonio added, "The quality of the top 25 entries in each category was so high, it felt like choosing between your favorite children."

In addition to the selection of winning images published here, you can see all the winners on the competition's website at <https://astrophotographyprize.com/app-comp-gallery>.



**2024 ASTROPHOTOGRAPHY PRIZE'S PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR
AND SOLAR SYSTEM WINNER:**

Phil Hart – Sunflower in the Exmouth Sky

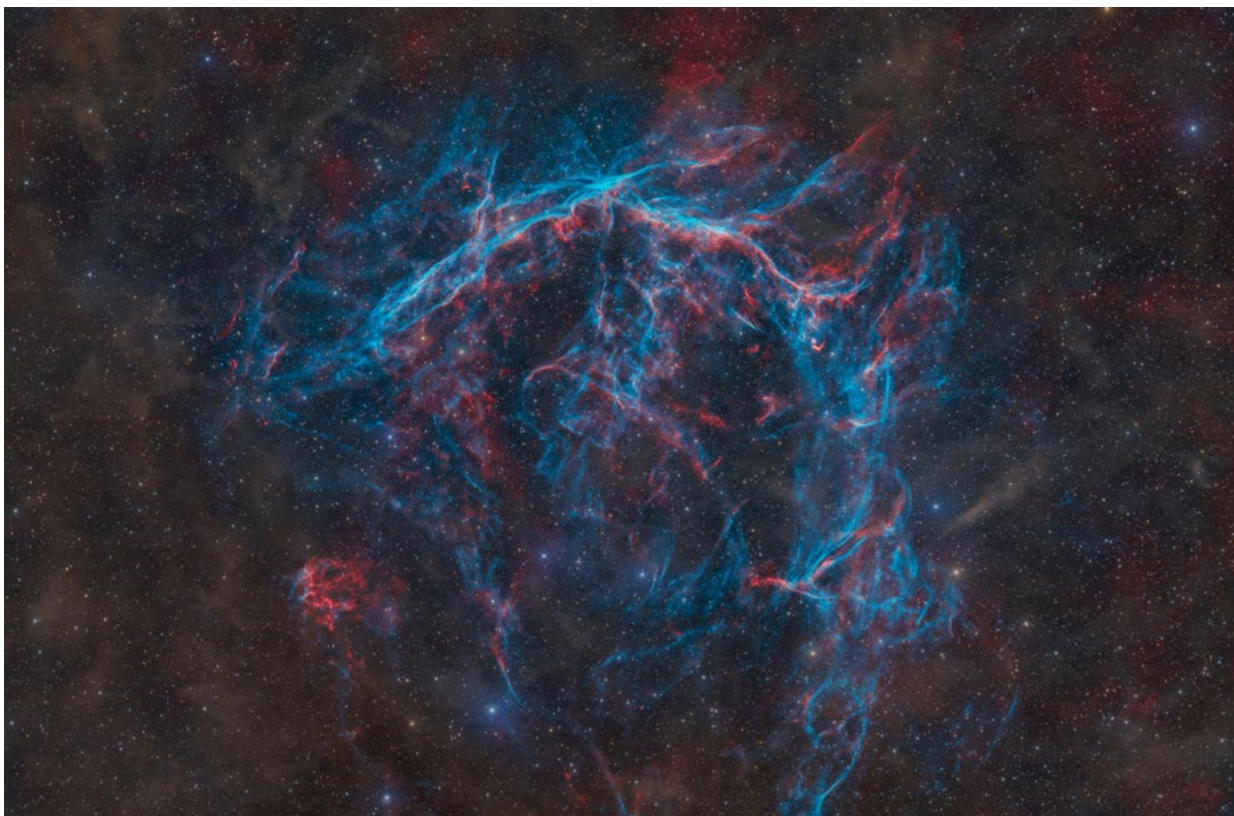
Hart's detailed image of the solar eclipse over Exmouth earned first place in this category, showcasing his mastery in capturing the solar corona.



SOLAR SYSTEM RUNNER-UP:

Gerald Rhemann – Comet C/2021 A1 Leonard

Rhemann's shot from Namibia highlighted the dynamic beauty of the comet's tail as it journeyed through space.



DEEP SPACE WINNER:

Yann Sainty – Supernova Remnant G119.5+10.2 (CTA 1)

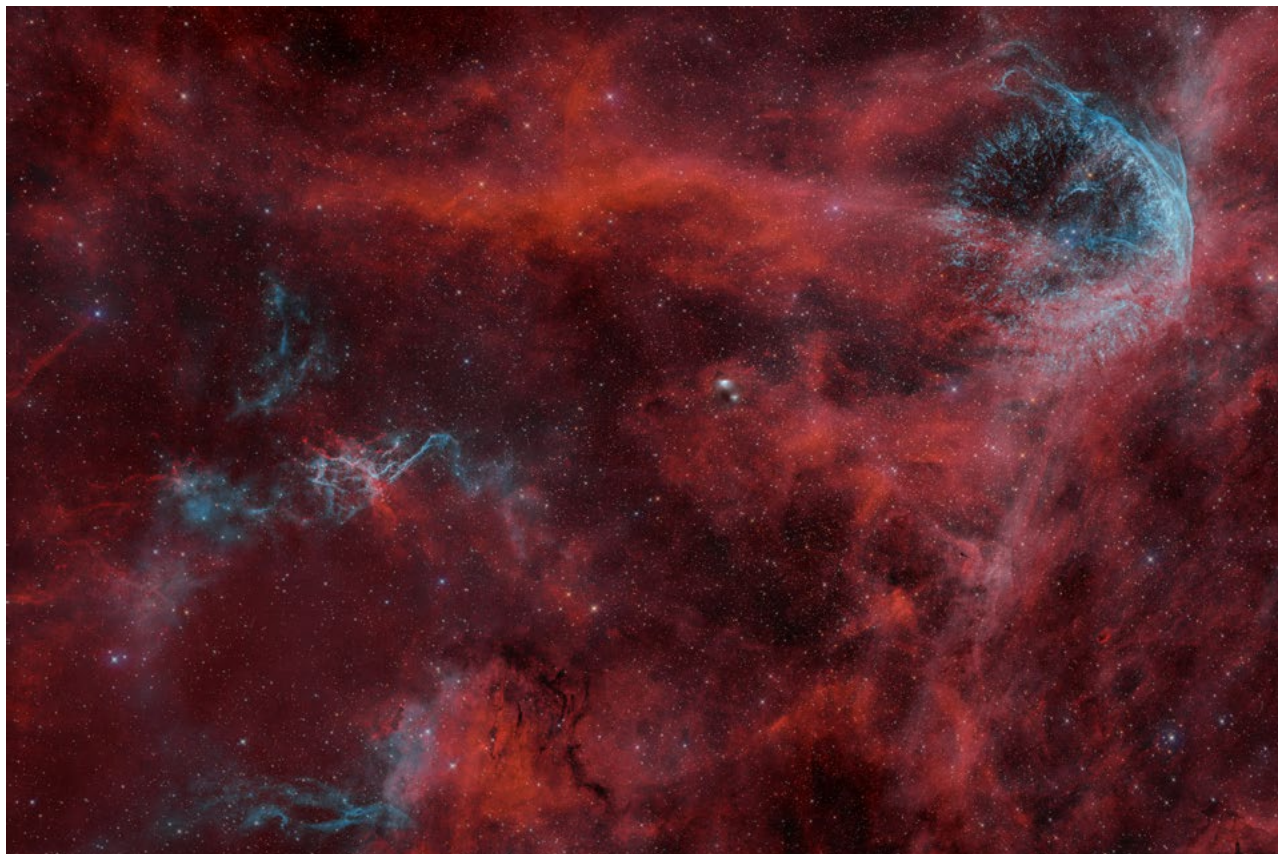
Sainty's striking image of this rarely photographed supernova remnant, with its dense Ha and OIII filaments and dust clouds, won him first place in the Deep Space category.



ASTRO LANDSCAPE WINNER:

Kavan Chay – Egmont National Park, New Zealand

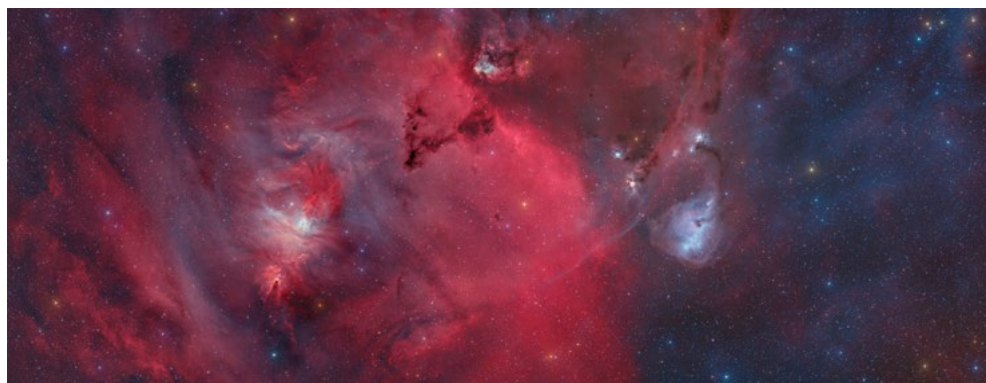
Chay's magical shot of The Milky Way over a volcanic snowfield won for its perfect harmony between earth and sky.



REMOTE IMAGING WINNER:

Julian Shapiro – Two Oxygen Rings of Cygnus

At just 16-years-old, Shapiro's remote imaging uncovered a newly discovered cosmic feature, showcasing emissions from the Wolf-Rayet star WR134 in breathtaking detail.



DEEP SPACE RUNNER-UP:

Yann Sainty – Monoceros Horn Widefield

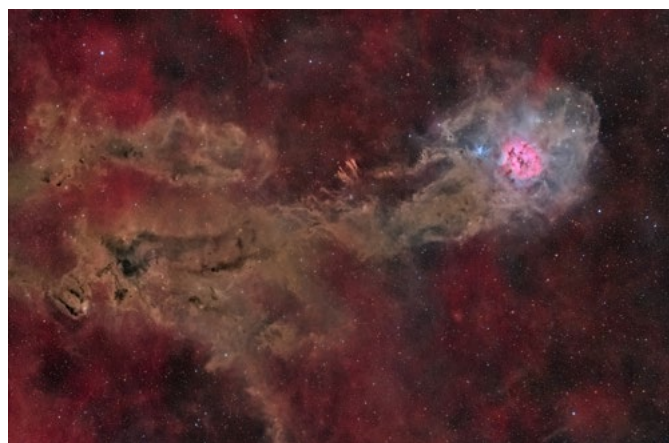
Sainty's second recognised image, a wide field mosaic capturing emission, reflection and dark nebulae, impressed the judges with its contrast of cosmic structures.



ASTRO LANDSCAPE RUNNER-UP:

Troy Casswell – Bald Rock Panorama

Casswell's innovative use of UV light brought out the rock formations and Milky Way in an impressive blend of technique and creativity.



REMOTE IMAGING RUNNER-UP:

Logan Carpenter – Cocoon Nebula

Carpenter's precise image of the Cocoon Nebula's comet-like tail, set against a backdrop of hydrogen alpha, secured him second place in this category.

The DARK & BRIGHT/LIGHT MULTIPLE EXPOSURE MODE *Experience*

Jackie Ranken has made quite a name for herself with in-camera multiple exposures and while nothing beats lots of practice and experience, here are some of her best tips for your own experiments.

I've been creating in-camera multiple exposures for nearly two decades, evolving from the Canon Classic EOS 5D to modern mirrorless models like the EOS R5. While I've enjoyed working with Average and Additive blending modes because they mimicked film-like effects, I felt it was time to push myself further – this time by exploring the Dark and Bright Multiple Exposure Modes, which offer me new challenges and ways of interpreting the built landscape. The results are pushing my work towards graphic and abstract artworks.

The process of creating multiple exposures often leads to unexpected, unique photographs that may not have been conceived otherwise. This technique allows for a rich narrative layering, adding depth to the visual story. Staying in one location for an extended period is often necessary, enabling the exploration of textures and experimentation with different backgrounds to solve compositional challenges.

Be aware that some cameras don't have these modes. If that's the case and if you find some of the images here in this article spark your curiosity, you can achieve somewhat similar results by using the blending modes in Photoshop. Take the photographs with the same intent and then spend time learning how to layer them in software (Photoshop or NIK Analogue Efex Pro, for example).

On a recent visit to Perth, WA, to give presentations and mini-workshops for the PhotoWest Conference on in-camera multiple exposures, I realised that my library of images using the Dark and Bright modes was quite limited. Fortunately, we (Mike Langford and I) had time for a three-day road trip to gather some local material for our presentations. Mike was busy shooting black-and-white landscapes for his presentation and I became focused on making images with ICM (Intentional Camera Movement) combined with multiple exposures using the Dark and Bright blending modes on my Canon EOS R5.

Combining ICM with Dark and Bright multiple exposures adds another layer of abstraction. By intentionally moving the camera during a long exposure, I could blur the rigid lines of the cityscape, creating dynamic compositions that emphasise movement and form with less emphasis on what the subject looks like.

Dark or Bright

In Dark mode, the camera's processor selects the pixels with the darkest RGB values and combines those pixels into one image. The result can often differ from what you might expect or visualise because the colours can merge, creating unusual shifts. In the past, when using this mode, I've always shot in monochrome picture style and overexposed each shot by at least one stop. I did this to minimise the muddy colours created when different or opposite colours become mixed together.

I would typically use this mode when the subject of the photograph is dark and it is composed against a light background, as this helps to keep the subject from merging with other dark tones.

Exposure plays a crucial role in colour results. Mixing subjects with contrasting colours often leads to unexpected and chaotic colour shifts, so keeping your colour palette simple is recommended.

In contrast, the Bright mode prioritises the lightest RGB values, creating images that emphasise highlights and bright areas. This is particularly useful when the subject of your image is brighter than the background, because the subject will not get lost under the dark RGB values.

Combining ICM with Multiple Exposures

Kings Park in Perth offers an uninterrupted view of the city skyline. A standard cityscape photograph of this iconic view



Perth ICM Multiple Exposures in Dark Mode

Canon EOS R5 24-105mm f4 L IS USM f22, 1/4 second, ISO 100 + Neutral Density Filter, Focal length 220mm

Notice how the dark tones cover up the light tones. The cityscape dissolves into a flowing abstraction of lines, shapes, and tones, with skyscrapers morphing into streaks of motion and light – capturing the energy of the urban landscape in a completely new form.



+



on a blue-sky day is generally uninspiring. However, using the Dark and Light Multiple Exposure Modes changed everything. My photographs no longer resembled the place; instead, they became abstract images celebrating line, shape, tone, and energy—the energy I put into moving the camera around and continuing my practice until I made results that satisfied me.

In the case of the Perth skyline, I experimented with both modes. Since the colour palette was limited to mostly blue, grey, black and white, the colours didn't mix too much, avoiding the mushy hues that previously put me off using this mode.

Creating the ICM Look

The recipe for achieving slow shutter speeds involves lowering the ISO and stopping down the aperture to its smallest diameter. To further reduce the amount of light entering the lens, I used neutral density filters. I could then shoot at a shutter speed of around 1/4 second, necessary for creating movement blur in the bright sunshine.

The slower the shutter speed and the faster the camera movement, the softer the images created. The camera becomes a tool for creative expression, not just for documentation. By shifting the focus from sharpness and clarity to motion and



abstraction, I can create images that are more interpretive and emotive.

It all depends on how fast you move your lens and the focal length of that lens. (A longer focal length lens will show more blur.) To reduce blur, I will use a shorter (wider) focal length and/or slow down or lessen my movement.



Perth ICM Multiple Exposures in Dark Mode (wider view)

*Canon EOS R5 24-105mm f4 L IS USM
f32, 1/10 second, ISO 100 + Neutral Density
Filter, Focal length 100mm*

The wider view of the CBD required faster movement of the camera. Notice when the same colours overlap each other, the colours remain quite clean.



