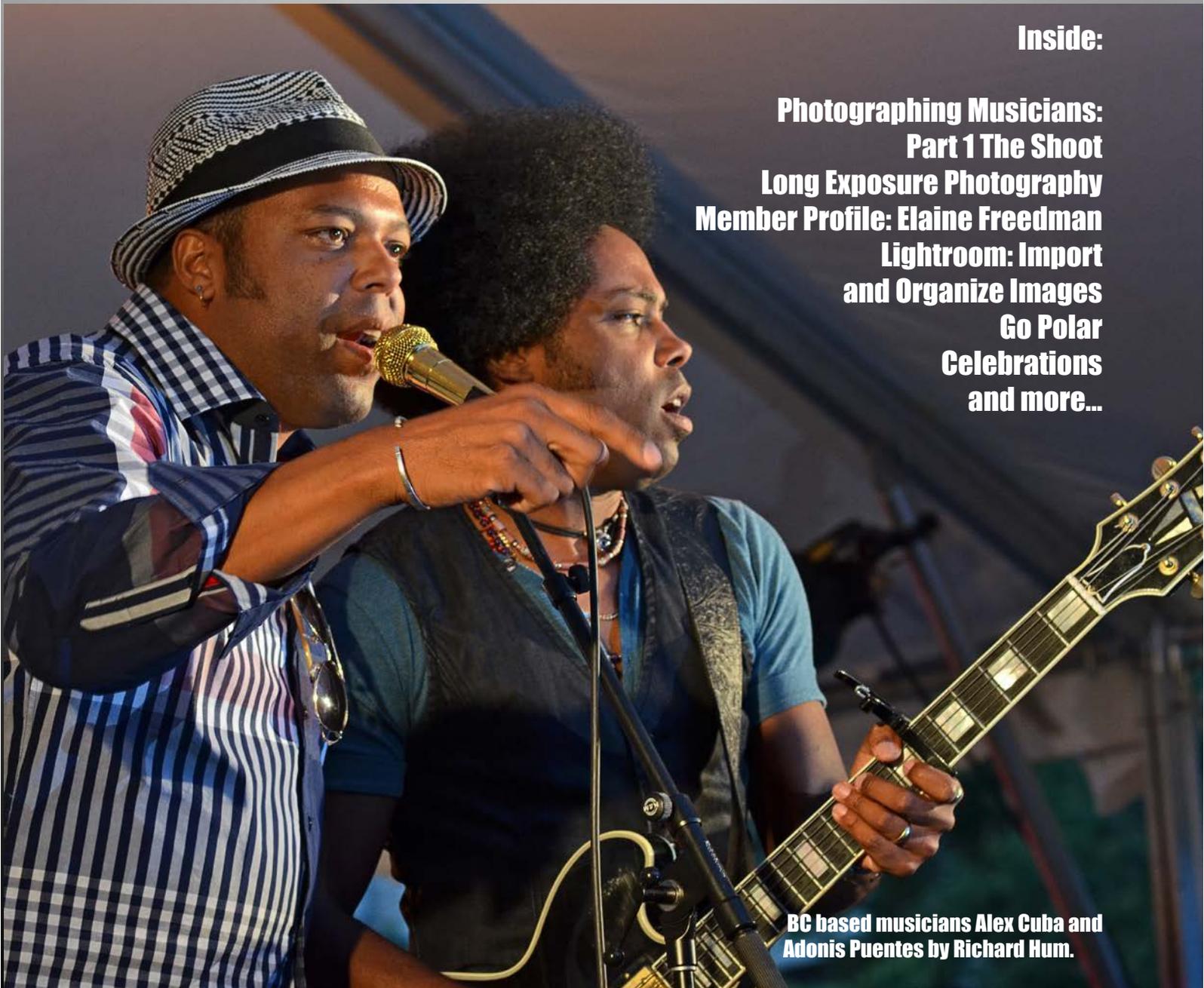


Close-Up

Inside:

**Photographing Musicians:
Part 1 The Shoot
Long Exposure Photography
Member Profile: Elaine Freedman
Lightroom: Import
and Organize Images
Go Polar
Celebrations
and more...**



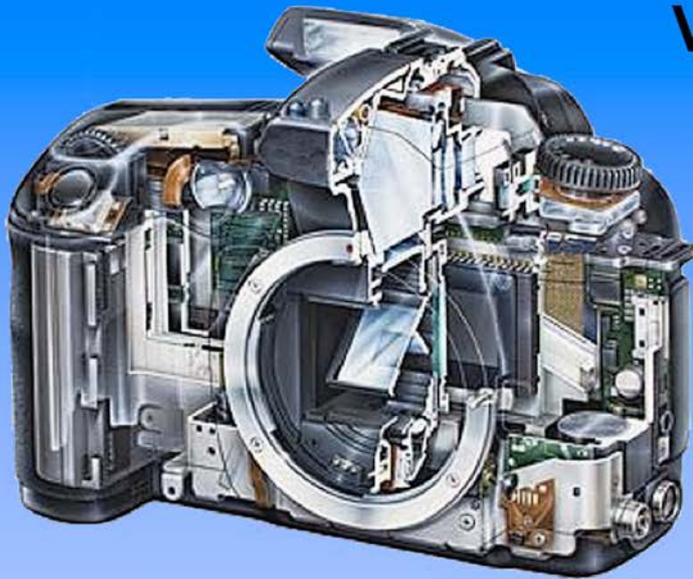
**BC based musicians Alex Cuba and
Adonis Puentes by Richard Hum.**

December 2014 Volume 67 Number 9

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Victoria Camera Club



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 Editor, Richard James, e-mail to newsletter@victoriacameraclub.org
 for submissions or to advertise in *Close-Up*.

Established in 1944, the Victoria Camera Club is a group of people who share the love of photography. We come together to appreciate each other's images, to learn, both from the feedback on our own images and from the images of others, and to exchange tips on how and where to take effective photographs. Our focus is on continuous learning. Our media include both film and digital and our expertise ranges from novice to master.

Events

We hold a number of events including:

- Three meetings a month from September to April (excluding December)
- Field trips
- Workshops
- Special Interest Groups (SIGs)
- Competitions within the club and externally

Meetings begin at 7:30 PM at Norway House, 1110 Hillside Avenue, Victoria, BC.

Membership

Annual fees include all workshops (except studio shoots and special events), meetings and all field trips unless travel/accommodation is involved. Annual fees are: Individual, \$85; Family, \$128; Student, \$43.

For current event information and locations please go to the website victoriacameraclub.org where you can also read or download the colour version of *Close-Up*.

For additional information: please contact the appropriate Committee Chair:

- Membership:* membership@victoriacameraclub.org
 - Workshops:* workshops@victoriacameraclub.org
 - Field Trips:* fieldtrips@victoriacameraclub.org
 - Meetings:* meetings@victoriacameraclub.org
 - Website:* webmaster@victoriacameraclub.org
 - Close-Up:* newsletter@victoriacameraclub.org
- or call Lloyd Houghton, President at 250-580-7154.

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Member Discounts: VCC members can take advantage of discounts offered by several retailers in Victoria. Details are on the members only page on our website.

The Victoria Camera Club is a member club of the Community Arts Council of Greater Victoria (CACGV), Canadian Association for Photographic Arts (CAPA), and the Photographic Society of America (PSA).



Calendar

Our workshop and field trip program is too extensive to list in *Close-Up*. Please go to the calendar page on the website (www.victoriacameraclub.org) for the latest details of all our workshops, field trips and meetings.

Thursday, Dec 4th; Christmas Social

Members enjoy a social evening with a “pot luck” feast. Details are on the website.

Our normal program will resume in January 2015.

Competition Night: January 8th (not January 1st).

Presentation Night: January 15th.

Member’s Night: January 22nd.

Featured Workshops in December

Advanced Lightroom.

Featured Field Trips in December

Craigdarroch Castle Christmas Decorations, Buchart Gardens Christmas Light Show, Esquimalt Lagoon.

Meeting, field trip and workshop visitor policy: Visitors are welcome to attend any three events in a two month period subject to the availability of space and a \$20 per session fee for workshops.

Message From The Editor

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members who have contributed to *Close-Up* during the past year. It really is you, those who write articles for *Close-Up*, that make this magazine what it is. Thanks are also due to the editorial team which includes John Coenraads, Bobbie Carey, Gordon Griffiths and Ragnar Eeg. I would also like to thank our advertisers without who’s support the printed edition of *Close-Up*, one of the main sources of promotion for the club, would not be possible.

Cover image: “Alex Cuba and Adonis Puentes” by Richard Hum. The twin Puentes brothers were born in Cuba, but have made Victoria and Smithers their homes since 1998. Initially taught by their musician father, they are Canadian Juno Award and Grammy Award nominees with a challenging repertoire of Cuban-style music.

Richard made this image at a performance at St. Ann’s Academy in the summer of 2014. Read about his techniques for photographing musicians on page 5.

