DIGIT

THE RPS
ROYAL
PHOTOGRAPHIC
SOCIETY

ACME
DETECTIVE
AGENCY

A.n.Tweeter

Upcoming DIG events

Details of all DIG events are available on the Group's website at
www.rps.org/special-interest-groups/digital-imaging/events

DIGITAL IMAGING GROUP

SOUTH EAST CENTRE

Joe Cornish Hon FRPS
EVOLUTION AND
REVOLUTION:
A life in landscape
photography

Sunday 7th April 2019 ~ Maidstone, Kent

DIGITAL IMAGING GROUP

THAMES VALLEY CENTRE

Andy Small
FINE ART
NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY
& Len Deeley
Memorial Trophy
PDI competition

Sunday 28 April 2019 ~ Wokingham, Berkshire

DIGITAL IMAGING GROUP

WESTERN CENTRE

Ray Grace ARPS DPAGB
Presentation of latest
work and Photoshop Clinic

Sunday 5 May 2019 Ilton Village Hall, TA19 9HG

DIGITAL IMAGING GROUP

THAMES VALLEY CENTRE

Simon Weir ARPS
BEYOND
VISIBLE LIGHT -
a day of
Infrared Photography

Sunday 19 May 2019 ~ Wokingham, Berkshire

DIGITAL IMAGING GROUP

SOUTH EAST CENTRE

Rachael Talibart
& Ann Healey ARPS

DIGITAL CAPTURE
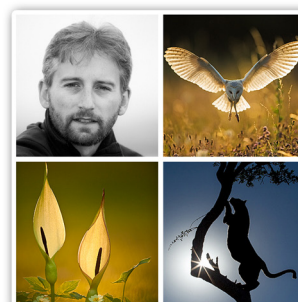OF THE
NATURAL WORLD

Sunday 9th June 2018 ~ Maidstone, Kent

DIGITAL IMAGING GROUP

YORKSHIRE & NE CENTRE

Richard Spurdens
EFIAP/p DPAGB
"Being There"

Saturday 22nd June 2019 ~ Clements Hall, York

DIGITAL IMAGING GROUP

THAMES VALLEY CENTRE

Guy Edwardes
SEEING THE LIGHT
25 years of
landscape &
nature photography

Sunday 15 September 2019 ~ Wokingham, Berkshire

DIGITAL IMAGING GROUP

THAMES VALLEY CENTRE

Iain McGowan FRPS
YET MORE FROM
THE GARDEN SHED!
& Millennium Cup
Print Competition

Sunday 20 October 2019 ~ Wokingham, Berkshire

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From the chair

Janet Haines ARPS

DIG prides itself on giving ever more value for money to our members and this was the driver behind offering online access to our recent AGM. Using services from Zoom, where we can video conference to many and screen share, members as far afield as Australia were able to feel part of the meeting even though they could not physically attend the meeting at Smethwick.

It was a first for DIG and (we believe) a first for any group in the RPS. Overall we considered this trial to be an 80% success, with very positive feedback from our attending members. There were a few gremlins of audio feedback to start with, but once the co-host realised he could mute the attendees microphones the quality was very acceptable. Online members could vote and using their chat facility ask questions. We learnt from this trial and I am very confident we will be able to deliver more opportunities for Group members using this technology in the future.

The AGM reports showed the success and stability of the Group, with our recent member survey showing a very high level of satisfaction. Two items on the agenda were approved. Firstly a 'sponsored youth project' and secondly the 'member recruitment'

programme. The latter you will find more information about on page 42 of this publication. We encourage you all to participate as currently DIG membership is declining slightly. If you wish to watch and listen to the full AGM then it is available on rps.org/DIG then navigate to the AGM page.

For this first trial we only broadcast the AGM element of the day but we went on to select the 2019 DIG Print Exhibition with entries from 162 members. The highest entry that I can recall in my time as Chair and, I felt, of a really good overall standard. Work we can be proud of as it goes around the UK throughout the year. If you know of and can assist us in finding new locations where the Exhibition can be shown then do get in touch. The prints are not framed so we need to display them on the fabric display boards: something to remember when assessing a potential exhibition area.

Finally we had Irene Froy give her talk 'Pastel Moments'. This popular lady showed us some exquisite work and happily shared her processing secrets with us all. However Irene is now hanging up her presenters hat and we were so lucky to be privileged to hear her penultimate talk. We wish you all the best in the future Irene.

Editorial

Gary Beaton

We had so many great articles to go into this edition you may notice that it is a bumper issue - well, bigger than usual, anyway. As ever, it has been a delight to see the wide variety of superb work that our contributors produce and my only disappointment is that it is not possible to bring you more inside the covers.

Amongst the pages you will find some practical advice for shooting images of musicians, and images created from the natural world around us. We also see some impressive uses of Photoshop, which clearly

show how something from the imagination can be converted into an image that can be shared. And if that were not enough, we have an articles showing some stunning architectural images, offering a model approach to gaining an Associateship and we meet a young Danish photographer who has taken an unconventional route to a professional career.

Add two Challenge articles into the mix and I hope that there is something for everyone in this issue. And whatever your interests, I hope also that you find inspiration from the stories and images which encourages you to get your cameras out!

Happy reading.

Freyja, First of the Valkyrie

Confessions of a Photoshop-a-holic

ANDREA HARGREAVES was first introduced to Photoshop in 2012, and hasn't looked back since.

I began my 'digital' journey in 2010 when I bought my first DSLR and had to teach myself photography, but it wasn't until two years later that I was catapulted head first into what is now a total obsession by my introduction to Photoshop.

Before using Photoshop I was using a free download called Picasa. I worried that I was ruining my photographs when I edited them until I happened upon a catalogue from a National Salon and Exhibition and was blown away by the creative/composite images I saw inside.

I wanted to create these types of images but I hadn't a clue where to start, or more truthfully I didn't believe I could ever do it. In fact it would

be another year before I learned how to show a PDI in my camera club competition, and my first prints were printed at Jessops and they were simply horrendous!

I should say that I have always been a wildlife photographer, and mad about airshows and travel. Photographing people wasn't my thing at that time…. Now it's a very different story.

I consider myself a photographer, but I am also a digital artist for want of a better title - I see both as two different skills, but without one I cannot do the other.

I use my own photographs for my artistic work

CONFESSIONS OF A PHOTOSHOP-A-HOLIC

including textures/overlays, and if I don't have an item I need for an image I make it from what I do have - you could say with me "its all or nothing!".

My inspiration to create is usually borne out of desperation for an entry into our Federation Annual Exhibition, held annually in May. The entry deadline is February so the New Year finds me tucked away in the 'Transmogrification Chamber', also known as the back bedroom, swivelling in my chair whilst trying to ignite that creative spark!

I am often asked where I get my ideas from or "how ever did you think of that?", and its a tough question to answer. Ideas come from many sources; from researching an idea or word, or a picture I have seen, to simply a happy accident whilst faffing with Photoshop. Whenever I have an idea in my mind it's Sod's Law that I haven't got the elements I need in my library or I don't have the Photoshop skills to create it. Mostly I just begin with looking through my model shoots for an interesting pose that will hopefully spark off an idea which I can research…. then the rest is down to Transmogrification!!!!!

As I look at my work in the last 5 years I see there is a progression from one series to the next which has developed as my Photoshop skills have improved. I have learned Photoshop on the hoof - if I need to know how to do something I find a tutorial to follow. I use my own images rather than the ones provided, which gives an added problem as the tutorial steps rarely work as per the tutorial - however, it usually results with roughly the outcome I want but with my own stamp on it, with the added bonus that I can also use it in competition.

