

DIGIT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY DIGITAL GROUP

Number 91 2021 Issue 4



UPCOMING DIGITAL IMAGING EVENTS

Details of DI events are available on its web pages at: tinyurl.com/sxzl487



Digital Imaging: South East
in Collaboration with South East Region
Friday January 7th 2022



Joe Houghton
Shows
5 Ways to Create a
Portfolio Website

rps.org/SEONLINE122

Digital Imaging: Online
Saturday 8 January 2022
Online



Julianne Kost
Creating Personal Projects that
Reignite the Creative Spark

www.rps.org/DIGONLINE28

Digital Imaging: South East
in Collaboration with South East Region
Starting Monday January 10th 2022



Stewart Wall
Leads a
Social Documentary
Visual Storytelling Course

rps.org/SEONLINE422

Digital Imaging: South East
in Collaboration with South East Region
Starting Monday January 10th 2022



Stewart Wall
Leads a Course
Making a Photobook
From Concept to Printing

rps.org/SEONLINE522

Digital Imaging: Online
Saturday 5 February 2022
Online



Paul Gallagher
Working in
Another Light

www.rps.org/DIGONLINE29

Digital Imaging: Online
Saturday 12 March 2022
Online



Gary Friedman
Computational Photography:
Why Your Smartphone Takes
Better Pictures than Your Big Camera

www.rps.org/DIGONLINE30

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Event programmes continue to be disrupted as a result of the COVID pandemic, please check on the RPS website or with the Centre Organiser for the latest status of any event.

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CONTENTS

- 2 **Group Events**
- 3 **Contacts**
- 4 **From the Chair** *Rex Waygood & Deborah Loth*
- 4 **Editorial** *Janet Haines ARPS*
- 5 **DI Committee Members Honoured**
Janet Haines ARPS
- 6 **The Private Life of Swans** *Charlie Wheeler*
- 13 **Environmental Abstracts** *Maarten Rots*
- 17 **The Music of Photography** *Evan Dawson RPS CEO*
- 20 **The Full Circle**
Gabriel J O'Shaughnessy FIPF MFIAP EFIAP/g
- 26 **Sharpening Myths** *John Miskelly FRPS FBIPP FIPF*
- 30 **DIGIT Challenge: Sitting Down on the Job**
Anne Conrad
- 32 **DIGIT Challenge: Alice**
Barry Mead FRPS EFIAP/d3 MPAGB APAGB
- 34 **Digital Imaging Print Exhibition 2022 Selection**
- 35 **In Previous Issues**

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Printed by Henry Ling Ltd., at The Dorset Press, Dorchester, DT1 1HD.

FROM THE CHAIR

REX WAYGOOD & DEBORAH LOTH

The first issue of DIGIT was published in the summer of 1996 with details of the aims and objectives of the newly formed RPS Digital Imaging Group:

1. *Disseminate information about digital imaging.*
2. *Promote good technical and ethical practice in the application of digital imaging.*
3. *Facilitate the interchange of information and ideas among the members of the Group by providing a programme of events and activities, including talks, workshops, exhibitions and publications.*
4. *Work towards a state of integration of digital imaging with silver-based photography such that eventually there ceases to be the need for a specialist Group.*

It's hard to believe that so much has changed in just 16 years. Now 95 million photos and videos are shared on Instagram per day and the social environment for photography groups has been transformed in many ways, not least by the COVID-19 pandemic with its huge impact on everyone's ability to travel and to meet in groups.

But to a large extent, the original aims and the objectives of RPS Digital Imaging have stood the test of time, aside from its evangelistic goal of integrating digital with silver-based photography. Digital imaging is no longer a mystery to most. This has led some to speculate whether the group has outlived its usefulness.

This autumn RPS Digital Imaging undertook a major membership survey to inform its future direction. At the time it had about 1890 members, 449 of whom – about 24% - took the trouble to complete a long questionnaire.

As compared to the 2018 survey, a higher percentage of respondents were UK members 65 and over (61.5% as opposed to 51.4%), and a lower percentage were UK standard members (18.3% as opposed to 29.8%). We're getting older. The proportion of online-only members has risen from about 10% to 25% of membership. Most respondents live in the South and East of England, followed by the Midlands.

As for post-pandemic face-to-face meetings, most respondents thought they would probably want to attend in-person talks and workshops one day, but not necessarily just yet. About a third would be content with online meetings only. Respondents especially appreciated DIGIT magazine and the programme of online events inaugurated in the spring of 2020.

There was a resounding consensus that Digital Imaging was/is a worthwhile, even outstanding, RPS special interest group, with most of the opinion that there was no need to change its name. The overall impression is that members are most interested in learning about techniques to improve their photography and the art of photography and less interested in making social contacts. Digital Imaging is perceived as a sort of mini RPS serving the interests of photographers across all genres, a position which is at once its great strength and its great weakness.

Going forward, we will be taking account of the preferences and comments expressed by those who participated in the survey insofar as possible.

Our long-term DIGIT editor, Gary Beaton, has needed to take a break, and for this issue of DIGIT we are very grateful to Janet Haines ARPS, who has stepped in as Commissioning Editor, and to Steve Varman LRPS, Web Editor for the Creative Eye SIG, who has helped us out as Design Editor

EDITORIAL

JANET HAINES ARPS

Sitting in the DIGIT hot seat... Due to the DIGIT Editor Gary Beaton taking a well earned six-month sabbatical, the DI Committee needed to find a way of filling his seat for two issues of our popular magazine. They needed to maintain the schedule and uphold the high standards that Gary achieves, so your current temporary duo hope that they can live up to expectations – no pressure!

Steve Varman and Janet Haines have jointly taken on that task and I hope I speak for Steve when I say it is a pleasure, as well as a responsibility that we are both happy to embrace.

Steve has the InDesign skills that are vital to creating the look of the magazine, and as the Editor for the Creative Eye magazine already has the knowledge in regard to the RPS brand guidelines and the printers'

requirements. With Gary's templates as his starting point you will spot much the same look as previously, but perhaps with a few twists in layout of his own.

For my own part I have undertaken the commissioning of the articles. Given my wide network of photographers and prior knowledge of the DI, plus the fact that the committee knew that my volunteer workload had recently diminished, I guess I was an obvious target for the role.

Steve and I wish to thank all those who have contributed to this issue and made our work enjoyable and, hopefully, delivered to our members another great issue of DIGIT. As this is the holiday issue may we wish you all an enjoyable holiday – just to keep you amused if you get bored in the next two weeks we have hidden a holly leaf somewhere in the issue, just for fun.

DI COMMITTEE MEMBERS HONOURED

by Janet Haines ARPS

A Society is made up of its members and whilst we are all here for photography the RPS could not operate without the tireless work of its volunteers. In recognition of this each year the RPS awards a few Fenton Medals and Member Awards to those who have given exceptional service. These are the individuals who sustain the existence of the groups and activities we all like to enjoy. Winning a Fenton Medal is, in my opinion, perhaps more valuable than gaining a Direct FRPS.

DI is fortunate to have many long-standing, hard-working individuals. However in the recently announced RPS Awards we had two of our committee members recognised for their outstanding contributions.



