DIGIT

AUTUMN 2009   Issue No 43

The Stars Look Down by Dave Urwin - HDR: page 20

The
Royal
Photographic
Society

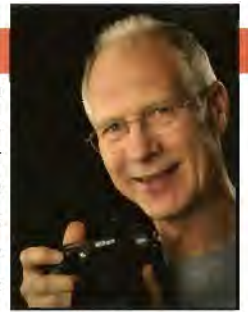Patron: Her Majesty: The Queen   Incorporated by Royal Charter

RPS Digital
Imaging
Group
2009
Exhibition

Playing Time
About
60 Mins
4:3 Format

With informative
commentary by RPS
DI Group Chairman
Clive Haynes FRPS

DVD
video

D.I.G.

**Get right up-to-date - Log on to *www.digit.rps.org*
for News, Information, Regional Events, Folio, Competition
and a unique source of expertise and advice
See page 4 for your guide to the website**

*Inside: DVD 2009 print exhibition
Back Cover: Steve Caplin 25 October
Portrait Weekend April 2010*

D.I.G.

Digital Imaging Group

Committee for 2009/10

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subscription to the Group. Copyright
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This edition includes the ***DVD of our 2009 Members' Print Exhibition***. Once again I was invited to comment on the pictures and this proved to be the usual enjoyable task. As many of you will be aware, my approach to image appreciation is to be perceptive and imaginative in my interpretation. I believe this open non-prescriptive approach to our art is one way of improving our appreciation of photography. The problem facing judges and selectors when dealing with a high volume of entries is one of not being allowed sufficient time to engage with the picture. Judgement and selection is too often the product of instant gut reaction and not the result of careful analysis and contemplation. Pictures are, after all, largely intended to be viewed at leisure and returned to later. It's hardly surprising therefore that images that are instantly judged in seconds often fall short of any lasting appeal when viewed in the less frenetic surroundings of the gallery. Often 'the exhibition image' makes a brief instant statement - it has to - and the authors know this. Unfortunately this approach leaves little room for deeper appreciation. It's always a pleasure to discover an image which not only fulfils the criteria for technical excellence but also contains a tempting, perhaps an almost elusive, narrative or evocative vision that invites return. Pictures such as this provide refreshment at each visit, as when listening again to a musical composition in which one constantly discovers delight in subtle nuances and myriad associations. Fortunately when viewing a series of images for a personal response comment, as when preparing for the exhibition DVD, time can be allowed to look deeper into the picture and comprehend how its content speaks to the individual (in this case me). The author of the picture is 50% of the exchange: the other 50% is the viewer. If we are to gain from the experience we must be prepared to enter this visual dialogue; it's not difficult and it's certainly worthwhile. We certainly hope that you enjoy the DVD - a lot of hard work has gone into its production, for which we thank fellow DIG committee member Graham Whistler and his editing-suite colleague, Gordon Rushton. I've had a lot of fun doing it. However, we are exploring a different presentation format for 2010 - and we're open to ideas.

Articles and Images for DIGIT Winter 2009
Copy Date end November

DIGIT relies on the contributions of members. So, when will you send me an article for DIGIT? Remember that everyone is learning and that all experience is valuable. You don't need to be an expert writer - we'll help you if necessary. We need *How To* articles with your favourite digital techniques and of course your brilliant images. We know you're out there so we look forward to hearing from you. Thank you. **Jim Buckley LRPS Editor**
Email: *editor@digit.rps.org*
1 Aldenholme, Weybridge, Surrey KT13 0JF. UK

Get Ready For Portfolio Two
The RPS Portfolio Two is a wonderful showcase for members' work. The Digital Imaging Group has been invited to contribute three pages within the Portfolio. Clearly, delighted as we are, the

Clive Haynes FRPS
Chairman

few pages available can't possibly illustrate the wide spectrum of our members' work. We can rectify this by making sure that as many DIG members as possible send pictures for consideration to the RPS. If your work is accepted you receive a copy of the book plus kudos as one of the published photographers. The closing date for submissions is 31 October 2009 so time is of the essence. Make a start before other events and attractions overtake you! Full details and an entry form are in the September *Journal* and online at:
**www.rps.org/resources/member_downloads/
RPS_portfolio_two_A5_flyer_2009.pdf**

A Great Day in October
We have a major event this autumn - a great day with Steve Caplin on 25 October at The Old School House, Oldbury, West Midlands. Steve will present Reality and Illusion - a serious look at the conflicting issues of digital manipulation. Steve will present plenty of examples and methods showing how to manipulate images and produce alternate realities. Steve is one of the UK's leading digital-imaging illustrators and Photoshop special-techniques wizard. His best-selling books include How to Cheat in Photoshop and Art and Design in Photoshop. Discover full details about this must-see event on the back cover, together with a major portrait workshop weekend next year. Book your places now!

Clive Haynes FRPS

**WE'VE GOT YOUR (RPS) NUMBER.
BUT HAVE WE GOT YOUR EMAIL?**
We want to keep you informed but to do that we need your email. Do you recognise your RPS membership number in the list below? If so, and you want to receive occasional circulars from the DI Group, please contact Bob Pearson FRPS on the special email: **secretary.dig@btinternet.com** to update your contact details. And please put this address in your email system to ensure the incoming mail is recognised.

			58444
1065	23960	37062	58488
9250	29354	40450	59491
9412	29629	40577	59799
10302	29629	53545	60089
10456	29716	53997	60358
15543	30205	53997	61182
18507	31517	54625	61692
19320	32895	55568	61742
20233	33705	56062	63961
23142	33810	57065	67563
23142	36117	57133	69094
23790	36261	57674	69459

Action Points from recent discussions from Secretary Bob Pearson FRPS

● Group **Publicity** Brochure to be updated with 2009 exhibition images and new text and produced by mid-September.

● **Exhibition** Judges and Speaker were being arranged for 2010. DVD produced at higher quality for lower cost than last year. Slide show without commentary to be also made for use as silent loop at events and Fenton House. Agreed to continue production in 2010. Chairman had successfully presented exhibition DVD for four years so new presenter was to be found.

● Plans for a Weekend **Portrait Workshop** at Cheltenham Film Studios, limited to 36 delegates each with own laptop, were approved. Travel Lodge nearby for overnight stays.

● **Panorama** Group would not be forming or joining a Special interest Group.

● **Finance.** VAT was now chargeable on ticket events. The provision for Think Photography was no longer needed as the event would not take place this year. Steve Caplin day was now an RPS event and would not appear in DIG accounts. IR 100 events were now also RPS funded. Other activities were generally running below budget.

● **Website and Forum** Unclear what form proposed Society template would take but would be progressed as soon as available. Flow diagram of website components to be published in DIGIT. Noted that main RPS Forum is totally open and the few members (about 20 were active out of 200 registered) who used the DI Group Forum seemed to prefer to keep that part private. Chairman to confirm committe's view on Forum.

● **Events The Real Thing, Steve Caplin**, now underwritten by Society who were taking bookings by phone with credit card payment only. Separate cheques for lunches were collected by DIGIT editor - a complicated arrangement. RPS International Print Exhibition to be opened by President at event. So far only few bookings. There were opportunities to encourage members to attend with publicity at regional events like the Midlands Digital event and a second email to members.

● **Riverhouse Barn Exhibition, Surrey, 6/24 October 2010** showing early prints from Collection alongside modern digital prints was also Society underwritten event and would become RPS traveling exhibition. If digital files from Bradford archive not available, exhibition would be the best digital work of today. List of photographers to be asked to donate a print for selection to be drawn up.

● **DIGIT** Next issue, out by end September, would again be 48 pages and include Exhibition DVD. Promotional articles like last issue's FixerLabs thought valuable but restrict to one or two a year.

● **Regional Group Affairs** Agreed to establish DIGRO sub committee to co-ordinate regional affairs and move towards uniform financial approach and visibility to outside world. The DIGRO guidelines leaflet needed updating and re-issuing. Regional events to be entered on website and reports of events to be sent to DIGIT. Co-ordination of RPS regional events and DI events to be encouraged. Communication between DIGROs to be by telephone and email. Plan to establish DIGROs in vacant or inactive regions. Thought to be given to expanding Thames Valley Region to cover London.

● **e-Campaign mailshot** sent successfully to 720 approved emails out of membership of 970. Second mailshot to re-publicise Steve Caplin Day.

● **Colour Group Print Circle** would become DIG Print Circle.

● **Portfolio Two** DI Group to be represented in this publication, ideally with separate IR section.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES

NATIONAL EVENTS

25 October 2009: Reality and Illusion Steve Caplin - see back cover. Book by 1 October

18 April 2010: AGM

24/25 April 2010: Portraits, Fashion and Nudes - see page 47 and back cover.

REGIONAL EVENTS

THAMES VALLEY
1000 Sunday 27 September
Ray Spence FRPS *Alternative Digital Techniques*
1000 Sunday 25 October
Famous for Five Minutes ...or ten or fifteen!
1000 Sunday 22 November
AGM and Millennium Cup Competition
Details: **www.rpsdig-thamesvalley.org.uk**

WESSEX
1000 Sunday 18 October
Mel Gigg FRPS *Far Red to Deep Blue*
Infra Red & Underwater Photography and
Antonia Cox **Underwater Photography**
Details: **www.digwessex.rps.org/**

YORKSHIRE
1000 Sunday 27 September 2009
Print Appreciation and
Print Presentation: Double Exposure
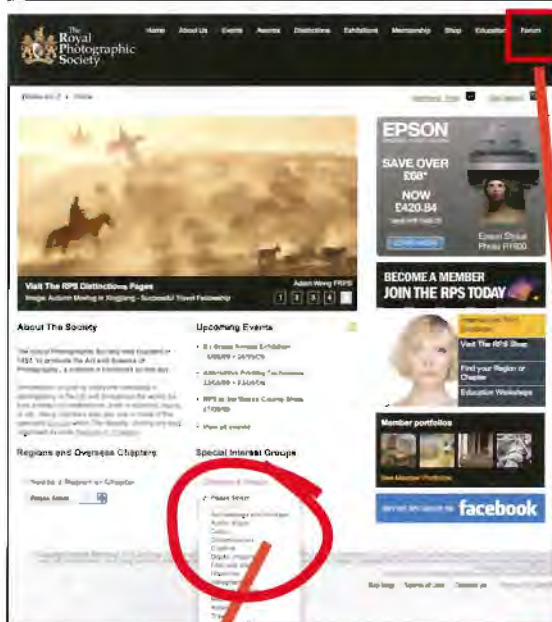Paula and Guy Davies FRPS
Details: **www.ydig.co.uk**

DIGIT is printed by Ian Allan Printing, Riverdene Business Park, Molsey Road, Hersham, Surrey KT12 4RG

Digital Imaging Group

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Vacant

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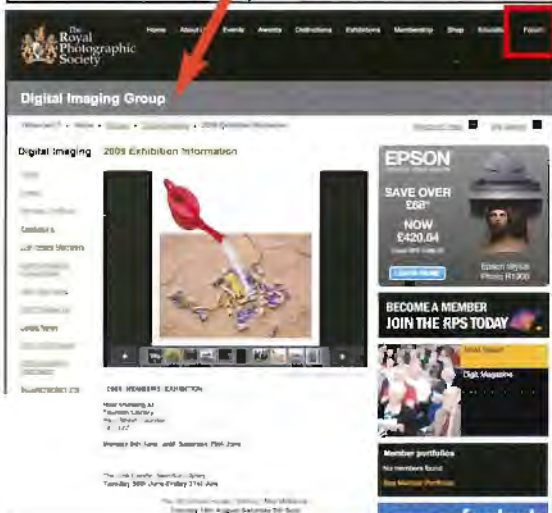# OH WHAT A TANGLED WEB WE WEAVE ... Sir Walter Scott, Marmion

Well I know that's what some of you think but since the sad loss of the excellent interactive web site designed and operated by Bill Henley and his son Iain the committee has struggled to offer members alternative ways of posting and commenting on images as well as keeping you up-to-date with news and events. The circular emails from Secretary Bob Pearson FRPS are just one of the latest innovations and seem to be proving highly successful. But use of the website itself remains slow to develop. Here I want to encourage you to find your way around and enable you to contribute. Our indefatigable web guru Maureen Albright ARPS is seeking where possible to integrate several facilities into the main Society website. Apart from the obvious consistency, this has the huge advantages of no cost to the Group and enhanced security. We are nearly there and this route map aims to guide and attract you to use the facilities which have been made available for members.

Society Home Page: www.rps.org
DI Group Forum: www.rpsforum.org

Start with the Society home page at **www.rps.org** as shown on the left. Here you will find all Society news and events, a host of material such as the new Distinctions Handbook, the opportunity to display your portfolio and a discussion forum. You need to register for this Forum to enable you to use the DI Group Forum. Any problems in registering, contact Tony Mant at the Society on *Tony@rps.org*. From the Society home page, select DI Group from the drop down menu at the bottom, as circled in the box on the left. You will now have access to all the information about your Group: events, DIGIT, exhibition and your portfolios. Put this in your bookmarks or favourites.

Once registered for the main RPS Forum you will have access to the private DI Group members' Forum. To enjoy and participate click on Forum link at top right hand corner of the main black header of the Society site or from the DI Group section header. It's marked with a red square in these examples. Your login details will show at the top right. Put this in your favourites or bookmarks so you can go there directly. You can now scroll down to the DI Group interactive site where you can post images for discussion, seek answers to your questions, enter the online competition, sell and buy and offer tips and hints. Go on: Give it a go, it's your website!

PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

With over 100 entries this year - and gratifyingly several from outside the UK so thank you to those members who take the time and trouble to submit - our tireless Exhibition Organiser Alex Dufty was well pleased with the three showings at Taunton, West Swindon Libary and Smethick Photo Soc. Here is his report. And look out for the DVD inside this issue of DIGIT. We are immensley grateful to Graham Whistler FRPS and his colleague Gordon Rushton for making the flm and for Clive Haynes' revealing commentary.

This year saw a new venue for the Exhibition at Taunton Library. Although Glenys Taylor ARPS and John Long ARPS did put an Exhibition up there many years ago it has taken me three years of applying to get an Exhibition again. Taunton is normally booked all year.

An excellent exhibition space, good lighting and well laid out screens and glass cases are enhanced by a window onto the road. People walking past catch sight of some of the prints and are attracted to visit the exhibition. A long, side window gives onto the foyer of the library, so there is bags of natural light and plenty of room to walk around. The front entrance to the Exhibition shown below can be seen from a very nice cafe part of the library complex.

On the right you can see the prints in glass cases as well as on the panels.

The Library staff tell me that the visitor numbers are over 9,000 a week, so if only 10% saw the prints - and I personally think it would be more since visitors to the library were wandering around as we were putting up, asking what the exhibition was all about - then we had a good showing.

As you can see from these photos it looked good. We had all the prints on show and we intend to be back there in 2011 if we can book it for two weeks. Our other two showings were at the established locations in Swindon and Churchbridge (Smethwick Photo Soc) and proved once again to be excellent facilities. I would like to thank Judith and Roger Parry for their continuing help in hosting our exhibition, year after year, even arranging their own helpers to hang the prints, for a smooth changeover when we can't make it.