President’s Message

What a great exhibition! If you didn’t see our 70th Anniversary Print Show, you missed a great display of our club members’ work. The show committee worked hard at setting requirements that would produce a more professional looking show than in the recent past. They certainly achieved that. The following unsolicited feedback from one of our members summed up the show pretty well, “*Not only were the works themselves of high quality but the presentation of the show was very well done. The variety of the subject matter was also wonderful and added to the enjoyment of the whole experience.*”

The opening reception for the print show was a double header, the show and the formal release of our 70th Anniversary Book. It was a pleasure to see non-members leafing through the book and expressing their delight at the standard of images they were seeing. The book and the print show have been instrumental in quite a few new members joining the club. Another quote from a member, who was very pleased with the book says “*However, my praise has only increased over time as I show the book to others and hear their positive feedback.*”

It’s too late to see the print show, but it’s not too late to get a copy of the book. There are a few left for sale, but don’t leave it too long. There is not going to be a re-print.

While the onset of winter is a good time to start sorting and editing all those images taken during summer vacations, it doesn’t mean you have to put your camera into hibernation. While plenty of the great images we see in the club are from exotic locations at the far end of a flight, or from photogenic locations a few hours drive from home, there are plenty of subjects that can be found within walking distance or less from your couch. We walk past subject matter that well known photographers would see, and then stop for. That’s one of the big differences between us and them; they really see, no matter where they are. I like the way James Morgan put it in his book *Chasing Matisse*, “*It’s not the scene, it’s the seeing.*”

How many times have you seen someone else’s image and told yourself you could have taken that. If you want to lift your images from the mundane to the eye-catching, training yourself to really see will definitely make a difference. But you’re going to have to slow down and linger a little longer, move around, turn around, look up, or look down. Then you’ll start to see what the big names are seeing.

Lloyd Houghton, President

by Gita McCormick and Richard Hum

In this article we are going to outline some of the important considerations when shooting musical performances. This type of photography is challenging from a number of aspects, and we will try and give you some guidelines. Most importantly, get out there and practice, and practice some more!

First and foremost be prepared for the event. That means being rested, fed and hydrated yourself. Have all your gear checked, batteries charged and packed where you can easily access it. Pre-set your ISO and your other "standard" settings.

Shooting outside and shooting indoors present different lighting challenges. Usually the lighting that presents itself is going to determine how you will shoot your subject.

Like any other action photography, knowing the performers' style and understanding your subject goes a long way to enable you to capture your shot. This helps you to anticipate actions, but they will always do something new.

Since your shooting locations are going to be quite restricted, it is important to scope out the venue. What would be some of the best angles to shoot from? Which spots are accessible once the performance gets under way? Where are the stage lights? Is there daylight?

Remember to move slowly and discreetly when amongst the audience. Stay out of the audience's line of sight. You do not want to draw attention to yourself. Normally this means staying low and/or off to the sides, or far back and up high. I dress in dark clothes if shooting inside a club to minimize being seen. If outdoors just dress comfortably and appropriately like any other audience member.



"AW Campbell"

You're almost certainly going to encounter mixed lighting; how to deal with it is important (get the face colour right unless you want purple skin etc!). I usually use incandescent or auto WB setting when in a night club. Most of the time, if coloured lights are being used, you will have a heck of a time trying to keep up with the rapid changes and you do not have time to fiddle with your settings once things get under way. Even if your objective is to produce JPEG quality images at the end of the day, this is one shooting scenario where shooting RAW gives you much better control and the ability to adjust the white balance in post-processing.



"Maceo Parker"

Getting the exposure right is challenging as the lighting varies from quite strong to very dark. Use matrix metering when shooting a group and centre weighted metering mode for tight shots. Always check the histogram as lighting changes; make sure you are not clipping the highlights.

Performance stages are often cluttered and getting a clean shot (i.e. mic not in face) can be difficult. There will always be a mic on the vocalists and you want to avoid taking a frontal shot shooting up. The vocalist will look like they have a growth or are eating the mic which is not flattering. It is often best to approach from the side.

The facial expression and body language of musicians are important to capture as they are what you see with no audio for reference in a photograph. Not all shots will be flattering but they could be extremely interesting photographically. The art of observing what each musician is doing will go a long way to capturing especially intense, internalized or cathartic experiences.

(Continued on page 7...)



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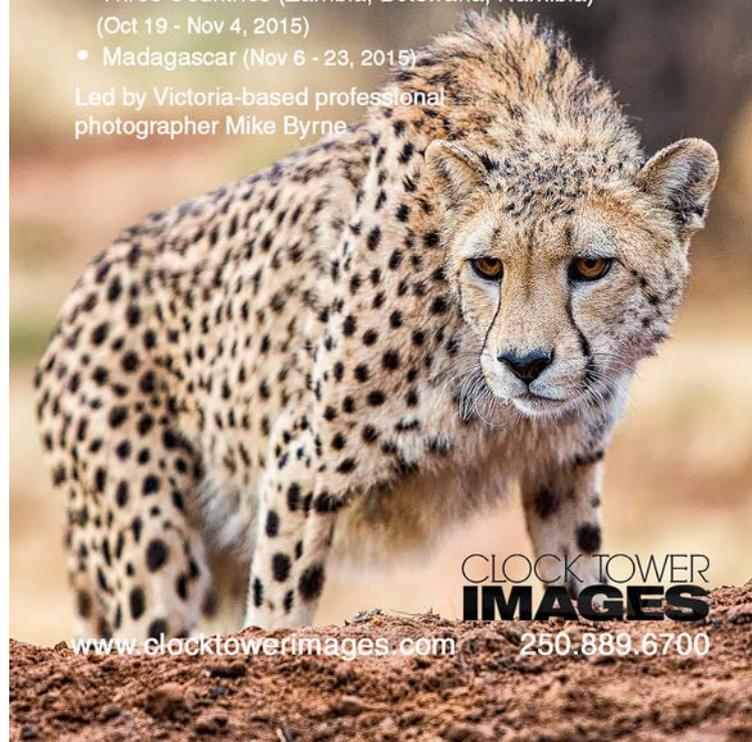
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Can you Control Daylight?

The answer is “yes, of course you can!” Each subject requires different considerations. You can’t move the subject in a landscape but you can change the camera position, time of day, or wait for different weather conditions.

A really useful app for landscape photographers is “The Photographer’s Ephemeris” (TPE). This is available as a webbased app (PC or Mac), as well as versions for iOS and Android devices. There is also a companion app available for the iPad called “The Photographer’s Transit.”

Together these allow you to determine the time and direction of sunrise/sunset and moonrise/moonset as well as providing a detailed three-dimensional picture of the visual coverage of the lens that you plan to use and the lighting on the landscape in front of you where you plan to shoot on a given day. So your biggest problem now is forecasting the weather.

If you are shooting “environmental portraits” then you have to control two things, the lighting on the environment and the lighting on the subject. The environment

is similar to the landscape, but the subject is movable and can be positioned to suit the lighting as well as the environment. For example, do you want the model on the sunny side or the shadow side of the tree? Do you need to use reflectors to direct the sunlight back into the shadow side of the subject?

Let’s change the scale and consider close-up or macro shots of flowers or fungi. Now we are back to the immovable object and probably a very limited range of camera positions from which you can shoot any given flower or fungus and get the image you want. So this really takes us into the realm of controlled lighting. Shooting a flower in a Garry Oak meadow you are likely to need a reflector to fill in the harsh shadows.

Even in a rainforest there is still a shadow and highlight side of the fungus or flower. So you can use a reflector to add light to the shadow side of the subject. If you are careful, you can use two reflectors to fill in the shadows but also lighten the background if it is in shade. But a word of caution, using two light sources in addition to sunlight can create disturbing dual shadows if the reflected light overlaps.

The trick is to capture these elements in a compositionally clean manner with interesting lighting and enough contextual background.

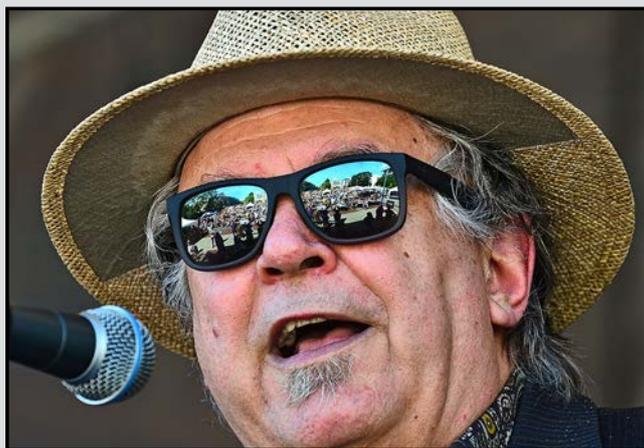
Not only is the stage cluttered but the backgrounds can be visual disasters! Most of the time there is nothing you can do about it except employ photographic strategies. These include shallow DOF, close-ups of individuals or changing your shooting angle to minimize the distracting background. We will deal with backgrounds in post-processing in part 2 of this article.

Unless it is a totally open venue, you are probably going to need permission to shoot from the organizers. Sometimes this will be difficult to get, at other times simply offering images may get you in. It may be helpful to have a sample of some of your work to show. If you are going to use your images for other than personal enjoyment, then you're going to need a model release as well.