My workflow has developed from the need to continually produce quality images for International and National Salons and Exhibitions to earn photographic distinctions.
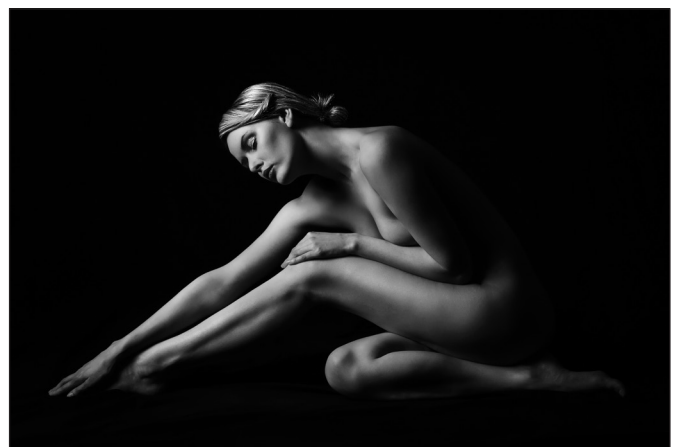
When reviewing a shoot or images to work on, I write down any word that pops into my head or sketch ideas to research whilst relaxing. My first stage is to produce a *photo composite image* (my description for a cleaned up competition image). The next stage is the *art composite*, which, through the research, begins to formulate in my mind. I have found that I like to have a story to tell. A legend or a character for whom I can create my own story - these sometimes snowball into something quite unexpected.

I can spend (embarrassingly) hundreds of hours on a picture and I do not work to a fixed formula (i.e., if you 'do these 10 actions you will have a picture'). I have a standard set up but that is where it ends. My enjoyment comes from an image unfolding and coming to life in front of my eyes. I like to think that each picture has a life of its own simply because each layer can be tweaked and altered at any time, creating a new effect or dynamic to suit the moment. It is for this reason I can never give a blow-by-blow tutorial of how I created a specific picture. Generally I can talk someone through the way I use Photoshop and my procedures and considerations in composition, but the finished Layers palette shows me the end result, unfortunately it does not remind me how I got there!

Fallen to Earth

My image, Fallen to Earth (see right), started with a photo shoot of Carla Monaco. A fine art nude shoot - one light and black back cloth. From this series of images is born 'The Swan', so named because it is reminiscent of a ballet pose. I created my fine art nude photo composite and then decided for the art composite she could be a swan… but not a normal white one… a black one.

The Swan

Having cut out the model I start with a new white canvas 12" x 16" @ 300ppi - more often than not I will 'grow' this if I run out of space, or crop it at some point to suit the finished picture.

With no black swan feathers in my library I looked to the Goths of Whitby for help and found a headdress made of black raven feathers that I had shot in the past. I cut and paste a selection of the feathers onto a new layer, duplicating this five or six times. Each of the duplicated layers is worked to fashion a feathery winged skirt and a winged headdress for what was to become an angel.

Fallen to Earth

I already had some long clumps of hair which I made from a model that I had 'overcooked' in Portrait Professional some years ago, hand drawing light and dark strands to give it definition and wispy edges, and added this to my angel. These clumps can be warped around the head into any hairstyle with a little practice. I change the colour of the hair to suit by using Hue/Saturation adjustment layers.

By now I have the beginnings of a picture which would become 'Fallen to Earth'.

For the background I chose from my library a brooding cloudy sky for the top half, and some curved steps at the base for her to sit on. I placed some fluffy clouds across the horizon and used a large soft eraser to get rid of any sharp edges. I duplicated the cloud layer a few times and using the Transform tool changed the size of the clouds to build up a convincing horizon.

I wanted the centre to be brighter, to draw the viewers eye to the subject so I added a vignette to the edges of the image.

'Fallen to Earth' is a simple picture and was 100% accepted in competitions but I asked a judge why it wasn't reaching its full potential. I was told that the Angel was pointing the wrong way (facing left) and that softer, warm brown tones were preferential to cold blues. I tried out these suggestions and decided that I wanted this improved version printed at A1 size for my wall at home. The print came back and was stunning -

Beauty and Dereliction

CONFESSIONS OF A PHOTOSHOP-A-HOLIC

The composition of Freyja, First of the Valkyrie

but I noticed on the invoice someone had written 'Valkyrie'......and a spark was ignited.

Valkyrie

I instantly began researching the Valkyrie and found myself submerged in the Norse Sagas.... leading me into the Irish goddesses, legends and stories....to the Celts…. goddesses of every religion, cult and creed. Inspiration for the next 10 thousand years!

It was around that time I did a shoot with model Maja Stina and had begun to create a series of images that I would call the Art of Metamorphosis. But the figure in one of these shots, Beauty and Dereliction, was to become my experimental Valkyrie; the first of many.

The first stage, as always, is to trawl my photograph library for anything I considered useful to create my story and store them together in a file for easy access. In went armour, birds, jewellery, skulls, skies, cliffs, floors, rocks ….

Valkyrie are described as having falcon wings so they could fly over the battlefields, but the highly

patterned falcon wings were too jazzy compared to the Raven feathers so I invoked a sprinkling of poetic licence and decided upon the ravens' wings. … and luckily found some I had made earlier!

All the elements were roughly cut out to start with and placed on a blank canvas and I started to build the image. If it has potential then all the elements are carefully cut out with the pen tool and edited before being brought into the image, they are warped into shape *in situ* but a copy of the new warping is saved because you never know when you might need one again!

The background is made from a picture of a rock formation warped with the perspective tool to give a diagonal depth of field. The base of the canvas was another basalt rock formation surface, falling away at the horizon. The next few layers are broody skies laid one above the other with their own mask where the clouds can be painted out to give the appearance of patchy fog or mist.

I now bring in the protagonist and other accessories to tell the story. You must always bear in mind composition rules - whether you are

going to abide by them or ignore them. I like to create strong diagonals drawing the eye and odd numbered items in groups, but I am happy to place the subject slap bang in the middle of an image if I feel it works.

Freyja is wrapped in ravens' wings which are warped to fit and more added to wrap around her shoulders and body. Because these are made up of lots of small sections, each on their own layer, they can be manipulated precisely to fit and move if needed.

As I placed the skulls into the picture I noticed they had a black skull cap so using the pen tool I cut out all the sections and used it for her head gear. It fit perfectly and with the addition of a few feathers it worked well. I could even feed small strands of hair through the gaps to make it look more convincing. I added wrist cuffs to cover blemishes and a collar.

For each element of the image that is on its own layer I created a shadow layer beneath and one above it. These are new blank layers on which I used a large soft black brush - opacity 6% to paint a shadow where the item touches another surface. As the image progresses these layers can be altered by erasing, lowering the opacity of that layer or changing the blend mode in the Layer Palette.

Once all the elements in an image are in place I look at whether I need to alter the size the subject to fill the canvas, or if I will reduce the canvas by cropping, or whether the background needs stretching outwards beyond the canvas. Once I am happy with these aspects I like to bring in textured layers and/or coloured layers to create the right atmosphere. Here I always use a mask to take the effect away from skin and other important elements and lower the layer opacity and/or change blend modes building these layers over each other at very low opacity and changing blend modes to soft light or overlay.

I check Levels, Brightness and Contrast and will usually add a soft vignette brightening the centre or subject slightly. I rarely sharpen an image but tiny adjustments are done with the triangle sharpening tool situated on the left hand bar, however, I tend to dodge and burn on a 50% grey layer with blend mode of soft light or overlay as a finishing layer.

When making a series of images, such as my Valkyrie, I use the same PSD file duplicated and attempt to get a similar overall feel to the image whilst creating a new story. It may be necessary to add a specific textured layer to the all to unify them.