Rex Waygood has been vital to the life and efforts of the main DI Committee for many years. His tireless work keeps the wheels oiled and delivers real innovation to the Group.

The biggest and most recent example of that was how, when we went in to the first lockdown, he undertook to deliver the technical solution, that provided DI members far and wide, with the very best presenters via Zoom. You may think they just 'turn on Zoom and away they go', but in reality it is very much a team effort and to do this with such professionalism is a real skill. Marrying up the bookings with the information going out to individuals;

ensuring good clear audio and madly trying to 'fix' any last minute technical glitches is stressful – but Rex took it all in his stride.

After starting out using the basic Zoom DI led the way to using Zoom webinar facilities, which provides an even better level of experience for the audience, no matter where they are around the world. Don't tell him I said so, but he is a bit of a techie geek – but believe me we are very lucky to have Rex on the committee and we thank him most sincerely for all that he does and continues to do for DI.

Congratulations Rex on your Fenton Medal – it is extremely well deserved.



Sheila Haycox ARPS

was a worthy winner of the Members Award. Those of you who have ever been along to the DI Western Centre meetings will know Sheila as the organiser and web content person for that Centre.

She also supports the AV Group with their web site too, as well as supporting other web content managers, when the RPS migrated to their new web site a couple of years back. Sheila will also willingly support other DI activities and can be relied upon to always do the best job possible. She is an asset to the Group at many levels.

Thank you Sheila for all your hard work over the years and congratulations on your Members Award.

CREDIT: Rex Waygood



CREDIT: Sheila Haycox



Territorial Fight at Dawn



THE PRIVATE LIFE OF SWANS

CHARLIE WHEELER

Working in Dorset as the manager of Abbotsbury Swannery and as Warden of the Chesil and Fleet Nature Reserve, Charlie can combine his passion for conservation and working in the great outdoors with his love of photography.

Bird photography is a discipline that is broadly practiced, with international competitions solely concentrating on the avian species of the world. One of the most photographed of these bird species is the Mute Swan.

When people envisage photographs of the Mute Swan, immediately the classic heart-shaped pose created by their courtship 'dance', or a handsome cob with his wings held broadly, gracefully gliding across the calm water, is brought to mind.

It is certainly important to

record these behaviours, as they are all part of their breeding cycle, and with the correct lighting, setting and composition, can create stunning images. I certainly have my fair share in the archives, but what I strive to achieve, are images beyond the expected.

People do say, "There can only be so many pictures you can take of the same bird!" This can be true to an extent, but I see this as a challenge, to push the boundaries of what can be achieved with one species. There certainly is merit to being in a situation where you can observe and interact with the

same species, almost every day of the year, and delve into their private life to record what you see.

In this situation, rather than finding myself bored and uninspired, I am thinking of new and interesting ways to showcase the myriad of behaviours that I witness, attempting to portray them in a way that provokes thought into what the bird is doing and why.

Working at the Abbotsbury Swannery for the past 14 years, I have felt privileged to immerse myself in such a stunning setting and learn so much about the

natural world, by observing and recording it with my camera. It is my appreciation of the natural world that first inspired me to take up photography. Being able to capture and record a single moment in time, where I can create a unique and artistic representation of an animal's true behaviour, beauty and expression, is an art that continues to fascinate me to this day.

I believe that photographing wildlife can be achieved in two ways. The first is to have a specific objective. This would include having a detailed plan of when and where to go, taking into account the light, and behaviours shown at certain periods of the year and even times of the day. There is of course undeniable reasoning to plan a shoot and this can be done to the best of your ability, using your knowledge of the animal you are trying to photograph, and the environment they are in.

The territorial fight at dawn (p.6) was achieved by having a plan. I knew that in February, nesting pairs of Mute Swans have powerful fights to either gain or retain a territory for the nesting period ahead. I was aware of a specific location where two territorial cobs had numerous quarrels throughout the day, and I could position myself low to the ground with a reed bed as the backdrop. My aim was to use the backlighting from the soft winter morning sun to highlight the water droplets that are kicked up during these fights. I believe the plan worked. Rutting deer in the autumn is another prime example.

Alternatively, option two is to just wing it! Which is precisely what happened for the outstretched cob (*below*). With a wide-angle lens, I was meandering around the site looking for inspiration when a cob started walking out of the Fleet lagoon.

Being such heavy-set birds, some of the older individuals flap their wings to aid their exit onto dry land. As the bird neared, I did not have time to position myself, I lowered my camera to the ground, estimated roughly which direction to point the lens and took three photos. This was the result. It is not a technically perfect image but it certainly packs a punch and is not half bad.

When photographing wildlife, it can be complimentary to the image to include the very habitat where the subject resides, as it provides a sense of place for the viewer and helps tell the story you are trying to convey. The nesting female is one of my most recent and is the result of a self-set challenge, to depict 'incubation', in one image, for a chapter in my new photo book. The aim here was to portray the absolute, albeit lonely, devotion of an incubating female to her eggs, barely leaving

Outstretched





Through the Wings



Incubation

her precious clutch for the 35-day incubation period (*above*).

As a photographer, you want to make the viewer think, to take time to look at your image and enjoy the piece of work that you have created. Looking up through the wings of a Mute Swan (with its back as the foreground), this image was taken using a 10mm wide angle lens, producing an interesting and curious image that encourages the viewer to think about what they are observing.

One of the most challenging aspects of photographing swans is controlling the highlights. An adult is a pure, brilliant white bird that typically resides out in the open in full sun. As a result, it is very easy to get blown highlights in an image. The added challenge to this is the cygnets. Being grey in colour, photographing parent and cygnet together is a technical headache and can be



Cygnet Safe Under Pen

Mute Swans Flying



Family Reflection



hard to manage and execute. However, there are a few tips I can offer to combat these issues. As with any photograph, firstly, and most importantly is the light. Soft, warmer morning or evening light is immediately going to make the situation easier, as you do not have the harsh light hitting the white feathers, meaning you and your camera will be able to control the end product much easier. If you are shooting in full sunlight, then a very fast shutter speed will be required, at a minimum of 1/1000 sec. When cygnets are involved in the image, a happy medium has to be struck. Cygnets that are out in the open, not sheltered under the adult, can usually be photographed with not too much trouble, and you can control the camera exposure accordingly, still using the same tips as before. The image of the cygnet and its mother (*left*) for example was taken in May at 5.30pm and at 1/1250 sec at f/5.3. If wishing to photograph cygnets underneath a parent, hatching for example, then it would be best to aim for an overcast day so to avoid the

drastic contrast in light and dark, as it is very challenging to achieve well-lit cygnets, without blowing the highlights on the adult above. The cygnet under the wing (p.9) is probably at the limit of what can be achieved when fully in sunlight. The highlights are just held in, the shadows still have detail and the cygnet is well lit from the reflected light from the feathers. Shot at 1/1000 sec at f/5.3.

On those cold, overcast, winter days, using the long exposure technique can produce some pleasing and atmospheric results. As wildlife photography is very unpredictable and things can change in an instant, I like the freedom of hand-held photography and so very rarely use a tripod. Long exposures and macro are the exceptions. This image (*below*) was taken on a calm day in December, with a three second exposure

Tail View



Waterfowl





Cygnets

at f/11 and using a neutral density filter. The slow movements of the birds can be recorded whilst those that are asleep remain still.