Right: Glenys Taylor ARPS and Alex Dufty LRPS all smiles now that the Exhibition is all ready to open

Far Right: Ian Boulton LRPS puts the finishing touches to a panel

Below: Swindon

Next Year...?
We are in discussions with the Yorkshire D I Group to host the exhibition in June 2010, and the prints will be in Swindon, Link Centre Library again in July 2010. And we hope to be at Smethwick as usual in the autumn of 2010.

So, start thinking about your entry now!

SOMETHING YOU WANT TO SAY?

This is the place for your ideas and thoughts in print so please let's hear from you.

A DOUBLE TAKE ON PHOTOGRAPHY:
An Exhibition of Photography from two viewpoints.

With over fifty years of experience between them, DI Group members photographers Alan Abercrombie FRPS and Phil Drake FRPS are holding a joint exhibition of their work. On show at the Garden Gallery, Osterley Park, Isleworth, Middlesex, the exhibition comprises black and white prints illustrating the differing styles of the two photographers.

Alan Abercrombie's images concentrate on the faces of people displaying a whole range of emotions whether celebrating, protesting or just contemplating.

Phil Drake's work illustrates patterns, geometric shapes and graphic images concentrating on ordinary subjects that can be found in the streets.

The Garden Gallery, which is free to visit, is an intimate venue situated next to the National Trust property Osterley House. The opening times are 1300 to 1630 Wednesday 21 October to Sunday 25 October and Wednesday 28 October to Saturday 31 October. For details of the location and how to get there log on to:
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-osterleypark
For further information contact Alan Abercrombie at *alanabercrombie@btinternet.co.uk*

Left: Trio
Alan Abercrombie FRPS

Below:
White Fence and Hut
Phil Drake FRPS

Janet Haines LRPS on a charitable idea ...

Have you got piles of old mounted prints hanging around in your house?

Great way to make space for your new work whilst supporting Cancer Research UK

By giving your old mounted prints to your local **Cancer Research UK** shop you will raise vital funds to help beat cancer.

If you have unwanted mounted prints hanging around your house and you can participate in this fundraising activity:
· Dig them out
· & Drop them off!

Find your local Cancer Research UK shop at www.cancerresearchuk.org via the 'support us' section.

If you wish to know more or have any query about this charity fund raising activity then do contact

Janet Haines on 01308 428219 or via janet.haines@btopenworld.com

From Elaine Herbert ARPS

Dear Jim

Greetings from the Victorian Chapter of The RPS - and congratulations on the latest issue of DIGIT which arrived here a few days ago. It is packed with so much interesting material and it's great to see such professional presentation in a Group publication. Congratulations to all concerned.

When we met briefly when I was in the UK it was all rather rushed, but I did enjoy meeting so many RPS people whose names - but not faces - were familiar. I expect you've had another round of meetings by now. It was all most stimulating and it would be nice if Australia were not so far away and we could attend meetings more often. However, to receive publications like DIGIT helps us to keep in touch and breaks down the barriers of distance.

Thanks for all you are doing.

Kind regards
Elaine

I WANT A DISTINCTION!

Well, don't we all but it can seem a bit intimidating. So how do you go about it? Fortunately the Society has recently updated the excellent Distinctions Handbook and it's now available to download as a pdf from the website at:

www.rps.org/associateship/New-Distinctions-Handbook

And now there's even more on the website with interactive tutorials and a facility to send your images for guidance by senior members who chair the distinctions panels.

When I was chatting to a young man recently about having a crack at a distinction he said something rather perceptive: I really don't know how good my photography is because I've never measured it against an external standard. With The Society's prestigious Distinctions and Qualifications you have a measure of achievement which is recognised throughout the world. Working towards a Distinction in itself improves your photographic skills. In his article starting on page 30 David Cooke stresses how helpful it is to attend workshops and seek guidance. Some regions are also experimenting with informal meetings to discuss the distinctions ladder and these are proving very successful.

Perhaps work commitments or travel or health restrictions mean you can't get to a workshop. You will inevitably seek the help of other members who, in my experience, will go to enormous length to help you. Listen carefully to what they say, and in some cases what they don't say!

But what if none of that is possible? Indeed, my young friend spends his working life in Russia so that doesn't make it easy. So what's the next best thing? Fortunately, there is a good deal of advice and a solid base of distilled experience available electronically from the Society. The starting point for all aspiring applicants is to read the Distinctions Handbook. I cannot stress how important this is. Download it from the web site address (see above) and study it carefully.

If you are aiming for the L distinction look at: **www.rps.org/licentiateship** where you will be able to download an interactive presentation from which you will learn a good deal.

As you start to assemble your photographs for the application, log in with your user name and password to: **www.rps.org/members** to discover the new facility to upload images for private guidance from a Panel Chairman. I decided to give it a go as a guinea pig with a prospective panel for my Associateship when the service was launched a few weeks ago.

I logged into the members' area and downloaded: *How to apply for Advice* and *How to install FTP Programme*. Armed with these I prepared a few more images than the 15 I needed for the submission, sized them appropriately following the clear steps set out by Andy Moore LRPS, the Distinctions Manager of the Society. Within a few days I was being guided by a Panel Chairman about my potential application. It was a helpful, if sobering, chat and has given me lots to think about. Give it a go!

FixerLabs software available at discount to DIGIT members

In the spring issue of DIGIT (No 41) we ran DI Group member Tim Atherton's article on his FocusFixer plugin for Photoshop - see **www.fixerlabs.com**. Since then some members have posted favourable comments on the Forum about their successful use of this software, with helpful comments by Tim - see Discussion and Introductions thread on the Forum.

The latest FixerBundle V2 (2.0.5) suite of Photoshop plug-ins for Mac and Windows continues to be offered to DIGIT members at a very healthy 40% discount. This discount applies to all FixerLabs products, including the Combo offer on FixerBundle V2 and SizeFixer XL. Use coupon **RPSDIGIT**. If you already have FixerBundle V2 you can buy SizeFixer XL with the coupon **RPSDIGITXL** for the same price as FixerBundle V2 and SizeFixer XL together with the Combo offer, in total 40% off the Combo price.

Remember:

www.rpsforum.org takes you straight to the RPS and DI Group Forum

www.digit.rps.org for the DI Group area of the main Society website

Good Picture - 2009
"Making Imaging Work"
An RPS Symposium

GOOD PICTURE 2009
University of Westminster, Regent Street, London
Saturday 12 December 2009, 1000 - 1600
£60 Concessions: £34 (Students, Retired, Unemployed)
Includes buffet lunch, morning and afternoon coffee & biscuits
Full disabled access
Contact Dr. Mike Christianson: 01753 890 480
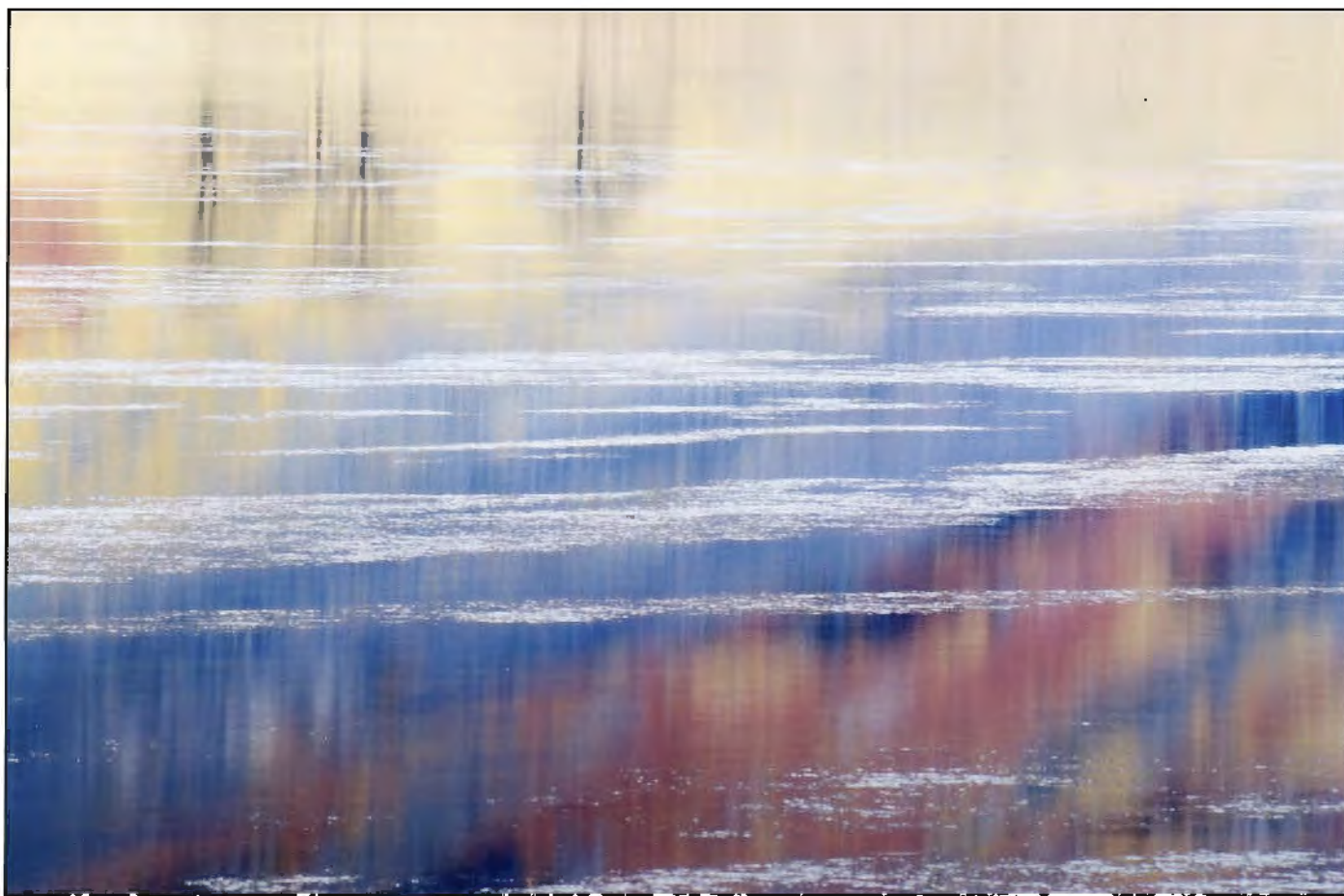Application form: www.rps-isg.org

Loch Achrtiochtan 1

BEYOND THE FELLOWSHIP: PAULA DAVIES FRPS

Paula Davies discusses the photography she has been doing since she was awarded her Fellowship.

The question I was most frequently asked after being awarded a Fellowship was "What are you going to do now? What's your new challenge? The answer usually was "I don't know!" Something which did happen, once the initial euphoria had passed, was that I felt nothing that I did was good enough. I wanted every photograph I took to be one which I considered to be good enough to win a medal in an international exhibition. Now I know this is an impossible task and, fortunately, after two years I have overcome this crisis of confidence and am again enjoying my photography.

Did I really need a new challenge? I was busy enough as it was and had never originally intended to apply for a Fellowship. It just followed on from being awarded an Associateship when a few people, whose judgement I respected, suggested that the panel was good enough to be expanded.

So what have I been doing with my photography in the past two years?

I tend not to do much photography except when I am on holiday or attending photographic workshops. So to keep my enthusiasm going and give me an incentive to do something with the photographs rather than leave them on the computer I enter international exhibitions. I also take

Loch Achtriochtan Reflections

an active part on a couple of internet forums such as the Digit Forum.

One of my aims has been to become a better landscape photographer and I do think that I am improving in that field (please forgive the pun). We spent a memorable morning at Loch Achtriochtan at the head of Glencoe. This was the only time in a week of dull weather when there was some sunshine and no wind. Plenty of opportunities were there for the broad landscape, taken with a wide angle lens, such as "Loch Achrtiochtan 1". I was happy with several of the images which I got that morning. However I was still drawn to the more intimate detail such as the fantastic reflections and soon the long lens was on my camera resulting in "Loch Achtriochtan Reflections". To me a much more satisfying image.

A visit to Tuscany for a week of landscape photography was very enjoyable, especially the food and wine! But I thought the best part was visiting the small towns in the middle of the day where I could concentrate on finding details. In "Montisi Shutters"

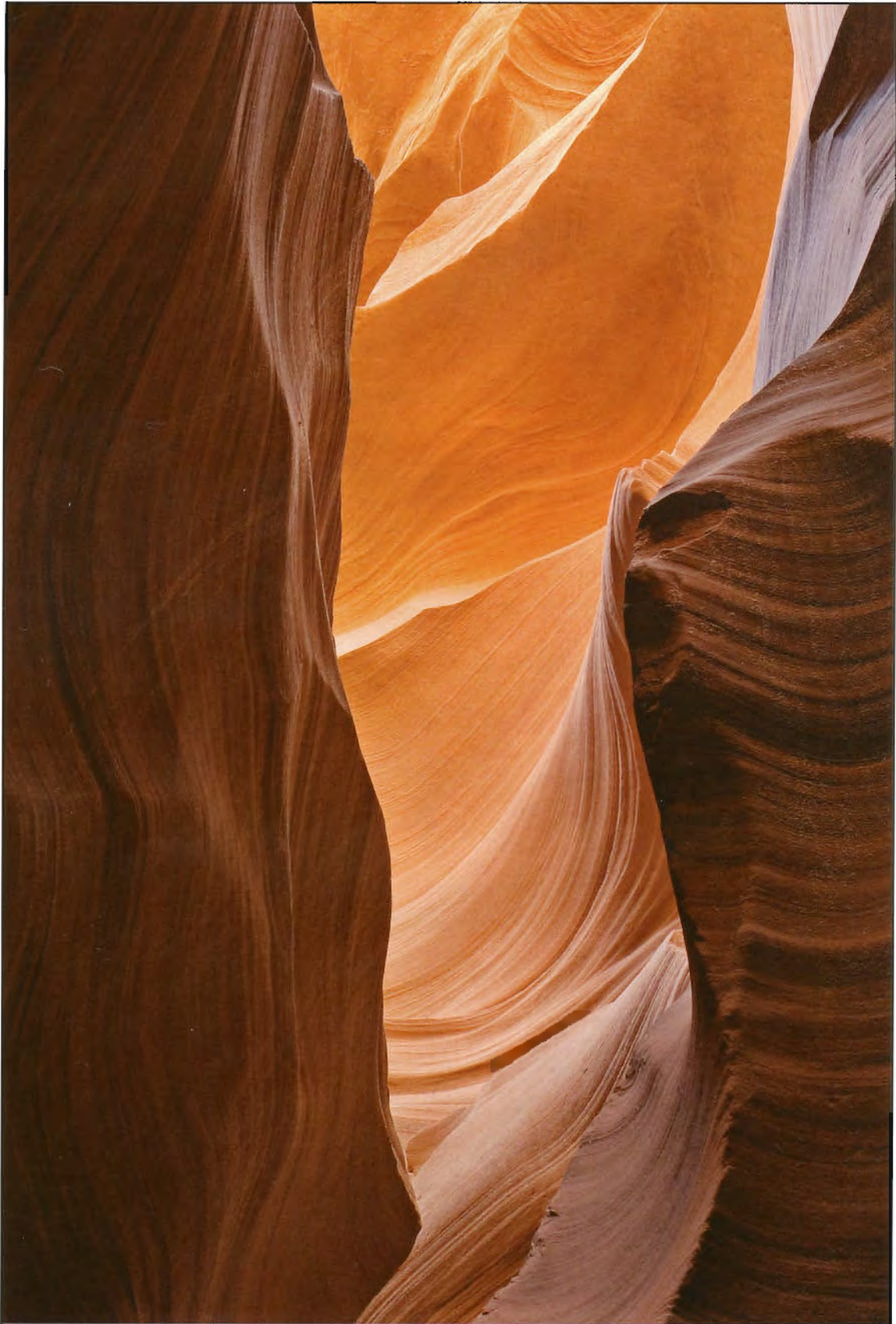*Montisi Shutters*

Hanging Space

I was drawn to the colours and textures in the old walls and also the lines of the shutters contrasting with the curve of the wrought iron hand rail. "Hanging Space" was spotted as a photo opportunity by a few of us on the workshop and I decided that the image suited being toned with light sepia.