Further into my research I find, as the Norsemen conquered more lands and settled abroad, legends and stories overlapped and merged together with those conquered - so too have the subjects of my images.

See more of Andrea's work at *www.andreahargreaves.art.*

The Ride to Valhalla

The Raven Queen

My Creative Quest

BRIAN McCARTHY ARPS explains how he makes photographs of scenes that do not exist.

These are a few notes on my journey to gaining an Associate distinction with the Royal Photographic Society, and how the idea of being a 'Stills Photographer on a film set' came about. I'll will try to explain some of my methods and the practicalities of what turned out, in the end, to be a humongous task. I found the project daunting but it was very enjoyable and fun to do. Who gets the most enjoyment out of our photographs? Yes, of course *we*, the photographers do!

The concept

Trying to come up with a suitable subject for an 'A' panel project is quite daunting; most subjects have been covered. You can try to add your own twist, but it's not easy to make it yours.

You start looking for something that's different and never been done before, at least, as far as you know. You must be comfortable and familiar with it; it's got to be non-offensive; it's got to be interesting; fun to do and of course practical. I did suggest to my financial director, the lovely Mrs McCarthy, that I could jet off and photograph 15 of the deepest caves in the world. It would take a couple of years, but no, not enough money in the kitty. I'll keep that for a possible FRPS panel, if I ever win the lottery.

There were three elements that did align, like the planets do occasionally, that led to my concept.

1. A TV documentary on an enormous archive of photographs stored in a warehouse taken during the making of the 'Carry On' films. The sons of two of the stars were looking through them and reminiscing, a bit like we all do when the old photo albums come out at home, it's as near as we get to time travel.

2. A few years earlier I had produced a short Audio/Visual of a rock concert using Lego figures.

3. I was given a large refuse bag which was full of Action Man figures and accessories.

Thinking of an initial Statement of Intent 'I'll be a stills photographer working on a movie' the only problem is, I will have to make the movie. I'll build sets in my shed of scenes from the movie and take 15 photographs, how hard can that be. After a few test shots using the action man in a simple door way scene (see below), I started planning the whole project.

The practical...the narrative

The first step was draft a narrative. In deciding what type of film to make an overriding factor was that the action man; the Navy one, had a beard and scar and he looked quite tough. So I decided on a detective theme; an American detective of the 1940s in New York; a film noir look; loads of moody lighting, dark streets, tall buildings, fast cars etc.

This was going to be the feel and look of the movie, I just needed a story now. After a few attempts I came up with...

The two main characters grew up in New York and were the best of friends. One joined the Police and the other turn to a life of crime, so good guy bad guy. It transpired that the cop ended up arresting his old buddy for a serious misdemeanour and he went to Sing Sing for a long time. Then one night he escaped and went looking for the guy who had him put away. A simple plot, but enough scope to come up with ideas for shots on the streets of New York at night.

I based my two main characters on a song which conjures up for me visions of how these two might have grown up; and from which the panel derived is name; 'Tweeter and the Monkey Man', by the Travelling Wilburys.

The story board

I had to expand on this theme to give me at least 15 key shots during the movie.

To do this I created a storyboard. This was a large sheet of mount board with three thin strips of card half glued down, I made small thumb nail drawings or just titles of possible scenes. This kept me on track with what to shoot next, could I use any of the sets that were to be built in any other shots and of course with the final layout of the panel {see next page}.

The scale

An Action Man figure is about 12 inches; if Tweeter in my world was 6 ft tall then a simple scale of 2 inches = 1 foot gave me something to work with. This is where I met one of the many problems, I only had one usable action man figure, so I needed to source more actors.

In the end I used two sizes of figures, the 12 inch one for the inside shots and a 2 inch figure for the outside scenes. This introduced costume problems and a myriad of other dilemmas to solve. It was a wonder I never just jumped in a plane and went looking for those caves.

The shed

This shed was custom built to be used as a studio to do photographs. All the normal things that you would find in a shed were in other sheds and greenhouses, so this, became my film lot.

It is well insulated, carpeted, heated and painted white throughout. You need somewhere like this for a long-term project, doing projects on the dining room table is not going to work. I could leave sets out in the shed until the shots for that scene was complete.

The building of sets

This was done from scale drawings. I used mount board, plywood, tape, cellophane, Lego, modelling clay, balsa, various tubes and wire and loads of PVA glue.

Most of the interior shots were built with only 3 sides, the others were a mixture of fully formed 3D models, and some were just the front of buildings like they did for cowboy films.

Seems Quiet

Because the sets were built in the middle of the shed on a large table this allowed me to move around the sets and experiment with various camera angles and different focal length lenses.

Recording and documenting

I took notes and continuity photographs as I went along to record the project, so ironically, I became a stills photographer on a film set. I had to take photographs of the sets and scenes just in case I had to recreate them again after they had been dismantled, as you can imagine I ended up taking hundreds of shots.

Costume design

In my statement of intent; I mention that if this had been a real film; in the credits my name would have been in all of them. Costume Design was just one of those. Having two sizes of actors meant two sets of costumes.

The photography

Lightroom and Photoshop were used throughout to manage the image files, camera gear was a Canon 1Dx with three 'L' series zoom lenses covering 16-35mm, 24-70mm and 70-200mm.

Live View and tethering was a great help with focusing, composition and depth of field. Techniques like focus stacking, exposure bracketing and Layer Masks were also used. Then files were transferred to a larger screen for a more critical look. Plain paper prints were produced so notes and amendments could be written on them. Then it was back to the shed to re-shoot, I repeated this process until happy. I had full control over the photography, so no excuses and no one else to blame if the shot did not work.

The lighting

A mixture of small LEDs, torches, workshop lights, larger studio LED Lights were used. All were low voltage or AA battery so the Health and Safety risks on the sets were kept to a minimum. Coloured gels and LEDs were used for creating different moods and low voltage dimmer controls to balance spot lighting to try and give drama to a scene. Using different light sources did produce some white balance problems, but I'd shot all the scenes in RAW, so balanced it out in post-production.

Post-production

I did try to keep the Photoshop trickery to a minimum, but, for squaring up perspectives and adding in elements like smoking tyres, it was of course most helpful.

In conclusion I'd like to say, overall, I found it an interesting and fun project to do. During the 15 months it took to complete, it kept me very busy solving the problems that appeared along the way. A big thank you must go to Lesley for the ongoing encouragement; she was forever saying "Aren't you going in the shed"; well I like to think it was encouragement. I've deliberately left any shots of the panel itself out to show a small number of the record/continuity shots detailing how it came together. To view the completed panel, it can be found on the RPS web site under Distinctions/'A' examples/Conceptual and Contemporary/Brian McCarthy.

Now where did I put my *Penguin Big Book of Caves*?

Photographing music

Following his earlier article on shooting sport, MICHAEL BERKELEY LRPS describes his approach to photographing musicians.

This is the second of two articles. In the first (Issue 78), I used football as an example of how I photograph sport, including typical camera settings and the challenges of trying to capture a live event.

Photographing music is spookily similar. Both music and sport involve people and objects that are moving, often quite quickly; they can be totally unpredictable; and, in both cases, the lighting is completely outside your control. It is about as far removed as you can get from controlling lighting in a studio. They can both be indoors or outdoors, and I have photographed in sub-zero temperatures at a football match; in the rain at cricket matches; all the way through to what felt like a sauna at a packed rock concert, being battered in the mosh pit.

Not knowing what is going to happen when I turn up at a sporting or music venue is a huge thrill, particularly if it is a sport I haven't previously photographed or a place I haven't been to before. The challenge then is to assess the situation, to find the best place to stand and to exploit my camera to capture the right moment to summarise the emotion and drama of what I am seeing.