When attempting to capture crisp, sharp, flight photographs, the most important thing that is required is a fast shutter speed. This will ensure the bird's movement is frozen, if that is the effect you are after. When attempting flight photography, the same important rule applies, of knowing and anticipating the behaviour of your subject. This allows you to position yourself in the right place and at the right time. Swans for example, like

all waterfowl, moult all of their flight feathers throughout the summer months, meaning they are actually flightless for a number of weeks, so it is best to avoid this time to take a flight photo. As a result of this moult, September and October is a great time to accomplish flight shots, due to the windier weather and the birds now having brand new feathers, enabling them to fly once more. They will be keen to take to the air after this long flightless period. For swans, position yourself downwind if you can, as they will always take off into a head wind. I wait for a nice south westerly

breeze off the sea to achieve multiple birds in flight.

As Mute Swans are such a recognisable species, abstract photographs can work very well. The tail view (p.11) picks up the detail in the tail feathers, and with a fairly shallow depth of field, the rest of the bird softens toward the background.

Whether you are aiming to photograph swans, or any wildlife species, knowing your camera is extremely important, but knowing and understanding the animal you are trying to photograph is crucial in providing new opportunities of what can be achieved.

Abbotsbury Swannery Through My Lens

Shown across sixteen chapters, Charlie's first photo book features the Mute Swans of Abbotsbury Swannery. Each photograph reveals a captivating insight into the fascinating annual cycle of this regal bird, its local habitat and history.

Editorial note – having bought a copy I can vouch that the book is fantastic. Packed full of wonderful images and good information about these beautiful birds. Makes a fab present! Available from Charlie's website.

wheeler-photography.co.uk
abbotsbury-tourism.co.uk/swannery





Krems an der Donau, 2019



ENVIRONMENTAL ABSTRACTS

MAARTEN ROTS interviewed by Janet Haines ARPS

Maarten Rots is a young and interesting Dutch photographer who produces what he terms abstract environmental studies. Having heard him speak at the 2021 Art of Photography seminar we thought he would be of interest to DIGIT readers, so made contact.

Maarten describes himself as an artist as whilst he currently focusses mainly on his photography he also crosses over to other art forms, having started out in film. Indeed it was a broken video camera that

pushed him into having to buy new equipment so he decided on a DSLR, thus facilitating still work which he quickly embraced.

Talking to Maarten it quickly becomes apparent that this guy likes to keep exploring new ideas

and challenging himself to reach outside his comfort zone. An early project in Amsterdam was particularly innovative. Who fancies a seven day instant exhibition where you have blank walls on day one and you have to shoot

within a one-kilometre radius of the gallery space, taking those images back to process, print and hang on the walls? Whilst out working those in the exhibition space could see the location he was shooting at, using his mobile phone and online mapping. So no pressure! Those walls needed to be filled with meaningful work if the project was to be a success. Looking at this early work one can see the origins of where he is today. Many of the shots in the Amsterdam exhibition display his fascination with reflections, which produced what look like double exposure images but are in fact straight shots.

Leading a pretty peripatetic life style Maarten, his wife Anne plus dog Laika, spend months travelling Europe living in their camper van, chasing the light and interesting subjects to shoot. With no real plan they simply wander from towns to villages spending anything from a few hours to a few days in places. He finds that shooting in tourist areas means he is less bothered by the locals who are used to seeing tourist with cameras; whereas he has to have a slightly more bullish attitude when taking his camera

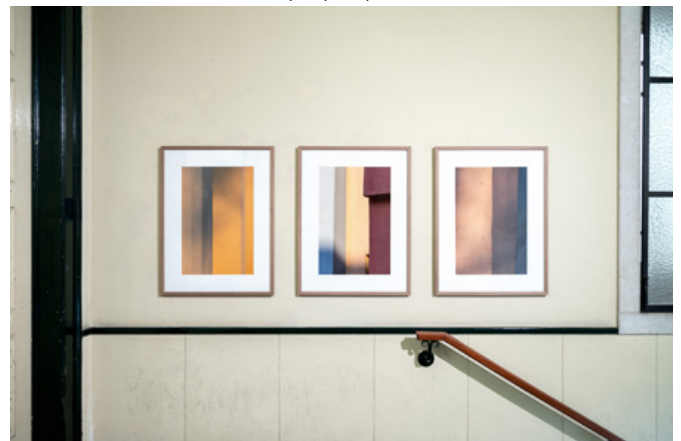


Amsterdam, 2015

Maarten's self-published magazine, March & Rock



Pop-Up Expo Fabrica Braco de Prata, 2020





Cascais, 2020

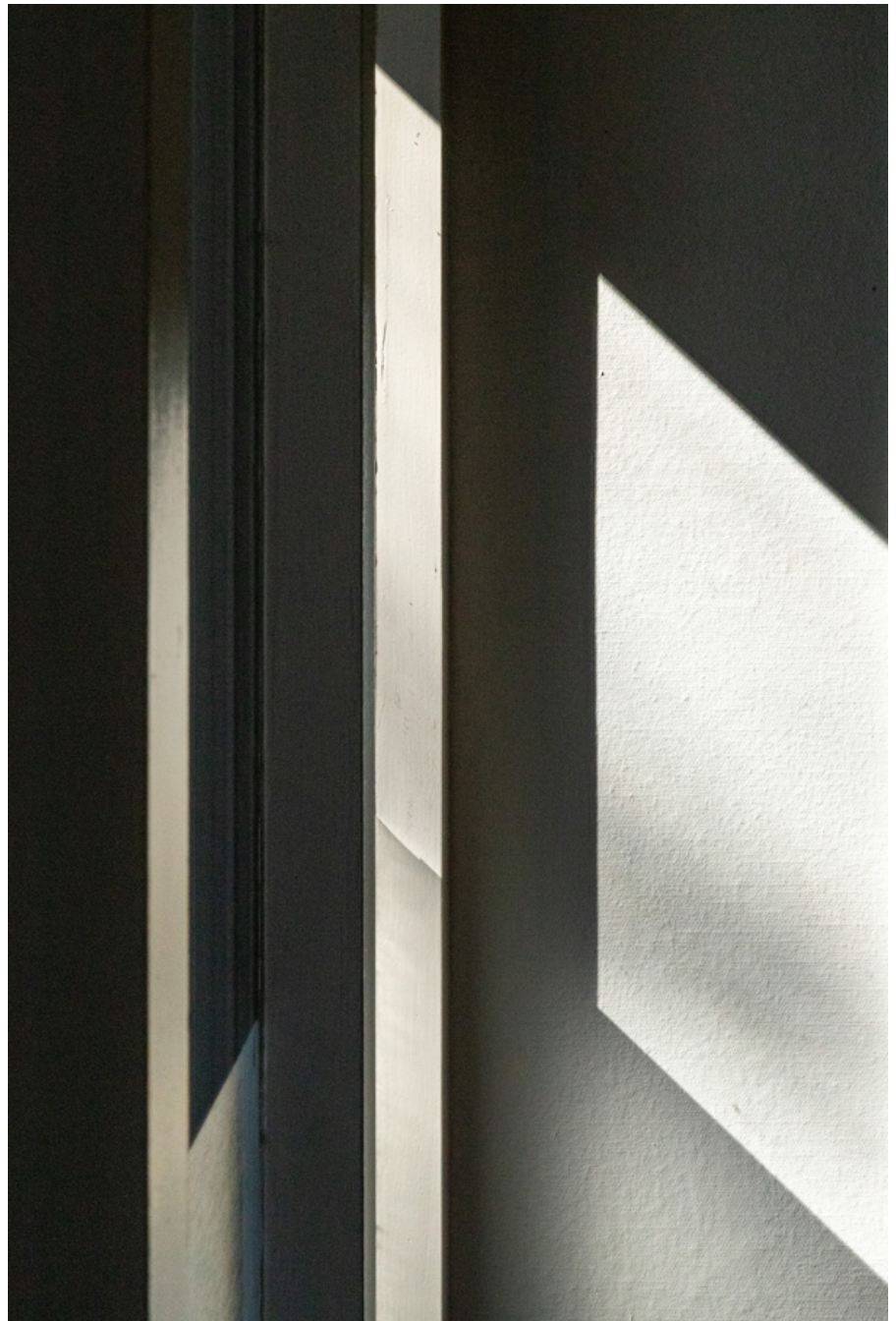
in to smaller village situations with curious and sometimes suspicious residents. In 2019 he even packed up his camper with a collection of mounted prints and did pop-up exhibitions at pre-arranged locations in Spain and Portugal. This was surprisingly successful and most enjoyable, but regrettably got cut short when they had to return to the Netherlands due to the start of the pandemic.