Great photographs tell a story. It is not always easy, but I find that if the musicians are interacting a lot with each other on stage, or with the audience who are also reacting, then you are capturing the human side of the performance. Understanding what type of music the musician is known for will help you tell their story.

There will be a variable flow of action during the show and even within a particular piece. The best shots often come in the peak of the action. Some musicians will inherently be more physical than others and capturing them when they perform a mini-solo often gives great shots.

Lens choice will vary depending on whether you are shooting in a dark, intimate club indoors, a large theatre venue, or outside with or without a stage cover. A 17-55 mm lens on a DX body (24 – 85 mm FX equivalent)



“David Vest”



“Ganga Giri”

usually fits most shooting needs. If you are going to be shooting more close-ups you will need a longer zoom. If you can walk around, then a prime lens in range of 24-85 mm usually fits the bill especially indoors with their wider apertures (often f2.8). If shooting outdoors you may want to also carry a 70-200 mm zoom. Just keep in mind that you will have to carry all your gear with you. I try to find different spots where I can semi-conceal my gear under the stage or put my jacket over my camera bag and always be within a foot of it. It's best to have an assistant, or someone who can look, keep an eye out and guard your stuff while you are busy.

If you have to push the ISO to uncomfortable levels like 6400... well, just do it. No one will say anything about the noise or artifacts if you got the shot. Remember, there are some good software options for minimizing noise. But if you have a blurry shot with fine grain, who cares?

I occasionally use a tripod but then I mostly switch to hand-held and try to brace my shooting hands on anything I can find indoors including columns, chairs, tables and drinking glasses. A sturdy monopod is more useful and discreet. If you are shooting outside then go hand-held. Occasionally when outdoors I will use on-camera fill-flash but I prefer not to as it draws attention to me and if it is darkish the flash will be more intense and therefore annoying and disruptive to the performers.

I keep some of the following in my bag in addition to camera gear. Earplugs, to keep me sane as I have very sensitive hearing. It is less tiring when your ears are not being constantly blasted with sound waves. Eye drops, wet wipes, Tylenol, and cough drops with silent wrappers are must-have items to help you get you through the performance, especially at an indoor venue.

Next month we will cover post-processing these images.

by Rob Raymond

Long exposure photography has to come with patience; either you love it or hate it. You have to sit around for hours setting up different compositions, playing with your exposure time, and waiting for the image to process in the camera. For me LE (long exposure) is the ultimate work of art; in a single image you can create motion, enhance reality, and convey emotion. I like to look at a photo and get a feeling from it, whether I took the photo or not.

Finding your work of art can be a true adventure; you can't just sit in a studio and make these images happen. You have to get out and create an opportunity for yourself, whether it is a long flowing river in a forest, light trails in the city, or even light painting with steel wool. You have to envision it, experiment with it, and then improve upon that. You grow with every shot you take. My favourite thing about LE photos is that they let you have the feeling of enhanced reality. Letting me show the movement in the clouds, the texture in the water, and the stillness of the rocks is to me the ultimate recipe for greatness.

The feelings I got from seeing other people's photos are what made me want to head out and try to capture that same thing. So one morning off I went, on my first sunrise to Cattle Point to try and see what I could come up with. After the first shot I knew there was a lot of work ahead of me. I learned that my favourite subjects for LE photos are water, rocks, and clouds; they make dramatic photos.

Starting off with LE shots you don't need a filter, but I highly recommend it. The gear I carry in my bag would be; Nikon D600, Nikon 16-35 mm f4 wide angle lens, a tripod with ball-head, a wireless remote, a timer, and a B+W 3.0 MRC (10 stop filter). If you are look-



ing for those really long LEs then you have to get a filter. I also like to carry a Black Card. This gives you the ability to control the exposure from the horizon up, because the sky will always over expose before the foreground, throwing your histogram out the door. But I think that is a whole other article all in itself.

Once I reach a location I will take 5 or 10 minutes to analyze my surroundings. As soon as I step out of my vehicle I start picturing everything as if I am looking through my viewfinder. Just because I have LE in my mind, I don't let other shots I see pass me by as I stroll down to my final destination. I will stop and capture those shots as well.

Once I have a general idea of the shot, my first priority is composition. When I look through the viewfinder I like to add an element of something into the foreground. These are called "Lead in Lines." These are subjects that can draw your eye or attention into the picture. Placement of rocks, or the flow of a stream, or the angles of a city street, are all things that can bring your attention to the focus of your frame. This will help you create dimension and help make your photographs pop off the page.

To me composition is every bit as important as correct exposure. Now let's get the camera and tripod in place. Just because I have taken the time to look for a great shot does not mean it will look as good in the camera so I might have to take a little more time looking through the viewfinder and moving the camera around a bit to find the photo that I am trying to nail.

We have now found our sweet spot. Now let's find our focal point. I like to focus between the first third and the middle of the picture for whole frame sharpness. But you can experiment with your focus point (single focal point); you might like to have it tack sharp in the front of the frame with some softness in the back or the other way around. The good thing with photography is that there is no right or wrong, and who is one to tell you what you like?

Now that we have locked our focus, flip the switch on your lens into manual focus and do not touch the focus ring on the lens, or you will have to lock your focus point again. The reason you do this is because your camera cannot see when you screw your 10 stop filter on the front of your lens and if you try to focus with the filter in place, the lens will continue to hunt for a spot to focus on. Then you will have to take the filter off and go through the steps of focusing again.

So now that we have the filter in place it is time to take your shot. The settings I like to use are between f8 and f11 at ISO 100 and in Bulb mode. Oh, and did I mention always shoot in RAW?

I like to shoot with long exposure noise reduction on. What this does is help control noise and hot pixels. For example, if you take a one minute shot, when that minute is over the camera will take and process the so-



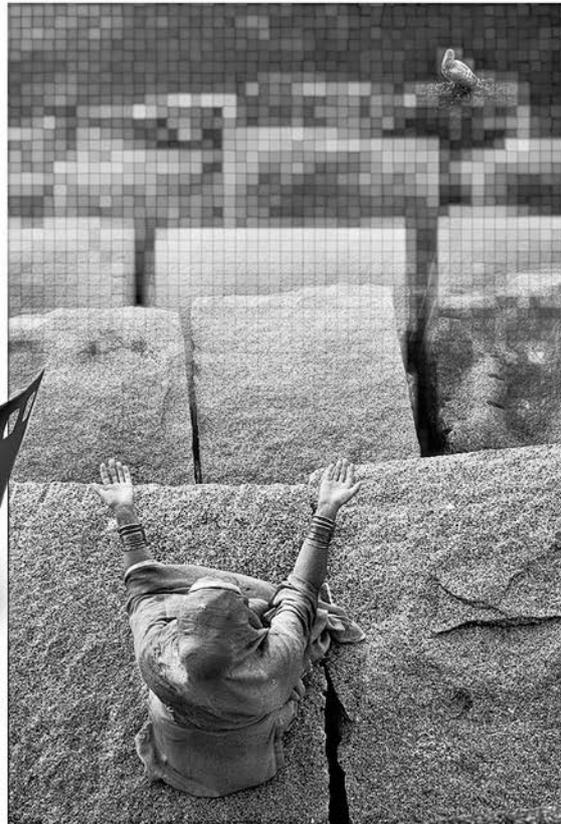
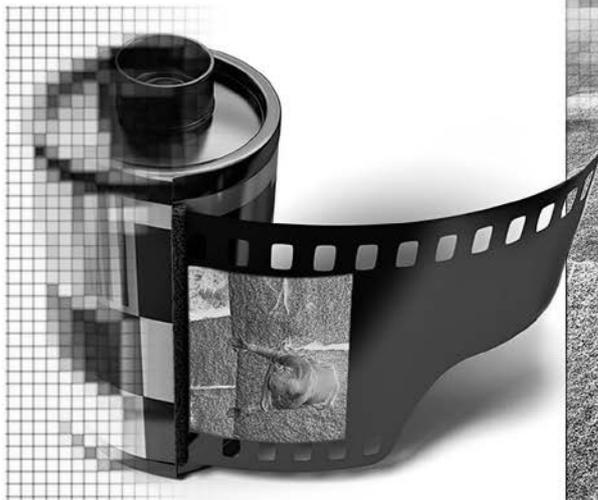
called "dark frame" image for exactly the same amount of time. So that would be something to remember if you are shooting the sun right on the horizon or some amazing colours in the sky and the light is changing rapidly.

That being said you do not have to shoot with a deep filter on. I do and it works for me, but you might not like the results. So now that we have taken our shot, it is time to look at it. You have either nailed the exposure judging from your histogram or you have clipped your shadows or your highlights. From there you would have to adjust your time. You might need longer, or you might need shorter, or if you're lucky and guessed correctly you got the outcome you were looking for. Just remember as the sun sets your exposure time will get longer and longer. I move around a lot and try to get as many photos as I can while I am out but not by sacrificing image quality. It's always quality over quantity. As you move around you will have to repeat every step for every shot.

Now you are off home to post process your newly taken images. From there your raw images are your canvas and you get to control the outcome of your adventure.