I had a stroke of luck when I started photographing music. I live quite close to Southampton and I contacted The Joiners - a small, independent music venue - to ask if I could bring my camera along to a concert. I was surprised to find out that they have a rota of 'house photographers' who record every gig there (I imagine this is quite rare). I was added

PHOTOGRAPHING MUSIC

to the rota and I have been given a couple of concerts a month to cover. After the show, we post photos on The Joiners' Facebook page (10 images max of a support act; 15 of the main act), each with the venue's watermark (see above). Also, while it is the normal protocol at most music venues to allow photographers for only the first three songs, The Joiners is completely relaxed about this and we can cover the whole act. This is a great bonus, because bands sometimes save their best performance to the end.

I am about three times the age of most of the other photographers on the rota. They tend to ask if they can cover specific and favourite bands, with the consequence that I often get bands that nobody else wants to photograph. This is another huge bonus, because I never know what I am going to get, and I have seen some extraordinary acts that I would not have seen otherwise. One of the most peculiar was a band called Galactic Empire, who are a Star Wars themed tribute band, playing John Williams music in a heavy metal style and wearing costumes from the films! Darth Vader on lead guitar, obviously.... But there are only so many photos you can take of a man wearing a helmet.
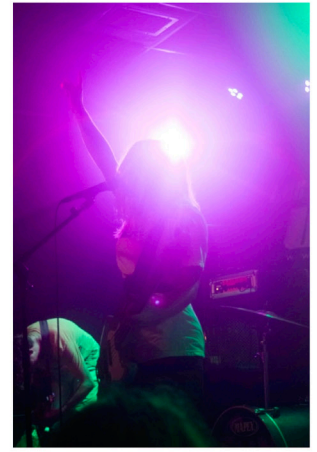
The Joiners is a small venue, with a capacity of about 250; standing only; and no barrier in front of the stage, which means that I have to fight for position. This can be difficult at a gig that is sold out, but this is often not the case. I once photographed an act when there was just the sound engineer, myself and eight in the audience....

I arrive early. I normally catch the end of the sound check and then might have a word with the bands, to let them know what I will be doing. I will then chat with the sound engineer - who often also controls the lighting - to persuade him or her to have as much light on the stage as they can. Some are very helpful; not unreasonably, others take the view that the show is for the audience,

Galactic Empire

Milk Teeth

not the photographer. This is fine. The challenge then is to work effectively with the light available.

Sometimes the shows appear almost completely back lit, making it very difficult to capture a good image of the artists' face. At other times, the lighting can change very quickly, and this plays havoc with the exposure. For this reason, I always use continuous shooting – see the sequence of photos taken in a continuous burst during a Milk Teeth concert.

As with sport, it is essential to expose correctly for the faces. As described in the previous article, I normally use a Nikon D500 and AF-C 3D-tracking (AI Servo for Canon users) - which works very well, as long as you 'lock on' to the face properly in the first instance. The lens will be wide open (I use either a 50mm *f*/1.8 prime; or a 24-70mm *f*/2.8 zoom lens); set at about 1/160th second; and ISO setting Auto. In the challenging lighting conditions, the ISO can get up to very high levels very quickly, which not even Lightroom can resolve effectively. One solution is to convert the photo to monochrome, which can make the 'noise' less intrusive and also has the benefit of removing the overwhelming red cast from the lights that can sometimes cause problems (see

The Blinders, next page).

The essence of music photography is capturing images that epitomise the artist or band. At one end of the scale, a harpist (such as Emma Gatrill, below) is only going to be playing soft and gentle music. At the other, a heavy metal band has a particular muscular style that will give a very strong clue that industrial strength ear plugs would be needed at this concert! Sometimes it is harder to reflect the style of an artist. The lead singer of Mask of Judas (next page) did not look as though she would produce the extraordinary vocal sound she did – listen to her 'singing' on the

Emma Gatrill

PHOTOGRAPHING MUSIC

The Blinders

track Axis (take a moment out to search for 'Mask of Judas Axis' in YouTube). When hearing this, you will appreciate that the photo of her was not so unflattering....

Smoke is used to give atmosphere and to make the lighting more effective, and it can be a curse or a bonus. It can play havoc with the exposure and obscure the musicians but, if timed properly, it can produce very dramatic images. Compare the photograph of The Sad Song Company, where no smoke at all was used during the evening with that of Fainites – the picture is so much sharper when there is no smoke.

Fainites

It is almost certain that I will not be familiar with the artists or bands that I will be photographing, so I always do a bit of research on the internet beforehand. But this can never fully prepare you for a live show - anything can happen. And this is the excitement of a small, independent venue, where the stars of tomorrow are being made.

If I had one 'killer tip' in relation to both sport and music photography, it would be to know your camera controls inside out. You need to be able to react decisively and instantaneously to events unfolding in front of you, and you have little or no time to adjust camera settings to make sure that your image is properly exposed, in focus and well composed. While success is often a case of good luck, you need to create that luck as far as you can by minimising the things that could go wrong; understanding what you are photographing; and loving what you do.

Mask of Judas

The Sad Song Company

The Cube Houses, Rotterdam

The art of architecture

HUGH ROONEY ARPS is drawn to buildings. He tells us more about his passion and his approach to finding art in buildings.

I have been a keen photographer for 40 years now. Obviously, I started out working in film, both colour and monochrome. However, since I started to work digitally, I have been more drawn to producing monochrome prints. I have been an RPS member since obtaining my APRS in 2008, my ARPS panel contained a mixture of monochrome landscape and architectural/cityscape images. My style has changed in the intervening years, I still take landscapes, but my interest in the architectural images has grown, and over time that has become my primary photographic interest.

Why architecture?

I have always been drawn to architectural photography, I enjoy nothing better than exploring a new city with my camera in hand. I have never felt comfortable photographing people, I know street photography is a fascinating and very popular genre, but I always preferred to capture the buildings and structures of a city. I

THE ART OF ARCHITECTURE

Flatiron, New York

Grundtvig's Church, Copenhagen

generally will go to some lengths to avoid having people in my photographs, there are sometimes exceptions where I prefer to leave some human element in the images, but more often than not I will try to shoot without people or remove them during post-processing.

I am specifically drawn to modern architecture. My favourite architects include Santiago Calatrava, Frank Gehry, Sir Norman Foster and the fantastic Barcelona buildings created by Gaudi. Calatrava's work can be found all over the world, from his famous buildings at the City of Arts and Sciences in Valencia, to his new Oculus transportation hub at the World Trade Centre in New York. These modern architects can produce many different types of architectural work, for example Calatrava has designed bridges as well as buildings, and both he and Sir Norman Foster have designed train stations. There are lots of great opportunities to shoot modern architecture,

at almost any city location in the world.

Researching a new location?

When preparing to visit a new city I will do extensive research online to discover interesting buildings and structures in the area. This research is conducted using Google and popular photography sites such as Instagram and 500px. Having determined which buildings are of interest, I will try to determine what time of day is best for a given location. I often use a phone app called The Photographers Ephemeris (TPE), a favourite tool of landscape photographers, and local weather apps to help decide when to visit a specific location. I am usually trying to visit a building with strong light on the facade I wish to photograph.

It is hard to pick out favourite cities, there are so many with great modern architecture. Valencia with it's many Calatrava buildings, London, New

The Round Tower, Copenhagen

York and Paris, especially the area of Paris known as La Defense, whilst it is not on many tourist lists, it is among the best areas in any European cities to view great modern architecture. There are also the German cities Berlin, Frankfurt, Dusseldorf, Munich and many more which all have fabulous modern architecture just waiting to be photographed.