For these images, I needed a focal length of between 100mm to 200mm, to capture the lines and the shape of the light on and between the buildings. Since my subject was at a distance, it didn't take much movement to create the blur that I liked. It was all about experimentation—reviewing the result and trying again until the desired image was achieved.

I moved my lens horizontally and vertically as straight as I could, but in retrospect, I liked the inadvertent wobbles that I made, as they added an organic aspect to the hard lines of the city buildings.

Have a look and learn from the Perth skyline images accompanying the article, asking yourself what you like and don't like and take this knowledge to your own practice.

The takeaway tip from these two examples is that the exposure that you choose for each image will dictate the result. For example, if I make one of my images EV+1, then the information from this file will be recessive. The image with the darker exposure, or the image with a dark subject matter, will 'sit on top'.

Slipping Through a Time Warp

Afterwards, we travelled north of Perth to the Pinnacles and further east into the wheat belt. My favourite subjects to photograph ended up being a collection of Functionalist-style commercial buildings from the 1930s that we found in the small towns along the way.

The geometric shapes and lines of these buildings, set against the rich red earth and endless blue sky, were a perfect subject because they were a light subject that separated out easily from a dark background.

It was once again a sunny, blue sky day in Morawa, a small wide-west ore mining town, population of 440. The hard midday light cast sharp shadows that enhanced the symmetry of the building, especially around the entrance, making this building stand out proudly from its red earth surroundings. The street was deserted, but we could tell that this place was the heart of the community.

I think my interpretation has made it feel like it is slipping through a time warp. That's all an image is required to do, to



“Morawa Town Hall” Light Mode

Canon EOS R5 24-105mm f4 L IS USM F11, 1 second, ISO 100 + Neutral Density Filter, Focal length 26mm

make the photographer/artist feel good. I love the blurred simplicity of tones and the way the soft chalklike colours print on fine art matte paper. I have transformed the architect’s artwork into my own.

Better Days

The Bank in Pithara has seen better days, but when the movement blur technique is used, many of the scars disappear. It’s a good one to study because you can compare one from the other.

Notice the difference between the Dark and Bright Examples:

- In both, the subject overlaps itself. This minimises the distracting colour casts created when different colours combine into one file.
- This overlapping of the same subject also gives strength to the lines of the building.

- See how the dark telephone pole almost disappears in the Bright Mode
- See how the trees and shadows are emphasised in the Dark Mode
- My preference is the Bright/Light Mode multiple because I find the dark blur of the tree in the sky distracting, though I like the cross-work pattern on the building’s front in the Dark Mode.
- Introducing both movement and multiplicity makes it nearly impossible to replicate the same image twice. The combination shows how versatile and creative this style of photography can be.

For continued study, check out my new soft cover book, *Multiple Exposure Landscapes: Ideas and Techniques*.
www.qccp.co.nz/shop

Not PHOTOGRAPHING WILD FLOWERS *in Western Australia*

Could you visit a location renowned for its wild flowers – and photograph something else? Ask Mike Langford!

Canola Crop

f16, 1/320 second, ISO 320. Canon EOS R5, Canon RF 100-500mm @ 200mm.

With canola being one of the main crops grown in WA, you get to see plenty of yellow fields during the flowering season. It wasn't until we came across this old farmhouse in the middle of it that I found a shot worth making. Shooting in black and white put the focus onto the old homestead, instead of the overwhelming vastness of the bright yellow crop itself.





Wild Flowers at Camel Soak

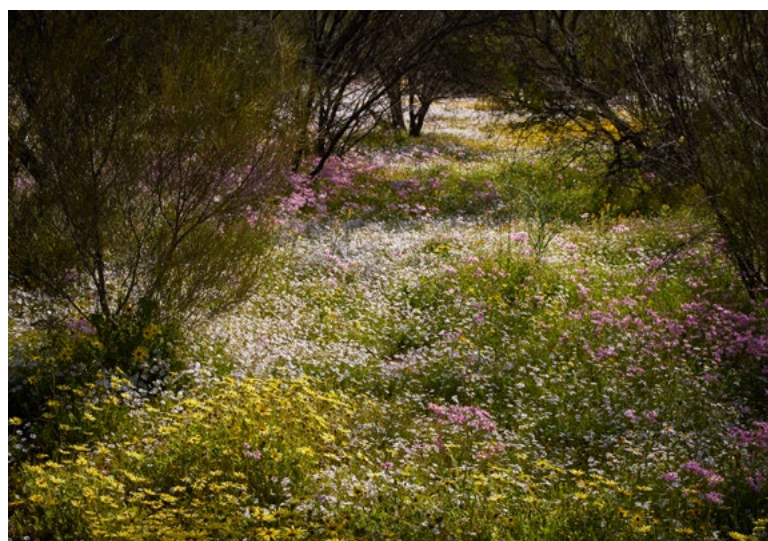
f16, 1/400 second, ISO 320. Canon EOS R5, Canon RF 24-105mm @ 50 mm.

I must admit to photographing these colour images in black and white in the camera, as I find that I can formulate my composition better when I don't see the colour – even if the final image is going to be in colour. Using the camera jpg capture on the rear screen, areas of light and dark become more separated and leading lines more obvious in creating foregrounds, midgrounds and backgrounds.

Recently, Jackie and I presented to the combined camera clubs of Western Australia at their conference in Perth, titled 'Photo West 2024', which gave us the opportunity to explore some of Western Australia. We had also been asked to present at the Professional Photographers Group of Western Australia a few days before the conference, which we gladly accepted, as we knew many of their members from our association with the former AIPP. It was while presenting to them that we were told about Western Australia's famous wild flowers and were given detailed maps of where to go and where the best flowers could be found.

Even though photographing flowers wasn't really our thing, we thought we should at least go and have a look.

We had already planned on heading north to photograph the Pinnacles in Nambung National Park and ended up there the next day under a midday sun, which in my mind was perfect in which to photograph these stark, stalagmite shaped rocks. Most Western Australian photographers had suggested staying overnight in the area and photographing them either at dusk or dawn, "as this was the best light under which to photograph them." As it was, I really enjoyed the harsh light that somehow



amplified their weirdness and gave me the opportunity to shoot some local content for my upcoming lecture, which was on 'In Camera Black and White Landscape Photography'.



Mallee Trees f18, 1/400 second, ISO 320.

Canon EOS R5, Canon RF 24-105mm @ 53mm.

Photographed from the Rabbit Proof Fence Road near Camel Soak in Western Australia. The only colour in the shot was the blue sky which was quite distracting in colour and looked much better in black and white. I shot this in-camera with high contrast and no filters, as the red filter would have made the sky darker and the contrast would have been then somewhat reduced. It took quite some time to find this gap between the trees, which is what the image is all about. The top of the lower tree on the right was left in to give balance to the higher tree on the left.

Luckily there was some high cirrus in the form of mare's tails in the sky when we first arrived, which created an added dimension to The Pinnacles. Photographing them both in black and white and colour helped illustrate the added strength black and white with high contrast provides, as well as the use of the red filter when doing this in camera. Being able to see both the colour and black and white together really helped support my suggestion of doing it in-camera at the time of shooting.

After a night on the coast at Leeman, we headed west towards the wild flowers. Neither of us had been into country Western Australia before and so we were overwhelmed by the vastness of the wheat growing plains that lay before us.

The town of Three Springs was a great break for a coffee and a rest from driving. It also provided me with some more local content, this time for my lecture on 'Manscapes'. I had seen a wheat silo for miles before we arrived, it dominating the landscape like a giant photographic beacon. I was in my element and spent a good hour photographing it in black and white from all angles, being careful to allow plenty of extra space around the silo so I could correct the perspective later in Photoshop.

Opposite page: Three Springs Silo

f14, 1/320 second, ISO 320. Canon EOS R5, Canon RF 24-105mm.

Photographing the Three Springs Silo took quite some time and a lot of exploration, but ended up producing three images that I liked. This set was very useful in my upcoming lecture on in-camera black and white landscapes as well as my manscapes, as it showed that you didn't need to travel to somewhere exotic like New Zealand to photograph such things as they are in your own backyard as well!

After another two hours' driving west from Three Springs, Jackie yells out, "Look!"

"Look at what?" I asked.

"A corner," she replied jokingly.

It was true that we had seen very few corners during our morning drive and I had been so inspired by one of them which had some telegraph poles behind it that I photographed it while driving past.

From there we drove north west to Morawa where we photographed the town hall and Jackie grabbed some local content for her in-camera multiple exposure lecture, then back to Perenjori where we called into the local tourist information



This first photo illustrates how it stood out from the landscape from miles around. When photographing this, I needed to make the frame size much wider, knowing that when I applied some perspective correction, the frame size would be reduced quite a bit. The use of in-camera high contrast and a red filter helped separate out the white silo from the blue sky.



Using the railway lines to lead the eye into the frame, this also allowed the shot to be aspherically correct, which meant no cropping of the image was needed as I was completely square to the subject.



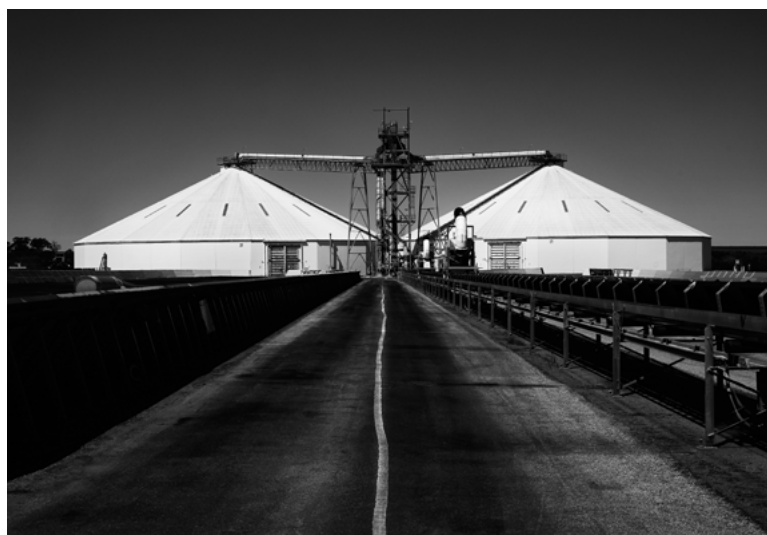
Getting in close and using the curved shadow as a point of interest added another dimension to the silo.



Photographing in the harsh midday light added to the harsh starkness of the buildings that stood out in an otherwise flat environment.



These bright white grain storage sheds were photographed at Ballidu on our way back to Perth. The unusual thing (for me) was that they were oval and not the usual rectangular shape I saw everywhere else.





The Pinnacles

f14, 1/640 second, ISO 320. Canon EOS R5, Canon EF 10-22mm @ 16mm.

Photographing The Pinnacles was a little like photographing the Wanaka Tree back in New Zealand. Everyone had to make these photos, even if it was just to prove that you had been there and seen it. These shots were taken both in colour and black and white to illustrate how photographing black and white in-camera can make a huge difference to how you see the ordinary differently. I used high contrast and a red filter in-camera for both images and ended up using them in my lecture at the convention later that week. Somehow, seeing examples of this idea taken in your own back yard can make the conversation even more poignant.

office and were told about Camel Soak, a place where the wild flowers were thought to be exceptional this year. We had actually returned to Perenjori to have the lunch special at the local pub because it looked especially appetising, but unfortunately, the sign had just been left out by mistake and lunch only happened on Sundays. As it was only Tuesday, we had five more days to wait!

The road verges of almost all the country roads out west were covered in wild flowers (even though we were told later by a camera club person at the conference that what we had been mostly photographing were weeds). Large areas of Rapeseed were also in abundance, but we found it difficult finding something within these fields to photograph, finally focusing on an old abandoned farmhouse in the midst of a large paddock. Even then, I liked my photograph of it in black and white more than I did the colour. We finally made it to Camel Soak, which was by far the best place for wild flowers on our trip and I even managed to make some photographs of them in colour!

On our way back, while driving down the famous Rabbit Proof Fence Road, Jackie insisted we stop and photograph some

scrubby looking trees which thanks to Jackie's insistence (you should always listen to your partner for the best advice), ended up being my favourite photo from the whole trip!

We stayed that night in a quaint old pub in Coorow, which appeared only to be open due to shortage of accommodation during the wild flower season and then made our way back to Perth, photographing old buildings and grain sheds along the way.

What I learnt from this trip was that no matter how beautiful the flowers, I still end up photographing the things I love, which for me are mainly 'manscapes'.

**Opposite page: Western Australian Intersection
f14, 1/320 second, ISO 320. Canon EOS R5, Canon RF 24-105mm @ 105mm.**

Whenever I'm travelling anywhere, I always have my camera set and ready to shoot. As we approached this intersection, after having driven on a straight road for about an hour, I felt compelled to make a photograph of it through the car window. After all, it was a 'Manscape' in that it had a road in it as well as several lines of telegraph poles. Funny how we are always drawn to photograph things we enjoy and things we visually relate to!



Salt Lake Fence

f11, 1/800 second, ISO 320. Canon EOS R5, Canon RF 100-500mm @ 300mm.

After driving north west through vast areas of crops for several hours, it came as a visual relief to focus on something minimal in the form of a broken-down fence on a dried salt lake.





A POINT OF VIEW

Regular contributor Nick Melidonis has been involved with *Better Photography* for over two decades and while he's still as young as the editor, it's his point of view we love.



Above: Brothers at Cremation of Grandmother in India.

One of the most emotional photos I've taken, again with my interpretation to leave just the basic elements in the image to tell the story. I was in the sacred Buddhist town of Bodhgaya, in India, on the river Phalgu where cremations took place. The grandmother had died hours earlier and her family and two grandsons had come to the joyful occasion of her cremation to the afterlife. As I raised the camera with their permission, the two grandsons knelt and cradled their grandmother's head in their hands. I was overcome with emotion.

Left: The Art and Science Centre, Valencia, Spain.

I was there to explore the marina facilities in the Spanish city of Valencia for a future America's Cup. On the way to the marina, I spotted the Science and Arts Centre through drizzle and clouds on an overpass. I later revisited the complex and captured some very satisfying images. I feel black and white best suits this image.

Recently, a friend of mine and a pro photographer and writer, Lyn Gail, was preparing a "Featured Photographer of the Month" article in the PPWA newsletter (Pro Photographers of WA). She left a series of questions for me to ponder over. After a couple of decades writing for Peter's *Better Photography* magazine, I thought the answers may be of interest to his readers as well, accompanied by some recent and favourite images.

How did you start in photography?

During my university years, I was very interested in the photo essays in *Time Life* magazines by photographers like W. Eugene Smith. My parents bought me a second-hand Hanimex rangefinder camera which led to an SLR and I read lots of books where I saw the works of Ansel Adams, Irvin Penn, John Sexton and Edward Weston. I even built my own darkroom. Over the next few years, I experimented with black and white and Fujifilm Velvia slide films while my travels were always a vehicle for landscapes and documentary. Much later in my photography journey, I decided to go full time into professional photography and was one of the early pioneers of photo tours in Australia.

What is your genre and how did you fall into that genre?

During an exhibition of my work, I met Richard Woldendorp who became my mentor and encouraged me to join the AIPP in 1999. I was runner-up in the AIPP Australian Landscape Photographer of the Year that year and fortunate to win the title in 2000 and 2001. From then on, I was hooked on landscapes and travel and decided to start running tours to Greece and the Greek Islands. I loved travel at a time when it was a real adventure, with no internet or mobile phones and only a few guides to work out how to travel to destinations. My camera became part of my hand in all the journeys I took.

What advice do you have for those starting out?

With so many people into digital photography these days and with the profession not regulated, it is difficult to make a living from photography. My advice would be for a photographer to find a small niche market and try to be the best you can at it, to differentiate yourself. Study the very best photographers' work within that niche and look carefully at their technique,



The Carina Nebula.