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Theme: Weathered

by Doug Ambridge

When I chose to write this article I thought, “How difficult can this be?” After all we all like to talk about the weather. However, “Weathered” is something else altogether. Here are some definitions I came across.

- Changed by exposure – so it can mean anything from satisfactorily toned down so as not to appear garish and new, to badly worn, damaged, and eroded.
- Seasoned by exposure
- Altered in colour, texture or composition, through either natural or artificial means

“Weathered” can also be a noun, adjective or verb. Here are some examples:

Noun: a specific place, day-to-day meteorological conditions, affecting or relating to the forecasting of weather, a prevailing state or condition.

Verb: to expose or be exposed to the action of the weather, to undergo changes, such as discolouration, due to the action of the weather, to withstand the action of the weather, to endure a crisis or danger.

Adjective: affected by exposure to the action of the weather, eroded, decomposed or otherwise altered by the action of water, wind, frost, heat, etc., artificially stained so as to appear weather beaten.

As photographers we are mostly looking for its use as adjective. The photograph may be any subject that illustrates the concept of the category. This could be of one or more structures, objects, plants, people (face and/or body), or animals that look weathered and worn.

So grab your camera and take a picture of something or someone that’s been around for a while and looks it.



October 2014 Competition Judges

We would like to thank our external judges for October, Allan Mandell, Allen Bargaen and Les Menard, for judging the Intermediate and Advanced categories. We also extend our thanks to our internal judges for the Novice category this month: VCC members Pam Irvine, Paul Ross, Caspar Davis, Suzanne Huot and Willie Waddell. All images and judges’ comments are available here: victoriacameraclub.org/vcccompetitions.

Allan Mandell: After twenty years as a freelance garden photographer with work published in magazines and books world-wide, he is doing more artwork, teaching workshops, and leading tours to photograph gardens in Kyoto, Japan.

His photography is based on three key ingredients: simplicity of line, harmony of proportion, and equality of attention. His photography is as much a gateway to the inner world of the photographer/viewer as it is to the beauty displayed in the outer world. The rational and the lyrical, the formal and the abstract, the known and the unknown, this is the world within a flower, and within a Zen garden. Visit Allan’s website at: allanmandell.com.

Allen Bargaen: Allen is a Past President of CAPA, (Canadian Association for Photographic Art), and holds several major CAPA distinctions for his photography and dedication to the art of photography including their highest honour, FCAPA. Allen is a CAPA Certified Judge, and teaches their Judging Course in cities across Canada and abroad. His interests include all genres of photography, with an emphasis on Nature and Sports. He offers lectures and adventure shows across the country and presents his work internationally to other photographic societies. Visit Allen’s website at allenbargaen.com.

Les Menard: Les has been a member the Windsor Camera Club which is affiliated with The Greater Detroit Camera Council and Western Ontario Federation of Camera Clubs and PSA since the early 1970s. His personal journey to becoming the photographer that he is today started with the realization that he was motivated by the desire to achieve and not by competing with others.

Les has evolved from being a photographer to being an artist who uses photography as a medium. “My pictures are painted with light, I am not overwhelmed by colours as I am colour-blind. I want my pictures to have emotion, I want you to love or hate them, I do not want them to be mediocre.”

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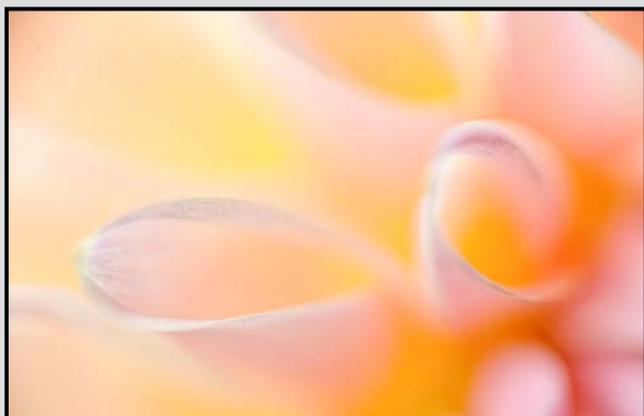
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Advanced Digital Nature - 1st "Just an Empty Shell"
by Gail Takahashi

Judge's comments: You know, sometimes less is more, as is the case with this shot. It is so simple that it excels in its singleness. What wonderful detail we see in this discarded shell with nothing else to distract us. The purples of the bottom shell provide dimension to the image, and isolate it from the browns of the sand it rests on. The slight twist opens the scene within for us, the story is quite clear.



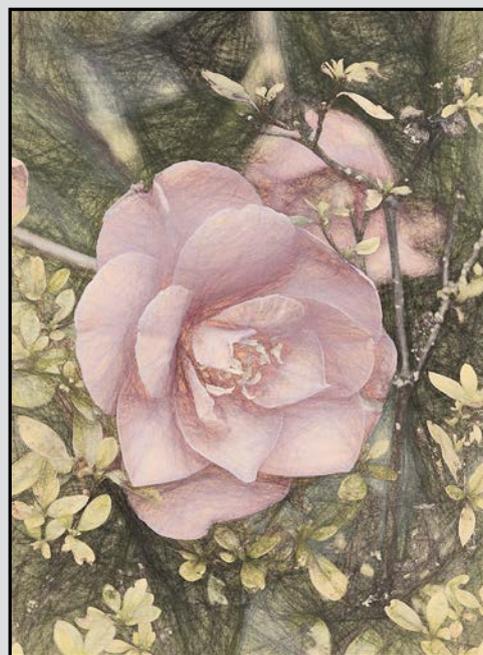
Advanced Digital Theme - 2nd "Dahlia"
by Richard James

Judge's comments: One can feel the softness with the exposure and focus. Use of pastel shades enhances the subject. Nice shot.



Advanced Digital Open - 1st "Vintage Beauty"
by Barbara Burns

Judge's comments: This incredibly well created image is a stunning example of how dramatic color adds excitement and drama to an image. The model, resplendent in her red dress does not compete with the MG, she becomes part of the message. One is a vintage automobile, the other an obvious beauty. Together they create a stunning image.



Advanced Digital Creative - 1st "A Rose By Any Other Name"
by Dan Takahashi

Judge's comments: Smooth lines, pastel colours, interest, and imagination make this picture stand out. Central position of rose is differently pleasing. Beautiful shot.



Advanced Nature Print - 1st "Crested Caracara"
by Mike Wooding

Judge's comments: Great dynamic in-flight action, definitely publishable, nailed the focus, got the right light, love the way the bird breaks above the horizon line which amplifies its impact, wonderful wing feathers & tips, background gives a sense of the outdoor environment, it's all working here.



Advanced Open Print - 3rd "Gate One"
by Don Peterson

Judge's comments: This image has a nicely mysterious 'film noir' B-movie atmospheric feeling, and that atmospheric mood has just as much impact as the architectural structure, this is clean & tightly composed and moves into abstraction rather easily (which I particularly enjoy), this could lend itself to an interesting moody series, nicely printed.



Advanced Monochrome Print - 1st (tie) "Sidney Pier"
by Hanna Cowpe

Judge's comments: A very evocative image that speaks to the subconscious, nice simple forms in a resolved composition, with excellent print quality and tonal control, tack sharp, great use of open space, love the fuzzy underwater rocks.



Intermediate Digital Nature - 1st "Inner Sanctum"
by Dennis Crabtree

Judge's comments: There's just something different about this image. One might say intriguing. Apparently soft throughout, this is not so much a case of the maker taking a soft image, as it is about the maker taking an image of a plant with many soft parts. There is a sense of depth to it, and the pastels are very complementary to the overall mood of the close up shot.



*Intermediate Digital Open - 1st "Sky Portal"
by Jonathan Adams*

Judge's comments: This is a very nicely seen scene of the nighttime sky, and is nicely exposed for the stars. Evidence of a long shutter speed is clear since we see the stars as expanded dots. The layer of cloud is a very nice part of this image, especially where the starlight is seemingly extended to shine into the cloud illuminating a bit of the mid-ground.



*Intermediate Nature Print - 3rd "American Avocet,
San Francisco, CA" by Meherzad Romer*

Judge's comments: Very nice, love the graceful and uncommon pose. Good asymmetrical framing, beautiful restrained color palette, good one! Now start to investigate Japanese scroll paintings, there is so much for you to discover there.



*Intermediate Digital Theme - 1st "Flowers of
Chefchaouen, Morocco" by Steve Barber*

Judge's comments: Excellent capture of texture of wall, placement of window and S curve with the flowers enhance the photo, well done.



*Intermediate Digital Creative - 2nd "Madrona"
by Ian Crawford*

Judge's comments: Colours, texture, circular motion and imagination make this an outstanding shot.



*Intermediate Open Print - 1st "Under the Bridge"
by Bobbie Carey*

Judge's comments: A thoroughly lovely and very painterly image, so many things make this image successful. Great eye, this goes from the literal into the lyrical effortlessly, you've got command of the entire picture plane, the bounced light from the water is ethereal, the strong brown verticals are perfectly placed, the excellent focus and depth-of-field throughout, the subdued color palette sets a palpable tone - this is taking photography into the realm of art - you and your eye are already at an advanced level.