When visiting some cities, it is very easy to be drawn to the famous iconic buildings, and when in a new city I am usually unable to stop myself from photographing the Eiffel Tower, or the Empire State building. And while these icons are wonderful structures and are obviously very photogenic, it is very difficult to produce images which are different to what has been done before by many other photographers. I do shoot these buildings, I can't stop myself! However, I also try to find and photograph less well-known buildings which might give me the opportunity to produce something a little bit more unique.

Inevitably in some locations you can be moved on by overzealous security guards. In public locations in most countries you are allowed to photograph freely. However, on private property you will be bound by the rules set out by the landowners,
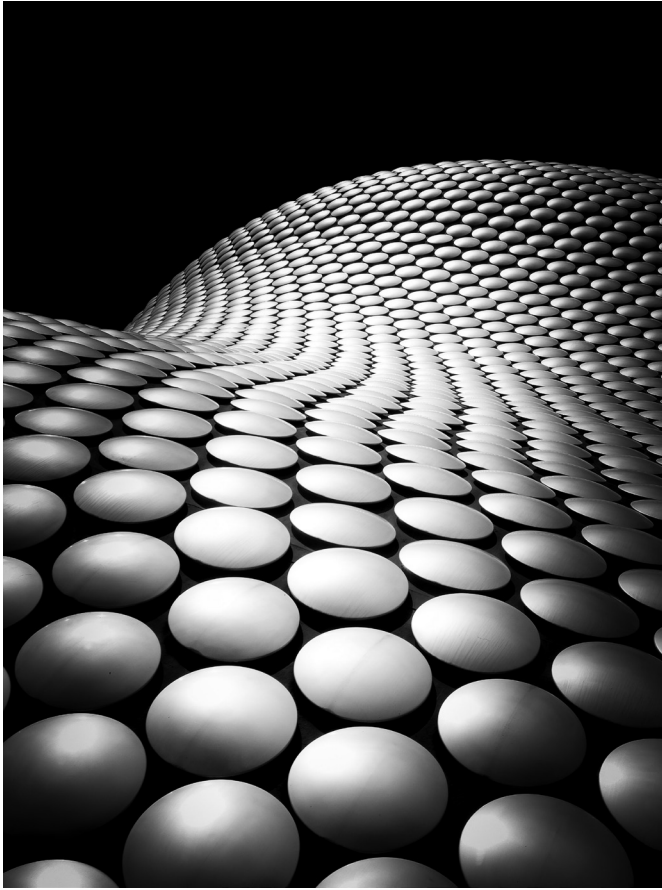
and laws relating to photography may vary depending on local law and culture. You will also find that many famous buildings are protected by copyright or even trademarked, and images which feature these buildings cannot be used commercially without permission from either the owner or in some cases the architect.

Black and white architecture photography

When creating monochrome images, the lack of colour often leads to placing greater importance on shape and form. This is especially true when taking monochrome architectural photographs. I mentioned earlier that when researching a new city, I will try to find the most interesting buildings. However, I then try to prioritise based on which images will best fit the style of image I am trying to produce. I am looking for strong lines, often images which will suit the high contrast images that I prefer. I also tend to prefer low angles, which exaggerate the buildings shape. I am always looking for buildings with strong symmetry, or with strong curves and spirals. Buildings with these features give me the base material, that I can then manipulate in post processing to produce the final image.

Axel Tower, Copenhagen

Bullring, Birmingham

Post processing

I'm afraid I am a bit of a Photoshop junkie! I know everyone says it is important to get your image right in camera, and this is true in that it needs to have details in shadows and highlights (even if these are on different frames), and of course it needs to be sharp. However, my images usually have extensive post processing in Photoshop. I feel this allows me to create something different, and unlike many people I actually enjoy the time spent manipulating the image in Photoshop.

My architecture images are sometimes high key (mostly lighter tones), and sometimes low key (mostly darker tones). It is generally true that my interiors are high key, and building exteriors are low key. This wasn't really a pre-determined idea on my part, but a way of working that developed over time. I felt when I found white interiors flooded with light that that were crying out for a high key approach. When working with building exteriors I am often using polarising and ND filters to help isolate the building by darkening the sky, and these images seemed to suit a low

key and often high contrast treatment. In both cases I tend to push these approaches to the limit, in the high key images the highlights are pushed to the edge, where some are bordering on paper white, conversely with the low-key images I am pushing the shadow areas to just retain the very smallest hint of detail.

In both circumstances I will often end up with many Photoshop layers, each providing detailed brightness and contrast control for small individual areas of the image. I will often also have a separate Photoshop layer where I use the paintbrush tool to enhance the contrast on the building lines, in some cases this layer alone can take hours to complete.

I want the final image of the building to still be recognisable, however I also want the image to have a certain abstract quality which shows the building's beauty, and that makes for a visually more striking image that a straightforward photograph. I am always trying to refine down the original photograph into something which I believe will make an interesting monochrome art print.

The print

My interest in black and white photography is ultimately about the production of high-quality art prints. I know many photographers hark back to the darkroom days, when they could watch their images appear in the developing dish, and I enjoyed that process too, but even more I do love to see a beautiful monochrome print produced on the best modern art papers. I print all my own work, still using my now 10 year old Epson 3800 printer, I print mostly on high quality art papers, my current favourite being Canson's Velin Museum Rag. I am however something of a paper geek, always on the lookout for, and always trying out newer and better papers.

I hope you enjoy my architectural images and perhaps when next visiting some great city, you will explore a little bit further, or look up a bit more often, or simply stare a little longer, and hopefully capture some wonderful architectural images of your own.

See more of Hugh's work at *www.hughrooney.co.uk* or follow him on Instagram *@hugh.rooney.*

Malou Reedorf

MALOU REEDORF is a young dynamic Danish photographer. We meet Malou and learn more about her work and her unique, award-winning style.

Malou Reedorf is a young photographer, aged 29, originally from Denmark who is now living in Italy. Despite her young age she has won numerous titles and awards. Her studios, based in Italy close to the fashion capital Milan, and right in the center of Denmark in the fairy tale city Odense, are where she creates fairy tales, fantasy and fashion. Clients from all over Europe take part in the experience. With Malou, they are able to get a very different product than most portrait photographers offer.

Malou loves to combine the strong aesthetic minimalistic Nordic design with an extravagant and colourful style. While working with photography as a medium, she has no limits on what is realistic. Her working method is structured and sophisticated, taking individual elements and combining them together to form a synthesis. She takes pride in having control over the entire process, from concept and planning of styling to photographic editing. The concept is FierceOgraphy, also described as 'Fashion for Individuals, where she has moved away from traditional photography and replaced it with wild makeup, designer dresses, and very specific photo editing. Her style combines photography

with her education as a creative make-up artist and her university study as a biomedicine scientist. The pictures she creates have roots in fashion photography with heavy avant-garde make-up and dreamy setups. It is important for her to tell her personal story, in the pictures. Through light, composition, and layout the story becomes real. It is the passion for people and the human body that makes it 'special through individuality'. With the mood, shape and impact, out comes a masterpiece with the client in focus.

Malou has won many prestigious awards in European photography, including three gold medals and 'The Golden Camera' in the European competition for professional photographers. In 2015 she was honoured with the title 'Photographer of the Year' in Denmark. She has also judged many other national and European competitions.