However an artist needs to work and being locked up meant looking closer to home – indeed looking closer at the home he was living in. As Maarten says, if you really look you can see all sorts of fascinating things watching how the light plays on different corners or aspects of a wall. Do we as photographers really examine what is around us as closely to find these little gems?

Working in series of work appeals to Maarten and often he finds these come together from a specific tour he does, or sometimes shots from different location that just work together. His work looks particularly strong hung as a set or triptych, with synergistic colours and shapes that compliment one another.

Appreciating that it is no good taking photos that are locked up in your computer and mere pixels, Maarten was keen to share his work with a wider audience in print form. Whilst he obviously takes advantage of exhibiting whenever he gets the chance and sells from limited editions of his fine art works, he wanted to reach a wider audience so started producing his own quarterly magazine *March & Rock*. There is more information about this on his web site but what a great way to share your work – photography crosses borders and language barriers, so what better way to get your printed work appreciated world wide.

Given the need to interview Maarten to enable me to write this article we decided to do something



Scenes From Home, 2020

new for DIGIT. Rather than just chat to him as part of the research, we used Zoom, recording the session and even inviting a small audience to put their own questions to him. Maarten was in his camper van in Italy, but ever the professional he had set up a small battery driven flood lamp to ensure good lighting. Using his mobile connection we had a lively and interesting chat. This has been made available to you via the DI YouTube channel and supplements this article. So do go to <https://tinyurl.com/RPS-DI-Maarten-Rots> to hear more details

about his work and see more of Maartens work there. There is also his web site to enjoy where you can even take a better look at the magazines and other images.

With a hope of an exhibition at Leamington Spa in 2022 I am sure this won't be the last we will hear of this young photographer – I for one will be following him on Instagram from now on.

See more of Maarten's work:

maartenrots.nl

[instagram.com/maartenrots](https://www.instagram.com/maartenrots)



Asian Arts Agency



THE MUSIC OF PHOTOGRAPHY

EVAN DAWSON CEO RPS

Evan joined the RPS as the new Chief Executive Officer in July 2020. With a professional career in music and being CEO of music charity Live Music Now, Evan is also a photographer specialising in musical performance.

During the course of my career in the arts, I've spent time as a professional musician, composer, concert manager and photographer. So, eventually, it was a natural step for me to combine all these.

When I was young, I met the great music photographer David Redfern at a jazz festival in Wales. I was intrigued by how he always seemed to appear from the shadows at just the right moments, keeping



Tom Arthurs



Aka Trio



Kathryn Tickell and the Darkening

well apart from the rest of the press photographers. So, it was with him in mind that I took my own cameras to a jazz concert in Bristol a few years ago, a concert being given by an old friend of mine, the trumpeter Tom Arthurs (pictured on page 17). The venue was the famous chamber music centre St George's Bristol. After the concert, the venue staff saw my images, and invited me to come to further concerts - and soon after, I became their first "resident photographer". So began a new photographic adventure for me, that deepened not only my experience of camera-craft, but also my relationship with music itself.

The first few concerts I shot were a big learning curve. There are significant technical challenges in capturing images of concerts where the light is low and changeable, in which musicians and others move quickly, and important moments can be unpredictable and fleeting.

Alongside these are the more subtle challenges of shooting in an environment in which you need to move discreetly through an audience, who have paid for unrestricted sight-lines; and who take unkindly to noises such as loud shutter-releases, particularly during quiet and intense performances.

The first thing I learnt was to wear dark clothes, soft shoes, and to remember exactly where the squeaky floorboards were. I also learnt the benefits of arriving early, to make friends with stage managers and audience members in particular seats.

To help address the shutter noises, I visited several camera shops, and listened to the shutters of many cameras. The staff were quite bemused by me. Mirrorless cameras are quietest in general, but there's still a lot of variance. The electronic shutter can be totally silent, of course - but doesn't respond well to particular types of LED light, which

are common in stage lighting. Eventually, I chose a Fujifilm XH1, which meant I could confidently take many more shots without disturbing people.

I have always enjoyed concerts, which are usually a fairly passive experience for audiences. However, as a music photographer, one needs to "read" the concert, to anticipate what is going to happen next - to move to the right places, choose the right lens, and line up the shot at the right time. It creates an intense awareness of the whole space, and a direct connection with the musicians - and through all this, I found a fresh new appreciation of music. When I shoot a concert now, I'm there for both music and photography, and hope this comes across to you in the images in this article.

You can see more of Evan's images at his personal website: www.evandawson.com



Hashmat Sultana



Cook in The Parlour



THE FULL CIRCLE

GABRIEL J O'SHAUGHNESSY FIPF MFIAP EFIAP/g

From club novice to international salon success and salon judge. Gabriel takes us on a journey from print to digital - and meeting the photographer that first inspired him 25 years previously.

Twenty five years ago I sat as a beginner, in our clubroom, and watched our guest speaker set up a wooden trellis-like frame, which he used to display his wonderful darkroom prints. I remember being quite intrigued as I observed the Welsh man set up this contraption, I thought to myself "this guy must certainly think a lot of his photographs". I looked on as he carefully assembled the wooden structure and positioned it strategically, to maximise the hotel room lighting. As our guest speaker displayed stunning print after stunning print, I became more and more intrigued and even spellbound by the magic of

his photography. Some images displayed were deliberately taken in mundane weather and lighting conditions, but only to demonstrate a point. The same locations were then shown with dramatic lighting and weather conditions. The contrast between the two was so evident, even to a beginner like me. Each image was masterfully printed and paid tribute to the wonderful Welsh countryside with her mountains and valleys, her abandoned coalmines and sleepy villages.