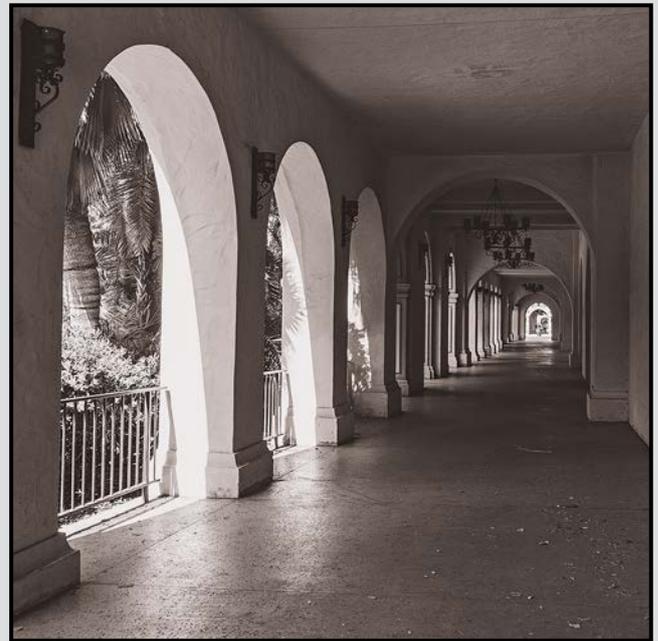
*Novice Digital Nature - 1st
"Angry Birds" by Christina Aitchison*

Judge's comments: Great capture of the two birds interacting. The maker dealt with the wide tonal range as best he/she could.



*Intermediate Monochrome Print - 2nd
"Playin' the Ivories" by Gita McCormick*

Judge's comments: very nicely done, good creative approach, lots of nice things going on here. I love the white keyboard dropping as a strong diagonal through the frame, in fact there is a lot of dynamic energy in this image; cool shot. The over-the-shoulder really works, I can hear him playing. Very nice overall tonality and printing. Good daring composition. You may enjoy looking at some of the vintage jazz photography from the '30s & '40s.



*Novice Digital Open - 1st "Balboa Park, San Diego"
by Chelsea Smyth*

Judge's comments: Beautiful image with interesting perspective. Good capture and exposure of light and shadow areas. Lovely composition with repeating lines.



*Novice Digital Theme - 2nd
"What's cracking?" by Michael Hofmann*

Judge's comments: Amazing shot. Simple and effective. Good lighting and exposure.



Novice Digital Nature - 2nd "Antarctic Glacier and Iceberg" by Carol Christensen

Judge's comments: Excellent handling of difficult snowy image. Focus and exposure are dead on - detail can be seen in the snow and ice. Details are also visible in the shadows of the iceberg.



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I became serious about photography 15 years ago while taking Visual Communications courses at Medicine Hat College in Medicine Hat, AB. I was taught the basics of photography with black and white film and darkroom processing. I had been painting and doing fibre arts at the time and was so hooked on photography I decided to concentrate on it.

I had belonged to the Medicine Hat Art Club and Fibre Arts Society but soon was organizing the Medicine Hat Photography Club and enjoyed sharing tips and ideas with other photographers. I live most of my time in Medicine Hat but when my husband and I bought a condo in Victoria I joined the Victoria Camera Club. I try to share ideas back and forth with my two clubs and in November showed two slide shows with the theme "Illumination" that were gallery shows from each city. My best advice for photographers is to join a club, take advantage of every workshop or field trip that interests you and enter the competitions for critique of your work.



"Birds in Paris - Burrowing Owl"

When I first started entering the competitions with VCC, everyone competed against everyone else; there were no novice and intermediate levels. It took me two years before I placed with an image and last year I entered every competition in every category for the whole year at the advanced level. I am cutting back on entries this year but plan a solo exhibition, a book and group shows as well as being a volunteer shooter for the Medicine Hat Exhibition and Stampede and the Canadian Cancer Society "Relay for Life." Volunteer jobs give me access to the events and also provide me with images for myself.

My camera equipment has changed over the years, I started with my film Nikon F100. I now shoot with a Nikon D800 as well as a new Olympus E-M1. My go-to lens is my 28-300 mm and I use my prime 80 mm for portraits. I also have a 500 mm which I took to Africa and use for bird

and wildlife photography. I plan to use this equipment for many years to come but of course you never know when you find something that you can't live without.

Over the years I have been interested in shooting a wide range of subjects. I continue to be interested in photography because I am always looking for something new to shoot or I'm trying to learn new techniques for post processing. I continue to love to photograph rodeo, my grandchildren and work on montages and digital art.

I always say that the only assignments in photography I have are the ones I give myself. I am so fortunate to be able to follow my passions and create images that fulfill me as an artist. Whenever I am invited to a wedding, I shoot lots of images but not as the official photographer. I share these images with the bride and groom and am always looking for photo opportunities that the professional photographers miss. When entering images for competition, I do try to enter images that I really like and not try to please the judges. But I do have to admit that when it comes to a gallery show the curator decides if they want the work and will choose what images they want in the show. Because of this I am more aware of what the curator is looking for than in just a photo competition. If you try to stay true to your own vision you will be a more successful photographer.

Please feel free to visit my website: elainefreedman-photography.com and contact me if I can be of help to you.



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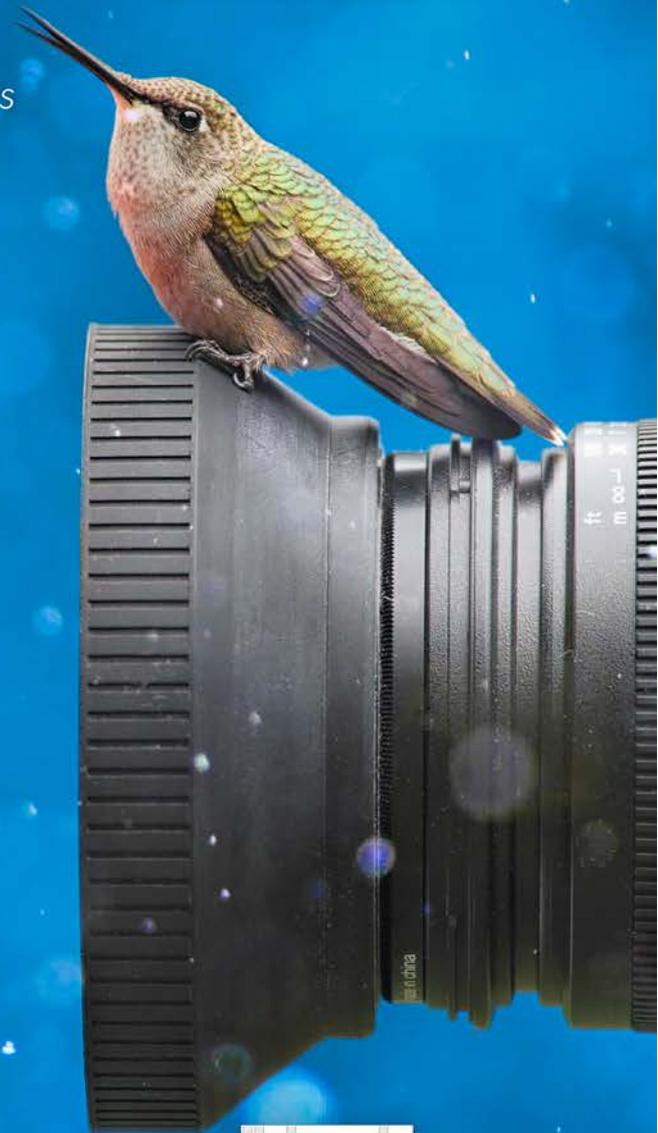
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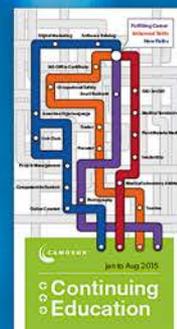
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Buying a Tripod

by John Roberts

When you are looking for a new tripod, and you see how many options and price levels there are, it is hard not to get overwhelmed. So, how you can narrow that down to a more manageable number, and pick from there.

The first thing you should consider is how tall are you? If you are under 170 cm or 5'10", then you have many tripods to choose from. If you are over 180 cm or 6'+, your options get fewer and tend to be bigger and heavier, unless you go for a super-light carbon tripod.

The next thing to consider is, how heavy are the camera and lenses that you want to use on the tripod? If you are using a mirrorless camera, you can use almost any tripod. If you are using a Nikon D4s with a 200-400 mm f4 lens you have very limited options. Tripods have a maximum weight limit listed on the box or the sales tag. Do not forget to check the maximum weight limit of the head you are using at the same time; it is fine to use a tripod that has a max load of 22 kg, but if the head only holds 3 kg and your camera and lens weigh 6 kg you are hooped! So check the specs of the head as well.