For quite some time now I have enjoyed photographing sandstone either with a macro lens for small details or with a longer lens which can make a small area of rocks on the beach appear to be a large wilderness landscape. The opportunity came with a visit to Utah to photograph both the wide and the more intimate landscape. "Bryce Canyon" was photographed early in the day when the low sun brought out the golden colours and made the hoodoos appear to glow from the inside. Standing on the rim of the amphitheatre of Bryce Canyon at 7 o'clock on a November morning was a challenge. It is between 8 and 9 thousand feet, the wind was blowing and the temperature was -18°C. In contrast "Antelope Canyon" was photographed in the middle of the day. This is the best time for slot canyon photography as the sun coming from overhead shines down, emphasising the shapes of the rock with both direct and reflected light.

Additionally, I do enjoy trying to produce creative work. Being a member of an internet based "creative" study group requires me to produce something new once a month and this has become a challenge. Visiting Venice at carnival time produced many good

Bryce Canyon

Antelope Canyon

Venetian Fantasy

combined in Photoshop CS3. The background has been stretched, blurred and coloured to make it slightly surreal before bringing in the two masked characters.

I have a website which I am trying to keep up-to-date. Together with my husband Guy Davies ARPS I give talks to other photographic clubs and groups. Occasionally I am asked to give a talk to our local U3A, the Women's Institute and the Mothers' Union. I have also found that once people discover that I am a keen photographer I get asked to do all sorts of things. One interesting, and time consuming, project was to montage about 100 head and shoulder photographs, taken by a non-photographer friend, into one group photograph as a present for somebody who was making a career move to a different area.

So here I am, two years later, still being a butterfly – flitting from subject to subject - but still enjoying my photography.

If you would like to look at my, reasonably up-to-date, website you will find it at www.pixelfoto.co.uk.

images of the "masks" but lots of people have been there and it is a struggle to produce something new. "Venetian Fantasy" and "The Plotters" are just two montages which I have made. "Venetian Fantasy" is a combination of two separate images which have been "painted" with Corel Painter IX software before bringing them together for the final touches in Photoshop CS3. "The Plotters" was also two separate photographs

The Plotters

PHOTOSHOP ACTIONS
PART 1

Actions are a very useful feature in Photoshop which can save you a lot of time. In this first of a two part feature, John Wigmore explains what they are, how to create them and how to use them.

Actions are a series of recorded instructions and key strokes which you have used to carry out a function or achieve an effect and which you may wish to repeat. I use some very simple actions as well as some very long and complicated ones and I assign function keys (F2 to F11) for my favourites. They can also be coloured and grouped for ease of location.

CS3 stores actions under c:\ Program files\Adobe\Adobe Photoshop CS3\required and/or under \presets with the suffix ".atn". Any you write can be saved wherever you can easily find them. I suggest that you use the default location when you click on "Save action" as Photoshop will then find them for you.

Once written you should test your action more than once on different images (files) and make a backup preferably on an external device. Your actions are also stored within the "preferences" file and will be loaded each time you open Photoshop. Simply open the actions palette and they will be there. You may wish to backup your "preferences" file too.

The actions palette.

When you first open it (Windows > Actions) you will see either a white palette with all actions listed and a row of icons at the bottom for recording etc. or some coloured action buttons ready for your immediate use. The coloured buttons are presets by Adobe and are best left unmodified! If you do see the coloured buttons then you need to click on the tiny arrow at the top right of the palette and then click on "button mode" to untick it. (See Fig 1). The white palette will now appear.

The easiest way to understand actions is to write a simple one, so let's do a bas relief, using one of Photoshop's filters "Emboss". This action will cover many of the basic essentials for successful action writing.

Writing the action.

1. Open your image. Open your actions palette.
2. Create a new set of actions by clicking on that tiny arrow in the top right corner, then:
3. Click on "New set" and name it "My own actions" or similar, then click on OK.
4. Click on "Create new action" icon (2nd button from right at the bottom of actions palette) and give your action a name, in this case "Basboss" or whatever will jog your memory as to the function of the action. Assign a colour &/or a hot (function key) from F2 to F11 with or without Control &/or Shift.

Start recording.

5. Click "RECORD" and the record icon at the palette base will glow red.
6. Hold down "CTRL" and touch "J". This will create a duplicate of the background layer called "Layer 1". (You
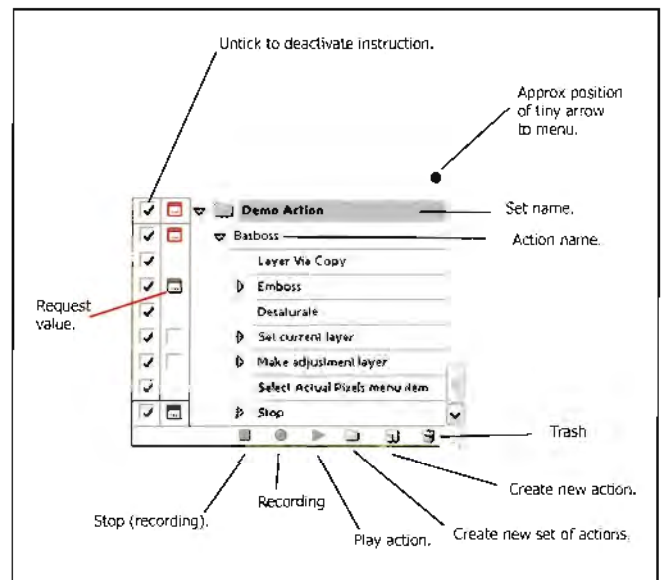

Figure 1: The actions palette

may need to show the layers palette (Window>Layers) to see this.)

7. In the menu at the top of the screen, find filter >stylize > emboss and click on "emboss". A dialogue box will appear on the screen. Set the angle to 135°, Height 2 pixels and amount to 250%. And then click OK . Desaturate (Ctrl + Shift + "U"). This removes traces of colour if present.

8. Go to layers palette and change the blend mode from "normal" to "overlay". Now this is where Photoshop has a quirk. The word "overlay" remains highlighted and all else is locked out. Simply left click on your mouse on a blank area around your image and the highlighting disappears. Why? ... ask Adobe.

9. Add a levels adjustment layer so the image can be tweaked to suit your requirements (Layer > new adjustment layer > levels). The levels dialogue box will appear. Click OK. Do not change anything in the levels histogram window, simply click OK again.

10. The recording part is now complete, so stop recording (left button at bottom of actions palette). However, we still have a little more to do:-

a. Go to the tiny arrow at the top right of the actions palette and use "Insert stop". Type yourself a message like "Done"

b. Adjust levels as necessary. (It is important to adjust the levels now before you flatten the layers. Once flattened, the levels adjustment layer is lost. This applies both when writing the action as well as when you run it on another image). Finally, flatten the layers if you wish to, and save the image as a .psd or .tif file.

c. Open the actions palette again and you will see your

Restoration Required with Unsharp mask only

completed action. The emboss instruction will default to the values used in (7) above and may not suit your needs. You can force the action to ask you for new values by clicking on the little blank grey box to the right of the tick in the emboss row A small icon will appear which confirms that when you run the action you will be asked for the angle etc Your action should look as in Fig 1 and your layers palette as in Fig 2.

Now test it.

Open the original image. Now, go to your action name, click on it then press the "play" icon at the bottom of the actions palette (3rd from left). and the action will play faultlessly.

To see the effect of the Bas Relief, view your image at 100% (Ctrl + Alt + zero). This too can be incorporated into your action by clicking on the tiny arrow top right of actions palette and clicking on "Insert menu item" (just above "Insert stop"). A box saying Menu Item: None Selected will appear. Go to the menu bar for View > Actual pixels then click OK and it will appear in your action after the stop message. Drag and drop it above your stop message or it will never be reached by the action since "Stop" means just that. Resave the action set to ensure these final modifications are not lost. Click on the name of your action set, then click on the tiny arrow (top right) and click on "save actions", save and allow to overwrite.

A 3D effect will be seen in the image and is useful in bringing out (say) the texture of a rusty padlock. I suggest you now display the actions as buttons (little arrow top right, button mode).

This may all look complicated. but once mastered, writing

actions will save you lots of time and will ensure that a complicated effect you have invented can be repeated faultlessly time and time again and fast. The action, Demo action.atn, may be downloaded from the Digit Magzine section of the DIG Forum at: **http://www.rpsforum.org.**

Useful tips.

1.To see the effect of the action, before flattening the layers hold down the "Alt" key and click on the "Indicates layer visibility" icon (eye) for the background. This will hide all layers except the background so the unmodified original image can be seen for comparison. Repeat Alt & click on "eye" to reveal all layers again.

2.Remember to flatten (if required) and save your embossed (Bas relief like) image after you have adjusted the levels.

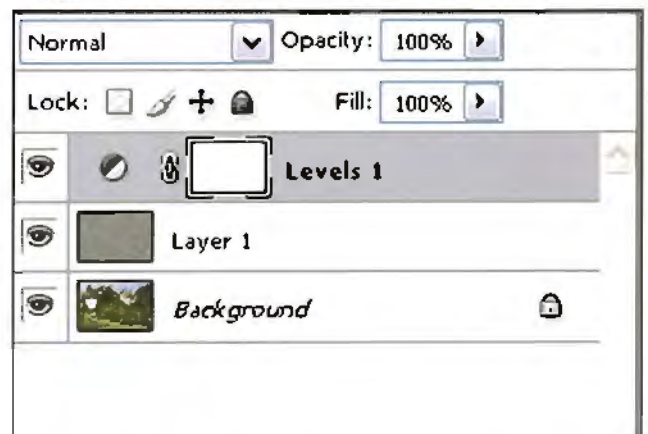3.The F12 key can be used to restore to original so action can be rerun.

Figure 2: The layers palette

Photo by Eileen Wigmore

Part of Restoration Required with Unsharp mask only

Part of Restoration Required with Basboss action @ +135°

Part of Restoration Required with Basboss action @ -45°

Pin Mill Original Sharpened

"DIGI-LITH" PART 1

In this first part of a two part series, John Wigmore explains how to create images resembling those from a traditional Lith bind-up process using digital techniques.

Many years ago, when film was king, I had the pleasure of both seeing, as a judge, and creating myself, many images produced by binding up Lith film with a colour transparency, emulsion side to emulsion side, and exposing the lith film to white light through the transparency in a darkroom. Lith film, being only blue sensitive, recorded whites and blue skies as black and the other colours as clear(ish) emulsion depending on the exposure given. This became the "interneg".

A variant of this was to use a film such as FP4 which is sensitive to all colours and therefore produced a negative with a full range of tones depending on whether any filters were introduced during the copying. The length of exposure given naturally altered the final effect.

After processing, the "interneg" was bound up, emulsion to emulsion side again, with the original transparency and copied on to colour transparency material. Depending upon the density and tonal range of the interneg, a variety of effects could be produced most usually with black or near black

blue skies and somewhat luminous reds, yellows and greens. Given the right subject, the results were often stunning.

Other more advanced techniques were later developed using multiple lith exposures, copied on to more lith and bound together with the earlier liths in different exposure combinations and copied again! Using pin registration, by exposing these "multi-internegs" onto colour transparency material separately through coloured gels of filters, a unique style of colour image could be produced. I know of one Fellowship which was obtained in this way by a Kent based photographer, and others perhaps. The process was very time consuming and to generate all the multi-internegs could take a week of evenings, all to produce one final derivation. This is only a very simplified description of this advanced process and may not be complete.

I decided that it might be worth doing a simple lith bind-up to start with, digitally. Several options were available to me but to emulate the blue sensitivity of lith film, either the blue channel

Pin Mill Sharpened with Digilith applied

could be used (channel mixer) or a deep pure blue (R=0. G=0. B=255) could be multiplied with an RGB colour file, either being inverted to produce a lith-like interneg. This could then be combined (multiplied) with the original RGB colour file, levels (or "exposure") applied and the final image would be similar to a lith bind-up. I finally opted for the channel mixer as the channel values could be varied for greater control.

I have written an action based upon this method, using adjustment layers for improved final tuning. This action may be downloaded from the Digit Magazine section of the DIG forum at http://www.rpsforum.org. *(Editor's note: John explains how to create your own actions in his Photoshop Actions article which begins on page 13 of this edition of DIGIT)*

Method for Photoshop CS2 or Higher.

1. Load (open) a sharpened file and duplicate the background layer (Ctrl-"J") and rename the layer "Interneg".

2. Image > Adjustments > Channel Mixer. Tick the monochrome box and set all channels to zero except the blue channel which should be 85-100%.

3. Image > Adjustments > Invert.

4. Change blend mode to multiply.

5. Add an adjustment layer "exposure" and adjust all three sliders to give the required effect.

You can stop here if you wish, but most internegs were shifted slightly out of register to give a 3D or Bas Relief effect. If you wish to do this then follow

step 6 below.

6. Select the "interneg" named layer. Filter > Other > Offset +/- 1 or 2 (maximum) for both settings (they need not be the same, plus or minus). Use "wrap around".

If grass appears too bright and intense in colour, use hue/saturation to desaturate &/or darken the yellows. Hue/saturation can also be used to tweak the colouration, if required.
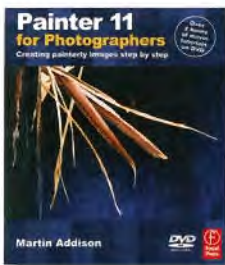
Finally, save your processed file (flattening it beforehand if you wish to).

I've found that Channel mixer seems to work better than "Black & White" as it gives more control over blue/black skies. However, Image > Adjustments > Black & White may be used instead of channel mixer, setting blue to about 100 and all the others to zero. With channel mixer a value of around 85% will allow some blue sky and grey clouds to show whilst 100% or more will give a black sky devoid of any tones.

The above is a basis for much experimentation which may lead you on to a technique which is different and possibly special for example, used in combination with selective colour adjustments! Even white clouds can be generated within the lith effect. By no means all images will respond favourably to this treatment, so experiment and have fun!

In part 2, in a later issue of Digit, I shall describe the "Lith with white clouds", method and make the action available for download.