This was my first introduction to photography, I had no idea that photography could be so powerful. As I sat there I wondered how this

guy came to be in our small club in Dundalk?

I had no idea that there was a network of photographic clubs throughout Ireland, the UK and beyond. But as the lecture continued I became more and more curious, it was like an awakening. Here this man was not simply showing photographs, I felt he was also expressing something of himself through his photography, this is what truly interested me. I was intrigued. Right then and there for the first time in my life, I knew that this was something I wanted for myself, a direction, a goal and a desire to express. Not having an education and leaving



Naoise 2

school prematurely at the age of sixteen, left somewhat of a void in me, and now I was presented with an opportunity to fill that void, I wanted to do what he was doing. And so began my photographic journey.

In the early days it soon became evident that learning the technical aspects of the camera was the easy part. Understanding the exposure triangle, composition rules and depth of field etc. could indeed be easily learned, of course, with a bit of dedication. But much more difficult was the task of developing a style, unlocking that creative desire which was harnessed somewhere deep inside me. Roll after roll of Fuji slide film was exposed as I trundled my way to the title of Non Advanced Photographer of the year. Ahh, promotion at last! And so into the senior section I went where the competition was much stiffer, but the reward all the more gratifying when the competition judge would comment favourably on my images. There was no doubt I was hungry for success, but success itself was never my goal. However I did see success as a conduit to one day reaching that goal, where I would be asked to speak to a camera club or photographic society, and who knows maybe even in a different country. I was eager to learn and attended every competition I possibly could both at club and national level. Also when possible I availed of the opportunity to attend lectures by Fellows of the Royal Photographic Society. As Chairman I was instrumental in setting up a system where we would bring prominent RPS members to present their work, and judge at our end of year exhibition. This proved to be most beneficial and also a great source of inspiration, not only to me, but also to the our society as a whole.

In the year 2000 I purchased my first computer along with an Epson



TV Room

printer and a Nikon negative and slide scanner, a Nikon Coolscan if I remember correctly. This opened up a whole new world to me. I was still shooting away on my trusty Canon EOS1, but now I could digitise my negatives which put me in control of my entire workflow, right from concept to the final print. I can still recall the many and often heated debates on the topic of digital printing, there was a climate of digital versus darkroom prints in those days. Certainly in the early days the consensus was that a digital print would never be a match for a traditional darkroom

print. I recall one die-hard friend saying, "at least not in our lifetime". Thankfully we are both still alive and digital prints are what they are today. For sure darkroom prints will always have their place and a unique quality that sets them apart. One thing for sure is whether darkroom or digital, there is no substitute for prints. Wasn't it Ansel Adams who said "the negative is the score and the print the performance"? Wise words indeed. These days, for most the digital file is the score but the print is still the performance. I still feel an image is not complete until it is printed. For



Aries And The Ram

me it's a bit like baking a cake and posting a picture of it, but nobody ever gets to taste it.

International Salons were invaluable as a means of learning and also a benchmark for my work and progress. The thrill of sending off my prints and awaiting the results was so exciting. Then there was a further wait and hopefully the joy of seeing your image printed in the catalogue. In the early days an acceptance was the goal but soon awards would become the objective. I still enjoy the buzz of International salons, but it pains me somewhat to see so many digital

catalogues these days. I must confess to not even looking at some of them, at least not in any great detail. For me, it's a cup of coffee and a printed catalogue on my lap, thank you very much!

Speaking of prints it would be remiss of me not to mention PermaJet. Today I am a member of PermaJet's lecturers team. However in the early years I found their expert help invaluable. I would recommend anyone starting out to attend one of their print workshops, you won't look back. Printing can for some be a bit of a minefield, but with the right help and guidance

you will quickly get to grips with it. Right from hardware to software, knowhow and consumables they are a one stop shop. Check out their fantastic new website for more info on all aspects of printing.

And so my progression continued, and recognition for my photography percolated throughout the camera club scene. I became an Associate of the RPS in 2006 and in 2008 I gained a Fellowship from the Irish Photographic Federation. 2010 was the most exciting year of all, I gained a Fellowship with the RPS for a panel on abandoned Irish houses. Later that same year



Molly

Dundalk Photographic Society won the FIAP World Cup for Clubs. As Chairman I had the honour of receiving the trophy in Paris and was also fortunate to win a FIAP silver medal and have four images (two is the maximum from any one author these days) in the winning panel. By now I was giving talks to camera clubs and judging competitions at club and national level. Soon after I was invited to judge international salons and also invited to show my work to clubs across the UK and further afield.

I am extremely grateful to photography as I have got more from photography than I could ever have expected. I have met so many wonderful people and made so many great friends with whom to share my passion for photography. I have travelled to countries which I would not otherwise have visited in 2017. I joined Drogheda Photographic Club, one of Ireland's premier clubs. There I have joined

forces with old friends and also forged new friendships. I find there that the blend of competition, while also providing a platform and outlet for beginners, is just right. I think it is important to help others achieve their dreams and goals and help them become proficient, so that they too can learn the art of expression through photography. On occasion over the years I have seen photographers totally driven by success, and crave the adoration that may or may not come with that success, but often these people lose direction and fall away. We must shoot to satisfy ourselves first and foremost, the rest will look after itself. If I may quote Ansel Adams again "A great photograph is one that fully expresses what one feels, in the deepest sense, about what is being photographed". I think this is a sentiment that is sometimes lost these days in some photographic circles.

In 2019 I received an email from

that Welsh man whom I mentioned in my opening paragraph. The email was an invitation to come to Wales and give a print presentation to his Club, Blaenau CC. The gentleman I speak of is of course Tom Dodd, needless to say I was thrilled. After all these years and the many talks and prestigious clubs to which I have presented or judged, this was the invitation that made me smile the most. I took great pleasure in telling him how he had influenced me all those years ago and how honoured I was to be asked to speak at his request. We set the date for March 2020 and you know what happened next....The Pandemic struck! So for now the visit is on hold, but I look forward to completing the circle and stepping off the ferry at Holyhead in the not too distant future, with a couple of loaded print boxes and hopefully I can inspire someone at Blaenau Camera Club, just as I was inspired twenty five years ago.



lbbs



Cobbolds Point



SHARPENING MYTHS

JOHN MISKELLY FRPS FBIPP FIPF

John explains how to sharpen images at each post-processing stage: importing, editing and output. Learn how careful and constrained adjustments are the key to success.

When I mention the word 'sharpening', I'm sure many of us believe we fully understand this subject and treat our images accordingly. The reality is often different, as can be evidenced by the continued

problem of photos being entered into competitions which are over sharpened and show evidence of over processing. On some occasions this over sharpening is obvious and at other times it is more subtle, but it's still an issue.

When I chat to some of these photographers, the reasons given include, "the original was not quite in focus, so I tried to improve the sharpness in post production" or, "I wanted the image to have more 'impact' for the judges".



Dunluce Castle

So, what does this over sharpening look like? Well, this is demonstrated in the image above, where I have enhanced the effect in this case to make it more obvious for the magazine.

You will see that the image has what I call a scrunched up or gritty feeling. It certainly doesn't look natural and even when it is a less 'extreme' version, the overall effect is still the same.