My first deep space photo while trying out my new astro telescope, 'deep space' computers and equatorial mount. Interestingly, it was captured with a narrow band Hydrogen Alpha filter with a dedicated astro camera from my driveway. I was blown away that the filter removed the light frequencies of the light pollution and street lamps and just left the red hydrogen alpha data that many deep space targets emit. To see an image like this appear first up means I am now hooked on the genre.

not to copy it, but to get inspiration and understand what the excellence benchmarks are for that genre. If possible, meet the artists. I travelled and spent time with some of my favourite photographers. Never settle for mediocrity in anything you do and always put a value on your work. If you don't value your work, then no one else will either.

Just as important as being good at your craft is to understand how to run a business. You can be the greatest artist

in the world, but if you can't sell anything, you'll soon have to give it away to survive.

Do you feel your photography style has changed over the span of your career?

Looking back over 30 years of my work and teaching others and running seminars, I believe a photographer's 'eye' and the way he or she sees the world changes very little. However, we become better at choosing and refining what we see and how we show our unique perspective of the world around us. The biggest difference in this digital age is the way we use our processing skills to interpret what we see, to get the ultimate from our raw files. We should never stop learning.

Often, I can go back to photographs I took many years ago and reprocess and interpret them much better. Now that I've developed my digital skills, I can get the best out of what I saw at the time. My style has developed and become more refined, although my 'world view' is probably much the same.

What makes a good photograph?

Our photography is always our personal and unique view of the world and so firstly, it should always satisfy us. However, what satisfies us may not be what others consider a 'good photograph.'

Universally, after being a judge all these years, I find the most consistent criteria for good images are that they must have impact and 'tug at the heart strings'. Creative viewpoints of 'ordinary' subjects that evoke emotions in others and let them see something differently make strong images.

Less is more and these days I embrace minimalism with a passion. Show what you need to show to tell the story and no more. Make it easy for the viewer to find your reason for taking that image. The 'decisive moment' in taking the photograph is critical and all good images share that magic moment when all



Mt Bromo volcano in East Java at the Bromo Tengger Semeru National Park just before dawn.

A friend and I took up positions just above the clouds of the Sea of Sand to wait for a sunrise. While waiting, I took a 30-second exposure with a Canon DSLR (I couldn't see anything in the darkness through the analogue viewfinder). I was amazed to find out it captured the fire in the volcanos and some stars as well. The yellow streaks in the clouds below are cars in the early morning, navigating through the sulphur-laced clouds covering the Sea of Sand.



The Milky Way and Guilderton Lighthouse.

The Milky Way and the Galactic core were captured with a Sony dedicated astro sensor (Sony A7R IV) and a star tracker on a tripod to keep the stars sharp. The lighthouse, which was shot in situ, was captured with a regular Sony Alpha 1. When you use a tracker to capture the Milky Way, it moves to track the stars and keep them sharp, but the foreground becomes blurred. On the other hand, foregrounds captured with longer exposures and smaller ISOs on a tripod, produce sharp foregrounds, but the stars become blurred, so the two components need to be blended afterwards.

the elements come together in a strong, cohesive whole which gives the impact we seek.

If you understand and have practised your genre, you will know when the moment presents itself. An image can be technically perfect, but not produce a strong emotional response, so choosing the right subject matter is also very important. My best known image of a camel train in the high Himalayas was the best of a few frames I managed to fire off before the light behind the camels vanished, but only one frame had clear separation of the camels and was the strongest in the group. It was pure luck to be there, but to capture it required experience. I believe it takes 20 years to be an overnight success. Cartier-Bresson famously remarked, "Your first 10,000 photos are your worst."

Tell us what you've got going on with your photography right now

Recently, I decided to retire from professional photography and passed my Greek tours over to Tony Hewitt. However, I am still working on other projects for future exhibitions, like my *Lost Kingdoms of Angkor* series which I've been shooting on trips to Cambodia over 17 years.

Recently, I became interested in astrophotography which is one of the most expensive and difficult genres I've ever tackled! Again, I spent countless hours researching the genre and viewing the best exponents of it. And at my age (I'm 81), I just went out and bought the best gear I could for both Milky Way photography and telescopes and cameras for deep space photography. I'm

fortunate to be mentored by one of the best in the business, Will Urbasso. So far, I'm very happy with what I'm producing. Time will tell, but if it isn't fun, then I'm not doing it properly.

I've also rediscovered aerial photography and was recently on an aerial journey to Shark Bay with Peter Eastway and Tony Hewitt. I thoroughly recommend it and I'm looking forward to arranging more trips over our wonderful WA coastlines.

What do you feel has been your biggest achievement so far?

I've been an educator all my life and although I rejoice and have celebrated my journeys in travel and the images they helped me produce, I think my greatest achievement has been to pass my knowledge, energy and enthusiasm on to others through my seminars and mentoring. To see eager students develop their passion for photography and start to produce work that is truly great and satisfying for them (often surpassing what I've produced in the genre), makes the photographic journey worthwhile.

If you had not chosen photography as a profession what would you be doing?

That is difficult to answer as photography was probably the last of a series of professions and interests I've had throughout my life. I became a professional photographer at the age of 56.

I started off as a lecturer in science and geology and became a geologist for a while. I started a folk band called The West Coast Trio that was twice runner-up in Melbourne's "Showcase" on TV

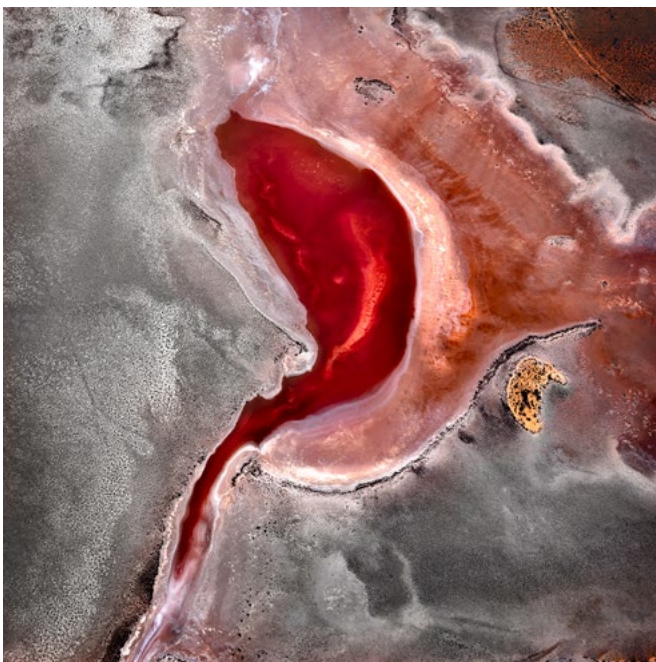


Camel Train, Nubra Valley, Himalayas, India.

Probably my most recognised image which was a finalist in National Geographic Travel Photographer of the Year and was printed in "The Times" in London. Pure chance to capture, I spent many hours to get the best out of a hurried raw file that was overexposed in my rush to capture the moment.

(today's equivalent to "Australian Idol"). Music and being out in remote places for geology didn't work for me, so to continue my music, I started lecturing at a teacher's college. Then I started the group Gemini that had a hit on Festival records called Sunshine Rive. It got to number four on the pop charts, so I nearly became a full-time musician. Unfortunately, the band broke up.

Then I met a management consultant and we started a recruitment agency where I was hiring professional people in



I've rediscovered aerial photography and joined Peter Eastway and Tony Hewitt in Shark Bay W.A. recently. I highly recommend the tour for capturing some fun abstracts.

the geology field during WA's mining boom. When we sold the business, I co-founded the successful management consultancy Integra with five professors from the business schools at WA's universities. It ran for 17 years. We took so much business away from the universities' business schools, that University of WA took us over. I decided not to join the new group and became a professional photographer. I've been one ever since.

Just this year, I've decided to retire, but I'm still very much involved in photo projects.

If you could have a conversation with anyone in the photography world, who would it be?

My first choice would be the Brazilian photojournalist, Sebastião Salgado whose powerful and haunting photos express the suffering of the homeless and downtrodden. He produced emotional photos of the atrocities in Africa and was one of the few photographers to document Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. After documenting man's inhumanity to man for so many years, he retired to his farm in Brazil and did nothing for a while.

In 2013, I was running a tour to Iceland and was passing through London on the way to Reykjavik. I stumbled on his amazing exhibition, "Genesis" at the Natural History Museum. Salgado's mesmerising and haunting black-and-white photographs from the Genesis project recorded landscapes and people unchanged in the devastating onslaught of modern society and development. After years of recording the cruelties of man, he decided to shoot what's 'right with the world.' The vast series of black-and-white photos left me speechless and I purchased his big and heavy book of the exhibition and travelled with it throughout my Iceland tour.

I would love to hear the great man's view on how he approached and visualised his powerful images.



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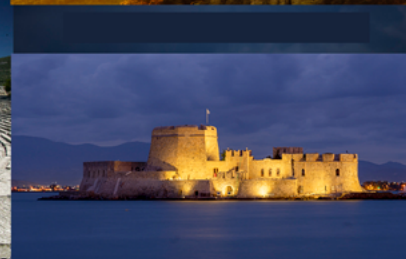
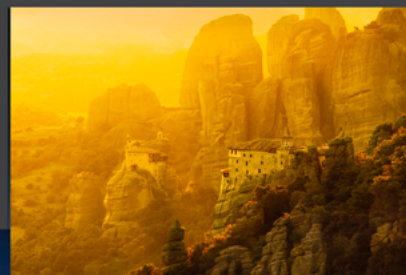
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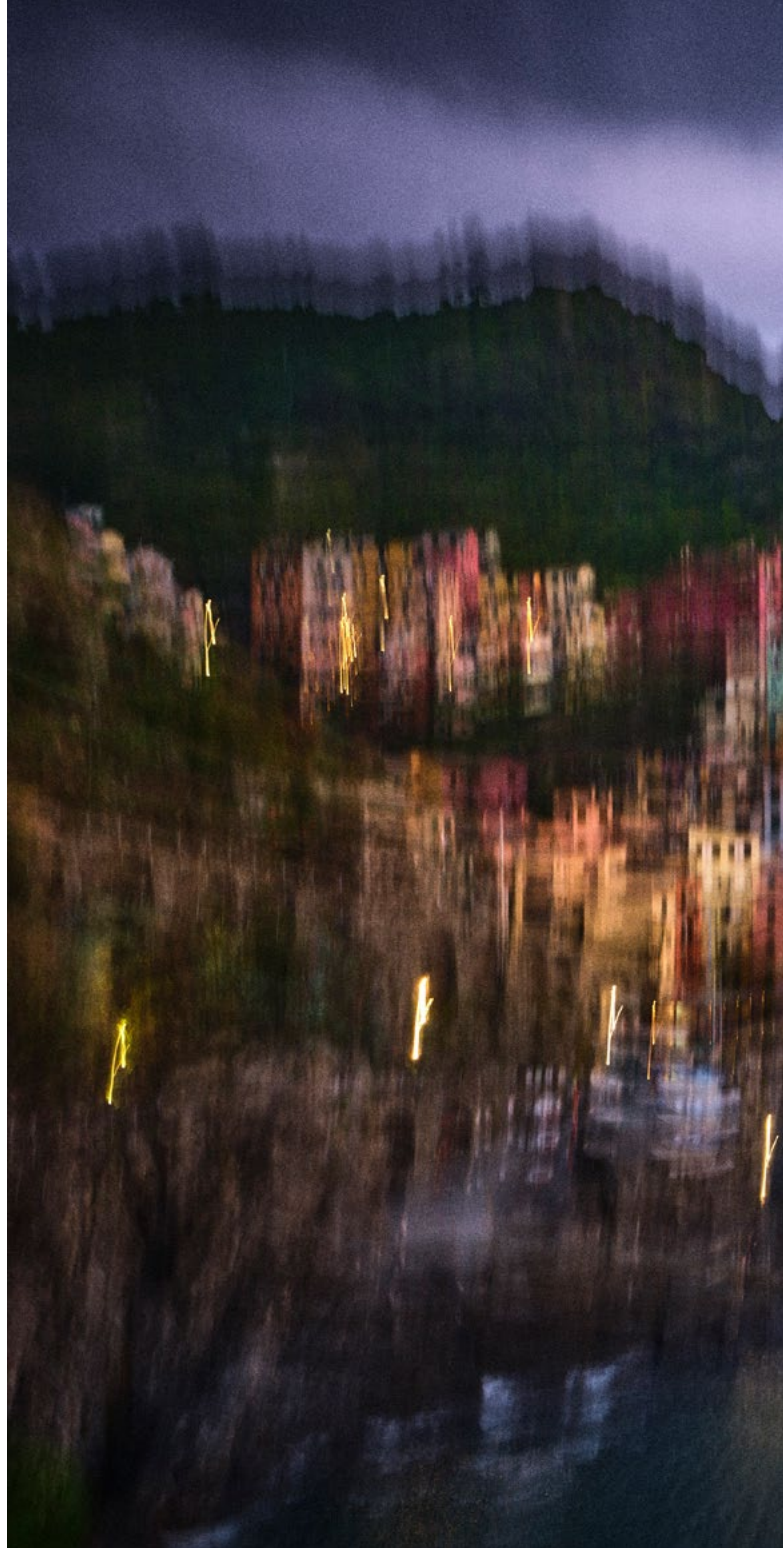
For a full itinerary, see Tony's website, tony@tonyhewitt.com or nick@nickmelidonis.com

Italian ICM

Intentional Camera Movement has become
very popular, but how do you do it?
Peter Eastway says just give it a try and
see if you like it! Here's how he did it.



St Peter's in Rome taken from around the side with the colonnade in frame. An ND filter was needed to produce a slowish shutter speed in bright sunlight. F22 @ 1/25 second, ISO 40, rapid movement.



One of the benefits of editing a photography magazine is the exposure I get to different genres, approaches and techniques. In recent times, I've published interpretative work by regular contributors Len Metcalf and Jackie Ranken and by well regarded photographers like Erik Malm and Michael Matthews.

I think sometimes photographers fall in love with the techniques they see, without perhaps fully realising how technique, subject matter and intent all go together. Mike Langford wrote about this a couple of issues back as well. I don't think it's enough just to use a technique without due regard to the subject itself or what you want to say about it.

For instance, a technique might be perfect for one subject type, but inappropriate for another. Not always, of course.



Looking a little different to the Keeper photograph at the beginning of the magazine, I feel the ICM manages to convey the feeling of the cliff-side village very well. F10 and 1.4 seconds, ISO 40, slow movement.

Sometimes a colour landscape will look equally impressive in black-and-white, they are just different. But the take-away is that often the reason we love the execution of a particular technique or approach is because of how it relates to the subject itself.

And the reason a technique might not resonate so strongly is because it's difficult to understand how it relates to the subject. Sometimes when judging photo competitions I see excellent execution, but personally can't understand how the technique complements or compliments the subject.

ICM

Over the years I've experimented with ICM – intentional camera movement – but it has been half-hearted at best. When you're photographing a landscape with a 150-megapixel sensor and

enthralled with fine detail and tonal range, it's hard to switch your mindset to a serendipitous and blurred abstract.

However, on my recent photo tour to Italy, I was often returning to locations previously visited and sometimes in less than perfect light. My usual high-resolution approach was not going to deliver something different – not that this would reduce my enjoyment of simply being in Italy and taking photographs.

And then it gradually dawned on me as I was sub-editing Jackie Ranken's article on multiple exposures for this issue. She was visiting Western Australia and shooting her locations in harsh light, yet the resulting images were very pictorial and abstract. It gave me the inspiration that I also needed to look for a different approach in Italy.



The classic Venice gondolas just off Saint Mark square – mind you, I’ve seen a lot of ICM versions of this location as well! F10, 1.9 seconds, ISO 200, slow movement.



The famous Cappella della Madonna di Vitaleta near San Quirico d’Orcia is still very recognisable. Shooting in the late evening, no ND filter was needed. F14 @ ½ second, ISO 40.



The Pantheon in Rome with its recognisable front portico. An ND filter permitted a moderately slow shutter speed in bright sunlight. F22 @ 1/13 second, ISO 40, rapid movement.

I thought of ICM.