The third thing to consider is whether it is constructed out of, steel, aluminum alloy, magnesium alloy, or carbon/basalt fibre. Steel and aluminum alloy are the most common, the most inexpensive, and ergo tripods made from these materials will be the most cost effective. Magnesium alloy is lighter and stronger than aluminum alloy but costs a bit more. Carbon fibre is the strongest, super-light, and is more costly to produce, but it stops vibrations almost immediately. So if you are doing a lot of long exposures, the carbon or basalt fibre tripod is the best option. Beware of some of the inexpensive carbon/basalt tripods since some use heavy materials for the centre portion of the tripod. If you are paying carbon fibre money, you might as well go for one as light as possible.

Lastly, how many leg sections does it have? A 3-section tripod will have stronger sections, but will not be as compact as a 4-section tripod. Every section added makes the bottom section smaller, so a 5-section steel tripod could be too flexible when you put some load on it. If it is constructed of carbon fibre, that lower section will be just fine.

There are a lot of tripods that are available out there to choose from. Each one of them will fit the needs of a potential user. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask me about which tripod best suits your needs.

Image Sharpening: Part 2

by Richard James

This is the second in a series of articles on digital image sharpening. In the first article (November 2014) we provided a general overview of why sharpening is needed for all digital images. Now we will address a couple of image issues that affect how much and what type of sharpening is needed to produce an optimal image.

Can sharpening improve an image that is "too soft?" The answer to that is very simple, no. While there is software that claims to be able to "correct focusing errors," this is not something that sharpening can do. The simple explanation for this is that sharpening works on edges and if the edge isn't distinct enough it can't help.

Another consideration is the amount of noise in the image. Sharpening tends to emphasize noise in an image. At low ISO values noise is not an issue and normally does not have to be specifically addressed. However, at the higher ISO end of the range of your sensor some visible noise is usually inevitable, especially in shadow areas. The best place to deal with noise is in the raw conversion where you will find settings to adjust how this is dealt with. You need to use care with noise reduction because, if it is done to excess, you may end up with a "plasticky look" to your images, especially in areas of low contrast and uniform colour.

In part one I mentioned that sharpening is dependent on the output media and magnification. For the output media (monitor or projector, ink-jet or offset printing) as well as the printer paper surface there is some degree of softening of the image due to the nature of the media. This softening is different for all media and paper types. This is compounded by magnification and viewing distance. Clearly, if you magnify the image and then look at it from a close distance, everything is bigger, including the thin lines outlining edges produced by the sharpening process.

It follows from this that the way the image is displayed on a monitor is not going to replicate exactly how it appears in print. So while you may be able to judge very closely the amount of sharpening for a monitor size image, you can only do this for prints with a certain amount of practice and preferably using a reproducible process.

Next month we will deal with sharpening techniques in Photoshop and how to achieve a reproducible process. Sharpening in Lightroom will also be discussed.

by Cindy Stephenson

This is the second in a series of articles on Lightroom we'll be running in *Close-Up* over the next several months.

Before we get started however, there are a couple of important points to recap from the previous article. First, Lightroom is a database-driven image management program that stores information about your images in a "catalogue." Second, the images you see in the centre panel of the Lightroom catalogue are jpeg copies of your images; they are not your original photos. The actual photo lives on your hard drive.

It's very important that you consciously decide where you're going to put your photos on your hard drive or they'll end up all over the place and you're not going to really understand where they are. You also need to know how to back up your photo library so that if your hard drive crashes you can be up and running again without losing anything.

One Solution to Organizing Photos

There are a number of different ways to organize images. This is the system I use and I find it works well. Credit for this goes to Laura Shoe who describes it on her video, "Lightroom: Fundamentals and Beyond."

On either an internal or external hard drive you have a master photo library folder (usually called "Pictures"). Within this master folder, create a "Photos Go Here" folder for all your original raw and jpeg files. It can also contain any Photoshop files you have. Basically it contains all of your photo files. Photos Go Here is a good name because when you get into the Import dialogue box, it'll be very clear where your photos are going. Keeping your photos in Photos Go Here within Pictures helps make sure they don't get mixed up with other items in your Pictures folder such as your iPhoto library.

Within Photos Go Here, organize your photos by date, create year folders and within year folders, create individual shoot folders. If you like, you can put the date before the shoot description and your shoots will be organized chronologically. If instead you want your shoots to

```
Pictures
> Photos Go Here
>> 2012
>>> 01-18 Mark's Birthday
>>> 01-20 Studio Lighting
>>> 01-25 Beacon Hill Pk
...
>> 2013
>>> 03-30 Bob's Party
>>> 04-10 Whales
>>> 05-10 Mill Hill Flwrs
...
Lightroom Catalogue
> Backups
```

be listed alphabetically, you could put the date after the description, or just leave the date off entirely. The basic idea is to have your shoot folder within a year folder within a Photos Go Here folder within a master folder.

You may have a different system. Laura suggests that whatever system you use, keep it simple and make sure your photos only live within one folder. You don't want multiple copies of photos within different folders. This is a possible folder structure, others will work, so select one that suits your work.

Backing Up Your Photo Library

Create and store backups of your Lightroom catalogue on a regular basis; this avoids problems if your Lightroom catalogue becomes corrupted. This is important because your catalogue records all of the work you've ever done on your photos. If you open up your catalogue one day and get a message that it has been corrupted, you want to be able to get back to an earlier version of your catalogue that didn't have that corruption issue.

Lightroom will prompt you to create catalogue backups. This process does not back up your photos. It's also not backing up things to a separate drive; you need to do that too. If you have a hard drive failure and you don't have a comprehensive backup plan, you're going to lose everything.

The first step is to back up your catalogue and the second step is to back up your entire Pictures (or photo library) folder to a separate external hard drive, preferably to more than one.

Importing your Photos to the Lightroom Catalogue

As noted in the introduction, "importing" your photos is a bit of a misnomer since you are not actually "moving" the photos from your hard drive into Lightroom, just establishing a connection for them in the catalogue.

There are two import scenarios: first, importing all of the photos on your hard drive that are not already in Lightroom, and second, importing new memory cards of photos. I'll go through both scenarios.

Importing Photos Already on Your Hard Drive

This is the simplest scenario in that your photos are already on your hard drive and you are just adding them to your Lightroom Catalogue.

To access the import dialogue, make sure you are in the Library module, and click on Import. The left panel is where you tell Lightroom where the photos are that you want to import. This panel mimics the folder structure on your hard drive. If you click on a particular folder, you'll be able to see thumbnails of all the photos in that folder within the centre panel. If there are some photos you don't want to import, you can uncheck them. If you want to import folders and sub-folders, in the top left-hand corner, click "include sub-folders. Since these photos are already on your hard drive, click "Add."

The Catalogue section in the left panel of the Library module lets you know how many photos are in your Lightroom catalogue to date. The folders panel lets you know exactly where they live in your hard drive. Both panels show you info about your photos, just in a different way. You can click on any folder, and you'll see the photos in that folder.

Importing New Photos from Memory Cards

Plug your memory card into your computer. From within the Library module, click Import. Because your memory card is plugged in, Lightroom automatically assumes that is where you want the photos to come from.

You have two tasks, copying the photos from your memory card to a permanent location on your hard drive, and adding them to the Lightroom catalogue.

Click "Copy" so the photos get copied onto your hard drive. (This is different from the previous scenario where your photos were already on your computer and you clicked "Add.")

If you have raw files, you can click "Copy" and copy them in their original format or click "Copy as DNG" and convert them to Adobe's DNG open-format file structure. Even if you don't convert to DNG when you copy off your memory card, you can always do that later in the library module.

On the right hand panel, you're going to specify where you want the photos to go in your hard drive using the Destination section in the right hand panel. This is crucial, since you are telling Lightroom where you want the photos to go on your hard drive. If you don't pay attention to this, you will end up with a very messy folder structure on your hard drive.

If you've created a "Photos Go Here" folder within

Pictures, you'll see it in the Destination panel because the Destination panel mirrors the folder structure on your hard drive.

To ensure your photos are copied into that folder, select the "Photos Go Here" folder by highlighting it. Then you want to tell Lightroom to organize your photos by date within that selected folder. To do that, go to the top of the destination panel, to "organize" and tell Lightroom to organize by date, and choose the date format you like, slashes mean sub-folders. (I chose YEAR/XX-XX.)

Lightroom will then show you in italics exactly where your photos are going to go. Check this carefully to make sure your photos are going where you intend before you hit "import."

If you have accidentally selected another folder, rather than Photos Go Here, that's where they are going to go.

Once your photos have imported, they will show up as a new folder in the left hand panel, and because you selected "organize by date," the name of the folder will be the date of the shoot. Rename the folder by specifying the event they are about.

If you are importing photos from several different dates, but you want them to go in one folder, you can ask Lightroom to organize them by folder rather than by date. To do this, go to Organize at the top of the destination panel and select "into one folder." You then have to manually create the new folder where you want the photos to go. In the Destination panel, right click on Photos Go Here, and choose "Create new folder." If you want your photos to go into a sub-folder, check off into sub-folder, and then name the sub-folder. A practical example of this is if you've been on a multi-day trip and want to save all of your photos from the trip in one folder. Once you've created the folder, highlighted it and are sure where the photos are going to go, click Import.