In addition, some photographers will add a lot of contrast to their image, where this often has precisely the same effect as over sharpening.

While many of us think we understand sharpening, it's a subject where there are a lot of misconceptions, so my aim is to explore this subject in some depth to ensure we can all make better decisions around how we process our images.

Let's deal with one very important principle first. That is, the actual sharpness of an image is related to (a) the resolution of the original image taken in the camera and (b) the technique of the photographer in taking this image. In other words, the sharpness is defined by the capture of the image, through the choice of a camera and lens combination, one which has adequate resolution for the job in hand, along with the photographer's skill in choosing appropriate camera settings and their ability to focus properly and to ultimately hold the camera steady. Sharpness is not and cannot be created in post production.

Now before some of you say, what about the likes of the sharpening tools in Lightroom and Photoshop, or other software such as that from Topaz Labs, Luminar, DxO etc? Well these tools work on what is actually called 'acutance' and which can create the 'effect' of a sharper image if they're used properly through creating more contrast at an edge.

So, what we're doing when we 'sharpen' an image

after its capture is to increase the 'apparent' sharpness of the image, which will mean that the human eye detects that the image is sharp. However, if we overdo this effect, it looks unnatural or what we usually call 'over sharpened'. As I've already mentioned, if we go too far here, we then we can also get halos showing up in our image. This is illustrated in the image below, where there are obvious halos (the white lines) around the trees and also between the field and the sky.



An example of over sharpening

So, how do we sharpen an image to bring out the best in that image, without going too far? Well, I divide sharpening into three steps. Firstly, there is import or pre-sharpening, then there is creative sharpening and finally there is output sharpening. Let's look at each of these in turn.

*Import sharpening*

Import sharpening

The purpose of pre-sharpening or import sharpening is to remove the inherent softness in the captured image. Many modern digital cameras have an anti-aliasing filter, which by its very nature slightly softens the image when captured. Even when some cameras don't contain this filter, some limited pre-sharpening can improve the image. However, like all sharpening, I believe that less is more here.

In terms of the ideal settings for this, it really depends on the type of images you're taking. However, with Adobe Lightroom, I find a good starting point is to apply a value for **Amount** of between 30 and 50, the **Radius** of say 0.5 or 1 pixels and I aim to keep the **Detail** value below 50. **Masking** value will depend on the image, as the example above illustrates.

In the screenshot, the left hand side of the image is before pre-sharpening and the right hand side is after. You will note that my settings are **Amount** at 50, **Radius** at 1.0, **Detail** at 25 and **Masking** at 83. The reason the masking is so high is to avoid any sharpening of the water or the sky. This subtle sharpening just gives the image a little more punch but is appropriate to the image. Lastly, I recommend sharpening at 100% magnification, which maps a single pixel of your image to a single pixel of your display and the image shown above is a 100% crop of the whole image.

Creative sharpening

This type of sharpening is probably the most important. With non-destructive programs such as

Lightroom or Photoshop, you can always go back and adjust your settings later.

This is a case where Photoshop gives much more control over localised sharpening than you can get in Lightroom, albeit Lightroom has improved significantly in this area in recent versions. If you only work in Lightroom, don't worry, as this can do a perfectly adequate job of creative sharpening.

It's also important to note that there are multiple ways to sharpen in Photoshop, plus there are many plugins designed to only sharpen images, such as those produced by the likes of ON1 and Nik.

When I use Photoshop, I would often use the Smart Sharpening Filter, with my settings similar to those in the example at the top of the next page (p.29). That is, an **Amount** of 124, **Radius** at 1.3 and a **Reduction of Noise** at 10%, as sometimes there can be a little noise in the blue channel, commonly found with water or skies.

If you are working in Photoshop, do make sure you do any adjustments on a separate layer, as this means you can make further changes later. This will also enable you to use a Layer Mask to paint in the effect, or remove it, to personal taste. That way, we don't end up sharpening things like clouds or areas of water, where sharpening is normally inappropriate.

Output sharpening

The final adjustment I will make to my image is output sharpening. This involves setting the sharpening you require based on both your final image size and the medium on which you intend to output the image. For example, if I'm printing on a matt art paper, I will



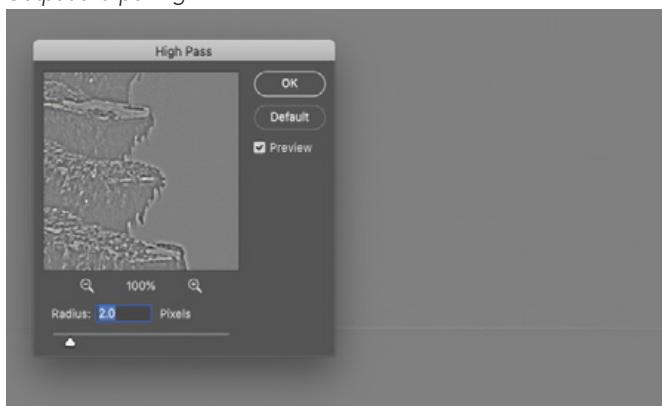
Creative sharpening

apply a little more sharpening to the image than if I'm printing on a lustre paper.

Again, there are many ways to sharpen for this stage, but I use what's called a **High Pass Filter** in Photoshop, using a new layer which I can delete and replace in the future if necessary. Before I do that, I make sure my image has been sized for the print, in this case it's 16" x 16" at 300 dpi. Using the same image as for the creative sharpening on above, I have used a **Radius** on the High Pass filter of 2.0 pixels. The higher the pixel setting, the greater the amount of the image that will be sharpened, moving beyond the edges to things like water and sky, so care once again should be taken. The effect looks like the screenshot below. I won't outline the full process in this article, but if anyone is interested, I can discuss this in the future.

I'm sure many will be aware that Lightroom has its own settings for output sharpening, which are selected when you either export an image or send it to print. In the case of printing, you can select a checkbox to

Output sharpening



apply **Print Sharpening**, after which you choose Low, Standard or High for the amount. I don't normally use these settings, because they are relatively crude and don't give me any control over the strength or amount of sharpening that is applied.

The image at the beginning of this article (p.26) is the final image, with the import sharpening, creative sharpening and output sharpening applied. The settings were for a 16" square print on a lustre paper and hopefully you will note that the sharpening was very minimal in each step, with just enough to give a natural look without any over sharpening.

The key here is to use all sharpening tools with care and restraint, with you as the author deciding how much sharpening is applied to your image at each stage. It's also worth noting that I don't use sharpening with all my images, as many of them require nothing more than some pre-sharpening and then output sharpening. As has always been the case, good technique in the taking of the image is key and no amount of post production can correct a sub-standard image.

Hopefully this article makes all of us think more carefully about our sharpening techniques and that we'll be seeing less over sharpened images in the future.