Malou Reedorf - questions and answers

How did you get into photography?
I have been fighting so hard NOT to be a photographer. So much so that I ended up completing a bachelor's degree in Molecular

Biology and Biomedicine. However, today I find myself sitting with a camera in my hand and working with it for a living. I am descending from a long line of photographers, so it has always been in my blood. I started out as a child model but when I grew older (and not as cute), I started working behind the camera. I often joke with my colleagues that I have been a member of the Danish Professional Photographers Association for 25 years where I attended courses and talks with parents. For many years after school, I worked in my parents' photography shop. I opened a studio in Denmark with my father five years ago, while I was finishing my BA degree. For many years, I only saw photography as a way to spend time with my parents and keeping up with being an entrepreneur. As mentioned before, I never really intended to take part in the creative process of making a picture. Besides, I always enjoyed more being in front of the camera as a model. Photography was never really a passion until I discovered make-up! Again, I never really saw myself as a creative person and I never really played with make-up and hair when I was a little girl. I completed make-up artist courses as we needed a permanent person for that job at the

MALOU REEDORF

studio. After the first class, I was ecstatic - all the things you could do, all the different looks you could create. It was amazing! Suddenly everything just came together and created a beautiful synergy in my mind. I had unlocked my creativity and vision. After completing the university, I became very engaged with creating a style for myself along with my 'Fashion for Individuals' concept through participation in photographic competitions.

Where do you get your creative inspiration from?
My mind comes alive with a pen and paper much like they teach us at the university. I have a database of many different components that I collect when I see something interesting or different. It can be a person that I walk by on the street, it can be a smell or a piece of fabric, and it can of course be a picture. Often, my inspiration also starts by watching a music video or listening to heavy metal music. I always plan everything in details before I shoot. I sit down with my database, a picture of a model and the photoshoot theme. This is how I kick start my inspiration. I choose some elements from inspiration database and draw it in my notebook and then the rest of it just comes together. Usually, I also draw the make-up, the clothing and accessories, background plus the different props that I will be using for the shoot.

Which photographer(s) has been the greatest influence on you?
Well, I would be lying if I didn't say my parents. They have been such great teachers. My mother,

Kitty Reedorf, has a very classic style, whereas my father, Ib Westersoe, (www.westersoe.dk) is a bit more experimental. I was able to experience the best of both worlds. Another photographer I highly admire is the Norwegian photographer Jens Haugen, (www.jhstudios.no) who has an amazing talent and also comes from a different background.

The world is changing, and it is not only just photographers, that are worth looking out for. Photoshoppers have become increasingly more relevant in the world of photography in this age of technology. Someone who inspires me on the Photoshop end is the Danish Photoshopper Jimmy Machon (www.machon.dk). He creates incredible imaginary compositions that you can look at for hours and always discover new things.

Another big inspiration is Brooke Shaden from USA (www.brookeshaden.com). I enjoy her work and greatly respect the way that she is branding her name and making it possible to live off her passion, forming it into a career.

How do you find the models to work on your projects?
Mainly my models are customers that contact me to do a FierceOgraphy shoot for them. My concept is where any women can get an experience like a professional model. For a short period of time, she will feel like a real diva/ working model with professionally done make-up, designer clothes and a professional photographer. This experience gives her the possibility to get 'fashion' pictures like what she sees in the

magazines, but with a twist, something that is normally only available for top models.

Of course, I also do my own projects where I am looking for models mostly through my official Facebook page www.facebook.com/MakeUpArtistMalouReedorf, or I simply find them on the street and ask if they would like to be a model for a day. However, I prefer to have models who respond to my posts, which means that they have seen my work and want to be part of that experience.

How much time do you spend taking photos, versus retouching photos?
To be honest, I spend a lot of Photoshop time on the pictures that I send in to competitions and use in books but also on customer pictures. So I probably spend ¼ of my time on planning shoots, ¼ on preparing costumes and wardrobe, ¼ on actually shooting and then the same amount of time on each picture in Photoshop.

What do you do besides photography? (any hobby, other job?)
Well, I design a lot of dresses and accessories for my shoots. I also have the honour to travel a lot for different workshops that I organize. Not only that, I even act as a judge for national and European photo competitions. Another mission of mine is to learn Italian. I moved from Denmark to Italy and therefore have the pleasure to learn Italian intensively, which is necessary to make it as a photographer here. To completely relax and not think about work, I enjoy taking trips on my motorbike, practicing martial arts, hiking with my

cat in the mountains or simply be a housewife at home cooking and canning jam or fooling around in my rose garden.

What are your future plans with photography? (any new projects on the way? exhibitions? books?)
My future plan regarding photography is to spread the word about FierceOgraphy and the fact that all women deserve to have the fashion shoot experience and look like a high end model in pictures. I also have a few books coming out next year with my illustrations, which can be found on my website shop (http://www.reedorf.com/shop/), along with the headdresses that I create. I am also looking forward to travelling more in the upcoming years to judge competitions. I find it inspiring to have the honour of commenting on the work of my colleagues and see how the styles change from country to country.

PermaJet ambassador
In 2018 Malou Reedorf became International PermaJet ambassador where she is travelling Europe to spread the word about creative photography and the correct printer profiles. In 2019 she will among other countries visit Belgium, Malta, UK, Denmark and Italy to give lectures. Malou´s paper of choice is the Titanium Lustre 280, the unique silver based Metallic Paper from PermaJet. Titanium Lustre has a beautiful pronounced textured finish on a heavyweight silver resin coated base that makes Malou´s colour images come alive.

Sligachan, Isle of Skye

The expressive landscape

COLIN WESTGATE FRPS takes what nature provides and then adds to it with Photoshop.

Landscape is undoubtedly the most popular of all photographic genres, yet at the same time it can be one of the most frustrating. I am sure that most landscape photographers will agree that the 'hit rate' for successful images is actually quite low and that a great many exposures fail to meet the expectations of the photographer at the time the picture was taken. Why should this be? One reason is that the most important element of any landscape photograph is the light and this is beyond the photographer's control. Even the most spectacular location will not produce an exciting photograph if the light is not good or appropriate. It is so easy to get carried away when in beautiful or dramatic scenery, especially on a first visit to such a location. We tend to snap away whatever the conditions, especially when on a holiday, when it would be impracticable to return another day. That is, of

course, very understandable, as we are all drawn to the beauty and majesty of the landscape, but without the right conditions, the results are likely to be merely literal recordings of what was in front of the camera. That doesn't mean to say that we need, for example, bright sunshine or 'good ' light, but we do need a quality of light or mood that enhances the subject and which can induce an emotive response. Perhaps surprisingly, such conditions will often occur in what might be considered to be poor weather, say when it is, foggy, stormy, windy or even when it is raining! Some of my most successful pictures have been taken on such days – yes, you do have to suffer for your art! So it is worth making the effort to go out with the camera when conditions may not seem ideal, and even if you don't come back with anything special, then at least you will have tried. But when that magical picture results,

THE EXPRESSIVE LANDSCAPE

Clogher Bay, Dingle, Ireland

then, wow, you will be over the moon! Remember the phrase 'bad weather makes powerful pictures'. Such are the images that make 'expressive' landscapes.

However, almost every image will require some degree of enhancement or manipulation to get the very best from it. The camera is, after all, but a tool and while it is very capable of recording literal information, it cannot record what the photographer feels. I learned that very early on in my photography, when in the darkroom it was almost invariably necessary to 'dodge and burn' (yes, Photoshop has borrowed that term!) to lighten or darken parts of the image. But when I started colour printing, I found that such controls did not work nearly as well, due to the limitations of the materials. So when I transferred to digital, in the early 2000s, I was able to call on my darkroom experience, so that when I made my first prints with the computer, it was second nature to emulate my darkroom techniques and, joy, those controls also worked with colour! I will be forever indebted to my friend, Irene Froy, who taught me my very first digital technique, using an Overlay blend layer to 'dodge and burn'. This technique remains the mainstay of my post processing and it is the foundation of almost every image that I make. There are, of course, other ways of adjusting tones in Photoshop, but I consider the Overlay method to be the best in view of its

simplicity, power and flexibility and also because there is less risk of degrading the image, as it does not destroy pixels in the same way as when using the Photoshop 'Dodge and Burn' tool. The other good news is that, particularly in monochrome, use of these tonal controls can dramatically transform a fairly ordinary landscape into something much more expressive, particularly with skies. Skies are so important in landscapes, as without a good sky it is unlikely you will have a decent image. For that reason I prefer cloudy conditions to bright days, as even when a sky is completely overcast there is usually a significant variation in the density of the cloud. This may not be obvious to the casual eye, but with appropriate use of tonal controls, such a sky can be transformed. For full details of this Overlay method see the box on the next page.