CREATING PAINTERLY PICTURES IN COREL PAINTER

Although less well known than Photoshop, Corel Painter is a superb program for creating painterly pictures from photographs. Designed with painters in mind, you create by painting with brushes rather than applying filters. Here photographer and author of three books on Painter, Martin Addison, takes us through a step-by-step tutorial to create a beautiful flower painting from two photographs. Martin has worked in many types of photographic media over 35 years, including slides, audio-visual, colour prints and now digital images. He lectures and runs courses and demonstrations on Photoshop and Corel Painter. See box on next page for special offer on his new book.

At first the program can be rather intimidating, with a huge choice of brushes and paper surfaces but, with the basics mastered, you can create a variety of pictures in any traditional style such as oils or watercolour. The picture above of magnolia blossoms was created in *Corel Painter 11* using the cloning process. Cloning in Painter means taking the imagery from the original photograph and painting it into a new document; the result will depend upon what brush type is chosen. Being a photographer rather than a painter I use photographs as the source for all my pictures.

Magnolias are such beautiful flowers: the pure colors and delicate tones never cease to attract me every year. The flowers were fully opened by the time I photographed them and some were starting to go over so I decided to combine two photographs to make a more satisfactory composition.

When you are combining more than one photograph in Painter it is important to plan where each element will be placed in the final composition. This avoids running into problems of placement once the painting has been commenced. What you need to remember is that when Painter is cloning from another document it lines up the top half to offset the picture. The files used here have already been prepared for cloning. You can download the original files from my website at **www.painterforphotographers.co.uk** to work through the tutorial.

First, open the two files shown here from the website: Magnolia A and B.

Create a new document: File > New.

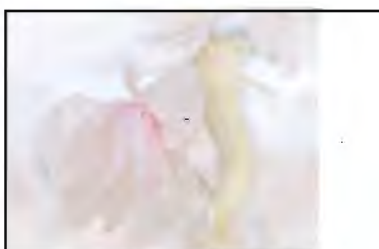Enter Width 3266 pixels and Height 2136 pixels and Resolution 300 pixels per inch.

Select the Pastels > Square X-Soft Pastel brush. This is a lovely brush to use for flowers. Return the brush to the default settings.

In the Colors palette click the Clone Color option. Brush size 137 and Opacity 7%.

Now to connect this new image file with one of the original photographs use File > Clone Source and select Magnolia A. Turn the Tracing Paper on and clone the whole picture very lightly with this soft textured brush, avoiding the hard edge on the left as shown below.

Below: Magnolia A and B

Change the clone source to the Magnolia B original. File > Clone Source > Magnolia B. Paint the remainder of the picture from this source, avoiding the hard edge once again.

Reduce the Resat slider to zero and blend the whole picture. This will provide a delicate colour wash for the background. When the Resat slider is at zero the brush picks up no color from the photograph and therefore changes to a blender. This is a useful tip to remember as it works with most brushes in Painter.

Make the brush size 30, Opacity 46% and Resat 60% and clone the flower petals, following the lines of the picture paying particular attention to the changes in color or tone. Enlarge the picture on screen to follow the detail more closely.

Swop the clone source again to paint the other flower.

Change the brush to size 30, Opacity 20% and Resat zero. Gently blend parts of the picture to integrate the more detailed areas with the soft background.

Change to brush size 21.5, Opacity 11% and Resat 48%. Bring back some more definite detail, the edges of the petals in particular.
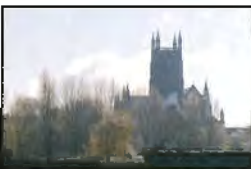
Continue to bring back detail with a small brush, and then soften it with a larger bush at low Opacity and Resat values, until you have finished the picture.

Combining several photographs in Painter is great fun and can produce some beautiful textures. This picture was planned at the start, but in many cases additional photographs can be added as you go along to increase the quality of the texture.

Have fun!

Martin's new book, **Painter 11 for Photographers,** *is published by Focal Press in the UK and has been written specifically for those who wish to create painterly images from their photographs. Using step-by-step tutorials, printable pdf files and video tutorials to explain how to get the most out of the Painter program, the new edition has been substantially revised and contains approximately 70% new material. It's £26.99 from Amazon and other bookshops but contact Martin at MartinandDoreen@aol.com for a special discount for DIGIT members.*

This tutorial used pastel brushes. However any traditional art form can be recreated in the Painter program. Alongside are some examples of different styles.

Pastel/Blenders - Worcester Cathedral

Gouache - Hanbury Canal Bridge

Oils - Malvern Hills

HIGH DYNAMIC RANGE COMPOSITES

In this article, David Urwin provides an illustrated discussion of his twin passions of High Dynamic Range Imaging (HDRI) as applied to the photography of period interiors, and the use of these HDR images as the basis for the creation of digital composites. You can see more of Dave's work at: www.daveurwinphoto.com.

Although I enjoy most genres of photography, I'm most at peace when photographing period and ecclesiastical interiors or, back at home, huddled in front of my computer processing the images and using them as the starting point for digital composites. Typically the types of interior shot that I like to take are high contrast scenes which could not easily be captured in a single exposure and, for this reason, I make extensive use of HDR based technology to help me capture an extended dynamic range. Additionally I almost always perform some degree of post-processing in Photoshop to personalise the images and add back a little of the atmosphere and character which is so easily diluted during HDR processing.

This article represents an introduction to HDR based imaging and an illustrated overview of my particular application of this technology, which is an approach that I think will be of more general interest than an intricate button pressing guide to my workflow.

HDR Overview A general problem in both digital and traditional film-based photography is the capture of scenes containing very bright highlights and deep shadows. If a long exposure is set to preserve and capture shadow detail then highlights are typically blown out. Conversely, if highlight detail is preserved with short exposure times, then shadow detail will typically be lost.

Traditional methods for handling such problem scenes involve the use of graduated neutral density filters which selectively reduce the amount of light striking the film or digital sensor from brighter areas such as the sky; or exposure blending techniques where two or more separate exposures are manually blended to preserve both highlight and shadow detail.

The Train Approaching

The advent of digital camera technology, cheap but powerful home computing and advances in image processing software has opened up a relatively new solution known as High Dynamic Range Imaging whereby the full dynamic range of a scene may be represented by automatically merging a series of separate exposures in a way which would be virtually impossible to perform manually using traditional exposure blending techniques.

The resultant 32-bit HDR image file must be post-processed in order for it to be visualised with conventional monitors and print output devices, involving a technique known as tone mapping whereby the full tonal range defined within the HDR image is compressed sufficiently to display or print correctly whilst still preserving highlight and shadow detail.

In essence then, HDR processing requires that the photographer take a number of separate exposures of the scene to be rendered such that collectively the exposures span the full dynamic range of the scene. This typically requires 3, 5, 7 or more exposures either taken manually or using the camera auto-bracket function. The individual exposures are then merged to a single 32-bit HDR format file, tone mapped to create a viewable representation of the scene, and then typically saved in 16-bit TIFF format for post-processing in Photoshop or equivalent.

Merge to HDR and tone mapping can be performed in Adobe CS2 and above, or (as I prefer) via more specialist software such as Photomatix Pro from *HDRsoft*. Further discussion of HDR processing and tone mapping will be based on Photomatix Pro, although the general techniques and processing principles are generic and are equally valid for all HDR imaging software.

Autobracketed exposures at -2, 0 and +2EV

want to retain extra window detail. ISO is invariably set at 100 to minimise noise in the shadow areas of longer exposures, and the camera is operated in AV priority mode with a typical aperture setting of f/11, although to some extent this will depend upon the required depth of field in the scene being photographed.

Mounting the camera on a tripod and triggering the shutter via a cable release (or the camera self-timer) is strongly recommended to ensure that there is no possibility of camera movement between exposures. For a high quality HDR image it is essential that there is complete alignment of the individual exposures taken to capture the scene.

Setting the camera to aperture priority (AV) mode is also highly recommended in order that the separate exposures vary only in shutter speed and not aperture width. It is absolutely essential that there is no change of aperture, and hence depth of field (DOF), between the separate exposures representing the scene as this is guaranteed to result in a general softness and lack of sharpness in the final HDR image. The rule therefore is to select a fixed aperture to suit the required DOF and to vary the separate exposures only by altering shutter speed.

Creation of the HDR Image in Photomatix Pro

The three bracketed exposures shown here illustrate that the 0EV camera calculated exposure has failed to cope with the extremes of light and shade in the room. Highlights to the left of the frame are significantly over-exposed whilst there is a general loss of detail in the shadow areas. As can be seen, the -2EV and +2EV exposures together extend the captured dynamic range and reveal adequate amounts of highlight and shadow

-2EV   0EV   +2EV

Photographic Technique My standard kit when photographing interiors is a tripod mounted Canon EOS 50D DSLR fitted with Sigma EX F4.5-5.6 10-20mm lens, and almost invariably shot at 10mm. I'm a lazy photographer and firmly believe in letting the camera do as much of the hard work as possible, so metering is set to evaluative and I tend to rattle the separate exposures off automatically via the auto-bracket function set at -2, 0, and +2EV, although I do sometimes pop into manual mode and shoot a -4EV exposure where I

detail respectively.

These separate exposures which collectively span an extended dynamic range are then merged to create a single 32-bit HDR file, this being achieved via the Generate HDR menu option. Supported input file formats are 8 and 16-bit JPEG, 8 and 16-bit TIFF, and RAW where all major RAW file formats are supported. I always shoot RAW and my personal preference is to process the RAW files in Canon Digital Photo Professional, saving the processed files in 16-bit

TIFF format which are then used as input to Photomatix Pro.

When processing RAW input, generation of the HDR file is more or less automatic with very little requirement for user intervention. Camera movement between exposures and moving objects within the photographed scene can severely degrade the quality of the HDR image and for this reason there are options to *Align Source Images* and *Attempt to Reduce Ghosting Artifacts*. Tripod mounted exposures negate the requirement for the former option and, from experience, the latter option can cause processing artifacts and is best avoided. My personal opinion is that with the current state of technology HDR is really only of use when photographing static scenes with a stable tripod-mounted camera. When photographing interiors then the only movement related problem that I may encounter is people wandering through the scene, in which case I wait till they have gone and re-shoot as necessary.

Tone Mapping the HDR Image The HDR image created from the separate input exposures is a 32-bit file which will not display correctly or print successfully on conventional monitors and printers. The file must be processed to reveal the inherent dynamic range and to produce an image that is capable of being properly visualised with consumer screen and print technology. This process is known as tone mapping and in this respect Photomatix Pro offers two different tone mapping methods, these being available via the *Details Enhancer* and *Tone Compressor* options.

Details Enhancer is the default tone mapping method and is the one which I prefer to use. It has more processing options than the *Tone Compressor* method and thus offers a greater degree of user control over the final image, although if the controls are set too aggressively this method is prone to creating unnatural looking images and halo artifacts.

The following discussion of the tone mapping process is based on the *Details Enhancer* method, but note that to a large extent tone mapping is unpredictable in that a series of settings that produce pleasing output for one particular image will not necessarily produce equally good results with a different image. It is however useful to remember that the settings used to process a particular image may be saved to disk and then loaded as the starting point when processing similar images. It seems to me though that experimentation is the key to success when tone

Figure 2: An example tone mapped image

mapping in Photomatix Pro.

Of the many tone mapping controls available it is the *Strength, Luminosity, Light Smoothing and Microcontrast* settings which most affect the look of the final image. The first three controls affect the amount of global contrast enhancements in the output image, whilst the *Microcontrast* setting affects the amount and transition of contrast at a local level within the image, that is between adjacent bright and dark areas.

It is not possible for me to define optimum settings for these controls nor even to detail typical settings which I favour, as every image is unique and everyone's taste and requirement of the final image will differ too. Suffice to say that these controls are adjusted on an iterative basis with due reference to the preview pane until the user is more or less satisfied with the tone mapped image preview.

The image may then be finessed using a range of secondary controls: these include white and black point clipping, shadow and highlight smoothing, colour temperature and colour saturation.

Once satisfied with the settings the image is processed to apply the tone mapping settings, and then saved as a 16-bit TIFF file for further work in Photoshop or equivalent as required.

Post-processing the Tone Mapped Image
In my early days of HDR processing I was always slightly disappointed with the output from the tone mapping process as to me the images tended to look a little flat and insipid. They certainly held highlights and revealed shadow detail as compared with single exposures but were somehow lacking in character. For this reason I experimented with post-processing of the tone mapped images in Photoshop and gradually evolved a workflow which allows me to add back a little atmosphere and visual impact.

Rather than go into great detail, I will just identify each of the main post-processing stages that I take a tone mapped image through. Note that each step is actioned on a separate masked layer in order

that I may control both the image area affected by the change and also its strength and visual effect by varying the opacity and blend mode of the layer.

Step 1 - Merge back the -2EV Exposure

The -2EV exposure is overlaid on the tone mapped image, the layer blend mode set to Lighten, and the two layers then flattened. This has the effect of brightening up highlight areas which may have been left rather flat and grey in the tone mapping process. A comparison of figures 2 and 3 shows that both window and table cloth highlights are corrected by this process.

Step 2 - Duplicate background layer to add contrast

The background layer is duplicated and the blend mode of the duplicate layer set to Soft Light in order to increase colour depth and contrast. This step usually requires that the changes are restricted to specific areas of the image and with varying degrees of opacity.

Step 3 - Dodge and burn

A new layer is created at the top of the layer stack, filled with 50% grey, and the blend mode set to Overlay. Local dodge and burn contrast enhancements are made as required by painting onto this layer with soft edged white and black brushes respectively, typically with an opacity of 4%.

Step 4 - Add vignette

I tend to add a subtle vignette to most of my interior images, both to concentrate attention toward the centre of the image and also to accentuate the natural fall of light and shade in the room. There are many ways to add vignettes in Photoshop but the technique which I favour is based on a curves adjustment layer with blend mode set to Multiply. The associated layer mask may be used to control where the vignette is applied, either via a blurred elliptical selection or by linear gradients dragged in from each of the image corners. The basic vignette created in this way may then be adjusted to taste by altering the opacity of the adjustment layer and also by painting directly onto the layer mask with a soft edged black or white brush.

The Creation of Composites Much as I enjoy photography, I am also something of a computer geek and, after 25 years working in computer graphics, I really can't resist a good dabble in Photoshop. It also seems to me that a carefully processed HDR image can showcase the beauty of an old interior but may not necessarily have sufficient visual impact to hold the attention of the casual viewer. The creation of digital composites therefore satisfies my own personal fascination with digital image manipulation and the pursuit of Photoshop excellence, and also adds an extra layer of interest to extend the potential audience of my images.

Very rarely do I go out on a shoot with the aim of a particular composite in mind, most of my ideas coming as afterthoughts once I have processed the HDR images through Photomatix Pro. On most occasions a 'finished' HDR image will sit on my hard-drive for months until an idea pops into my head, and I will then go about photographing the

The Gigapan Sy

With discussion of the possible formation of a panorama group within the Society and wonder together, Roger Holman tells us of his experiences with a rather different approach. Roger's would appreciate its ability to produce hnge size images with all the incredible detail that is po of Wimborne Camera Club and has been interested in photography since his teens but it was Since then he has prodnced more than a half a dozen landscape books on Dorset, the connty

The *Gigapan* system has three elements:

● A robotic mechanism which will accept a small compact camera;

● Custom software which will happily stitch up to hundreds of files together to produce a high quality panorama;

● An ability to upload the resulting images onto the *Gigapan* website for everyone to share and comment on.