John is the winner of the BIPP Commercial Photographer of the Year 2021

You can see more of John's images at his website: www.johnmiskelly.co.uk



SITTING DOWN ON THE JOB

ANNE CONRAD

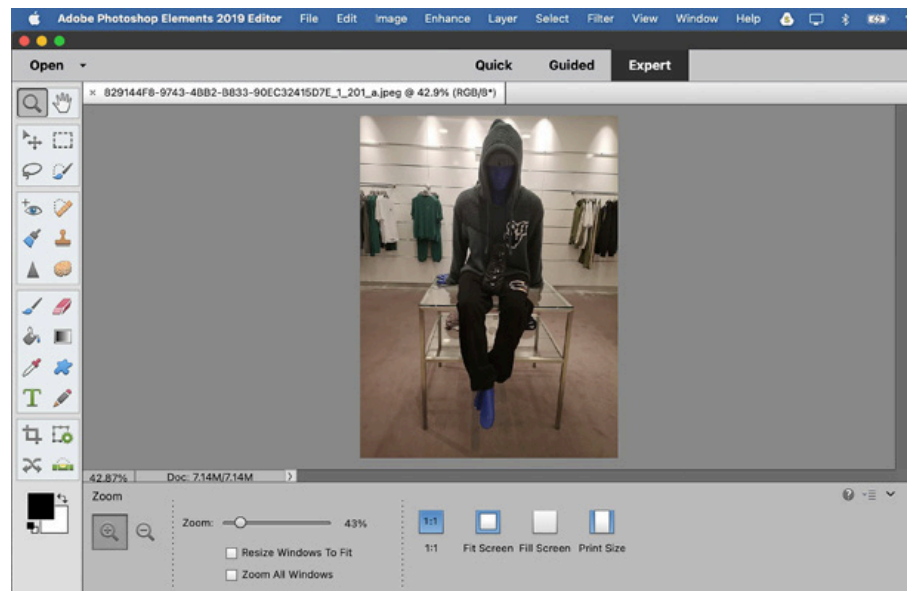
I am not a huge shopper but seem to have developed a love for photographing mannequins in big stores, especially Harvey Nichols in Edinburgh, my home town. [*Mannequin - an artist's, tailor's, or dressmaker's lay figure also : a form representing the*

human figure used especially for displaying clothes. 2 : one employed to model clothing.] The store seems to be able to position them in really good storytelling positions. I always find it amusing that they don't allow one to photograph their

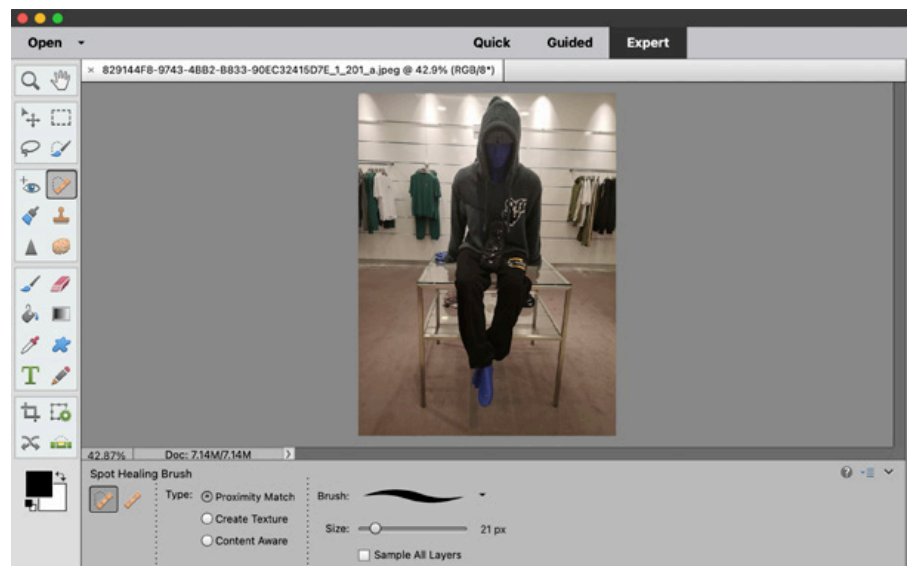
figures using a normal camera but will happily allow the use of mobile phone cameras - don't they realise the quality of such cameras these days?! I use a Huawei P20 Pro and tend to have it set up on one of the settings for AP, Monochrome or HDR. On my

recent visit I wandered around the store randomly photographing the Mannequins set up for the festive season. A lot of the time I can envision the final photo before I have taken the shot but I do enjoy the randomness of photographing them and creating a new pictures from an original. The photograph here was one of those that shouted out to me, so once I had captured the photograph it was off home to do some simple editing on it - I already knew its title.

I use Photoshop Elements, so my editing choices are not as broad as they might be with 'full' Photoshop. I performed the usual tidy-up, such as lighting, contrast, exposure etc., also removing any flaws/parts in the photo that would distract from the main feature - the mannequin - using the **Spot Healing** tool. Next, I played around using different filters that would match what I saw as the style I wanted to us, settling on **Note Paper**. This filter created enough to make the Mannequin look more like a person. My next move was to use some colour, adding a slight pink/lilac colour from the colour palette. I set about creating the right amount of shadow/detail to change the look overall to be more human-like, rather than just a simple dummy. Once happy with the final look, I like to put a simple frame on it with a title so as to make it my own creation. I thought that the title of this image, *Sitting Down on the Job!* suited it well, as even though it is not human the Mannequin was doing what the title said. Although this is a simple transformation from start to finish, I hope I have been able to share my belief that everything around us is telling its own story and we can help bring it to life. Never be scared to use your mobile phone to start the creative process!

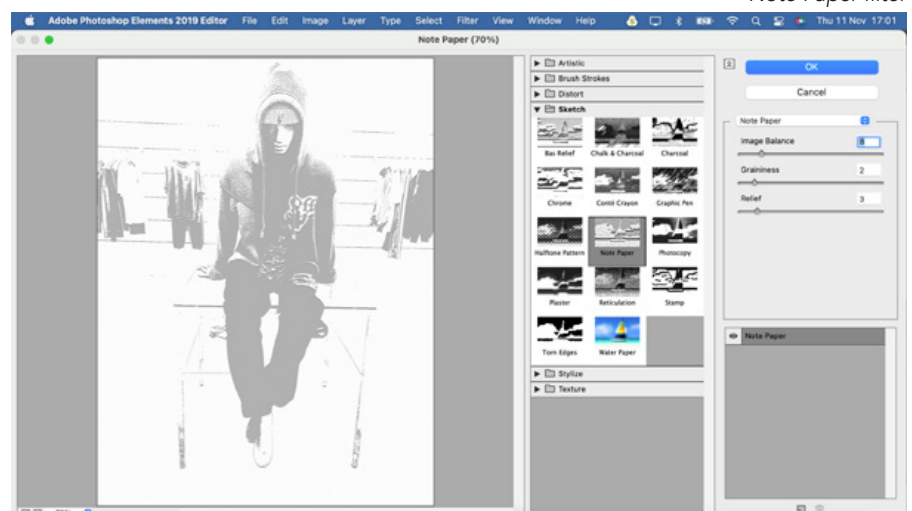


Lighting, exposure and contrast corrections



Use the Spot Healing tool to remove flaws

Note Paper filter





ALICE

BARRY MEAD FRPS EFIAP/d3 MPAGB APAGB

The image of Alice was taken in the Bristol Photographic Society studio and the Hatter was at a Venice Carnival. At the time I had no idea what they would be used for. The idea came from a short sequence in the second *Alice in Wonderland* film: the one featuring Johnny Depp. This required clock movements and parts thereof. A friend had the clock bits and a full movement. All cutting out is done by loosely selecting parts of the image and dragging onto a lurid green background, then erasing around the edges with the image greatly enlarged on a big monitor. Many people would find this tedious but it is very accurate and it works for me! After the erasing process, I darkened the green background and then checked