Another powerful technique I use is enriching the blacks, particularly in a monochrome image. I am often complimented for the quality of my monochrome prints, but the way I achieve this could be seen as technically flawed! This is because I 'clip' the blacks, which means that there are often some areas in my prints where there is no detail. The logic behind this is that a 'correctly' exposed image will reproduce a full range of tones. This will usually result in a typical pyramid-shaped histogram stretching from the extreme left to the extreme right. It thus follows that only a tiny part

Fallen Tree, Mersea Island

Guillemot Landing, Farne Islands

on the very left of that histogram will represent pure black. That means that the majority of the deepest tones throughout the image will be at best a dark grey and thus the resulting image, especially when printed, may then seem rather flat. So to resolve this, using Levels, I move the left-hand slider slightly to the right, into the histogram, so that the darkest greys become black. The result is that the depth of blacks throughout the whole image are strengthened. I find that as long as the clipped blacks are not large areas, such underexposure is not important and will not be noticed. However should the area of dense black be too large then I will gently dodge back, using the Overlay method, to bring in a suggestion of detail, and this usually works well.

I do not use Lightroom, so when producing my images, my typical workflow is to open the image in Photoshop Camera Raw, which is very similar, if not identical, to the window in Lightroom. I initially use the sliders to adjust the highlights/whites, shadows/blacks, and contrast, plus adding some clarity and possibly some careful use of the de-haze tool. I may also adjust the colours slightly, although I normally prefer to do that in Photoshop itself. When I want a monochrome image, I convert to this in Camera Raw prior to making the above adjustments, so that the tonal effects can be assessed. Having completed the adjustments, I will then transfer the image to Photoshop where I will make further enhancements as necessary, using the Overlay method.

One final method that I sometimes employ is when correcting a completely overexposed area in a picture, such as a very bright cloud. The normal 'dodge and burn' methods do not work well with 'paper base' tones, so to correct this I clone in some adjacent cloud detail, using the Clone Tool. This must be done with a very soft brush and at a much reduced opacity, say between 25 to 50%, so that the cloud itself is not replicated completely, but leaves enough tone to cover the very bright area.

The post-production of an 'expressive landscape' then, is one of interpretation, with the aim of creating or replicating the feeling and emotion that was present at the moment of exposure. Photoshop is a very powerful tool for this - it is a very wide ranging and often complex software. Do not worry however if, like myself, you do not have a broad knowledge of Photoshop skills. I prefer to keep things simple and thus the few techniques I employ are all that I need to produce a technically and aesthetically pleasing image. As long as I can continue to achieve that, I am more than happy. It can be tempting to try and learn a large number of techniques, but unless these are used frequently, it is likely most of them will be forgotten!

Before you start, you may wish to make a duplicate layer and work on that rather than the Background layer - although I don't always do that as it doubles the file size - but this will probably be considered 'bad practice' by some! It is also advisable to work in 16-bit as occasionally artefacts can occur when working in 8-bit due to the much more limited range of tones.

With the image open in Photoshop go to LAYER, then NEW LAYER. A window will come up in the centre of your screen. The default name is 'Layer 1' but you can change this as desired to e.g. 'Dodge and Burn'. Click the arrow in the MODE box. This will drop down a list of numerous layer modes. Choose OVERLAY. You can also use SOFT LIGHT or HARD LIGHT for weaker or stronger effects,

Leave the Colour box as 'None', leave the opacity box at 100% and leave the box 'Use previous layer to create clipping mask' un-ticked

Tick the box headed 'Fill with overlay neutral colour [50% Gray]'

When you have completed the above, click on OK and the window will disappear

From the usual Photoshop tool list select the brush tool. Choose a soft brush - I normally use maximum softness 100%. Use the square brackets (to the right of the letter 'P' on your keyboard) to change the size of brush. 'Overlay' should appear in the 'mode' box on the left of the top menu bar - Photoshop defaults this to 'Normal', so make sure Overlay is displayed.

Look at the two overlapping squares near the bottom of the tool list (usually on the left of your screen). Make sure these are set at black and white. Choose white to dodge (lighten) and black to burn (darken), whichever one is on top is the one that is operative - you can alternate between the two by tapping the letter 'X' on your keyboard. If there is another tone or shade in those boxes, tap 'D' on your keyboard and this will then re-set to the default black and white

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TONAL CO

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In the example shown here, image 1 is the RAW capture direct from camera - note the weak and uninteresting sky. Image 2 is the conversion to mono in Camera Raw. The final image (bottom), 'Remembrance', has been enhanced in Photoshop after transferring from Camera Raw - note how the sky detail has been brought out and how the image now has the feeling and mood that was absent in the original capture.

A Tree of Fire

Symmetree

TIM SAWYER reflects on creating beautiful images using symmetry from elements of the world around us.

My photography really took off after a visit to the Lake District in 2012 where, along with my wife Sharon, I did a landscape photography course with John Gravett. This intensive course had us out all day taking photographs, and then there was a critique session in the evening featuring ten photos from each person. This was the key educational section of the course for us, and

it opened our eyes to what 'good' landscape photography was.

With a subsequent house move to the north side of Leeds, we joined Ilkley Camera Club and our minds were expanded. Looking at quality work week in, week out, trains your eye and opens up possibilities. I was especially inspired by a camera club lecture from Dianne Owen who showed

Blue Symmetree

creative prints. I was struck by how different her work was from traditional photography, and it switched on something in my brain. I was up early the next day, and I had to get on the computer and start messing around with Photoshop to see what I could create. Seeing Dianne's work was almost a 'permission' thing for me – I was somehow now allowed to be wacky and creative and I wasn't limited to doing everything in camera. I've been on a mission to learn more Photoshop techniques and 'make good art' (to quote Neil Gaiman) ever since, where 'good art' is images I'm proud of.

Following in the footsteps of John Gravett I have an account on BlipFoto.com and I post a photo a day there. I now have a photo each day for the past four and a half years. These images are sometimes simple snapshots taken during my lunchtime wanderings near work or, when time allows, I produce more elaborate creations from what I've taken. Inspiration for these comes from

films, books and other creative photographers on the web. I believe that finding a photograph each day keeps your eye in, and means you're always looking out for images. I will freely admit that sometimes what I produce is rubbish!

Creating images this way is a double edged sword – it keeps your mind focused, but also can lead to relaxing once you have a 'good enough' image. I sometimes need to push myself to create quality work. My images also tend to be made quickly, as they are usually done on the same day they are posted. On the whole, I find this approach works for me and it had led me to produce some images that have gone on to gain various awards.

I have a 'just mess about' approach to creating my arty images in Photoshop. I often start with an idea of what I want to achieve in terms of shape, but when it comes to textures or effects I play around with filters, trying things out, and then I

The Wishing Tree

decide whether the change improves the images or makes it worse. If it's worse, I'll delete the layer and try something different. If it's better, then I'll build on that with something else. With textures I will pick a favourite of the moment, stick it into my images, and try different blending modes until I like it. Or until I get fed up, delete the layer and try something else!

I've been fascinated by symmetry for a while. I think it's wonderful that the brain interprets a symmetrical image as pleasing, and that a simple image reflected upon itself becomes so much more. I'm also intrigued with the idea of adding elements, such as birds, that unbalance the symmetricality.