So briefly that is it, but the interesting part is the robotic camera mount. There are two mounts. The Epic and The Epic 100 priced at US$379 and US$449 respectively. On their website there is a list of what cameras can be fitted to either.

The operation is very simple. Set the unit on a tripod and level it with the bubble spirit level. Fix the camera on the unit. If the panorama has foreground that is within 50 feet, it is best to set the nodal point on the lens correctly otherwise it doesn't seem to make much difference. The first time it is used, or if you change the zoom factor, you have to instruct the inbuilt computer to calculate the overlap it needs to get a good stitch. This is achieved by setting the zoom you want and recording an image. Then adjust the up button until the bottom of the picture is where the top was. The unit then takes those readings and does the required calculations.

It is best to manually lock the exposure to an average of the whole intended picture just as you would taking any panoramic shot. Now set the top left point that you want by using the up/down/left/right buttons, and then the bottom right point. The unit then calculates the number of frames that will be taken to cover that size of picture, converting it into rows and columns. Press the start button and away it goes, moving and exposing until it has covered the whole area - magic! You can pause it at any time and repeat a frame if someone walks into the shot. You are looking at the live view picture all the time.

You will now probably end up with dozens of images which are then put into the *Gigapan* stitching program. It first lays the images out in rows and columns which is very handy because you can check if everything is in the right place and allows you to delete a repeated picture. Set it

The Epic Gigapan

stem

...rful free, and commercial, software available for stitching images
... aim is to bring Gigapan to the attention of photographers who
...ssible - but with just a small compact camera. Roger is a member
...not until he retired some 17 years ago that he had time to pursue it seriously.
...in which he counts himself fortunate to live.

Roger with the Gigapan which he shares with a friend

to work and go and make a few cups of tea or find a good book because you are likely to end up with a file size of a gigabyte or more. Lots of RAM and a fast processor help. If it really is a massive file, set it to work overnight. With my computer, 50 images take about a hour.

When the picture has been rendered it will be curved but as soon as it is saved in either TIFF or RAW then it straightens out. I guarantee you will be amazed at how much detail there is to see when you zoom in and in.

If you want confirmation go to **www.gigapan.org** and look at President Obama's inauguration picture. You can almost read his speech! I was told it was taken using the *Gigapan* with a compact camera by someone who had not operated it before and was talked through it on the phone.

The stitching programme is first class and is free to anyone who takes the trouble to download it. It can of course be used for images taken by any camera.

Gigapan was not developed with photographers in mind but as a means of bringing people together across the globe and because of the incredible detail possible, exploring other people's worlds and environment. I think that is the reason it doesn't seem to have been picked up by the photographic press.

Go to **www.gigapan.org** to learn more.

Wimborne Minster

additional elements and assembling them as required. Very rarely do I resort to the use of stock images, preferring to use elements that I have photographed myself as far as is possible, as in *Sleep Walker* below.

Regarding compositing technique then my main objective is to have the final image look as real as possible, and certainly to avoid the dreaded pasted on look. In this respect scale, perspective, direction and quality of light, shadows, colour hue and saturation are all absolutely key. There is no 'one size fits all' workflow that must be followed when creating composite images, rather it is a case of bearing in mind the key attributes as defined above and gradually building up the reality of the image on a layer by layer basis.

The panel of four images shown below illustrates this process and depicts some of the stages in the progression of a composite image. Top left is the starting point where the man and skeleton have been brought into the background HDR image and scaled and positioned to fit. In the top right image, a shadow and shading has been applied to the skeleton to give a more three dimensional look and (hopefully) a more convincing feeling of the object actually belonging in the room. This same approach of shadow and shading has been applied to the man in the bottom left image, again with the aim of bedding the added element more convincingly into the underlying scene. Finally, in the bottom right image, the colour saturation of the man has been reduced and reflections painted in on a layer above him to give the impression that he is in the cabinet rather than pasted onto the outside of it.

Although each and every composite is different and is progressed in its own way, I do find that there are certain key Photoshop tools and techniques which contribute extensively to the compositing process and which are repeatedly used in all of my work. Layers and layer masks are fundamental in allowing the image to be built up in a progressive and reversible manner; curves and hue/saturation adjustments facilitate the blending of an added object into its environment; and painted shadows and shading with a blend mode of Multiply and opacity to suit really do ground the added objects and give them a feeling of depth and belonging. I would also add that the use of a graphics tablet is essential in allowing for much greater precision and control when working in Photoshop than could be achieved with a conventional mouse.
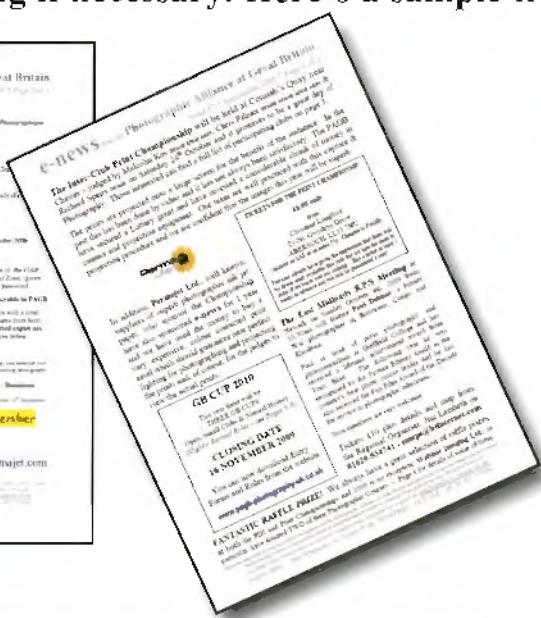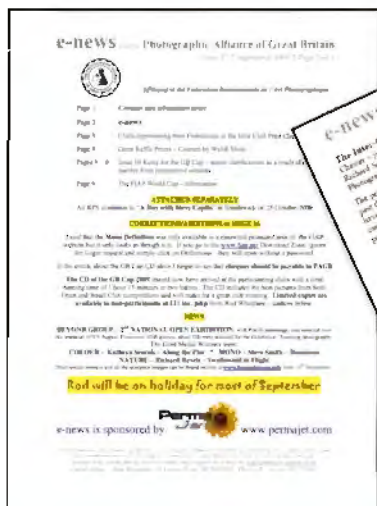
Stages in the creation of a digital composite

Right: Heritage

PAGB

The PGB is of corse well known but do you want to be kept in touch through its electrouic newsletter? Just email Rod Wheelans at *rod@creative-camera.co.uk*

The PAGB is very happy for you to forward the e-news to iuterested parties or to print it off for display at camera clubs or other venues. But clearly you should not alter it other than resizing if necessary. Here's a sample from the September newsletter.

The Photographic Alliance of Great Britain (PAGB) co-ordinates specific activities for photographic clubs in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It does this through 15 geographical regions known as Federations. Access to its services and facilities is available through membership of a club that is affiliated to the PAGB through its Federation. So, there is no individual membership of PAGB.

The Alliance organises national competitive photographic events for its Federations and for clubs and offers other services such as Recorded Lectures to clubs and its own photographic Distinctions (known as awards for photographic merit) direct to qualifying club members. You'll spot these as, for example, DPAGB.

1: The original image

SIMPLIFIER SOFTWARE

Alan Dedman has being using 'buZZ' software to produce his wonderful landscapes for some years. This is no longer available so what can people who want to create a similar effect use as an alternative?

The 'painterly' look. Love it or hate it. Long, long ago I was greatly taken with the works of Constable and Turner and wanted to reproduce the painted look with a photograph. More recently I found, as I wanted to do landscapes, the more I liked this idea. Some landscapes simply cried out for it, or so I thought. Until a short while ago it was produced by using a program called 'buZZ', which is a simplifier. Unfortunately, or not, the company that produced this program went out of business. Obviously, not too many people liked it, but I think it still is, and was, a valid means of expressing ones personal vision.

The Simplifier effect is based on patented Sieve transform technology, which, according to Segmentis (this is the name of the 'buZZ' company before it changed to Fo2PiX), "allows an image to be segmented into its component parts, in order that they may be identified, understood, labelled, and indexed." In essence, the Simplifier effect removes unimportant detail from a photo while preserving colour, focus, shape and edge, leaving you with an improved base image for applying other effects. You control how much or how little detail you wish to remove from the original photo by adjusting the controls within the Simplifier effect.

As buZZ is no longer available this will be a simple comparison. I leave the finer tuning to you.

The original image for this comparison (Image 1) is a 'Tiff' file saved at 300 ppi, at 8 bits. This seems to work best for these programs, especially 'buZZ' which will not work with much else.

The second image is using 'buZZ', not the 'Pro' version. This program has a slider that allows you to vary the amount of simplification you do. I set the slider at 500 for this image. This is using Simplifier One with it applied to both the light and the dark setting.

The third image is using 'Topaz'. This program, that you have to buy from

http://www.topazlabs.com, is the new kid on the block, taking over from 'buZZ'. With 'Topaz' you get lots of differing sorts of simplification treatments. This is using the option 'BuzSim' at its default setting, or should I say, at the values it gives me each time I open it. Needless to say, you can make it subtler or more pronounced.

The differences would appear to be that the 'Topaz' image is more saturated, has more contrast and is more aggressive in its simplification. Even pushing the 'buZZ' slider up to 1500, I cannot get the same 'look' of the simplification between the two. The 'Topaz' program does give you controls for the contrast, saturation and detail strength.

The fourth image is made using Simplifier 1.22 from Amphisoft. With the setting of 5 on the square slider. Any lower would not be particularly noticeable on a small image. This would appear only to be usable with Adobe CS2 or CS3 Photoshop. It is freely available from several plug-in download web sites.

Whilst this is a simplifier, it is not comparable with the other two. I cannot get a result similar to the others with just the controls given.

With 'buZZ' I have to add levels and curves, in differing amounts as and where I want it. 'Topaz' would have me work the other way, which I am not keen on. However, my conclusions are that as 'Topaz' is the nearest I can get to 'buZZ', there would appear to be no other alternative. 'Topaz' does give you other instant forms of the simplifier and does give a range of controls to create the look you want. If this had come along first and 'buZZ' second, we may well be saying that 'buZZ' was a bit weak.

2: Modified with buZZ Simplifier

3: Modified with Topaz

4: Modified with Amphisoft Simplifier

Figure 1: The successful panel

THE EVOLUTION OF AN ASSOCIATESHIP PANEL

David Cooke worked for over a year on his successful Associateship panel after gaining his LRPS. He discusses the process he went through and what he learned on the way.

I've always been interested in taking photographs of people and that's why there are no people in any of my Associateship panel images. Let me explain.

Like many others, I took a keen interest in photography when I was at school and had a small darkroom at home. As time when on, and other responsibilities took over, I let my photography slip and it was not until three years ago, when I was given a second hand Nikon D70 that I started to take it seriously again. Naturally, I turned to my favourite subject and started exploring the photography of people again.

I joined the RPS in 2006 and the Digital Imaging Group a few months later. This last move was invaluable as it allowed me to post images on the DIG forum and to get comments from other group members. I learned so much from these comments that I would strongly recommend it to anyone who wants to improve their photography.

Soon my photography improved and, with the help of John Long ARPS, I started to put together a panel for submission for the Licentiateship. All the photographs in the final panel were of people

and I achieved my Licentiateship in February 2008. This was a major achievement for me, one which, many years ago, I thought was an impossible dream.

Encouraged by other DIG members on the forum to use this as a stepping stone rather than an end in itself, I started thinking about trying to obtain the Associateship. But what would be the best way to go about it?

I decided to start working more in projects and thought of a few subjects I could explore. One decision I made early on was not to include any people in the projects, hence my opening statement. This was very restricting for me and that restriction was deliberate. I thought that by exploring something without people I would learn much more than by sticking to my favourite subject.

I thought of a number of projects to work on, including one on The Church of St Thomas the Martyr in Bristol which was eventually the subject of my panel.

St Thomas the Martyr is the sort of church you could walk past without noticing it is there. It's on

Figure 2: Original panel for the workshop

the main road and the outside blends in with its somewhat dowdy surroundings. It had graffiti on the walls (this has now been removed) and weeds growing in the cracks in the concrete.

I didn't notice it at all until one day, I saw a board in the street saying 'Church Open'. I went in, and inside it is a different world. Looked after by the Churches Conservation Trust, the main part of the building is magnificently kept – grand, clean and welcoming. Upstairs, in a less public area, there is a room once used by an art group and now containing the remnants of their work.

I was struck by the similarities and differences between various aspects of the building and its surroundings and set about trying to capture this.

I started work on the project in April 2008. I put images I thought were good on the DIG forum to get comments and by October I had put together a draft panel to take to a distinctions workshop (Figure 2). At this stage I was still uncertain as to which distinctions panel to go for, in particular whether to go for Visual Art or Contemporary. I feel that Visual Art is my artistic home but my

panel was intended to tell a story so maybe contemporary would be more appropriate.

The draft panel consisted of 15 images arranged in two rows. This fitted with my original intention to convey the similarities and differences by forming a link between the images on the top row with those immediately below them: both in substance and in form; e.g. the bible and the graffiti on the outside walls, shadows amongst the pews and shadows formed by the fence outside, the opulent candle holder by the altar and the dilapidated standard lamps in the art room.