There's one final important note now that you have some images in your Lightroom catalogue. Once you've imported your photos into Lightroom, any work you do to them, such as moving them to a different folder, renaming them, etc., should all be done from within Lightroom. If you do this outside of Lightroom in Mac Finder or Windows Explorer, the information is not being recorded in your Lightroom catalogue and you'll have to do a bit of backtracking to tell Lightroom where your photos are. I'll have more on this in the next issue. We'll also delve into the Library module.

The Palouse

by Steve Lustig

The Palouse is a region of the northwestern United States encompassing parts of SE Washington and adjacent Idaho. It is a major agricultural area, primarily producing wheat and legumes. It is often referred to as the American Tuscany, and for good reason. The pastoral setting has gently rolling hills coloured in shades of green, yellow and mauve. In early June, when I visited the Palouse, the winter wheat, spring wheat and canola fields produced an amazing tapestry of colours. Wild lupines were in bloom in some of the valleys. In addition, the Palouse has old barns and cars that draw the attention of photographers from all over the world.

Many of the iconic shots of the Palouse are taken from Steptoe Butte State Park, although many other locations exist for great photography. The Butte provides different vistas at various elevations as you drive up a road that curves around toward the top. The best locations, however, are not found at the top of the Butte, but partly up the hill, and the spot you choose depends on whether you are shooting in morning or evening light. Morning shoots require you to be set up by about 5:15 am as the light changes rapidly, creating wonderful shadows on the hills. The window for shooting lasts until about 7:30 am on the Butte. In early June, evening shoots usually last from around 7 pm to 8:30 pm.

This photo was taken at 8:10 pm with an 80-400 mm lens at 400 mm on a full-frame camera. I used f11 at 1/20 second. Unlike most landscape photography, the Palouse requires a long lens. A tripod and a remote release are essential. In Lightroom 5, I moved the black and white sliders to increase contrast, boosted clarity slightly, and only increased saturation by +5. Yes, the colours in the Palouse really look like that!



Oculus Lacerta, The Eye of the Lizard

by Jonathan Adams

This photo was taken in Arches National Park, in early May of this year. This park is very close to Moab, Utah, and features a number of natural stone arches. This image was captured under a moonless sky, well after Astronomical Twilight had ended, just before midnight.



My goal was to capture the Milky Way passing through this stone arch, the North Window. The challenge of exposing for both the Milky Way (best done with no moon present) and the rock was solved by light painting the arch with a flashlight. The person visible below the arch was doing the light painting, using a 2 D-cell LED Maglight. The rock arch was light painted for about 10 seconds, with a white handkerchief over the lens to soften and dim the light.

The camera settings used were: 15 mm lens on a full frame Canon 5DIII, f2.8, ISO 4000, 25 sec. exposure and RAW capture. The camera was on a tripod, with a remote release and using mirror lock-up.

As might be expected given the demands placed on the camera sensor, these images require a significant amount of post-processing so it is essential to capture in RAW. Initial noise reduction and white balance is best adjusted in Lightroom or ACR in Photoshop. I selected the foreground into a separate layer mask from the sky, and adjusted exposure, levels and curves independently. The contrast between the sky and the foreground makes it easy to create a selection using the Quick Selection tool. A final check using the spot healing tool at 100% to repair any "hot pixels" and the image was complete. I chose the name because the image reminded me of a movie poster of Godzilla's eye, with the Milky Way taking the place of a barred pupil.

Tuesday Shoots

by Wayne Swanson

December 2: Shop Entranceways

Every merchant wants to see as many feet as possible stepping over the store's threshold. The entrance must attract attention to get customers in to buy merchandise. Examine the details on the doorways that seem to welcome you into an establishment. Perhaps ornate columns greet you, or brass door handles invite you in, or etched glass panels entice you. Now try to capture that element in your image. Find the lighting that enhances the merchant's efforts to get you into the mood to enter the establishment. Perhaps you might also want to include any of the signs that are provided for the same reason.

By the way, remember that "entranceways" is also the theme for the January competition. This would give you the opportunity to try to come up with the winning entry.

December 16: Santa, I've been good

Even if you haven't been good, 'tis the season for exchanging gifts with friends and relatives. The stores overflow with temptations to lure every gift-giver to purchase more and more. Glitter and lights dazzle the kid in all of us. Santa Claus beckons at every mall to receive your wishes and have your photo taken. And shoppers bustle around smiling about the perfect gift they have just bought for a loved one. Of course, we are dropping hints about the gifts we would like to receive; it's more likely a lens than a Red Ryder carbine with a compass in the stock. So take a photo of whatever you want to put on your spouse's pillow.



Victorian period decorations intrigue shoppers, who may or may not have been good this year.

Weekend Shoots

by David McLean and Donna Robertson

Esquimalt Lagoon

One of the best times to shoot at Esquimalt Lagoon is during the winter, as that is when you will see the greatest variety of wildlife. You will find not only: Hooded and Common Merganser, Ring-necked Duck, Bufflehead, Mallard, Pintail, Great Blue Heron, Coot, American Wigeon, Mute and Trumpeter Swans, and Black Oystercatchers on the inside of the lagoon. On the outside of the lagoon you will occasionally see: Surf Scoter, Red-breasted Merganser, Loons, assorted Grebes and the occasional Seal and River Otter.

Each year there are also a few birds that don't normally over-winter in the lagoon: Eurasian Wigeons, Cinnamon Teal and others. There is also quite a variety of wading birds along the shoreline.

The best time for shooting the birds on the inside of the lagoon is between sunrise and noon, when the sun is behind you. Save the late afternoon and early evening for shooting the birds on the outside of the lagoon, if tide and wind permit.

If you notice a lot of bird activity off the waterfront of Royal Roads, then a short drive will take you to the parking area along the water. This is a great place to shoot in the later afternoon as the sun will be behind you.

As with many wildlife shots, your goal is to get at eye level with your subject. Bring knee-pads or a plastic sheet to kneel or lie on, as there is a lot of "goo" on the ground near the shore on the inside of the lagoon. Also try some panning shots, and make sure you have a spare card, as you will likely take a large number of shots in the hopes of that "perfect image."



by John Coenraads

This article was inspired by the very informative presentation made by Jim Swift to our club on October 9.

It is only natural to use rectangular coordinates: walk one km east, then one km north, in a city with streets laid out in a north-south, east-west grid, unless you are a crow. Then you might prefer: fly north-east a distance of 1.4 km. Both will get you to the same point. A direction given “as the crow flies” (a direction followed by a radial distance) is an example of the use of polar coordinates. “Polar” in this case has nothing to do with polar as in “polar bears” but refers to a starting point, called a pole, which plays the same role as the origin in a rectangular coordinate system. In addition, a line called the polar axis is defined which emanates from the pole and is used as a reference direction from which angles are measured.

The Polar Transformation

In Photoshop, or PS Elements, under Filter > Distort > Polar Coordinates (note, image must be in 8-bit mode) you will find the transformation which takes an image from rectangular to polar coordinates and back. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate such a transformation from rectangular to polar coordinates. Let’s begin by following the fate of the circled digit 4 in the blue rectangle in figure 1.

If we assume that the image is 100 by 100 pixels, then,

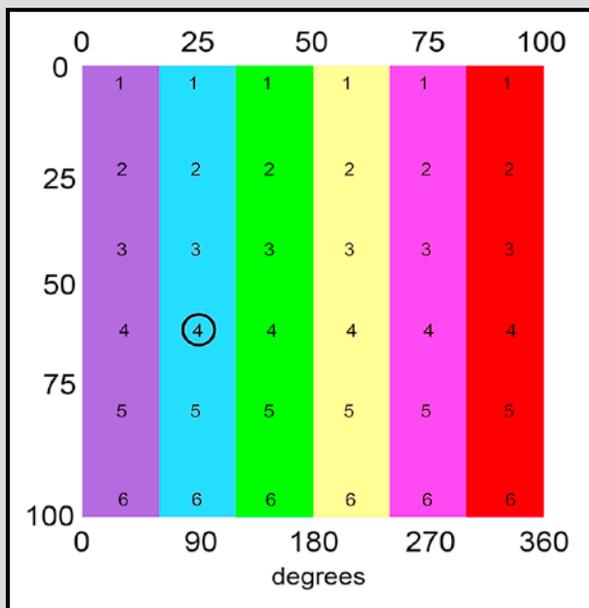


Figure 1: Pattern, consisting of rectangular stripes, ready for conversion to polar coordinates.

measured from the origin in the upper left corner, the circled 4 is at the location over 25, down 60. In its conversion to polar, Photoshop treats the horizontal scale running from 0 to 100 as angles from 0 to 360 degrees. Thus the “over 25” now becomes “90 degrees” as indicated by the scale along the bottom. The coordinate “down 60” is divided by a factor of two and becomes “a radial distance of 30.” The need for scaling will become obvious shortly.