If you've visited Rome, you'll know how hectic and busy it can be walking around the monuments. Getting a clear shot of the Pantheon is only possible very early in the morning, you have no chance at the Trevi Fountain just now with all the scaffolding around it and the Colosseum is worse with bright yellow hoardings all around the streets!

However, all these landmarks could be photographed with intentional camera movement that clearly represented the locations while hiding or subduing the unwanted hoardings and people.

Shooting ICM and checking the results on the back of the camera provided the basic framing and composition and then in Capture One, I processed the images with added colour and contrast. Originally, I also added in quite a lot of grain, but I've dialled this back a little and I'm still thinking through the final rendition as I write this article.

The result is a series of Italian travel photographs that depict an essence rather than a specific location.

The blurred images indicate where we are, rather than showing us. And the colour and movement reflect the sometimes chaotic enchantment of vini rossi, cappuccini and gelati.

Technique

I don't expect many readers will understand why I used a Fujifilm GFX100S II with its 100-megapixel sensor to shoot my ICM. In my defence, I wasn't shooting only ICM and so for my 'typical' hero photos, the resolution was used more appropriately. However, given we are intentionally blurring our subject, it really doesn't matter what camera you use as long as you can set the shutter speed appropriately.

To create blur, you move the camera during the exposure. How much blur is the trick and it changes depending on the amount of light, the lens focal length and the subject itself. In Italy, my subject was predominantly buildings, sometimes with people in the foreground, so I was shooting with a wide-angle lens. The wider the lens, the more you need to move the camera to create the blur. If you move the camera the same amount with a longer lens, you get more blur as everything is magnified; so you either move less or more slowly, or you might use a shorter shutter speed.

For me, shutter speeds of 1/8 to 2 full seconds seemed to work the best. At 1/8 second, I was moving the camera very quickly, jerking it up and down in what must have looked quite strange to a disinterested observer. However, in the middle of the day in full sunlight, I couldn't get my shutter speeds slow



These two photos show the difference between a horizontal and a vertical camera movement. Of course, you can do diagonals and curves as well – it's a matter of matching the movement to your subject. For my Italian locations, I generally preferred a vertical action.



enough; even at f22 and ISO 40 I was at 1/30 or 1/60 second which didn't produce sufficient blur for my purposes. The solution was to use an ND filter.

I think a 3-stop ND filter will do the trick most of the time, but so would a 10-stop filter which you might already have in your kit for long exposure work with skies and clouds. Whether you're shooting at f2.8 or f22 probably doesn't matter given the whole image is being blurred anyway. The main consideration is the shutter speed.

I purchased a Hoya variable ND filter which claimed to offer up to 9-stops neutral density and it was a waste of money. I have heard photographers complain about the variable design, but making my purchase in Rome, I hoped that a respectable manufacturer like Hoya would have worked it out by now. Unfortunately, this was not the case for my \$300 purchase. The variable ND filter seems to use two polarising filters which in many lighting conditions actually blacks out the image in irregular shapes across the screen. I found it absolutely hopeless except at one- or two- stop strengths, so I will be purchasing some standard ND filters for the future.

However, I persevered with Mr Hoya and the 'black out areas' through the filter could be positioned sometimes to give an



Perugia Central Square. In the middle of the day an ND filter was required to get a long enough shutter speed. F22 @ 0.6 seconds, ISO 40, rapid movement.

interesting result – and keep my shutter speeds down to $\frac{1}{8}$, $\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ second.

As the light dropped in the evening, I could take the filter off. It felt a little odd to shoot ICM in what were otherwise perfect lighting conditions. At Cappella della Madonna di Vitaleta in San Quirico d'Orcia, we had a glorious evening with light clouds and magic light. With the camera tripod mounted, I was shooting some very respectable landscapes at one or two seconds, so when the camera came off the tripod for ICM, it was a matter of slowing down my movement to get the best results.

The best results? How do you know if you have a good result? ICM includes an element of luck or happenstance. While you can compose a subject, very often you won't expect exactly the result you get – there's always something a little different that you didn't recognise before swinging the camera. I think this is what gets photographers addicted to ICM.

However, the short answer is you just review the results on the camera's LCD screen until you see what you like. Not every subject lends itself to ICM. Some subjects you think mightn't work can look incredibly good! And the trick is to shoot the same subject multiple times because every one is a little different. I also keep an eye on my exposure, tending to underexpose by

a stop or so to ensure I don't end up with too many burnt-out highlights. Of course, if you do, a little post-production can usually solve this anyway.

Post-Production

I think a fair percentage of the impact in the accompanying photos comes from the dramatic, contrasty post-production. Very often, the raw file looked a little plain until I applied a pre-set to the file. The pre-set was created after processing my first few files and establishing the look I wanted. I ramped up the contrast, clarity and dehaze, but opened up the blacks and shadows as I didn't want huge areas of detailless black.

The preset acted as a starting point. Often, I would need to dial down the highlights and whites a little, especially where I had blue sky which would be blown out by the contrast setting I was using. I'd also use some selective adjustment to increase or decrease colour saturation and contrast so I could better direct the viewer's eye to what I felt was important in the composition.

Overall, I'm happy with the images I've created. As we go to press, I still have quite a number to finalise and then the portfolio will be dropped into a photo book to complete the project.

There's nothing like a photo book!

ARE WE THERE YET?

If you're a landscape photographer, you're also a traveller. But do you travel to distant locations or are your forays local? And which is best?

Murray White has some suggestions!



There was a time when I thought the only worthwhile landscape destinations were to be found at the end of a 4WD track. And not only that, it was my wishful belief that the calibre of the images made there would be directly proportional to the corrugations endured or the number of tyre patches required. Sadly, any such link is coincidental at best.

I would not be alone in thinking that it is only fair for effort 'above and beyond' to at least be compensated by some compelling subjects or exotic settings. For many, there is an expectation that those remote and much anticipated photographic hotspots are not only desirable in the sense of being a somewhat exclusive destination, but are essential more broadly for the subsequent creation of unique and unforgettable imagery.

After all, we landscapers by definition are required to travel to do this genre justice – but just how much travel is required to achieve that end?

It is an interesting question and one I think worth exploring from your own perspective and work practice. The process of analysing where our best landscape photography is done and being able to separate that result from our travel ambitions (or

AFTER THE RUSH

While the geology of Australia's Pilbara seems to exert a magnetic pull over our cameras, that myopic fixation on iron-rich red rock need not be the sole strategy on this visual stage. I found this composition at the foot of Fortesque Falls and despite its somewhat chaotic architecture, recognised that an alternative narrative could be made. Yes, the falls above were just as captivating and photogenic as I expected, but so too were the quieter, but no less intriguing settings that presented themselves from beneath the exotic facade.



GROUND

This morning's camera walk confirmed to me that more exotic settings are often the sole trigger for inspired photography. Although this particular destination lies only half a day's drive from home, the striated snow gums and angular granite outcrops are features so unlike our local area, they may as well have been on the moon. This fog-shrouded setting of foreign looking entities (to me), created such a sense of wonder that satisfying photography was only a matter of a routine search for pleasing compositions as I moved from one incarnation of this curious woodland to the next.

**UNSETTLED**

This image was made at a local destination that I visit regularly and have come to appreciate from many sides of its character. These rocks are exceedingly slippery at the best of times due to a wicked combination of incessant wave action and algal growth and with drizzle falling, I was forced to partly crawl to this viewpoint. There is something to be said for getting to know a location so well that we feel a need to maintain that relationship over the longer term and in all conditions; circumstances perhaps where our photography is more able to drill down into that understanding. For me, an exotic capture is not necessarily a new destination, but a new observation.

restrictions), may be quite revealing. Has photography driven our travels, or has travel driven our photography?

I thoroughly enjoy the travelling component and would continue to seek out the roughest roads in Australia, even without a camera bouncing along beside me! However, it wasn't until I began to write this article that I actually assessed my photographic results over time in terms of their genesis and visual value to me; and only now can quantify how essential travelling is for me in a photographic sense as well.

Closer Examination

As I sit here, there is a box of 8x10-inch monochrome working prints in front of me. These are all images that, in my judgement, have reached a certain threshold in terms of aesthetic value. There are 77 landscape photographs, previously chosen for a particular project, but random in every other sense of selection (including destination). Of these, 24 were captured on relatively short day trips from home and 53 shot on more remote

expeditions. So roughly speaking, I make twice as many usable images on longer journeys than I do otherwise.

On closer examination, this same ratio is also reflected by the number of days actually spent behind a camera. In a typical year, I will undertake about 90 days of extended journeys and about 40 day trips. Expressed as a percentage, the usable image per day outcome is uncannily close.

So, does this mean it is pointless for me undertaking longer trips for purely photographic purposes, when greater time and creative efficiency could be found by simply increasing the frequency of my day trips? Well, not exactly and for two reasons. Firstly, I also shoot for longer hours on my day trips and therefore the return is mathematically diminished on that basis alone, but second (and more importantly), I believe there are other influences at play when we photograph new locations, compared to known destinations revisited. It is these influences that can help us reconcile and possibly improve our landscape photography.

Different Aesthetics

Perhaps one of the most obvious advantages of a longer photographic expedition will be the multiplicity of fresh subjects to consider. More distant destinations often stir our imaginations simply because they are different. They can be seen as an exciting cocktail of unfamiliar environmental elements and relationships. In many cases, alternative weather and more nuanced lighting qualities can further shape a visual world, quite unlike that to which we are accustomed.

When challenged by such diversity, our first instinct may be to capture this divergent landscape purely on the basis of its novelty. I guess we apply the same rationale that generates

**RECLINED**

I find the ghost gums of Central Australia to be reason enough for travel half-way across the country and in many cases choose to capture these expressive trees purely for their striking presence on the landscape. But sometimes, even on a tight and demanding schedule, these same entities can be interpreted quite differently. This image was made near a lunch stop when I had time to explore an area new to me with just a little more nuanced observation than the bigger picture travel had permitted. Yes, the ghost gums had piqued my interest in a broad sense, but amid that outward attraction of the generic, there was so much more to find.



DREAMCATCHER

We sometimes view local destinations as rather mundane and familiar settings with only a limited capacity to excite our shutter finger. However, I believe that there is also an opportunity within this visual malaise to actually explore more options because we have the time and incentive to do so. While this subject didn't initially capture my imagination, by investing time and considering other possibilities, I found that by including the lake rim reflection and then disturbing the water surface, a more dynamic composition could be revealed.

compelling images back home – among other criteria we look for a point of difference that will endow our capture with a more unique aesthetic. With exotic destinations, the setting is already a point of difference and to some extent this explains why I have found more distant locations to be particularly fertile grounds when roaming with a camera. As an alien to these locations, it is common for me to find that virtually everything offers a refreshing and indeed urgent visual experience.

However, one of the risks of allowing the location to drive the aesthetic agenda is that in visually exploring a new environment, we may not feel a need to dig as deep creatively as we otherwise do at home – the destination

THE GHOST

Revisiting any area can prompt us to look at its features through fresh eyes and although this capture was made near a place where I have taken many photographs previously, its rather intimate subject interpretation required a creative mindset. Of course, we can apply that same discipline at any location, be it local or remote, but I feel familiar settings are more likely to inspire an alternative observation because we must work harder to avoid returning home with just visual clones of an earlier outing.





SHAKEN AND STIRRED

Remote area travellers often seek out and literally stumble upon subjects that are captivating in themselves. When we travel to an area of curious landscape structures, it is easy to find subjects that simply require sympathetic selection and framing to please our sense of the aesthetic. I say 'our sense', because for those people who may be more acquainted with that area, these subjects are not necessarily novel or compelling; to them they may be just routine. As visitors we may do well to follow the role modelling of locals and try to look beyond our first impressions, applying as much creative energy to exotic entities as we do in a more familiar setting.

has already done some of the heavy lifting for us. A case could be made that as photographers, we respond to a setting on the basis of its familiarity to us. If we are confronted by a scene foreign to our visual sensibilities, then we may seek to clarify that new understanding by savouring its freshness through our photographic capture. On the other hand, our awareness of a routine subject back home may seem to have been so comprehensively revealed before, that we fully expect to look beyond that banality and apply a more discerning creativity.

For example, when I revisit a local destination, even one seen many years ago, I still tend to gravitate to the same subjects and viewpoints as I have done before; not deliberately, but I believe subconsciously, because my vision assesses and responds to visual elements in a predictable and even repetitive manner. The difference here though, is that I am now forced to look for alternative ways to interpret these settings if I wish to avoid conceptually similar images or even a replication of historic compositions.

The environmental restriction has been the catalyst for an alternative interpretation of the setting.

Even nearby destinations not visited before can still promote that same practice incentive, because in many instances the subjects remain broadly familiar in flavour. In effect, I overlook what has become a routine experience in my particular neck of the woods, in favour of a habitually more unorthodox approach. This self-imposed act of seeing in a visually progressive manner feeds into our broader vision, even our style and its (many would say necessary) development over time.

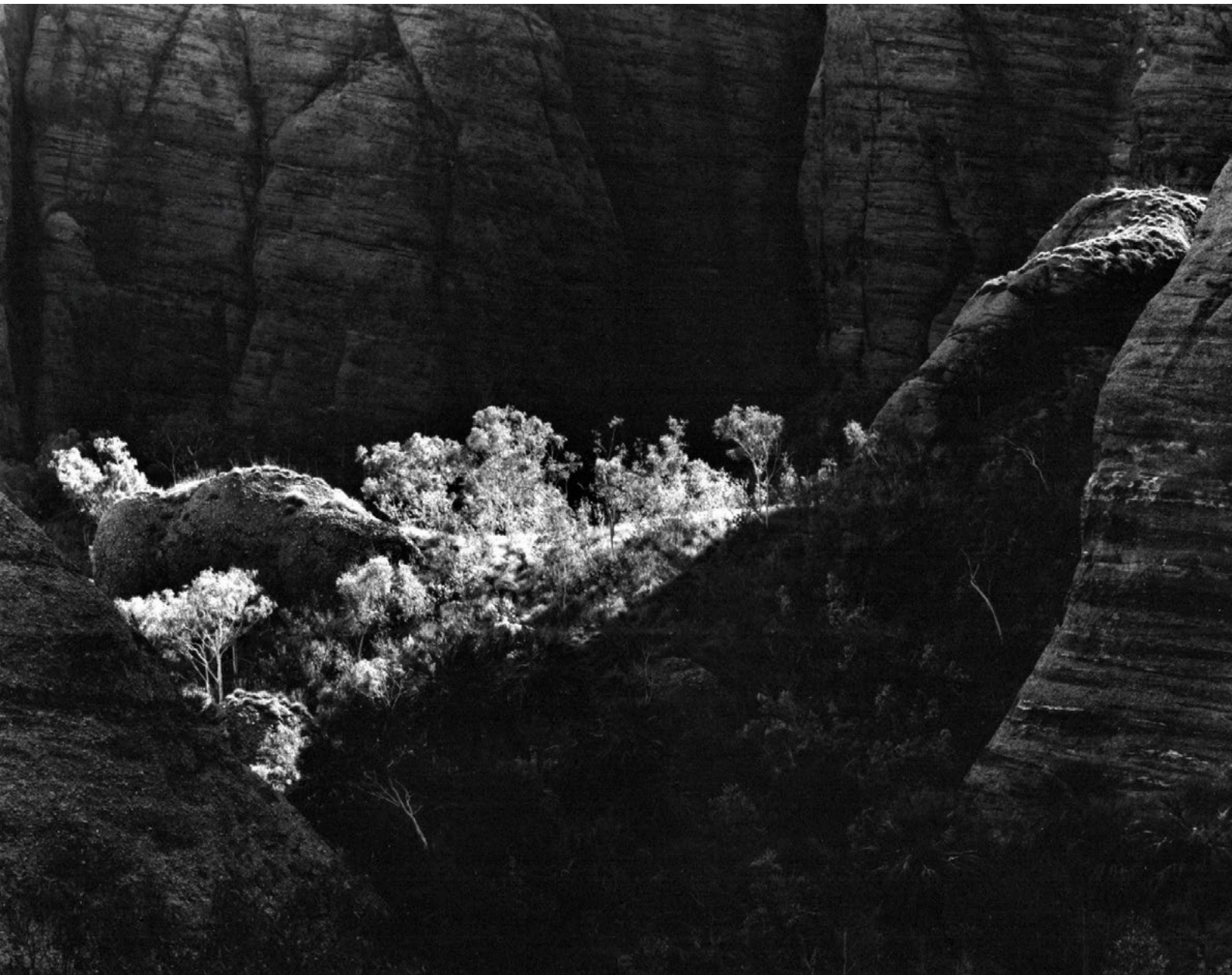
Another factor that can differentiate between local and exotic locations, is that our travels closer to home can be better tailored to suit those weather and lighting influences that impact landscape photography both in a positive and negative sense. Even tide times and periods of high visitor activity can be more effectively managed, because we have a more flexible window through which to work. In comparison, travel to those further flung destinations is often tightly scheduled and we must adapt to what is on offer at the time of its availability.