Many of my early creative images were based around photos taken in the mist at a local park, and the first time I reflected an image was a simple one of a bush framed by trees. I liked it just flipped and made symmetrical, but then

for some reason I added a bird of prey just to one side. This was the start of what became the Symmetree theme.

The 'Blue Symmetree' image started life as a photograph of a skeletal tree in the mist. I first did some basic processing in Lightroom: blacks, whites, shadows, highlights, clarity. It was then opened up in Photoshop, duplicated onto a new layer then flipped horizontally and a mask added to half the image to make a symmetrical tree. Next, *Nik Colour Efex* was used to add Sunlight and Fog giving it an ethereal look. The birds were then added, and masked using *Blend If*. I find *Blend If* to be a useful tool when adding birds – if you have dark birds against a bright sky, you can make the layer transparent where it is bright leaving just the birds. I find this is often quicker and easier than trying to select just the birds. A total of four textures were then layered on top – the bottom of a boat from Malta, a blue wall from Devon, some rock from (I think!) North Yorkshire

Symmetree Fire

Time Flies

and out of focus water from New Zealand – using a variety of blending modes – Subtract, Color and Soft Light. The moral of this story if you want to produce this kind of work – always keep a look out for interesting textures, wherever you are! The background circle effect was made using a masked curves layer.

I have found that I normally end up using Soft Light or Hard Light blending modes with my textures, and I start off with an opacity of 100% and then reduce it until it looks right. Hard Light usually needs a lower opacity percentage to work well. I've also been experimenting with the other options that are available – Divide and Subtract are often fun to play with.

The 'Symmetree Fire' image again started with a reflected tree. The red background texture was made using a photo of a green mug, and the subtract blending mode. I like the fact that the trunk of the tree is not symmetrical.

'The Wishing Tree' still uses the same concepts of a symmetrical tree within a non-symmetrical landscape, but has a little less of an abstract feel. There are still numerous layers and textures involved. You should be able to see the out of focus water texture in the sky; it's one of the favourite textures that I keep coming back to.

'Time Flies' was inspired by an abstract image I found online. It's more of a conceptual image but uses many of the same ideas as the earlier ones. You might be able to spot the New Zealand water in the background again!

'A Tree of Fire' is one of the newest in the series. The background here is wool, not flames. There are faces to be found in the tree trunk if you look hard enough.

Make sure to give yourself permission to try something new, and see what you can create.

See more of Tim's work at *tim.sawyer.photo*.

EVER TRIED RACKING YOUR LENS WITHOUT WRECKING IT?

Daan Olivier FRPS

I am sure you have been out there doing night photography and after you got your shots, you were thinking 'what else can I shoot while waiting for the other guys to finish?'. Many years back during a night photography workshop we were shown the Zoom Burst Technique, also known as 'racking the lens'. With this the photographer can bring movement and even intriguing effects into what would have been a very 'dull shot' taken by many photographers before you.

What is racking?

This in-camera technique relies on using a zoom lens and long shutter speed to build up the image in stages. While the image capturing is happening, you move the zoom ring to close/open the zooming of the lens manually and this results in lines in the image that looks as if the subject was moving either towards you or away from you.

So, how do I do it?

1 - Look for a scene with good contrasts, typically a street at night, with elements lit-up by all kinds of lights.

2 - Mount the camera on a stable tripod. Yes, I know that your new mirrorless camera can probably do this hand held but using a stable tripod will help you in perfecting this technique. A tripod helps keeping the blur in a straight line radiating out/into the image.

3 - Go Manual. Shutter Priority could also be used but going manual is being 'in-control of everything'!

My most used settings are shutter speed between 1 to 4 seconds, ISO 100, *f*/14 or higher.

4 - Zoom out, compose the image on the back of your camera while you focus on the element (say a neon light) which you want to give a light trail to. Then lock the focus (in manual).

5 - Zoom in.

6 - Press the shutter all the way down and immediately start zooming out (smoothly) before the shutter closes. The trick is to do the zooming during the first half of the shutter being open and then keep the lens in the zoom out position for the second half of the lens opening. This stationary zoom ring during the second half of the exposure ensures that the image of the element (neon light) develops more strongly during the second half of the lens opening, to give the looks of an element which moved with a visible light trail.

A few tips for perfecting the technique

You will probably have to make many exposures to get a useable shot!

In steps 5 and 6 above, experiment with both 'zoom-out to zoom-in' and 'zoom-in to zoom-out'. You will see that the effect is not the same! Longer exposures to capture the movement could results in overexposure of the image.

If you cannot go lower on ISO, close the lens by going to *f*/22.

Finally, smoothness of hand in zooming the lens, and zooming at the same speed, are vital to ensure that the trails are smooth with no blobs where you hesitated in the zooming.

When you have mastered this racking technique, it is time to attempt something more difficult - combining racking with standard motion blur in your image. To do this, look for a street night scene with elements to rack zoom and where many buses are running. Select a composition area on the street and capture a good 'racking image' of the street and elements. Let us say the exposure time was 2s. Check where the buses are on the street from where they will take 1s to enter your composition. Trigger your shutter when a bus is on this one-sec-away-spot. During the first half of the exposure, say 1s, you move the zoom ring to capture the light trails of the stationary elements. During the second half of the exposure, the bus moves over your composition and the image registers the light trails of the moving bus. With this you get an image that looks as if the 'stationary images' moved towards or away from you while the vehicles moved across the image!

If you do not have the patience to try this, you could always take two images - first a good racked image and a second image of the moving bus. Then you overlay the two images in Photoshop using masks!

Whatever you do, Enjoy Racking!!

CATALAN COAST

Anthony Wright

My memories of Spain were based on a visit to Benidorm in the early eighties, so when my wife suggested a holiday to Tossa de Mar on the Catalan Coast I was not terribly enthusiastic, imagining the worst.

Searching the internet, Karen had found a bargain holiday and a hotel with great reviews. Sensing my disinterest, she then produced a brochure showing an aerial picture of the beach which showed a tree on a rock, knowing that this would have the desired effect of gaining my interest.

On arrival at the resort, we took a 20 minute walk to investigate the beach scene and relax at a bar in front of the tree. The rock and surrounding beach was covered in tourists and locals enjoying the weather. So another early rise on holiday was needed to miss the crowds and capture the early morning light.

Rising early on holiday whilst it is still dark is never easy and the temptation is always to put it off until tomorrow, however I know that arriving at a beach in the dark and waiting in anticipation for sunrise is always a great experience.

This time I was not alone as a couple had spent the night on the beach and the remains of a fire were still present. Fortunately they were not where I had envisaged the positioning of my tripod from my scout on the first day.

I shot up to 6 different images, from different viewpoints, with my Canon 5D Mk 3 with 17-40mm lens at a focal length 17mm using ND and using cable release. This composition shown worked best and was 11 seconds at *f*/16. Checking the histogram on the back of the camera at the time of shooting, I knew I had the shot I wanted as it showed no dark shadows or blown highlights, keeping all the detail.

I made my way back through the awakening town enjoying the atmosphere and then joined my wife for breakfast.

For editing I use Adobe Camera Raw and Photoshop CS6. The two main processing steps are described on the next page.

Step 1 - The histogram of the unprocessed raw file shows that the exposure is to the right without any clipping and proved that I had captured all the details at the time of shooting.

Step 2 - the highlight slider is down revealing more detail.

Before creating the final image, using Photoshop, I removed a lamp on the rock and a flag on a nearby rock to create the illusion that this was in a more remote and natural environment. I then saved the image as a JPEG. Finally, I opened the JPEG in ACR and cropped, dodged and burned using the adjustment brush until I was satisfied with the final image 'Catalan Coast'.

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