Alice

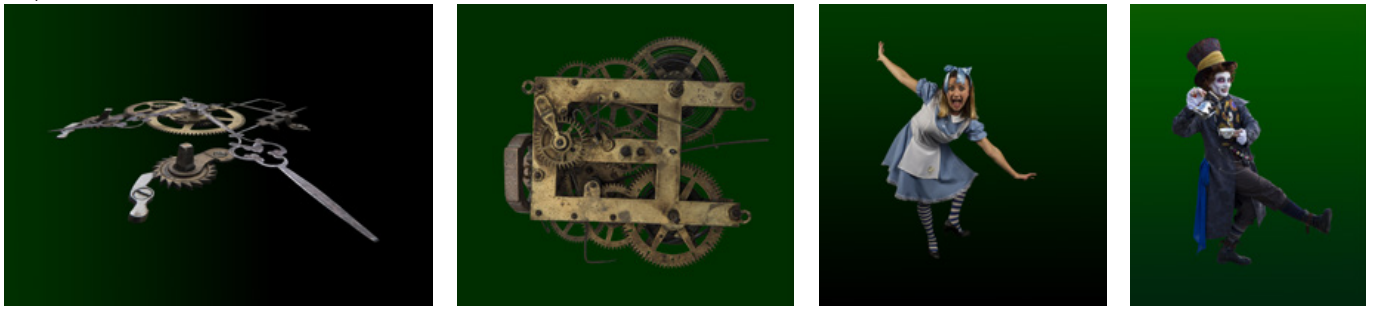
that I have not missed anything. So, all the cut outs are on a dark green background as shown at the top of the next page. The first of which shows a change of perspective which is done using



The Hatter

Photoshop's **Edit > Transform > Perspective** function. All work is done in Photoshop with 16 bit images and I use a Wacom Tablet/pen for my editing.

Prepared cut outs on green background



The background for the image (below) is a sky which has been distorted and colour-shifted to suit what I thought would complement the clock mechanism colours.



Background layer



Layers flipped horizontally

The next image shows the clock layer dragged on to the background, as was the 'Hatter'; the scale of both was changed using the **Edit > Transform > Scale** function.



Combined layers

It was obvious at this point that the figure of Alice placed on the large clock hand would not work, so the two layers were **flipped horizontally**. The 'Alice' layer was added and sized to suit, and a few other clock parts were added and partly erased to suit what I thought looked right.

I now felt that the background needed something else, so I duplicated the background and added the cut-out of the full clock movement between the two background layers. The opacity of the front background layer was changed until I got the desired effect. I also selected bottom part of the upper background

layer and altered its perspective **Edit > Transform > Perspective**. Parts of the background clock layer were then distorted and I added a small puppet figure onto the clock winder as the peg seemed to stand out too much.



Additional background layers

To get movement in the clock hand on which Alice is balanced, I duplicated the clock hand layer, **Gaussian blurred** the then identical layer underneath and erased the blur on the leading edge of the clock hand leaving a sense of some movement (see final image on page 32). Shadows were burned in gradually until they looked OK. The final thing I do with all my images is to duplicate the figure layers and Gaussian blur the underneath one by about 1.2 pixels which removes the "cut out" look. If you can see an editing effect then you have overdone it! I have added a small amount of darkened graduation top and bottom of background. I tend to leave images overnight so as to review before classing as finished and I keep all steps with layers separately.

DIGITAL IMAGING PRINT EXHIBITION SELECTION



Too Many People by Helen Jones ARPS
(2021 Winner of the Gold Medal and Chairman's Cup)

All entrants may submit up to three images and are guaranteed to have a print accepted in the 2022 exhibition

Free to enter and open to DI members only

For full information and rules visit www.rps.org/DIGExhibition

Results to be announced and selected images reviewed with comments by selectors at the DI AGM on 20 February 2022

Open for online submission	1 Jan 2022
Online submission closes	31 Jan 2022
Prints due with Exhibition Secretary	11 Feb 2022
Selection date	16 Feb 2022

We hope you will join us and submit three of your prints

For an overview of the 2021 Print Exhibition Selection and to download catalogues from previous years' exhibitions, visit the Digital Imaging Print Exhibition page on the RPS website: www.rps.org/DIGExhibition. Selected images for several previous years' exhibitions can be viewed on the Digital Imaging Hall of Fame.

DIGITAL IMAGING AGM & SPEAKER DAY

20 February 2022 will be the Digital Imaging AGM & Speaker Day:

- A brief business meeting
- A presentation by the selectors of the 2022 Print Exhibition images
- An inspiring guest speaker

As in 2021, the event will take place via Zoom videoconferencing. For further details, visit rps.org/DIGAGM.

IN PREVIOUS ISSUES

All previous issues are available from the RPS Digital Imaging web pages at: rps.org/digitarchive



DIGIT 88

2021 Issue 1



DIGIT 89

2021 Issue 2



DIGIT 90

2021 Issue 3



- 2 Group events
- 3 Contents
- 4 From the Chair
Ian Race
- 4 Editorial
Gary Beaton
- 5 *Man Has The Dream of Flight*
Adam Mullender
- 12 *Art of the Airport Tower*
Carolyn J. Russo
- 18 *City Blocks*
Paul Bather ARPS
- 22 *Open-Source Post-Processing*
Paul Herbert ARPS
- 27 *Lulu - A Modern Muse*
Tim Pile
- 33 DIGIT Challenge
Who is The Fairest of Them All?
Zoe Harbord
- 35 In previous issues

- 2 Group events
- 3 Contents
- 4 From the Chair
Rex Waygood and
Deborah Loth
- 4 Editorial
Gary Beaton
- 5 *Photography: A Creative Obsession*
Sharon Prenton Jones
ARPS
- 12 *A Visit to Jantar Mantar,
Jaipur, India*
Brian Law ARPS
- 18 *Photographing
Silhouettes*
Colin Trow-Poole FRPS
- 23 *Photographs As
Metaphor For Working In
Higher Education*
Brian O'Callaghan LRPS
- 27 *Photography From The
Flight Deck*
Martijn Kort
- 33 DIGIT Challenge
Finding Unicorns
Adrian Lines ARPS
- 35 In previous issues

- 2 Group events
- 3 Contents
- 4 From the Chair
Rex Waygood and
Deborah Loth
- 4 Editorial
Gary Beaton
- 5 *Alchemy - Merging The
Old And The New*
Brian K Edwards
- 10 *Leeds: A New Eye*
Glennys Garnett
- 17 Back To Basics
- 23 *A Moment Of Fame*
Julia Wainwright FRPS
- 26 *The RPS in India*
Ashok Viswanathan
- 31 DIGIT Challenge
Springtime
Roger Hinton LRPS
Fire Flowers
Samantha Ruth
- 35 In previous issues