Of course, we can apply at least some logistical parameters to our expedition work and I suspect very few travellers would head away on a lengthy journey without at least considering what liabilities can be mitigated by advance decision making. Those seasonal choices we make can offer somewhat predictable weather conditions and we may well be more



SWAYING IN THE LIGHT

One of the big advantages to photography born of a less global nature, is our capacity to better co-ordinate those random influences that impact landscape photography. This image was made at a location near home that I drop by quite often, but today's visit had witnessed a rare confluence of tidal status, weather and lighting in a way that would be difficult to achieve with certainty on tour in a remote setting. Sometimes repeat visits to a particular destination are the only practical way to manage that Goldilocks factor and eventually have all of the stars align.



THE LOST ISLAND

Preliminary planning can equip us with some basic knowledge and perhaps strategic timing for our remote journeys, although we still need to think on our feet when exploring an exotic landscape. For me, the combination of unfamiliar structural entities and unexpected moments of light or elemental juxtaposition provides the best of both worlds in a visual sense. This capture made at the Bungle Bungles was neither planned or expected, but the result of allowing Nature to be present on her terms, rather than only be defined by features we initially see as all-encompassing by virtue of their apparent uniqueness.

diligent in our itinerary construction, but there are limits to what can be arranged with the natural world!

The irony of this reality is that despite our best intentions in planning for a lengthy trip, we will still need creative agility to deal with the environment on its own terms. It often follows that in the real world, those exotic subjects we crave to capture in the first instance are not always ripe for the picking and we must dig just as deep visually as we do back home. For example, I have driven the Canning Stock Route twice. It is an arduous 1800 kilometre 4WD slog that features countless photographic opportunities along the way. However, the subjects and settings that I may have hoped to shoot in the planning phase don't always fit in with the unpredictable daily distance covered, breakdowns, boggings and an uncertain matrix of more natural influences.

So, while exotic subjects may in themselves captivate my interest, the reality of remote travel is that it will be those

subjects that align with my movements and the nature of my interaction that creates the visual spark in real life. In many ways more remote destinations have for me ticked both boxes for effective landscape photography – I enjoy the excitement of stimulating new subjects together with the challenge of interpreting those same entities within a more restrictive touring framework.

Other photographers will have their preferences and experiences of the necessity for travel as a landscaper. I can certainly understand the joy of forming an intimate relationship with the environment close to home and the incentive and advantage that brings to the potential depth of capture. At the same time, I appreciate the excitement and instinctive response that will accompany a more remote expedition.

Like many other decisions in life, we must follow the path that brings us the most contentment, in this case photographically, no matter how long that path may be.

THE POWER *of the* STILL IMAGE

In this modern world of 24-hour news and moving captures, Michael Coyne explains why the still image still has a special power of its own.

If you go back to your country, you will probably die. If you take a boat, you will probably die." This dire prediction comes courtesy of Kamran, an asylum seeker on a sinking boat.

Barat Ali Batoor is a Walkley Award winning photographer who documented his journey as an asylum seeker, travelling for two years through three continents. Barat was forced to flee Afghanistan after receiving death threats when his images of underage male prostitution were published in the *Washington Post*. He continued taking photographs as he travelled across Pakistan, Indonesia, Thailand and Australia, documenting life through the eyes (and lens) of an asylum seeker.



Camera gear used by Barat Ali Batoor during his journey.

Out at sea on a sinking boat, with no help in sight, Barat continued photographing this perilous existence, until the situation became even more difficult: "My camera stopped working after falling into the sea; I couldn't document this part of my journey."

The well captured still image has the power to inform, reveal and create an emotive response. If a still image has the capacity to incite Afghan war lords to want to kill a photographer, it can also reveal the terror of asylum seekers on a sinking boat.

Moments Not Missed

There are also moments in history that we would have missed had professional photojournalists not been there and reacted to the sudden changes of circumstance.

Photojournalists at a Trump rally were suddenly faced with an unexpected and dramatic situation when a gunman fired at the former president, with a bullet clipping his ear. One bystander was killed and two others seriously wounded.

The photographers reacted immediately, producing iconic images that reflected this sensational moment in American political history. Evan Vucci from The Associated Press captured a classic image of Donald Trump pumping his fist in the air, blood on his face, the American flag above him and Secret Service agents supporting him.

Getty staff photographer Anna Moneymaker photographed a close-up of the Presidential nominee lying on the stage between Secret Service agents with blood dripping from his wound.

Doug Mills, a *New York Times* photographer who has been covering the White House for forty years, captured the most startling picture of all – a bullet streaking past Trump's head. Mills captured this image by using a shutter speed of 1/8000 of a second.



Above: Photograph by Barat Ali Batoor of asylum seekers who wave for help on a small boat they sailed in on their quest for freedom.

Left: Front cover of *The Age* showing one of the Trump photos mentioned by Michael.



Cathy Freeman running at the Sydney Olympic Games. Photograph by Michael Coyne.



Photograph by Barat Ali Batoor of young men dancing for the pleasure of warlords and powerful men in Afghanistan.



Wedding party at the groom's home in Mahuadanr, Bihar, India. Photograph by Michael Coyne.

We have all seen or will see the videos of this assassination attempt, but it is the still images that freeze the moments that we will remember.

Dangerous Consequences

Many situations where people capture the decisive moment are dangerous and have consequences. Over 175 media people including Palestinians, Israelis and Lebanese have died in the Gaza strip since October 7, 2023. Often, they were targets because they were capturing powerful still images that challenged the purported truths of the situation.

The still image remains powerful regardless of its historical significance.

It is an important way of capturing remarkable moments, small as well as great. When parents first see their newborn baby, a couple says 'I do', an athlete crosses the finish line – only a still image can really distil the essence of these moments.

Searching For Sanctuary – Journey of an asylum seeker through the eyes of Barat Ali Batoor *is on at the State Library Victoria until the end of January 2025.*



A mother and father are handed their baby, minutes after it was born. Photograph by Michael Coyne.

RADIANT PHOTO

Do you struggle to process lots of photographs, not only quickly, but to your creative satisfaction? Could Radiant Photo be part of your solution?

By Peter Eastway.

All photo editing apps have an Auto button. In most cases, it's a fraud! Now, don't get me wrong. I'm sure the software and app designers did the best they could. I'm also sure that, technically, the Auto button works. But the results are rarely to my liking.

What Does Auto Do?

Perhaps we should ask the question a little differently. What can the Auto button do?

Let's start with exposure. Your raw file (or any photo file, for that matter), can hold a range of tones from black to white. Let's limit this overly simplified example to an 8-bit file which has 254

tones between black and white – a total of 256 values.

The Auto button runs a little routine that looks at your raw file and sets the lowest tone as black (set to 0) and the highest tone as white (set to 255), and then it stretches out all the other values as greys – the tones in between. This is a great theory – or at least a good starting point.

We are taught that good photographs generally have a range of tones from black to white, so surely by setting the lowest value to black and the highest to white, we'll end up with a 'correct' exposure? Correct, yes, but suitable or pleasing, not necessarily.

For instance, sometimes you don't want any blacks. Sometimes you don't want any whites. Think of a landscape on a foggy morning – blacks and whites would kill the mood.

There are lots of complexities to consider. When you stretch the tones out between black and white, do you use a straight line (linear), or add in a curve (which gives a more natural looking result)? But if you're adding in a curve, what should the curve look like – should it be high or low in contrast, for example?

As you can see, the calculation can be done many different ways, but which is the right one for each of your photos? Now add in three colour channels and how those channels interact and your head starts to spin. And if that's not enough, look at the Auto button in Lightroom and Adobe Camera Raw; not only does the Auto button adjust the exposure, but the contrast, whites, blacks, highlights and shadows, saturation and more!



The Radiant Photo interface is clean and easy to use.



At first glance, the 'Auto' button in Capture One has done a pretty good job (top) compared to the Radiant Photo version (bottom), but check out the highlights on the top right which have been corrected.



Most Auto buttons are doing everything technically right, but the results rarely look as good as I can make them with a little extra 'human' attention. They are not producing a 'pleasing' result.

My problem (our problem) is that I don't have time to give all the photos I capture the extra personal attention they need. But sometimes I would like to.

A 20 Year Project

When my daughters were 2 and 5, Kathie and I took them on a two-month trip to Italy. Everyone said what's the point, they'll never remember it. However, I am quite selfish in my world view and answered that I would remember it!

We spent two weeks in four locations and, over twenty years ago, I put together an album that covered one of the fortnights, with the full intention of doing the other three fortnights 'shortly'.

Does this sound familiar?

This year, I decided the time had arrived. I'd take my 2002 raw files, shot with a pre-production Canon EOS 1Ds, on my flights and spend a couple of hours processing them so Kathie and I could put a book together. It was a lot of fun and I greatly enjoyed processing the family photos – but boy, it was taking a lot of time. And the Auto button – well, I felt like I was resetting the Auto button so often, I gave up.



Most of the differences are subtle but important. This Venetian night scene is rendered reasonably well with the Auto button (left), but note the better exposure, contrast and saturation with the Radiant Photo version (right).

I was about two-thirds through this project when in August, I met Elia Locardi at the NZIPP annual convention where he was giving a presentation on travel photography. He also used the opportunity to spread the word about Radiant Photo, an editing app which he and a team of programmers have designed.

Elia described his own challenges processing travel images. Like most of us, we come back with thousands of images. We'll look through the shoot with eager anticipation, we'll tweak a few of the more interesting shots, but rarely will we get each image looking its best.

In some ways, this is a travesty. We spend all this time, money and energy visiting a location, but then life gets so busy when we return, we forget to give our photographs the attention they deserve.

As a professional travel photographer, this was very much Elia's challenge. And Radiant Photo is his solution. With the press of a button, a whole folder of photographs can be processed 'automatically' to a much higher standard than I've found anywhere else.

The Radiant system will be attractive for many genres of photography, from portrait and weddings to sport and wildlife. If you have lots of photos to process, Radiant Photo will edit them quickly.

What Can Auto Do?

Naturally enough, Elia isn't revealing the special recipes he and his team have built into Radiant Photo – that would be giving the game away. However, a look at the Radiant Photo interface shows how they're thinking.

These are global changes. Radiant Photo isn't using selective adjustment layers to darken down a sky or lighten up a face (not yet, at any rate). However, it is using highlight and shadow adjustments which to some extent are selective in their nature. Also, all the adjustments are processed globally. It's also why Radiant Photo won't completely replace us as invariably some further selective adjustments will allow us to better edit and/or interpret the image. I'm not looking to hand over my editing to an algorithm just yet. I love editing my photos, but there are a lot of steps that I find myself repeating for every image, so abdicating this chore to an app like Radiant seems sensible.

I discovered after running Radiant Photo that I was in a much better position to assess the merit or otherwise of my photos. More often than I expected, an average image when given the right amount of exposure, contrast and colour would move from 1 star to four or five stars!

Radiant Photo puts me in a better position to apply my own edits. I have a starting point with fewer shortcomings, but of course, once Radiant has processed a file, it's no longer a raw file. Is this a problem?

We're told how important it is to use our raw files so we have access to the maximum amount of information recorded by our cameras and this is true. But I queried the programmers of Capture One software years ago, and they confirmed the difference between a raw file and a 16-bit TIFF file processed into a large colour space like ProPhoto, is as good or almost as good, depending on what aspect of image quality we're discussing. There's a very slight compromise that most of us would not notice anyway – and the time saved with Radiant Photo is worth it in my opinion.

So, when I process my raw files, I output them as 16-bit TIFFs and reimport them into Capture One or Lightroom – and proceed from there. Or, I could take them one at a time into Photoshop. Or, I can convert them straight to JPEGs, ready for uploading to a website or for viewing by clients. Using Radiant can be the last step or the beginning of the editing process.

One Step Processing

Here's how I've been using Radiant Photo. I open up the program and drag a folder of raw files onto the interface. On the left I select the Radiant Photo – Pro Smart preset, which represents the algorithm that will be used to process my photos. On the right, I leave the Smart Editing sliders for Enhance, Color and Skin Tone set to 100%. I press Save All at the top of the screen and let the software go to work.

As mentioned earlier, I have already set Radiant to create 16-bit TIFF files and I save them into a subfolder with the raw files.

However, as you look around the Radiant Photo interface, you will see that there is more control available if you want it. For instance, there are smart presets for specific genres such as landscape, people or animals. And you can also ask Radiant to



This Tuscan landscape is an extreme example of how poorly the Auto button can work (top) and how well Radiant Photo works (bottom)! Of course, I can find examples where the Auto button closely matches Radiant Photo, but I've found very few that have beaten it!



introduce intentional biases – such as making the images lighter than average, or adding in some light diffusion, more depth or vibrancy. In other words, you don't have to accept how Radiant Photo wants to process your photos without question, you can customise the output to suit your needs.

All this is in the Quick Edit section. Radiant also offers a Detailed Edit screen and a Color Grade which will help you get all the photos in an edit looking similar – wedding photographers will find this particularly helpful when putting together an album and you want there to be a consistency in the images from front to back.

The only limitation to my approach of processing an entire

file is that I end up with a lot of large TIFF files, many of which I will never use. The solution is to just process the photos one at a time and whether I'm working from Lightroom or Capture One, I can access Radiant Photo as a plug-in and do just that. Even better, the TIFF file immediately shows up next to the raw file.

There's a lot more to Radiant Photo which I have not yet explored, but even with my limited use so far, I think Radiant Photo is definitely worth a look and you can download a free trial, so try before you buy. The full bundle is AUS \$270 which includes a discount that seems to be available most of the time. There's also an annual subscription model available.

Details at <https://radiantimaginglabs.com/>

Retouch4Me

Are you looking to create a perfect

complexion on your portraits?

Tired of spending hours hiding blemishes

and wrinkles? Maybe an app like

Retouch4Me will do the trick!

Do you 'edit' your portraits to create a blemish-free visage? Does it take you forever to get the skin looking smooth and even, especially where the skin meets the hairline? Are you tired of using time-consuming techniques in Photoshop to get a satisfactory result?

Retouching the human face is an artform in its own right. In the advertising world, for instance, big money is spent ensuring the glamorous models are rendered to perfection – even when the subject herself is flawless, the lighting sympathetic and the hair and makeup artists the best in the business! The raw files are handed over to a retouching artist who, in the past, may have spent hours if not days finessing the image – removing minor skin blemishes, evening out the skin colours, tweaking the lighting and perceived volume of the subject.

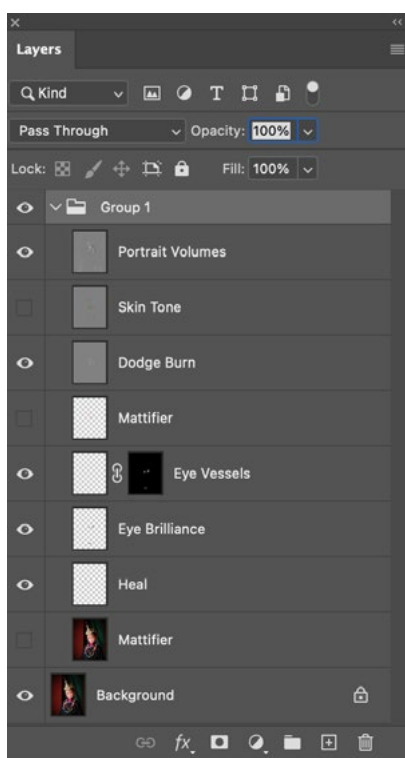
The result is like a painting, an air-brushed masterpiece. Think of the movie posters with a famous actress – she has never looked so good!