I found the workshop extremely helpful. The ARPS advisor on the day was John Chamberlin FRPS. He told me that the Visual Art panel would certainly be interested in seeing my submission and that I had a good basis for one, although there was still some way to go. In particular, I had some images which were not as good as they should be. This was because I was trying to tell a particular story and I had fallen into the trap of using less good images to do that because they fitted with the story. Furthermore, there were problems with the
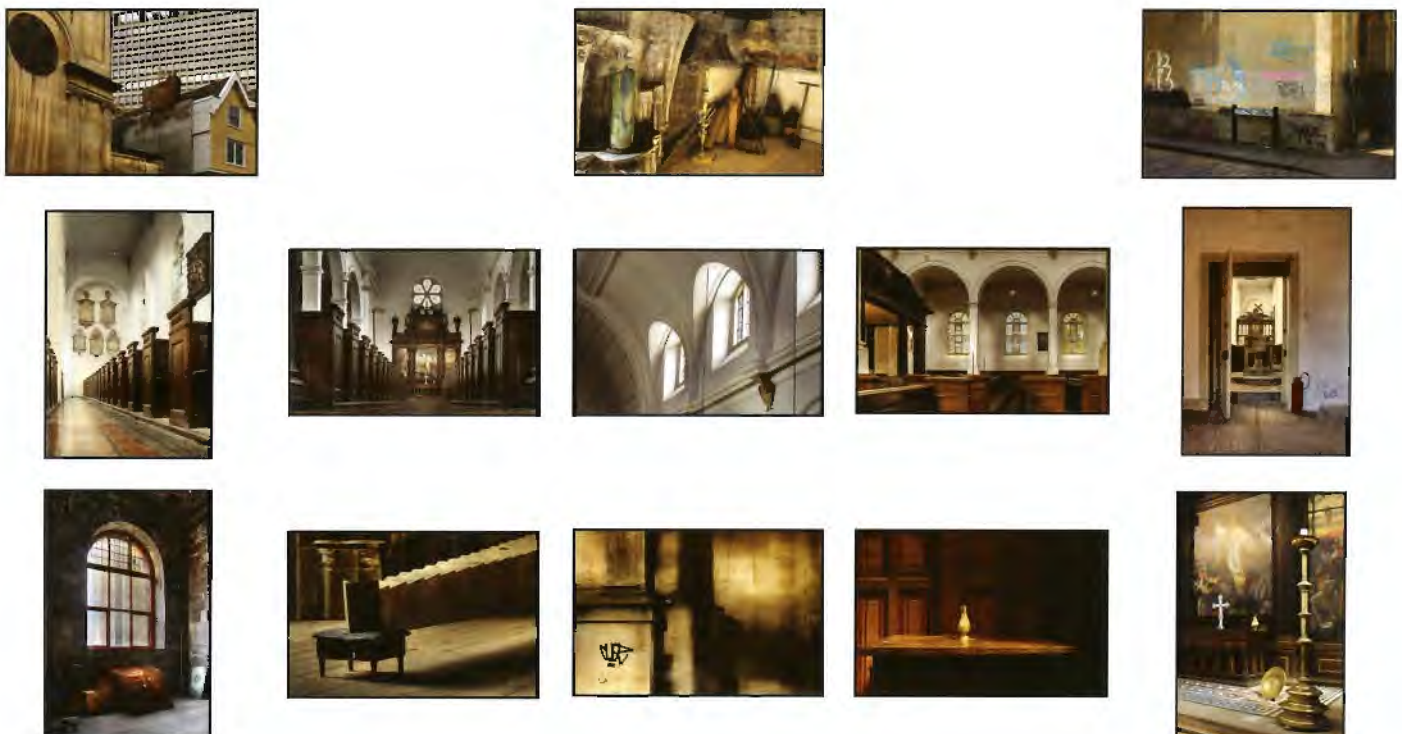

Figure 3: Draft panel after subsequent meeting

layout and overall feel of the panel. It didn't work as well as it should, for example because the bright red aisle stood out and drew attention away from the rest of the panel (Figure 2, fourth image from the left on the top row). I also realised at this stage the importance of the way the panel is laid out in maximising the impact of the images and just how difficult this skill is.

If I were to go to the Visual Art panel then I also needed to concentrate more on the 'artistic' side of my images; good use of light and form for example. We agreed that I would take several more images then meet again to discuss them.

Suddenly it all became much more difficult. With any subject it's easy to get several good, if not predictable, shots but it's when you've exhausted all these that it gets difficult. But that is also the time when you get more creative. Several times I thought I'm never going to get another shot out of this then some came which were much better that any of those I'd taken previously. This was a potential problem in itself as the good images made some of the others look distinctly mediocre. But it's a good thing as it showed that my work was improving and if some of the images I already had looked mediocre then they needed to be replaced by better ones.

I also started to find the limitations of my camera. It just couldn't cope with the high contrast lighting in the church, especially on sunny days. It was at this
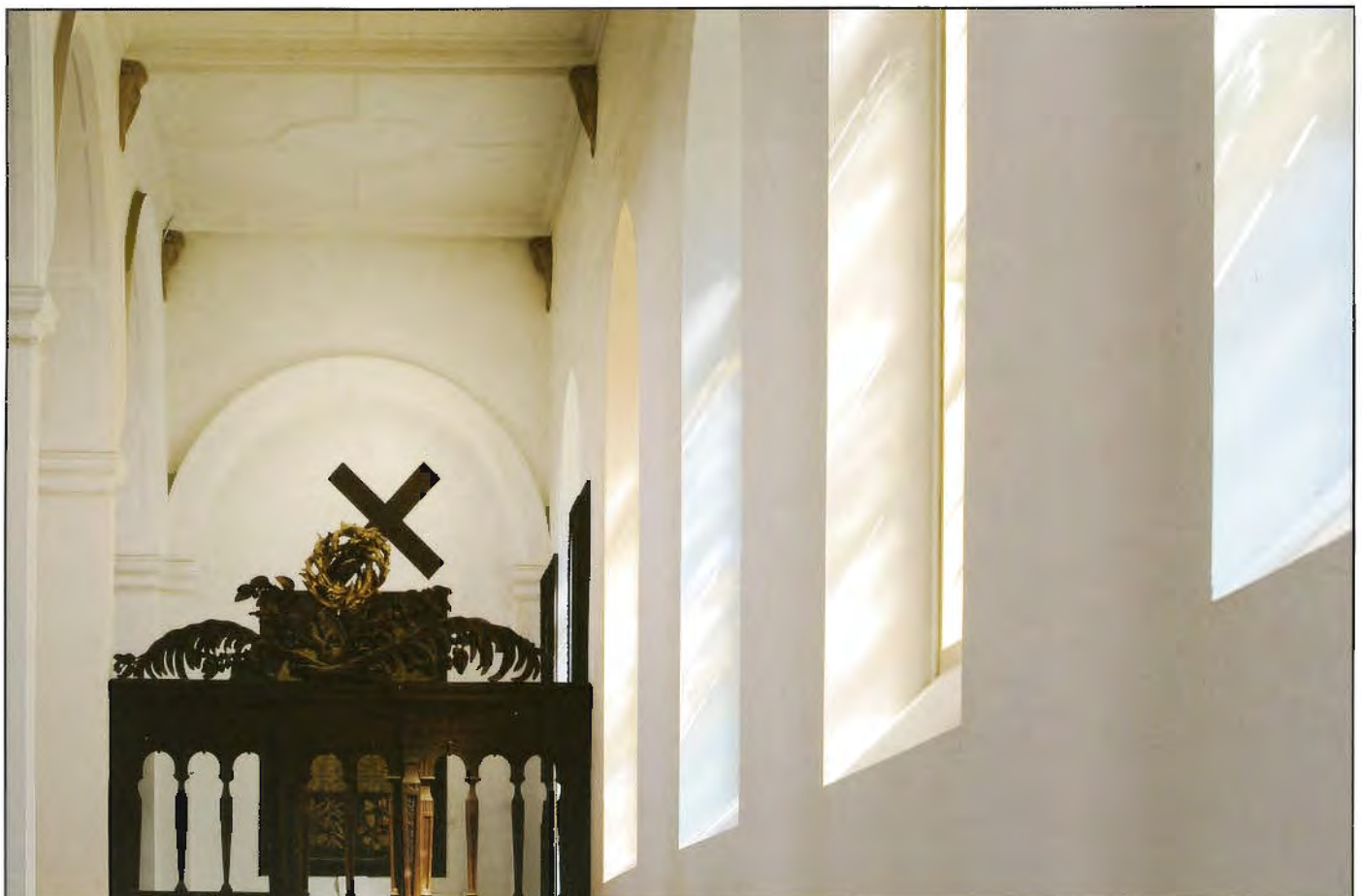
stage that I started to take High Dynamic Range (HDR) images and I learned a lot about how to do this successfully as a result. Six of the final panel images were taken using HDR techniques.

By February 2009, I'd put together a second draft for discussion. I was much happier with this but it still wasn't up to the required standard. One problem I had was that the church was only open between 10:30 am and 2:30 pm on Wednesdays and this restricted the lighting conditions I had to work with inside the building. For example, the angle of the light coming through the stained glass windows limited what in the church was suitably lit to photograph. However, the angle did vary between seasons, making this something of a long term project. Another was that the lighting in the images I had taken outside was a bit flat. The images in the draft panel after this discussion are shown in Figure 3.

More images were needed, not only to fill the two gaps on the top row but also to address the problems mentioned above This meant my finding them by being more creative with angles and use of available light.

I took more shots and, after further discussion, I put together the successful panel (Figure 1).

Only five of the images originally taken to the workshop survived and made the final panel, whilst eleven of those kept after the subsequent

meeting did so.

I was awarded my Associateship in June 2009 and, as you may imagine, it was a great relief that the panel succeeded.

A big bonus for me was that the Churches Conservation Trust asked me to put on an exhibition of my work at the Church which ran from 25 June - 30 July 2009. I also put together an electronic catalogue of the exhibition which you can download free of charge from: **http://sites.google.com/site/lightshadeandcontrasts/** The first fifteen images in that are those in my successful panel, the remaining six were considered at some stage in the process but didn't make it into the final panel. I'm extremely grateful to the Churches Conservation Trust for allowing me to take photographs in the church and for agreeing to my publishing them.

All in all it's a long, long process (for me anyway) but a very educational one and I hope that by giving you an account of the process I went through, those who are thinking of submitting a panel for their ARPS will be encouraged to do so. I can honesty say that even if I had not succeeded, despite the undoubted sense of real disappointment I would have felt, I learned so much and my photography developed so much that it still would have been well worth it.

THE COOKE CHALLENGE

This time we have four more images from DIG members who explain how they created them. I hope you'll find these interesting and helpful techniques to use in your own photography. If you do, why not join in and send me some of yours? Email me at: digitchallenge@gmail.com

The Thistle Foundation montage

Stonework

Robyn Chapel

Thistle Foundation sign

Stained glass window

Wrought iron tree with robins

The Thistle Foundation montage by Andy Wanstall

The Thistle Foundation is a purpose built estate initially for injured veterans of World War 2. Over the years the premises have been open to people with various illnesses such as M.S. and Parkinson's Disease.

The beautiful Robyn Chapel, which caters for all religious beliefs, is situated in The Thistle Foundation grounds and is a memorial dedicated to Robyn Tudsbery, the only son of Sir Francis and Lady Tudsbery, who sadly lost his life during the last days of WW2.

The image was created as follows:

1. Select and import the photo of Stonework and duplicate same.
2. Import photo of Robyn Chapel.
3. Use rectangular marquee tool to make a selection and feather by seven pixels.
4. Copy and paste. Put the selection into position on the Stonework.
5. Use drop shadow by ten pixels from layer menu for effect.
6. Next select the Thistle Foundation Sign.
7. Use the elliptical marquee tool set to twenty pixels for feathered effect.
8. Copy and paste. Position onto Stonework
9. Next, place the Stained Glass Window photo into position and below the copy of Stonework layer.
10. Highlight the Stonework layer and set opacity to 50% You will see the Stained Glass Cross picture below.
11. Next, keep 'on' Stonework layer and select brush tool.
12. Set brush to 50% grade.
13. Find layer from menu then layer mask, the Stonework photo, > reveal all.
14. Now set the black and white from tool bar and set to default (press 'D').
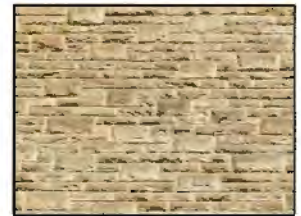15. Use the brush tool as previously set (50%) and brush over the Stonework to reveal the Stained Glass Cross below as required. Occasionally check and reinstate the Stonework picture to 100% opacity to view the design of the Stained Glass Cross. Use the letter 'X' on the keyboard to restore the 'white brush' if too much stonework has been removed and 'brush-in' the required stonework to suit.
16. Lastly, select the photo of the Wrought-iron Tree with Robins.
17. Use the magic wand tool to select the majority of the selection then fine tune the selection by using either the eraser tool or lasso tool to remove any stray pixels.
18. When satisfied with the selection again use the magic wand tool and re-select and inverse.
19. Place the picture into position on the Stonework.

Two girls

Right hand girl

It's not a Lamppost

Houses

Left hand dog

Right hand dog

Layer Palette

It's Not a Lamppost by Malcolm Kitto ARPS

The time window in which this image was created was very long. The original idea came quite quickly when I shot the stilt walkers at the Winchester Hatfair in July 2006. I was able to create a folder of many images as there were five girls in the group. Finding the Dalmation dogs took much longer, in fact I finally succeeded at Widdecombe Fair several months later on a day when the weather was very inclement. I shot the Tudor buildings at Potterton in March 2007. I think the final version went "live" in April 2007.

Photoshop CS and CS3 were used. I prefer to use layer masks to select the various component images after making a rough selection with the polygonal lasso. Note: I save all cut out images in a folder I name CS3 Bits 2009 (I create a "bits" folder each year).This ensures that I can use them should I wish for other creations. Each component image was dragged into the main image where it became a layer and was then re-sized using Edit>Transform>Scale.

The image was built up as shown in the Layers Palette but layers were not necessarily introduced as numerically listed.

Layer 1. White base layer

Layer 2. Grey Grad with some Noise added for the street surface. I required this area to be relatively minimalistic to emphasise the figures I intended to introduce later.

Layer 3. The houses, were added and Find Edges applied.

Layer 4. Convert the houses to a black and white sketch using a Channel Mixer adjustment layer.

Layer 5. A general Clean Up layer.

Layers 7,9,13 and 15. At this point the cut out images were dragged in from the "Bits Folder" and re-sized.

Selective Curves adjustment layers were applied by means of the following layers.

Layer 10. To lighten the 2 girls' faces,

Layer 11. To correct the 2 girls' slightly burnt out hands.

Layer 14. To lighten the entire RH girl who was slightly under exposed.

Layers 8 and 12. For the girls' shadows the shapes were selected and copied from the original images, re-sized and filled with black and the opacity was reduced to suit.

Layer 6. I painted in the dog's shadows.

Layer 16. Colour Balance Adjustment layer to correct a slight magenta cast.

Layer 17. Finally a Grey Grad was added to the sky.

Reflection

Reflection original image

The Lady Train Driver original image

Reflection by Jean Pain LRPS

The image was taken in the Lake District at Great Woods in Borrowdale, directly into water, which is a subject I love to take.

As you can see from the original image, I first of all cropped it to a square format, because I felt this was a stronger composition.

I then made a background layer, and introduced a small amount of Gaussian Blur to soften the image slightly and took the opacity down to approx 70%, then generally lightened the image to give a more soft pastel feel, and printed it on Permajet Oyster Paper to give a texture to the whole subject.

As you can see very little has been done to this, just softening the whole image and making it shades of pastel, which made the whole subject more interesting.

The Lady Train Driver

The Lady Train Driver by Ron Pain LRPS.

The image of this lady train driver was taken at the Sherringham 40s weekend. It is a good place to get some candid photos and a great day out if you are a train buff.

As you can see from the original image, the first job was to crop the shot to simplify it and concentrate on the lady but still show her in the cab of the train.

The day was very contrasty as you can see from the original image. The shot was taken in raw format. In CS2 browser, using the preview shadow and highlights boxes, I moved the exposure and shadow sliders to remove the burnt out and underexposed areas (as shown by the red and blue warnings)

I then opened the image in Photoshop and gave the image the final touches, removing small distracting details and selecting the side of the train and making it darker.

The changes I have made to the original image have lifted it from a quick grab shot to one I am happy with.

WEBWISE 6 with David Cooke ARPS

All the *Webwise* material is on the new DI Group Forum which is located within the main RPS Forum. You'll need to register to make comments and to contribute. Details of how to do this are on the main RPS DI group page at **http://www.rps.org/group/Digital-Imaging.** Please do make a comment on the Forum or email me at *digitwebwise@gmail.com* to let me know how useful (or not) you found the sites recommended. And please do recommend sites you've found interesting yourself so other members can share them.