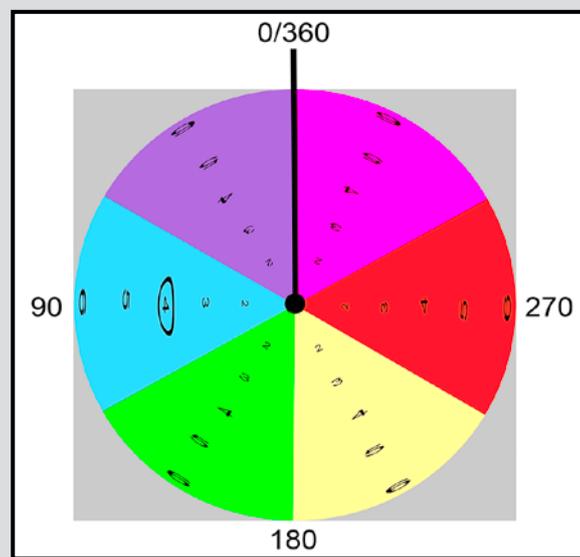


Figure 2: The image in figure 1 now converted to polar coordinates. The rectangles have been turned into wedges of pie (pi?).

In figure 2, we see, not surprisingly, that the rectangle has turned into a circle. I have marked the pole, (big dot at the centre) and the polar axis (heavy line pointing up). The circled 4 is at the predicted location: 90 degrees (measured counterclockwise from the polar axis) and out 30 units. The scaling by one-half is the result of having to squeeze the rectangle into the radius of the circle, not its diameter. The upper edge of the original image now converges on the pole and the bottom edge is spread out along the circle’s circumference.

Applying this transformation to a landscape scene yields the predictable (and familiar) result shown in figure 3. As you can see, problems arise when the left and right edges of the image are dissimilar (in this case due to differences in sky polarization). Note that if the original image is not a square, an ellipse results. Also note how Photoshop fills in the blank areas by extending colours on the circumference out radially.

Polar to Rectangular Transformation



Figure 3: Reflection of Mt. Shuksan in Picture Lake (WA) in the round. Original (rectangular) image courtesy Linda Baker.

The polar to rectangular conversion can be used to recover the image in figure 1 from the one in figure 2, but this would be pointless, and a bad idea. Polar transformations involve heavy duty pixel mashing and the recovered image will have been subtly damaged at the pixel level. What is more fun is to take what is basically a rectangular image, treat it as if it is in polar coordinates, and apply the transformation to rectangular coordinates. This is what has been done to the image in figure 1 with figure 4 showing the result. The results are surprising and not easily accounted for. It is here where unusual effects can be achieved with serendipity being an important ingredient.

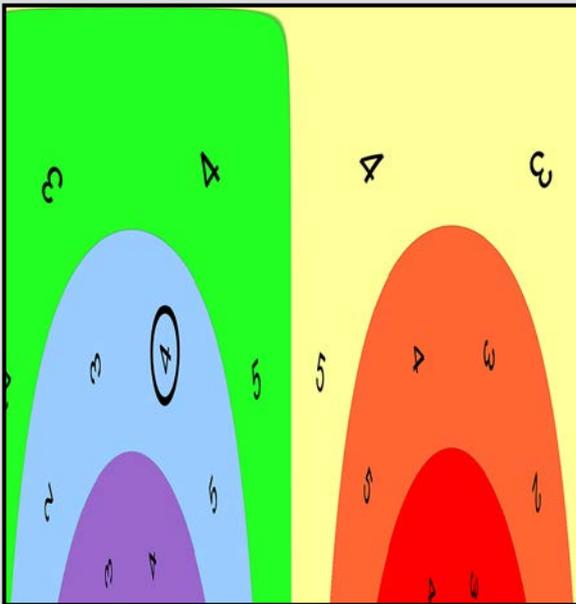


Figure 4: Applying the polar to rectangular conversion yields surprising results.

Transformational Abstracts

Photoshop has many ways of altering an image, e.g., by changing the colour through manipulation of the RGB values for a given pixel, but such a change is not a transformation in the mathematical sense. Transformations, strictly speaking, apply only to changes where each pixel is assigned a new location. That new location is computed by applying mathematical formulas to the coordinates of its original location to obtain the coordinates of its new location.

This includes not only Rotate, Flip and Resize but also the distorting transformations such as Perspective, Pinch, Polar, Skew, Shear, Spherize etc. The results are referred to as “Transformational Abstracts” and the art lies in cooking up the right stew of transformations to yield the desired result. Transformations can be applied in any order and the same transformation can be applied many times. And nothing stirs the pot more than the Polar transformation. In the hands of a master, the results can be stunning. Visit Jim’s website at js-ca.net and click on his “Transformational Abstracts” for examples of what can be achieved. Also take a look at the vivid images created by our own Mike Wooding at nahanni.smugmug.com/Dreamscapes/Transformational-Abstracts.

I couldn’t resist doing some pixel peeping to see what happens at the centre of a rectangular to polar conversion where many pixels are fighting for the same real estate. Let me explain. A pixel is not a mathematical point; it is a tiny rectangle. Now ideally the pixels would also have their shape transformed from rectangles to wedges under a polar conversion but of course pixels never change their shape or size. So what does Photoshop do when many pixels are assigned the same coordinates? One could simply have the last pixel calculated replace any previous pixels, i.e., the last pixel wins. But this would make the transformation sensitive to the order in which the calculations are done, not a good idea. In fact, what happens is that the overlapping pixels get blended, just like flavours in a fine stew. Zeroing in on the centre of the image to a square of about 12 x 12 pixels, I applied the Polar transformation about 30 times (thank you Photoshop for Command F). Sure enough, the saturated reds, greens and blues I started with gradually lost saturation and turned into an insipid brown.

So start with some images, even ones you may not consider great, and while away an afternoon creating Transformational Abstracts. Be prepared to be surprised.

Celebrations

by Nancy MacNab

Two of the year's biggest celebrations take place within two weeks of each other, coming up at the end of this month. I'm talking of Christmas and New Year's, of course, with all the photographic opportunities available during this time: lights, Christmas trees, people, parades, presents and wildly excited children. Whether you enjoy landscape photography, macro, portraits, or action, there is something for everyone.

If you are planning to photograph the Christmas lights at night, then a sturdy tripod is definitely recommended, although long exposures also give the opportunity for deliberate camera movement during the exposure.

Make sure that your camera's batteries are fully charged and that you have a spare set with you as batteries die more quickly when it is cold. As your own batteries die more quickly too, dress warmly and plan on ending your session in a warm place for a seasonal drink.

Fingerless gloves with a mitten over-piece that can be folded back when you want to change your camera sittings are great for winter photography, giving the dexterity of free fingers with most of the warmth of mittens. They can always be supplemented with silk glove liners if it's really cold.

When taking long exposures, you can try bracketing (taking three shots at different speeds to correctly expose, overexpose and underexpose the image) to ensure that you get one at the right exposure. The three, or more than three, images can also be combined in HDR (high dynamic range) using special software techniques in order to get as much detail as possible in the highlights and shadows. Always keep an eye on your histogram.

Parades provide opportunities for action shots, portraits, crowd scenes, and more. If you are trying to freeze the action, you will want to use the wide end of your lens (f2.8-f5.6). This is also better for parades and crowds as it gives you the least depth of field, rendering the backgrounds out of focus. You may need to increase your ISO in order to get the required shutter speed to get a sharp photo of action.

On the other end of the scale, using a small aperture (f22 – f32) and a slow shutter speed gives the opportunity for deliberate camera motion and blurred

action shots of things like the Christmas truck parade. Abstracts like this take practice and you will have to take lots of images to get even one that has just the right amount of blur. Vary your shutter speed and the speed and direction of movement of the camera to get a variety of images.

Indoor photography of Christmas morning and the opening of the gifts can bring its own challenges in the form of cluttered backgrounds, lighting or lack thereof, and lack of space to find the right angle from which to take the picture. A zoom lens is very convenient as it gives you greater opportunity to adjust your field of view, allowing you to exclude the kitchen counter or the vacuum cleaner parked in the corner. Shooting wide open (f2.8-5.6) limits your depth of field, which also helps to reduce the background and allows your subject to stand out.

The mix of lighting sources and varying brightness is another factor to consider when photographing indoors. A flash helps to even out the light and to eliminate some of the shadows. Explore and experiment with any options your camera may have for fill flash versus using it on full power. Doing this NOW means that you know the effect you want and how to get it on the actual day.

I must admit that photographing children at this time of year may lean more towards action photography than portraiture! The eager faces and happy smiles as they spread the wrapping paper and ribbons all over the room make for great photos. Being ready with a fast shutter speed and wide open aperture, adjusting the ISO as needed, gives you the greatest chance of capturing the moment. Fill flash can add that sparkle to their eyes and banish unwanted shadows cast by overhead lights or back-lighting. When photographing children, remember that the "child's eye view" is often more intriguing than the "looking down" view that adults see. So, get down low!

Are you sending Christmas cards this year? If so, do you use your own photos for them? Whether the old-fashioned paper cards sent via snail mail or the e-cards sent via the internet, using your own photo or photos for them adds a personal touch. It's time to start reviewing your images to find a suitable one and get it ready for the season.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. May you capture images of many wonderful memories!

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