However, a lot of the best portrait retouching is done without the viewer being aware that the image has been edited (although we are sceptical of everything these days, so let's just say it is 'invisible Photoshop').

There's probably little to be gained from smoothing the wrinkles of an octogenarian for a travel shoot when the obvious intention is to celebrate the subject's age and appearance.

The gypsy woman photographed in India shows how all retouching can go too far for a travel portrait (middle image), but the retouching strength can be easily reduced to give a more natural result (bottom image).





As a travel portrait, the original is possibly the stronger, but I selected this image to show how well Retouch4Me smooths out the tones and colours of the face. The strength of the initial adjustments was reduced using the opacity sliders for each layer and turning off some layers as they either did nothing to the image or were not helpful for this portrait.

Similarly, if you're photographing a family down at the beach, dressed in casual attire, you probably don't want them looking like Vogue models after you've finished editing.

However, there are as many levels of post-production as there are photographs and so it comes down to applying an appropriate amount of editing to your subject and what you want to represent.

You may not require a complete makeover on a travel portrait, but tweaking the whites of the eyes and adding a little catchlight might give the subject an extra sparkle. Appropriate retouching can enhance a portrait without morphing it into a fantasy.

Plug-ins and Apps

So how do you do it? There have been hundreds of tutorials on how to retouch a portrait in Photoshop with varying degrees of complexity. Frequency separation comes to mind as a technique which splits the base image into areas of less detail like the skin and areas of greater detail, such as the eyes and lips. Or maybe you added three or four adjustment layers to give the eyes some attention, darkening down the edges of the iris, lightening the whites, adding a catchlight.

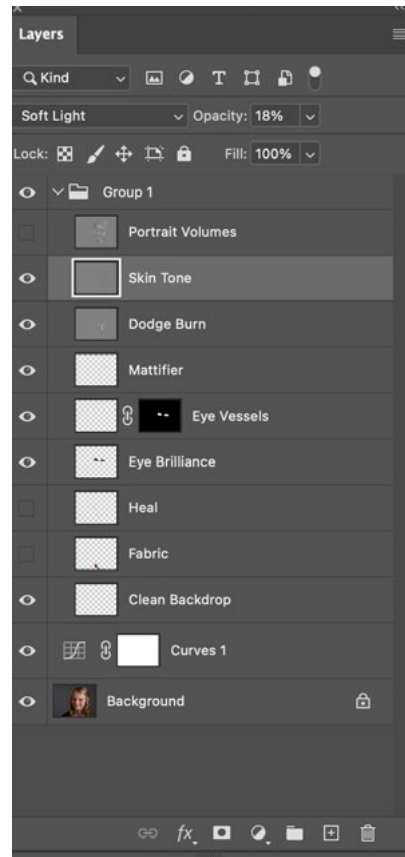
Even subtle adjustments can make significant improvements and as we're using photography to communicate something about our subject (or perhaps ourselves), it's an important part of the process.



However, time is of the essence. We don't want to spend all our lives chained to a computer – and after all, computers are supposed to take the drudgery out of our lives. There must be a solution for automatic portrait retouching.

And over the years, there have been many, often based on facial recognition. If you know what the face looks like, it's easier to create a selection (mask) and make an editing adjustment. And as facial recognition today is extremely sophisticated, it appears the new portrait retouching apps are taking full advantage of it.

Retouch4Me comes from the developers of 3DLut Creator, which some readers will be familiar with. We tested it as a Photoshop plug-in, but if you don't use Photoshop it also works



If you're into studio photography, Retouch4Me will give you a fully retouched image (middle), but for my work, using the opacity sliders returns some of the subject's reality and may be your preferred result as well (below left).

as a stand-alone app. We also tested the cloud version, which we understand in principle is the same on the on-device version.

It is easy to use. We downloaded the plug-in, installed and opened the panel in Photoshop. Then we opened a portrait file to retouch, clicked the button and in a short time, Retouch4Me added up to 10 image layers. This significantly increases the file size, not that this is such an issue these days, but it also means all the retouching adjustments can be further tweaked by either turning off layers or adjusting their opacity (which effectively reduces the strength of the edit). Depending on how you want the portrait to look, you'll find the opacity sliders on each layer very helpful to reduce the retouching to a more natural look.

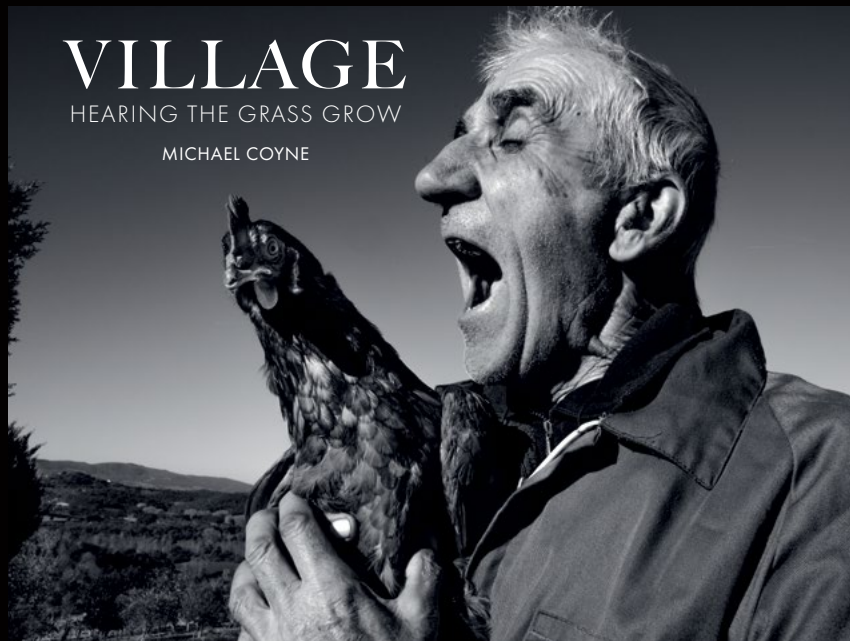


The beauty of the Retouch4Me plug-in is that all the adjustments can be reduced to a suitable level.

VILLAGE

HEARING THE GRASS GROW

BY MICHAEL COYNE



Around the world traditions are disappearing, languages are being forgotten and cultures washed away.

The main culprit is urbanisation resulting in the wholesale disappearance of villages and village life. It is this that Michael Coyne has made his mission to capture through his probing lens.

This stunning collection guides us through a disappearing way of life at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries.

"MICHAEL COYNE'S MOST RECENT BOOK IS A MASTERPIECE OF DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY."

-PETER EASTWAY, BETTER PHOTOGRAPHY MAGAZINE

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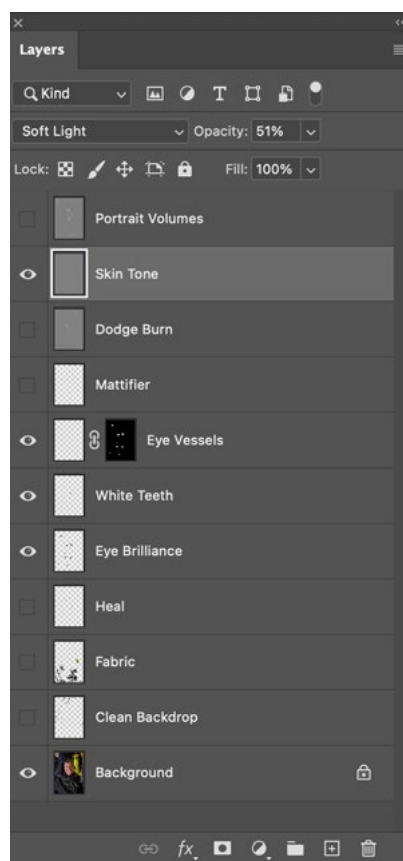


Not that Retouch4Me over-retouches necessarily, but using the cloud version, there doesn't seem to be any point reducing the amount of retouching with the plug-in (using the slider controls) because there is no feedback until you've downloaded the retouched file. In comparison, I imagine the on-device version provides immediate feedback. However, the purpose of this paragraph isn't to confuse you, rather, explain why we were using the opacity sliders on the retouching layers in Photoshop, rather than in the app itself.

There are ten retouching areas: Heal, Mattifier, Dodge & Burn, Portrait Volumes, Skin Tone, Eye Vessels, Eye Brilliance, White Teeth, Fabric and Clean Backdrop. Not all portraits need to be retouched in all 10 areas, but if you're doing a cloud retouch, you might as well leave them all turned on when using the Retouch4Me panel and then turn them off if they're not required in Photoshop's layer panel. This is the approach I used.

On these pages you can see a series of before and after portraits. I imagine Retouch4Me is designed primarily for wedding, portrait and glamour photography, whereas these days I do very little of this type of work. My portraits are usually travel-based and usually I don't want a heavily retouched look – and so I found myself reducing the opacity of most of the layers to produce a more lightly retouched result.

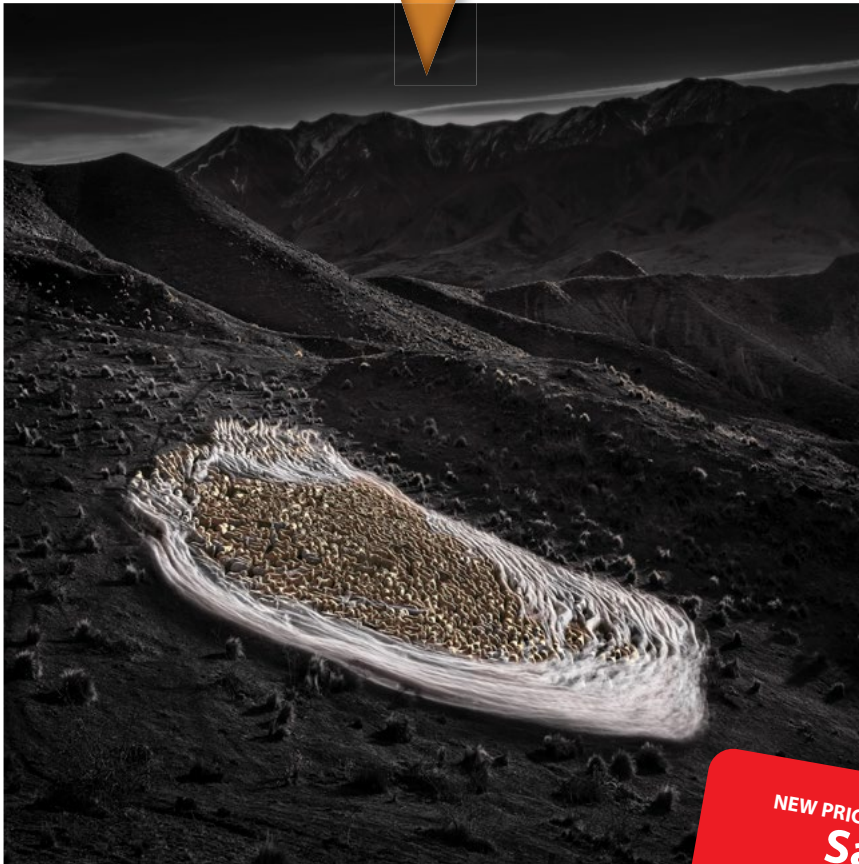
The plug-in works very well, but the pricing model is intriguing. There are two options – you do the initial processing in the cloud and the results are downloaded into Photoshop. You pay a subscription per month or for a set number of retouches. Second, you can purchase an on-device version of the software (you download and install the app on your computer). However, there are ten components and each component needs to be purchased separately. If you buy them all, it will cost over US\$1000, but if you use Retouch4Me's cloud service, you can spend as little as US\$4 for 15 image retouches. The pricing model seems to be pushing us towards a subscription model and an ongoing relationship with the software developer.



Photographer Scott Portelli looks ridiculous with a full retouch (middle), and readers would rightly suggest retouching wasn't really necessary for this type of portrait. However, by selecting just the Skin Tone, Eye Vessels, White Teeth and Eye Brilliance layers, the portrait is certainly given a professional edge (right).

So, is it worth it? You can be your own judge with 20 free retouches available from Retouch4Me. The selection of images we tested worked extremely well and provided a professional quality result. In fact, it was a little too easy!

<https://retouch4.me/retouch4mepanel>



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www.betterphotographyeducation.com



CREATING YOUR OWN WEBSITE *with* ZENFOLIO

**Peter Eastway has been a Zenfolio Ambassador
for over a decade – and Zenfolio has just been
revamped to make it even easier.**

Years ago, perhaps nearly twenty, I engaged a programmer to build and design my personal website, www.petereastway.com. I had full control over the look and design, but even so, I struggled to get the webmaster to produce exactly what I wanted, mainly because it was in the early days of web design and the things we could easily do on paper in print publishing didn't always translate well onto a web page. And it was expensive because every time I wanted to make a change, the webmaster turned on the clock.

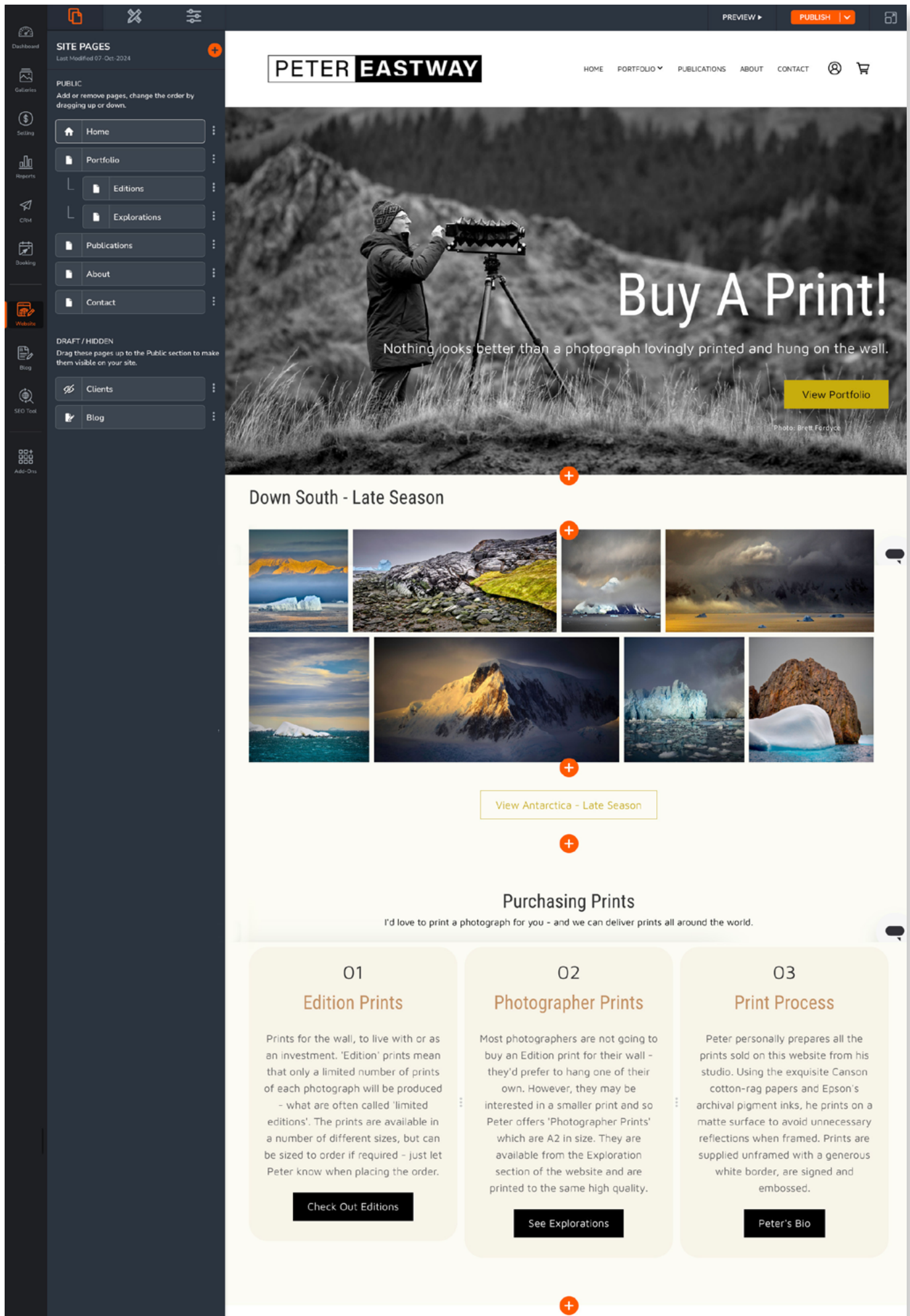
A few years later, a number of website providers arrived, offering website solutions specifically for photographers. While not customisable to the same degree, their template designs looked pretty good and when you analyse what you're trying to achieve, most photography websites are similar in their aims: to present photographs along with the photographer's name and logo. Zenfolio did this very well and all for an annual fee that was a fraction of what I was paying for a custom site.