Welcome to the sixth edition of Webwise. This time we have a site covering photography tips and tutorials, two sites recommended by Mike Arnison LRPS and another DI Group member's website. I hope you find them all interesting and useful.

The Amateur Snapper
http://www.amateursnapper.com/
I came across The Amateur Snapper Website using 'StumbleUpon' (recommended in Webwise 4). The site has photography tips, trick and tutorials covering a wide range of subject areas. It's well laid out and the content is well written. Definitely worth a look to find out how to do things or just to reinforce things you already know.

Next we have two sites recommended by Mike Arnison LRPS.

The Cloud Appreciation Society.
http://cloudappreciationsociety.org/
The Cloud Appreciation Society site is all about identifying and photographing clouds. It has a cloud gallery where you can see some excellent photographs of clouds submitted by members. You can search photographs by cloud type and photographer's name. The site also has a cloud of the month feature, music to watch clouds by, and cloud and art poetry. It's a fun site with lots of intersting things to enjoy.

PercepTool
http://www.georgedewolfe.com/perceptool.html
PercepTool is a Photoshop plug-in which, according to George DeWolfe's website "works with the luminance image we get from the camera and corrects it to look like the luminosity percept produced by the visual cortex of the brain". The website has examples of images before and after processing and you can download a 30 day trial version of the software. A free pdf file of the first two chapters of DeWolfe's book 'B&W Printing' that cover where PercepTool came from and how it works is also available from the site.

Brian Eacock ARPS
http://www.eacock.co.uk
Brian Eacock ARPS is a member of the DI Group. His photography covers a wide variety of subjects including nature, bridges, landscapes, panoramics and people, both in colour and mono. As he says on his website, 'They are a cross section of subjects because I simply like to shoot what I see'.

Brian took up photography in a serious manner when he retired. He bought a computer and became more aware of the opportunities of digital photography, so he decided to take a short course in digital imaging.

Then he joined Beacon Camera Club and really got the bug, having seen what could be achieved. He discovered that what he had thought was a good photograph did not meet with the judges' thoughts.

Since then he has had three changes of computer, three printers (each bigger, better and more expensive!) and 4 camera upgrades. Brian was awarded both his LRPS and ARPS at the first attempt, the latter in September 2008.

Do have a look at his site. There are some lovely images there and I'm sure you'll find something to interest you.

An invitation
If you'd like your website to be featured in future Webwise articles then please email me at **digitwebwise@gmail.com** with details of your site and let me have a few words about your photography. It could help to put you in touch with like minded photographers.

The bridge by Brian Eacock ARPS

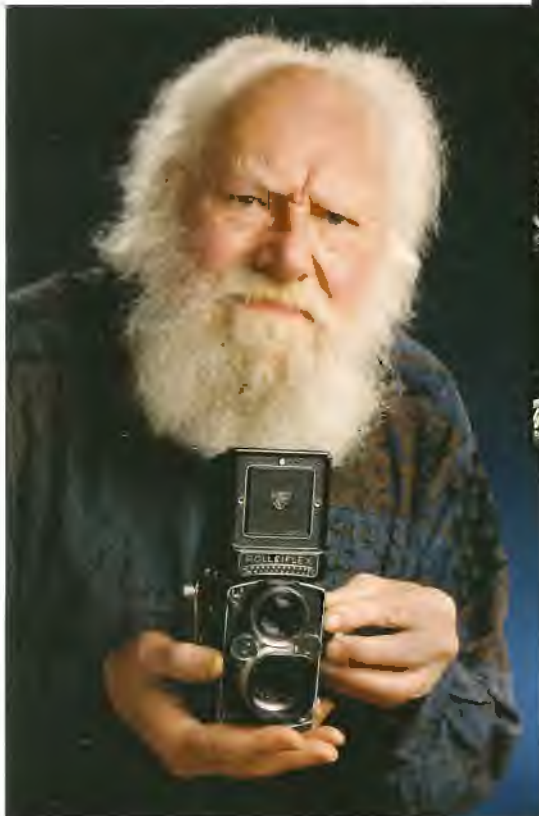# NIKON FLAGSHIP D3X IS 24.5 MP FULL FRAME ENOUGH FOR YOU?

The autumn of 2007 saw the introduction of Nikon's first full frame FX camera, the amazing D3. With 12.1 Megapixels it replaced the D2x while the new semi-pro Nikon D300 12.3 Megapixels DX replaced the D200. Vice-Chairman Graham Whistler, a long time Nikon adherent and commercial studio photographer, reviews Nikon's latest beast for DIGIT. See page 47 for details of the workshops that Graham is organising in Cheltenham next year, and the back cover of this issue for the booking arrangements.

I tested the D3 at the time but it is very much aimed at the press, sports and wild life photographers: Bob Pearson FRPS has more than covered its world-leading high speed/low noise abilities in *DIGIT* for us. At the time I felt that the D2x would still cover my needs for studio photography as I have little demand for high ISO. However the compact D300 with the 18-200 AF-S lens was a very good upgrade from the D200 and as I have done a considerable amount of air travel in the last 18 months it has proved to be an ideal travelling camera, producing high quality results and low noise even at 1600 ISO.

In December 2008 Nikon finally announced the new D3x FX (full frame) with a 24.5 MP all new CMOS image sensor producing 6048 x 4032 pixels 14 bit images.

The NEF (RAW) files are 35.6 MB each requiring a large amount of computer processing power and storage space. The amount of very fine detail recorded is amazing but only the very best professional lenses will do. Nikon's new 14-24, 24-70 and 105mm macro AF-S lenses were designed with the D3x in mind. I had purchased these in early 2008 but was in for a shock: the D3x body UK launch price was £5,500, compared with £3,000 for the D3. By February 2009 prices were down slightly and reviews were all good. I had to get one!

As Nikon's main rival, the Canon EOS-1Ds Mk 3 21.1 MP, was still selling for £5,200 there were few grounds for complaint. By August 2009 both D3x and 1Ds Mk3 bodies were still selling at about £4800.

The new camera is very similar to the D3 and apart from the suffix x it would be hard to tell them apart. Both cameras share the same robust weatherproof bodies and near indestructible shutters. For me the D3x is a huge step up from the D2x. Image quality is outstanding, and the fine detail is more than most photographers would ever need.

Processing the 35.6 MB NEFs needs a powerful and fast computer and Nikon's Capture NX2 software slows up if you have too many images open at the same time.

Studio portrait with detail enlarged

The files open in Photoshop as 16 bit 139 MB Tiff files, so you need plenty of RAM and a very fast graphics card. Even at 300% in Photoshop you can only just see the very fine pixels. Blacks are very pure with no noise at all up to 400 ISO but even at 1600 ISO shadow noise is still well controlled and at A3 prints are still of very high quality. I have not tried the D3x beyond 1600 ISO but reviews say this is where the D3 scores, impressing every sports and wild life photographer who has used one. Even the new compact Nikon D700 12.1 MP FX
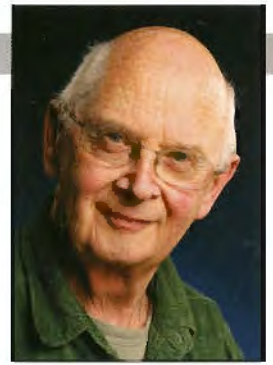
camera that came out in the middle of last year aimed at the semi-pro market is also a world leader in terms of high quality ISO performance.

I will not dwell too much on technical specifications as all this can easily be found on Nikon's web site. As a studio camera it would be hard to fault and results are now getting close to top end digital backs on medium format cameras. The D3x is much easier to use than any medium format camera and has a far wider range of top quality lenses. The D3x can also use DX lenses in a special crop mode.

Auto focus is fast and accurate with 51 focus points (including 15 cross-type sensors for action tracking). Focus tracking is automatically activated with AF-S lenses according to subject status. After seven months using the D3x I have yet to have an unsharp picture even in poor light. Frame rate is slow compared with the D3 but for a studio camera 5 frames a sec for 12 bit NEFs is adequate but at 2 frames a second with 14 bit NEFs this may not be fast enough for a fashion photographer.

Like the D3 the camera takes two compact flash cards but has increased buffer size to cope with the larger files. To take full advantage of the fast processing you need ultra fast cards. I use a pair of SanDisk Extreme IV 8 GB cards. Each card holds 154 14 bit NEFs or 200 12 bit NEFs.

The 1005-pixel RGB sensor 3D Matrix exposure metering system is hard to fault and as yet I have not needed to use the spot or centre weighted

Below: 1/160 at f/16 at ISO 100

Nikon D3x FX

*Detail enlarged shows
the definition achieved
with the Nikon*

modes. The dynamic range is very high with first class retention of highlight detail and accurate colour reproduction. An amazing amount of highlight and shadow detail can be recovered from over or underexposed NEF files in Nikon Capture NX2. So far I have rarely needed to correct exposure in post production.

The bright large viewfinder is 100% accurate and easy to use: the larger FX field is a big improvement after years of using DX format cameras. The 3 inch 929,000 dot LCD Monitor is ultra high definition but still proves difficult to see in bright sun!

The LCD glass is said to have great damage resistance but I have still fitted a third party see-through cover.

Like the D300, the D3X has Live View allowing you to compose and shoot using the monitor: I have yet to find much use for this feature.

Is this the camera for you? If you are into landscape or still life studio photography and need the fine detail of a 4x5 inch view camera you will be very pleased with the D3x. It is a large professional DSLR needing a full range of top glass to exploit its full potential. It is aimed at the advertising, commercial or industrial photographer who in the past would have used studio large format or medium format cameras. It is able to produce very high quality large files needed for top quality reproduction. As these reproductions indicate, the recording of very fine detail is amazing. On the other hand, if your aim is to produce top quality A3 exhibition prints there are any number of first class cameras in the 12 MP range capable of doing all you need for 20% of the cost of a D3x body.

The latest development from Nikon and other camera makers is to upgrade models to include high definition movie recording. Canon with its full frame 5D Mk II and 500D, then Nikon with the D90 and now the upgraded D300s (pushing the price up from £1,100 to £1,500) which is due out soon.

Do we need this added feature? I for one will not replace my D300 and will continue to shoot moving images with a camera dedicated to that function. I am very glad that Nikon has not gone that way with the D3x and spoilt the best camera I have ever owned.

40 YEARS ON

You can't have missed all the nostalgic excitment of that first Moon landing all those years ago. You no doubt remember where you were - assuming you're old enough - but here's a unique photographic memory from Tony Healy. Australia was fortunate enough to be facing the Moon at the critical time and seized the chance to make history.

Prior to the moon walk, the photographic department of every newspaper in Sydney comprised small cubicles where every photographer did his own thing to produce pictures that the editor would deem suitable to publish. Any of those photographers who happen to be alive today have a plethora of stories on the special personal techniques they used to get the picture from film to editor's desk, with not always successful results.

In 1969 the edifice at 2 Holt Street, Surry Hills was Mirror Newspaper Ltd. They had tendered, and won, the syndication rights for the pictures coming from the Parkes dish to the OTC Centre in Paddington before being sent on to Houston Control in Texas. The images were to be displayed on a special TV monitor and photographed with a Fairchild camera fitted with a Graflex 70 mm back.

The camera took a picture every ten seconds or as required. The 70 mm back held 15 feet of film sufficient for 50 exposures.

The Mirror photographic manager, Max Ross, realised that apart from the fact they did not have 70 mm processing equipment, they could not possibly expect to cope with that volume of film processing and volume printing within the expected time frame.

Kodak Australia/Asia had just introduced a film processor that would process film up to 10 inches wide, dry to dry in just six minutes. News Ltd approached Kodak with the proposition to install a processor at the Mirror to use for this purpose. The installation would make the Mirror the first newspaper in Sydney to install machine processing in an Australian newspaper. The installation was started on Wednesday 16 July and a fellow Kodak representative and I were given the job to make sure the processor was operational for the first rolls of film on Monday 21 July.

I drew the short straw to be the person to feed the first roll of film into the processor. To stand there with that roll of film in my hand and realise the ramifications if Murphy's Law was invoked was a bit daunting. Fortunately the whole exercise went like clockwork, despite some drama behind the scenes - and the world received the pictures.

Sydney Newspaper and Kodak Join To Give the World Moon Pictures

In this picture the Versamat Processor at Mirror Newspapers is shown. It was used to process Pictures of television images transmitted direct from the Moon to Parkes radio telescope and relayed to O.T.C. at Paddington, Sydney. Seen with the processor are L to R Tony Healy (Kodak Sydney), Max Ross (Mirror Pictorial Editor), Derek Davis (Kodak Sydney) and Roy McInnes (Asst. Pictorial Editor, Mirror Newspapers)

Tony's on the left of the picture in the newspaper cutting above. And, on the right, here he is today on a recent trip to Alaska captured by wife Joan. His digital back Leica is at the ready. Watch out for a future DIGIT article from Tony on this fantastic cruise where they enjoyed wildlife ranging across bears, sea otters, puffins, orcas, whales, sea lions, mountain goats, dolphins, bald eagles, birds galore and of course glaciers. A great wildlife frontier says Tony.

EVEN SHARPER
LUMINOSITY BLEND MODE AND
SELECTIVE SHARPENING

Following his **Start Here** article in the spring issue of DIGIT this year (No 41) Chairman Clive Haynes takes us through more sophisticated sharpening techniques. Although Clive has retired from full time college teaching he is active in the club circuit, lecturing and judging and sits on the L panel of the Society. His website at **www.crhfoto.co.uk** contains a wealth of information on Photoshop routines, including sharpening.

The starting image: a studio portrait of The Fisherman

Luminosity Mode

In this article I'm exploring two methods of refining the sharpening process. Last time I touched on the benefit of using this filter in Luminosity Blend Mode and now I will expand on that and also explore how to apply sharpening to selected areas of an image.

Unsharp Mask using Luminosity Blend Mode

When sharpening it's frequently advisable to avoid sharpening the colour information within an image as this can reveal an increase in visible colour noise. Sharpening is often better carried out in the monochrome portion of the image known as Luminosity. The Luminosity (Lightness) content of the image provides the essential structural detail of the picture. To sharpen the Luminosity content only, copy the image to a new Layer. Change the Blend Mode of this Copy Layer from Normal to Luminosity. To do this click on the drop-down arrow next to Normal at the top left of the Layers Palette and from the drop-down menu list of Blend Modes choose Luminosity at the bottom - see screen grab on the left.

Set Unsharp Mask to an appropriate amount for the image. Careful examination will reveal a lack of colour noise.