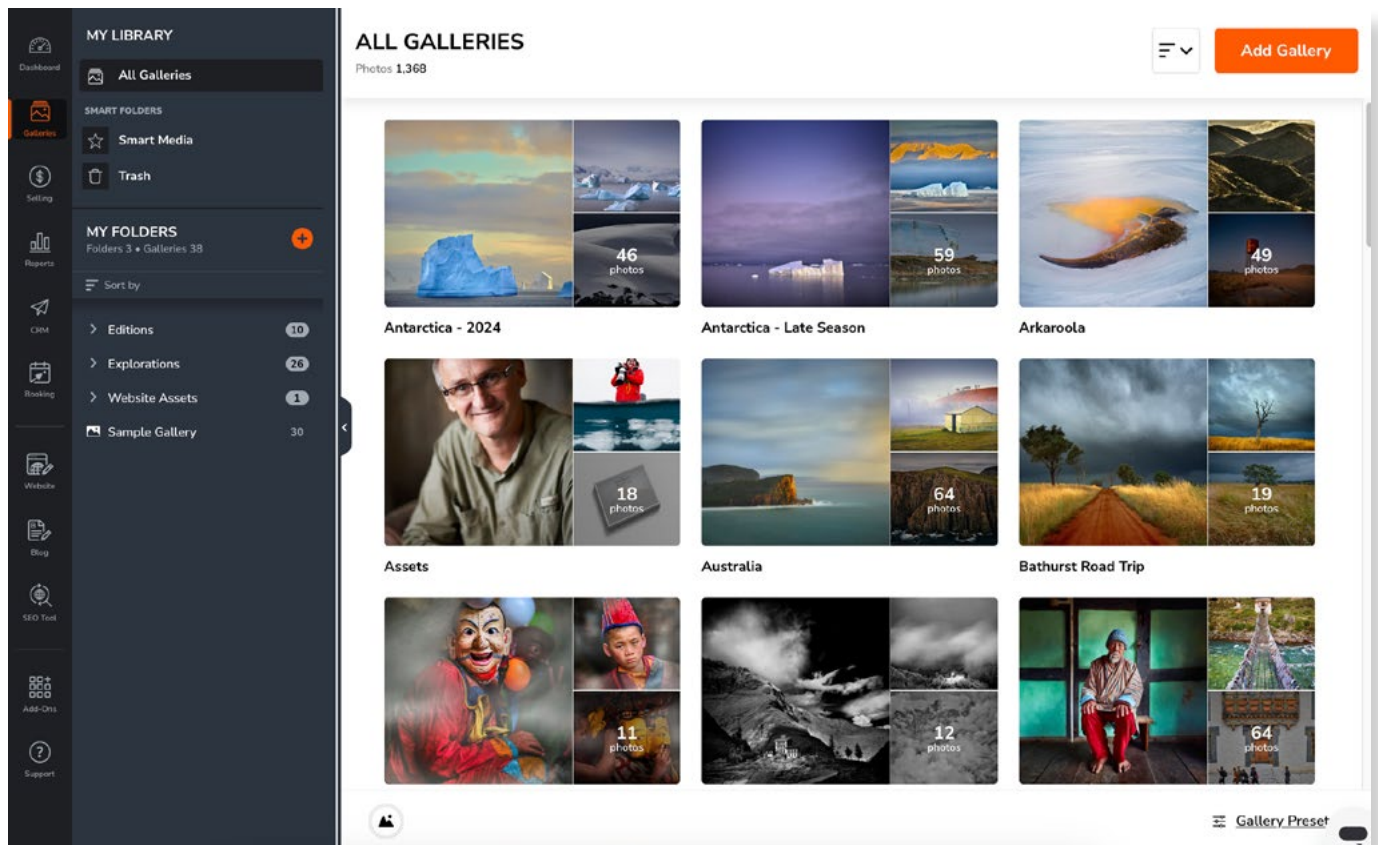
So, I moved my photographs across to Zenfolio and subsequently I was invited to become a Zenfolio ambassador – which means I don't pay for my website. It's a nice gesture, but given an annual subscription is as little as US\$108, I wouldn't still be there if it didn't do the job.

What Do You Need?

Many readers only need a website to display their photography. It's a place where they can curate an online exhibition of their best work. And while they'd love to sell a photograph here and there, it's not a business for them. They don't need an online

Opposite page: Designing your website is very easy using content blocks. View Zenfolio's instructional videos and give it a go!





shop because for the occasional people interested in buying their photographs, an email contact page will do the trick. In Zenfolio parlance, this is called a Portfolio plan and costs US\$108 a year if paid \$9 monthly, or US\$84 if you pay annually. This is all my old website did and it is considerably cheaper than hiring a web designer.

Of course, Zenfolio is not the only photography website provider and no doubt there are others that are cheaper and possibly better. However, my recommendation is that unless you are skilled in web design and enjoy the behind-the-scenes programming, a service like Zenfolio is not only affordable, it frees you from the administrative needs of running a website. You can spend the time saved uploading more photographs and going on photography shoots.

Professional photographers – and enthusiasts who'd like to pursue the sale of their work – may opt for Zenfolio's PortfolioPlus which adds an online shop. It costs a little more at US\$138 – which is still not expensive. If you shoot for clients (e.g., weddings, portraits, events), being able to present your work with private galleries can be very useful. You can also team up with a photo lab that will print and deliver your prints and even files to clients directly, so everything can be done online if this is your business model. In Australia, HCPPro works with Zenfolio.

What You Need

Zenfolio is essentially a 'content management system' designed for photographers. We provide the content. Zenfolio provides the website system.

Begin by selecting your photographs and organising them into folders – or galleries (in Zenfolio parlance). I have galleries named by country or job – it doesn't really matter, but the

subject of the photographs is a good place to start. It could even be best photos of 2023, 2024 etc. Up to you.

Then log onto Zenfolio and upload these photographs into galleries. Your content is now ready to go.

Of course, you can also provide additional content, such as a bio and photo of yourself, which will be presented as a separate page. Now it's time to design how the website will work.

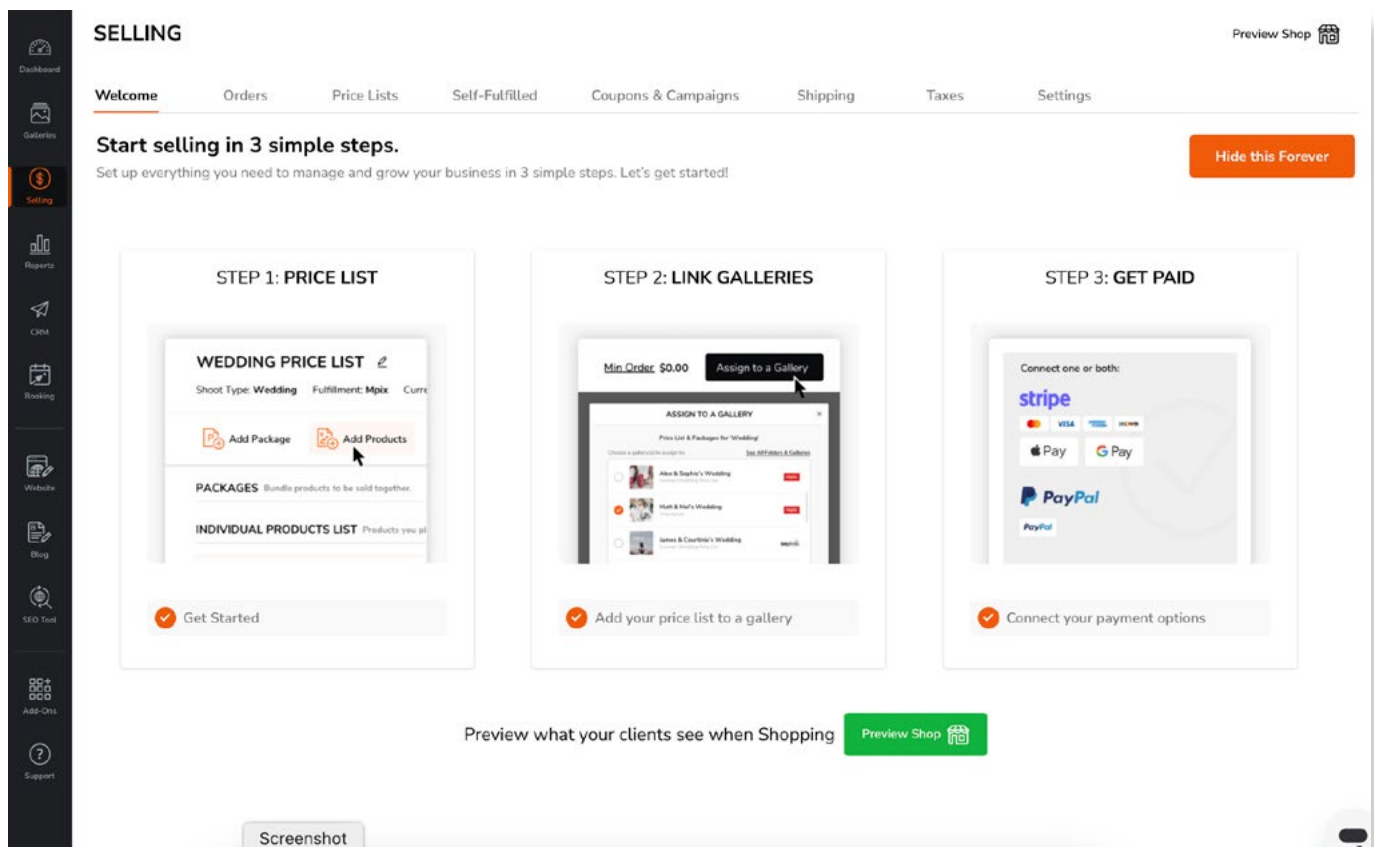
How It Works

The next step is to visit the website section where you can select from a number of different templates. The templates are pre-populated with sample content and photos and you simply open the pages and change this content to your own. There are instructional videos by Zenfolio who show you how this works and spending a few minutes here will make the process incredibly easy.

The templates can be customised. As Zenfolio is also designed for photographers selling their work, there may be elements that are not needed for your own website – you simply delete them. Or you may like an element in the portfolio to be presented differently – you can do this by changing the element, called a 'content block'. In fact, you can build the website from scratch without a template, using the content block.

So, how do you know what you're building? The interface includes a preview of the website, so what you change in the preview is exactly how your website will look. It is incredibly easy once you get your head around using the content blocks. Watch the instructional videos and you'll know!

One important step is that after making a series of changes, you have to press the 'Publish' button to save them onto the actual website. Don't forget or your work won't be saved. On the other hand, this lets you experiment with different website



looks and features, but if you don't like them, you don't publish them and your original website is left unchanged. This is a really important feature for a live website – meaning you can preview your changes before committing to them.

Design Features

Perhaps a highlight of the Zenfolio experience is the way the photos are presented as grids and slide shows, with zooming, panning, moving effects built-in – if required. As you scroll down the page, new 'content blocks' are revealed. The photos are presented cleanly and quickly – I am uploading files that are 3000 pixels on the long edge as JPEGs, setting 8 or around 80%. And while you don't have to name your files, if you do they can be presented with the photograph, along with a caption. I have uploaded my photos, but not yet given all of them a caption, so I have turned off some of the features that are available – and these features can generally be turned on and off on a per-portfolio basis.

If you go for the PortfolioPlus version, you can offer your photographs for sale. I have divided my website into two sections – Editions and Explorations. The Editions are for sale as large prints, the Explorations are only sold to photographers as smaller A2 size prints.

Commercial Features

Within Zenfolio is an extensive price list section, allowing you to offer a variety of different products to your website visitors. If you're selling prints, you can choose to print them yourself (self-fulfilled) or work with a photo lab who will print and deliver them for you. However, while these labs might offer a range of 1000 different products, you might choose to offer just five or ten of them. You can also sell files as downloadables, in

which case you may need to upload higher resolution files for commercial use.

There are some small limitations at present if you're selling products in that the 'heading information' in the shop is written by Zenfolio and is not changeable by the user. The main problem from my perspective is that the language used doesn't sound like me and is a bit 'salesy' if that's a word. This I am assured will be updated in the future and it has no impact on photographers using Zenfolio only as a portfolio. So, if you're buying a print on my website, please forgive some of the language and presentation options!

Other Features

ZenfolioPlus also gives you access to lots of reports, there's a built-in blog section so you can talk about favourite photos and you can build up a mailing list so you can send out newsletters from time to time if you wish. If you're in business, it can do most of the chores required and there are even modules for automatically retouching photographs (mainly wedding and portrait) and even a diary booking system.

In terms of your website address, you can easily change this to your own site (e.g. www.petereastway.com), or you can use the one provided by Zenfolio (e.g. petereastway.zenfoliosite.com). In other words, you can have a website presence immediately.

Once you have a few portfolios of photography ready to go, testing out a Zenfolio website is really easy. You can sign up without a credit card for a 14-day free trial – so get your photos ready first so you have time to experiment with the site.

For more information, visit www.zenfolio.com





MIDDLEHURST *with* PHASE ONE

When you combine an amazing location in the

New Zealand high country with the best

quality camera available, the results are simply

sensational. By Peter Eastway.

Over the last 10 years, Tony Hewitt and I have built a strong partnership with Sue and Willy Macdonald at Middlehurst Station in New Zealand. Regular readers will have seen Middlehurst referenced often enough as I've taken many award-winning images there – and some of my favourites of all time as well.

Tony and I have also been Phase One ambassadors for many years and we were asked if we'd be prepared to host a Phase One Middlehurst week in August 2024. To be honest, it was easy to say yes for two reasons. First, it meant staying another week in the wonderful Middlehurst environment. Second, the only difference in the program would be to help prospective Phase One users with their cameras – and we'd do that anyway.

The Location

Back in 2014, Tony and I did a photography road trip with Will Parsons, after giving a presentation to the PSNZ in Blenheim. We asked Will to include a sheep station as I had this idea I wanted to photograph sheep running through a gate in the early morning, steam rising off their backs with majestic mountain peaks in the background. I was channelling the photographs of Andris Apse. We spent a couple of days at Upcot Station in the Awatere Valley, which we greatly enjoyed, but the following year when repeating the road trip, Will took us a little further up the valley, to Middlehurst Station.

The accommodation was literally the shearers' quarters – a rectangular mud-brick building divided into eight small rooms, each with a bed, a thick blanket and a bare overhead bulb. The bathrooms were outside and we had a separate building with a kitchen and common room. And it was always winter because we

Left: The Middlehurst Station seen from the south-west corner, with Mount Lookout in the middle and the Inland Kaikoura Range in the distance. Phase One XF, 80mm Schneider Kreuznach lens.



There's more to Middlehurst if you keep driving down the road towards Muller's Station – which in the mist looks very atmospheric. Phase One IQ4 on Cambo Actus-DB2, 90mm Rodenstock lens.

loved the light at this time of the year. On the one hand, we were struggling for our art, but on the other, it was warm and the location was especially conducive to running a workshop, rather than being on the run every day with a photo tour.

Sitting on the Awatere River, Middlehurst Station covers around 16,500 hectares of spectacular high country. Standing on a hill one day, I asked the owner Willy Macdonald how far his property extended. He pointed and said, 'Just over there.' Over there had several layers: distant hills, more distant foothills and mountains covered with snow in the background.

"Which hills," I asked?

"The far ones," he answered, indicating the snow-capped mountains.

Middlehurst is a huge property which we're still exploring ten years later and many of the locations can only be visited by helicopter or along private farm roads, assuming the weather permits. And the mud-brick shearers' rooms have been replaced by modern quarters with comfortable rooms and an onsite chef with amazing culinary skills. It's hard to suggest to anyone that we're suffering for our art.

The Photography

By now, we have around 30 locations we can choose to shoot from, but with a seven-day program, we only visit 12 of them, depending on the weather conditions, recent rain and snowfall and the interests of our group.

Although it's an incredibly rugged environment, we don't need to do much walking. For most locations, a farm vehicle or helicopter drops us within 100 metres of a great viewpoint. More agile participants can certainly climb the surrounding hills for different views, but generally it's not necessary. And we choose to run the workshop in winter because there's always snow on the higher peaks and the chance of fresh snow during the week's program. We usually have ice, fog, rain and mist from time to time, which add to the atmosphere in a positive way.

And the subject? Mainly landscape, of course, but we mix it up with close-ups of ice and grasses, time exposures with the running rivers and aerial abstracts from a helicopter. You can even bring a drone if you wish.

However, our camera of choice for Middlehurst has been a Phase One medium format camera. Most of our guests don't



Phase One cameras come in three flavours: XC, XF and XT.



This year, we discovered a new shooting location, accessible only by helicopter. It had great views looking back over the Middlehurst property and I found a telephoto lens best to isolate features and patterns. Phase One XF, 240mm Schneider Kreuznach lens.

shoot with Phase One – and we don't expect them to. Tony and I use Phase One as we come from an earlier era when medium format was the only way to get the quality we needed for large exhibition prints. With modern DSLR and mirrorless cameras featuring high pixel counts and extended dynamic range, the differences between a Canon, Fujifilm, Nikon or Sony etc. and a Phase One medium format back has greatly decreased. We emphasise to our photographers that there is no need for pixel envy to achieve incredibly high quality results. You don't need medium format to be a creative photographer.

Yet we still use Phase One with 100- and 150-megapixel backs. Why?

From our perspective, using different camera systems for different subjects is not unusual. In the days of film, I'd use a

35mm SLR for travel and wildlife, a medium format camera for studio and advertising work and a large format camera for landscapes. Owning three or four camera systems is what most professionals in the commercial world did.

Similarly today, I will take a Fujifilm X-series along with my Phase One outfit to cover both wildlife and landscape. For some locations (like Italy), I have taken a Fujifilm GFX outfit, being a halfway point between the X-series and medium format. But for Middlehurst, it will always be the Phase One because this is a location where I have the time to use and exploit its incredible quality.

So, why do we still use Phase One cameras? The simplest answer is because of the joy they give us when we open the raw files in Capture One. The quality difference is obvious. You might not immediately see the difference in a print, certainly not on social



After fresh snow, the mountains look simply marvellous from the air and the high resolution Phase One files capture and maintain all the exquisite detail. Phase One XF, 80mm Schneider Kreuznach lens.

media, but you will always see it on-screen. Importantly, I find I can push and stretch a Phase One file further than other cameras, which is helpful on the creative side when editing an image.

The Equipment

The idea behind the Middlehurst Phase One week was to allow photographers to decide for themselves. We had a number of Phase One cameras, digital backs and lenses, along with a Phase One representative to help our guests get the most out of using this gear. There was no obligation to use the equipment – and there's also a danger if you do! You've heard about the pet shop that asks if you'd like to take the puppy home over the weekend so it's not too lonely, but you can bring it back on Monday if you wish? I think this is the idea behind the Phase One week! In fact, I'm sure it is!

Phase One comes in four camera flavours, beginning with the

Phase One XF which is a true medium format DSLR camera. It has an excellent range of Schneider Kreuznach lenses, ranging from 28mm to 240mm. It accepts any number of Phase One digital backs, the main models now being IQ4 100- or 150-megapixels. However, it is primarily designed for studio use and for landscape photographers, Phase One recommends the smaller XT.

The XT in some ways is just a piece of metal that sits between the interchangeable lenses and the digital back. It has a shutter and shifting camera movements that is great for perspective control in architectural work. Its lenses range from 23mm to 150mm and they are made by Rodenstock. Some people believe there is no better quality available than this system, making it ideal for large format printing. We'd tend to agree.

More recently, Phase One has introduced the XC camera, a smaller version of the XT without camera movements and



We photograph a sheep muster each year and using a neutral density filter, or the exposure averaging feature on the Phase One, I can capture their motion with a long exposure. Here I have composited four images together, two with short shutter speeds that freeze the sheep and Henry (Willie's son), two with longer shutter speeds that blur the movement of the sheep. Phase One XF, 240mm Schneider Kreuznach lens.

currently available with fixed lenses – either a 23mm or a 40mm. Fortunately, the digital back (the most expensive component) can be switched between the various cameras – which leads to the fourth option: no Phase One camera at all.

The Phase One system is designed to be modular, so you can also attach a Phase One digital back to any number of cameras, assuming there's an adaptor available. For instance, I love using my Phase One with Cambo Actus-DB2 monorail system. I think this is an indulgent example of using a view camera like we did in the old days, but with all the advantages of modern digital capture!

Over at Middlehurst, when I have time to play, I love using the Phase One back on the Cambo, except on windy days when

it's hard to keep the camera still with the bellows flapping around. On poor weather days, the XT is the camera to use, so I switch things around. And when we shoot from the helicopter, I use the XF as it provides the fast shutter speeds required for aerial work. And all the time, I'm using my one and only IQ4 digital back.

For Tony and me, Phase One and Middlehurst are in many ways synonymous. Not that you need a Phase One to enjoy Middlehurst (we don't want to discourage anyone), but it certainly adds to our enjoyment of the resulting images.

You can find further details about Middlehurst on the *Better Photography* website and details about Phase One on its websites.

Too Many PHOTOGRAPHS?

Do you take too many photographs? And does it even matter?

Len Metcalf suggests this is one thing we need not worry about.

Is there such a thing as too many photographs? If we enjoy photographing so much, why would we even consider this as a problem? Yet I hear so many people asking this question. They take so many photographs and they do nothing with them, but the joy is in the taking of the photograph. It doesn't matter what we do with them.

In this article, I'd like to argue that the joy of taking photographs just for themselves is enough. I say this with an ethical tone in my voice. Of course, there are photographs you shouldn't be taking, but let's not go there now.

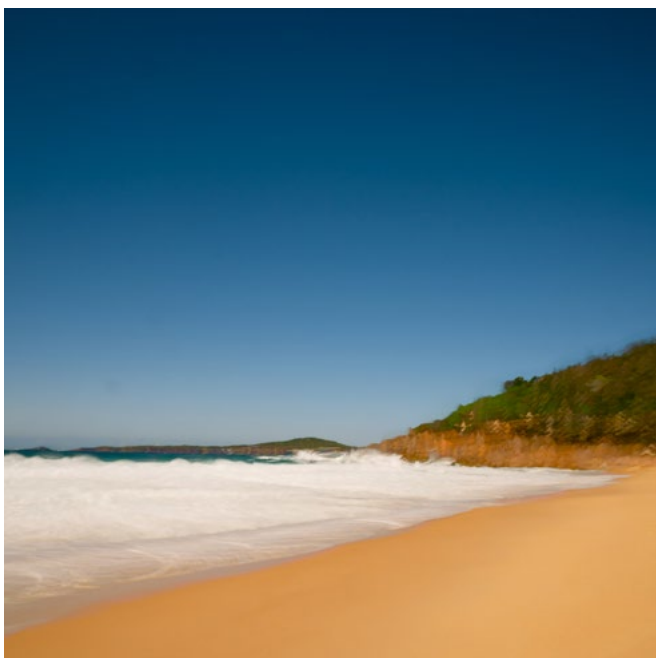
Huge Catalogues

Some days, I look at my Lightroom catalogue with more than half a million images in it and over 40,000 rated ones with five stars. My rating system is pretty black and white; either they get

five stars or they get none. Please don't read anything into that particular number as the overwhelming majority of them are just marked as ones I need to pay attention to, rather than being ones of actual worth.

That is a lot of images. Yet I will happily go out for the day and take more, perhaps adding a few thousand more in a shoot or a week. Do I ever get overwhelmed and think to myself, "I shouldn't take any more because I already have enough?"

The answer is no, basically because I really love the process of creating the photographs more than I do the finished image. I definitely dislike spending too long processing them. I am actually a computer avoidant. And I'd rather a walk in the bush with my camera than another processing session. However, a printing session is a different matter. You can't keep me away from the printer. I bet you didn't know I spent many years not



Photographs by Len Metcalf.





Photograph by Len Metcalf.



Photograph by Len Metcalf.

being able to afford to fill my large format printer with ink! That was a very bad time in my life I can assure you.

Have you seen Banksy's movie 'Exit through the Gift Shop'? The main character in the documentary, films graffiti artists around the world, creating over years thousands and thousands of hours of incredible footage of artists working. For him, the joy was in the taking of the video. It was an adrenaline rush sneaking out at night with these incredible artists and filming them doing illegal activities.

The threat of getting caught and persecution or even jail time was hanging at everyone's throat. They probably got a huge dopamine hit every time he told someone about the film that he was making and indeed, he got incredible dopamine hits every time he filmed. Imagine how amazing it would be to come home after having such a fabulous experience, just knowing you

were going to be in the movie. Banksy eventually gets hold of all this footage and turns it into the movie about the film-maker. It's a beautiful movie and well worth a watch.

As I write this article, I am standing on the Newnes Plateau on the edge of the Gardens of Stone National Park in the greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Wilderness Area. I have been enjoying taking photographs in the morning mist. New blooms of wattle litter the landscape.

Yet here I am in the depths of winter in my warmest down jacket, my warmest pants and boots, freezing cold taking photographs. I don't know if these photographs will be any good. I don't know if they will end up in my portfolio. I don't know what will happen to them. I have long let go of hanging on to my photographs. I've learnt to relax and just to enjoy the taking of them.



Photograph by Len Metcalf.

When I take or create a photograph, I am trying to make it the best possible photograph I can at that moment. I'll recompose, I'll shoot again, I'll refocus, I'll photograph again. I'll experiment with my aperture, my exposure and where I stand. I continue looking. I continue playing. I'm putting as much effort as I can into every photograph. And the majority, the overwhelming majority of my photographs, never get shown to another person.

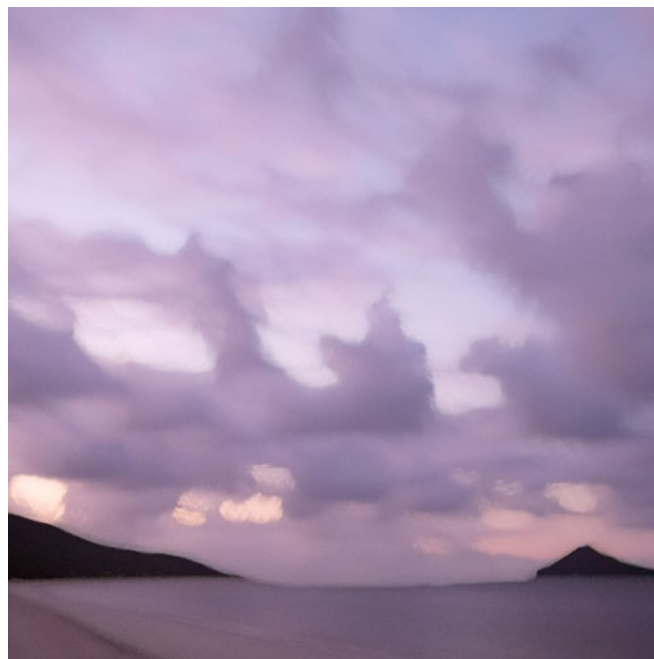
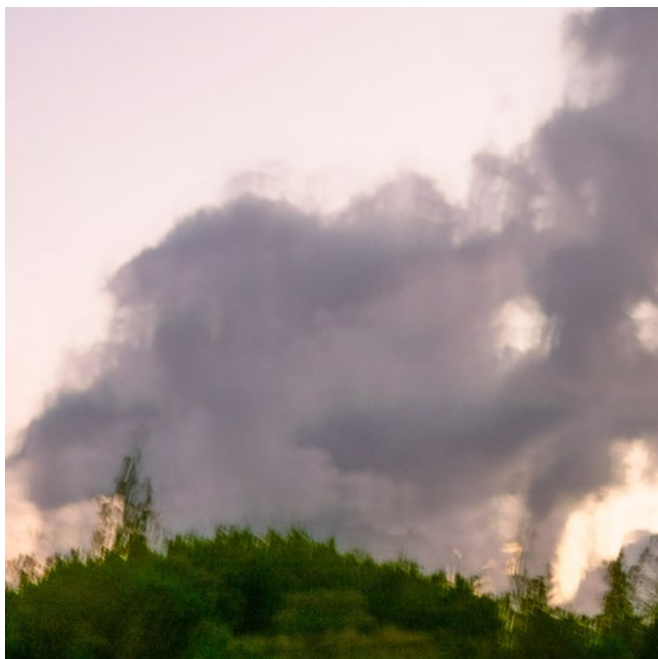
In fact, the overwhelming majority of my photographs only get seen by me with a quick glance as I skip through my catalogue. Then, like a miracle, one stands out. Just one, yet that one photograph may have come from days and days of photographing. Is it worth all that work for just one photograph?

Of course it is because I enjoyed the process of taking every single photograph in that time. I enjoyed the hardships, the cold,

the wind, the rain, the hours of walking, the hours of waiting. So many hours spent just to get that one photograph. How beautiful is that?

Why can't we just enjoy photographing? Why do we give ourselves such great pressure to produce masterpieces every time we press the shutter, every time we create an image? Perhaps if we shift our mindset away from having to create a masterpiece and just letting that image go into our catalogue, we will actually take better photographs. It's this pressure that stifles us. The pressure is what causes us to stay in our heads, not to relax and stops us being present. Being mindful.

When I am free to play and experiment without the pressure of producing a masterpiece, I find my best work lies. It's when I'm deeply present in place and myself. Grounded. Listening. Feeling. Doing.



Photographs by Len Metcalf.

Mindfulness comes in two parts. One part is grounding ourselves, being in our body, being present with the moment. The other is grounding ourselves in the sense of place. It's worth considering what mindfulness isn't. It isn't thinking about our stresses.

It isn't thinking about what gear we need to buy next. It isn't thinking about what we haven't got. It isn't obsessing about what isn't here. It isn't thinking about how many photographs we must not take because we may have too many, that is definitely for sure.

It is a state of mindlessness. Achieving pure mindlessness is hard for me. It might only be there for a few milliseconds. My mind initially wanders and rushes around as I'm out photographing, but when I am mindful I am centred in myself and centred in place and that is when the beautiful photographs flow from me.

The beautiful photographs flow out of me when I feel and let the mind go quiet.

So, there are not too many photographs. It doesn't matter how big your collection gets. It doesn't matter how many you take. Take as many as you feel like. You have to find your own balance in the number of photographs you take. Let your feelings guide your intuition.

Len Metcalf is a professional art educator who specialises in teaching monochrome, abstract, landscape and flower photography. He teaches a year-long Master Class online, which started his photography school. Len has just finished a 'Learn to See' course that uses drawing to teach photographers better observation skills. Please sign up to Lens' newsletter and see his array of offerings at <http://lensschool.com>

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