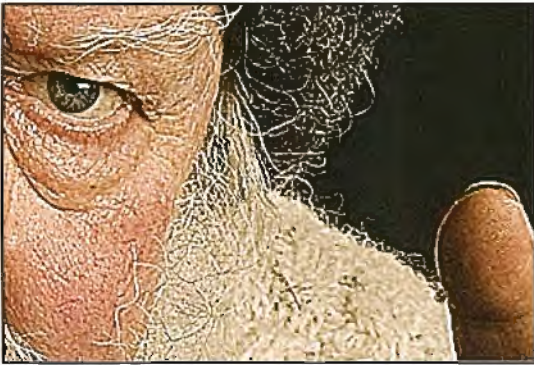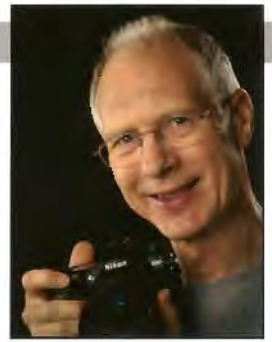Colour Noise may be difficult to see. However, magnifying a portion of the image allows us to see this annoying result. Even if the noise generated is small it will begin to erode the quality of the image. If, as serious photographers, we wish to have consistent quality throughout our workflow, attention to detail is essential. Using a small portion of the example image, the screen-grabs that follow illustrate how using Luminosity Blend Mode successfully eliminates colour noise. The examples are all captured at 500% on-screen magnification. This large magnification better illustrates the problem and its effect upon image fidelity. To further understanding and as an aid to comparison, the amount of USM sharpening is deliberately excessive, set at 500%.

Above: Unsharpened original. 500% on-screen magnification.

Above: Sharpened with USM at Amount 500%, Normal Blend Mode at 500% on-screen magnification. Notice the colour speckling in the eyes, upper eyelid, rim of finger, in dark areas, amongst the hair and pink-looking flesh-tones.

Above: Sharpened with USM at Amount 500% Luminosity Blend Mode at 500% on-screen magnification. Notice cleaner non-coloured noise in the eyes, upper eyelid, rim of finger, in dark areas, amongst the hair and better flesh-tones - an improvement.
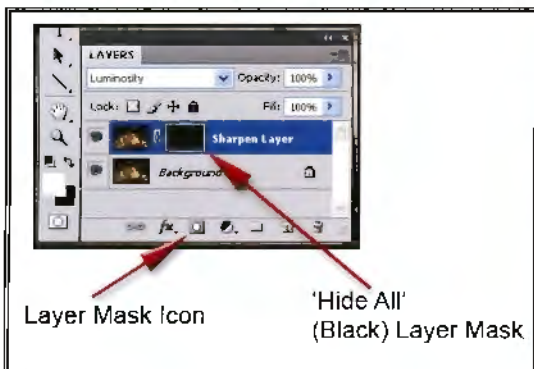
The Advantages of Selective Sharpening

Sometimes we wish to sharpen only part of the image. This, of course, can be done by first selecting and feathering the appropriate area then applying a sharpening filter. However, for more subtle effects and to keep our options open a more sophisticated method is recommended. This is simple to do and uses a Layer Mask.

The first step is to duplicate the image. To do this quickly within the Layers palette, drag the image layer (probably labelled 'Background') to the new layer icon at the base of the layers palette. Alternatively, use the route from the top menu bar, choosing Select > All, Edit > Copy, Edit > Paste. Sharpen the image on the new layer to the appropriate amount. A popular method is to use Unsharp Mask available via Filters > Sharpen > Unsharp Mask.

The next step is to hide the effect you have just created. So keeping the same layer active, go to Layer > Add Layer Mask > Hide All. The layer mask thumbnail on the layer appears as a black filled rectangle.

Alternatively, click on the Layer Mask icon (white circle in a grey rectangle) at the base of the layers palette. However, you'll need to hold down the Alt Key as you click to produce a Hide All mask (not using the Alt Key gives the Reveal All mask). The Layer Mask thumbnail will appear filled with black.

Layer Mask Icon

'Hide All' (Black) Layer Mask

With the foreground colour set to white and a suitable brush chosen, the layer mask can be stripped away to reveal the sharpening applied. To reverse the operation, choose black as the foreground colour and as you paint the area will be filled in again.

Depending on the brush tool selected, different pressures or opacities may be applied to make the effect more subtle. You may return to the layer mask at any time for more adjustments.

Note: For all Layer Mask operations you must activate the layer mask. Do this by clicking inside the layer mask thumbnail rectangle in the active layer. To return to normal layer mode, click in the image thumbnail in the active layer.

When you are satisfied with your image and the adjustments you have made, to reduce file size the sharpened layer may be merged with the original image.

Selective sharpening is a highly effective method of not showing sharpening artefacts such as halos and the sharpening of unnecessary and inappropriate areas.

The two example images below illustrate before and after selective sharpening. Notice how in the lower example, where selective sharpening has been applied, sharpening to the eyes, eyebrows and parts of the beard lend emphasis and character.
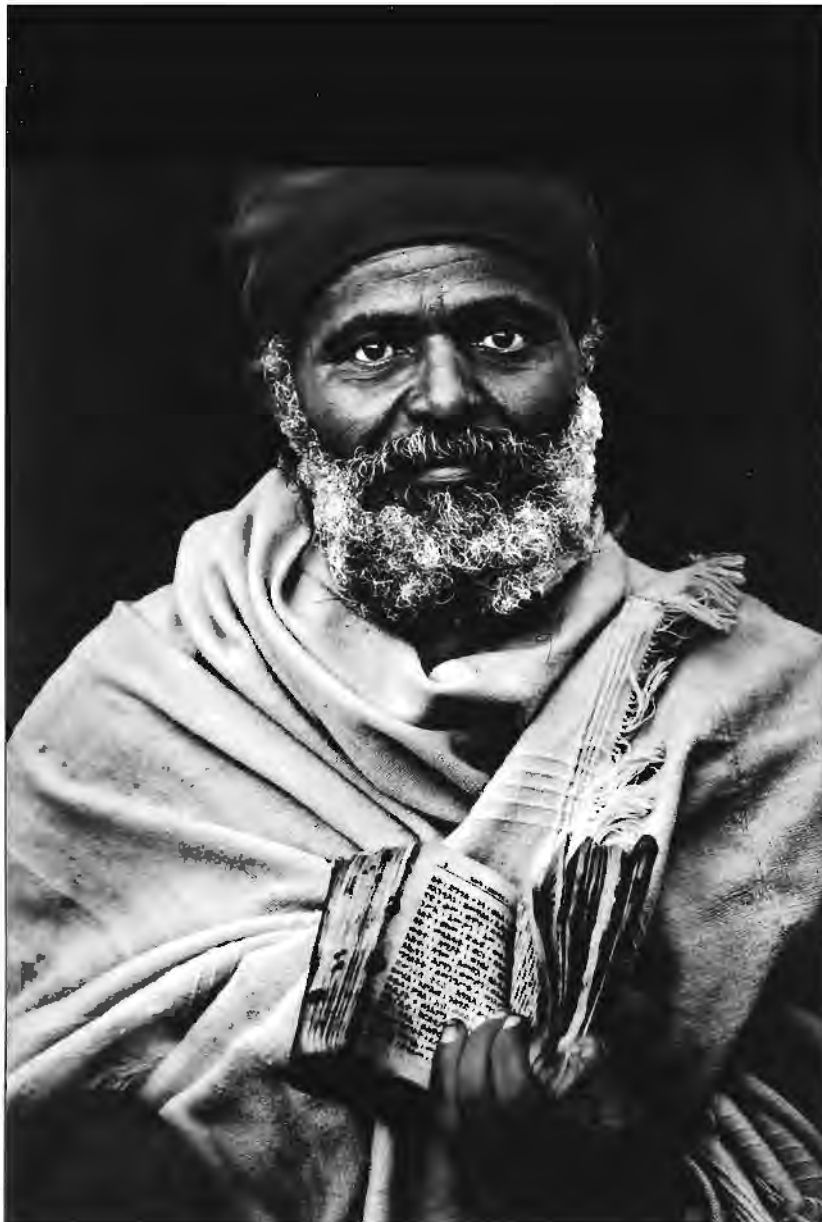
BREAKING THE LINK

Monochrome prints are not colour pictures with the colour taken out says Andy Beel FRPS, an exponent of moody mono. DIGIT featured his work in the spring issue of DIGIT in 2008 (No 37). Not surprisingly, he's a firm believer in the adage that *Pictures are taken but photographs are made.*

The phenomena of de-saturated colour files are regularly seen in club circles supposedly masquerading as black and white prints. The expressive monochrome print by necessity does not rely on the mimicry of the tones and the tonal range of a scene as found in nature. A big step forward is made when the printer (the person not the machine) of the photograph realises the tonality of the original scene as found in nature is not necessarily linked to the tones of the expressive black and white print.

Austrian photographer Josef Hoflehner makes this point very well in his studies of the Icelandic coast

Above: The original colour file and a mono version with the colour taken out

Left: The final expressive monochrome print

which you can see on his website at **www.josefhoflehner.com/publications.html.** In his stunning work he largely disregards the mid-tones (middle greys) relying on very controlled and separated highlight tones and solid blacks. This is not describing the landscape as it is but elevating it to art through the use of craft.

The key word here is expressive. We are not attempting to record and describe reality as pictorial photographers.

This is a fundamental point. The purpose of the expressive pictorial print is to communicate with the viewer at an emotional level what we saw and felt and not merely to describe how something looks as a record.

The expressive print also takes on an additional dimension which comes from the philosophy and attitude of the printer. The printer sees the original digital negative as a print that has only been designed to its concept stage. All other design decision are yet to be taken in the various stages in the process of coming to the final expressive print. A point made by many authorities is that pictures are taken but photographs are made.

The preparation and production of the expressive digital monochrome print in its editing stages will require the same degree of dedication, application, skill and experience that has always been vital to the darkroom exhibition print worker.

Andy is a Fotospeed-sponsored lecturer and you can see more of his work at: **http://www.fotospeed.com/gallery.asp**

PORTRAITS, FASHION AND NUDES

Graham Whistler FRPS

A DIGITAL IMAGING WEEKEND WORKSHOP

24 and 25 APRIL 2010

AT CHELTENHAM FILM & PHOTOGRAPHIC STUDIOS
Hatherley Lane, Cheltenham. GL51 6PN
www.cheltenhamfilmandphotostudios.co.uk

Clive Haynes FRPS

Tickets £105 for DI members

All other tickets £120

This exciting weekend workshop will be led by Graham Whistler FRPS for studio portraits. Clive Haynes FRPS will cover RAW files and Photoshop; and Simon Walden, principal photographer at Cheltenham Film Studios, who is well known for his workshops at the studios, will cover fashion and nude photography.

There's more information on the back cover with booking details.

You will be working with professional models and you will learn how to make portraits and figure studies like these examples.

Simon Walden

Numbers are limited to just 36. You will work in groups of nine, taking part in four workshops each day. Both Canon and Nikon DSLRs users will have experts on hand to guide them.

You should bring your own laptop and DSLR.

PermaJet are supporting the event with printers and paper to print members' pictures.
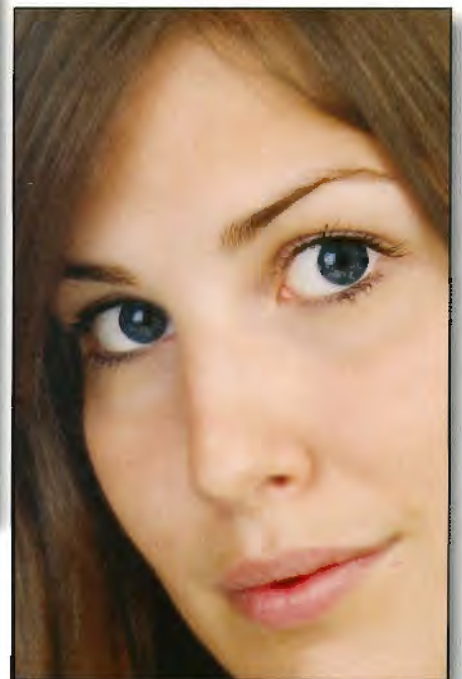
The studios are just one minute from J11 on the M5 with ample parking. Lunches are available at reasonable cost and a Travel Lodge (the best deals are available on their website) and other reasonably priced hotels are nearby.

Blue Drape by Simon Walden

Dennis - Studio Portrait by Jim Buckley LRPS

Photoshop Soft Focus by Clive Haynes FRPS

For more information see back cover or contact:
Graham Whistler FRPS, 9 Cherrygarth Road, Catisfield, Fareham, Hants PO15 5NA
Email: graham@gwpmultimedia.com Phone 01329 847944

The Royal Photographic Society

Patron: Her Majesty The Queen.   Incorporated by Royal Charter

D.I.G.
Digital Imaging Group

A DAY WITH STEVE CAPLIN   25 OCTOBER 2009

The Old School House, Smethwick Photo Society at Churchbridge, Oldbury, West Midlands B69 2AX
Easy access from M5, Junction 2 by car with ample parking, and by public transport from Birmingham International or New Street and Sandwell and Dudley stations. See **http://www.theoldschoolhouse.com** for map and routes.

Tickets £7.50 for DI members | ## Reality and Illusion | All other tickets £12

Digital imaging illustrator and Photoshop special-techniques and amazing manipulations specialist Steve Caplin presents an outstanding programme. Steve's books - *How to Cheat in Photoshop* and *Art and Design in Photoshop* amongst others - are well known. Be there for the opening of the International Print Exhibition; print competition with prizes; hear Steve on the ethics of photographic manipulation with current and historical examples; assessment and constructive advice of your own manipulated prints and images; and a Photoshop workshop demonstration and question session to round off an entertaining and practical event.

PROGRAMME

1000 onwards Coffee and biscuit and a chance to see the RPS International Print Exhibition on display. Members' prints displayed for instant competition.

1045 RPS President opens International print Exhibition

1100 Introduction and judging of prints.

1130 Steve Caplin on Reality and Illusion: Staging, Manipulation and Photographic Truth

1300 Lunch - Full Bar Bring your own or pre-order sandwiches

1400 Steve Caplin assesses members' prints, and images submitted electronically, with manipulation or montage

1500 Steve Caplin on Photoshop

1630 Questions and discussion

1700 Tea and biscuit and close

Book your ticket with the Society
at *reception@rps.org*
or phone 01225 325733

BRING YOUR PRINTS AND SEND IMAGES ELECTRONICALLY
Full information available from the DI Group website at **www.rps.org** in Events or email to **editor@digit.rps.org**

A WEEKEND OF PORTRAITS   24 & 25 APRIL 2010
2 DAY WORKSHOP CHELTENHAM FILM STUDIOS

Tickets £105 for DI members | All other tickets £120

Portraits, Fashion and Nudes

See below and inside back cover of DIGIT for more details. To reserve a place contact Graham Whistler at graham@gwpmultimedia.com or phone 01329 847944. £50 deposit required and balance by 1 February 2010.

This weekend workshop, where there are just 36 places, will be led by Graham Whistler FRPS (studio portraits), Clive Haynes FRPS (RAW files and Photoshop) and Simon Walden (principal photographer at Cheltenham Film Studios - fashion and nude photography), who is well known for his workshops at the studios. Two professional models will be booked for the weekend. There will be instruction on the use of both Canon and Nikon DSLR cameras. PermaJet are supporting the event with printers and paper and you will be able to print your pictures. All three tutors will display examples of their work. There will also be room for members to display their pictures taken during the event. Bring your own laptop.
Lunches available and a Travel Lodge and other hotels are nearby.