

Inside:

Event Photography
Scanning 101

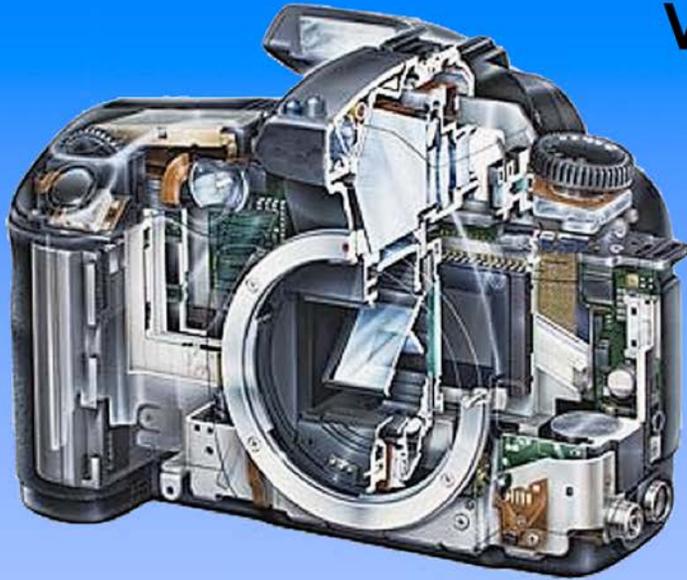
Tech Tips - Sensor Dust
How to Photograph Smoke at Home

Beginners' Corner: Catch the Action

Polarization: Part 1
.....and more



"Dance on Fire" by Barbara Burns is a composite of two images. The dancer is a studio shot; the smoke was shot separately and composited.



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Victoria Camera Club



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 Mailing address: 2642 Quadra Street, PO Box 46035, Victoria, BC, V8T 5G7.
 Deadline for submissions for the March issue is February 5th 2014.
 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 Lois Burton, President at 250-652-6940.

What's Inside

Club Calendar.....	4
President's Message	4
Event Photography	5
Scanning 101.....	8
Competitions	10
Tech Tips - Sensor Dust.....	15
How to Photograph Smoke at Home	16
How I Did It.....	18
Shoots Around Victoria	19
Beginners' Corner: Catch the Action	20
Polarization: Part 1	21

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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, Feb 6th; Competition Night

The January competition results will be presented. One of the judges will review selected images. February's submissions are due; the theme competition subject is "Reflections."

Thursday, Feb 13th; Presentation Night

Our guest speaker is Victoria based nature photographer Mikhail Belikov who will present his thoughts on Wilderness Photography focusing on the Great Bear Rain Forest.

Thursday, Feb 20th; Members' Night

Presentation of members' images, field trip slide shows, prints or short technical topics.

Featured Workshops

Layers, Masks and Blending in Photoshop

Introduction to Photoshop Elements

Featured Field Trips

Victoria Butterfly Gardens, see page 19 for details.

Snow Geese and Shorebirds - one or more trips to Delta/Richmond to shoot some of our winter visitors.

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.

Cover Image

The cover image "Dance on Fire" by Barbara Burns is a composite of two images. The background smoke image was lit by two speedlights with coloured gels on a black velvet background. The dancer image was shot with three studio strobes in a darkened theatre. The compositing was done in Photoshop. For more information on how the smoke image was made and for suggestions on the compositing process, please see the article "Shooting Smoke" on page 16.

President's Message

This year marks the Victoria Camera Club's 70th anniversary, highlighting our journey from a small club of 45 members to one of the oldest, largest and most active camera clubs on Vancouver Island with about 220 members today. This deeply symbolic moment for our club is a time to celebrate not only the past, but the vibrant present and promising future.

Our journey is an acknowledgement of the untiring efforts of successive generations of members who have devotedly served the club over the past 70 years. It is a time of considerable pride for all of us who are and have been part of the club and its inspiring journey.

This will be an historic event and I encourage all members to get involved, and share your time and expertise to help make the 70 years celebration a great success.

The year long celebration will start with a spring print show April 3rd to 16th, followed by a special event co-sponsored with the Canadian Association of Photographic Art. Acclaimed Canadian photographer, author and speaker Andre Gallant will be in Victoria on April 4th and 5th presenting a workshop and public presentation "Inspiration." I would encourage all members to take advantage of this unique opportunity to attend this workshop by a renowned Canadian Fine Art Photographer. The event is reasonably priced and there are no travel costs! A final print show will be scheduled for the fall.

From its beginning in 1944 through to today, the club has seen unparalleled advancements in photography over the years. From the development of TTL metering for SLR cameras, to instant pictures (Polaroid) and now to digital technology and computers which have freed photography from film and made darkrooms redundant.

Membership is the heart and soul of our club's success. Members should be proud of the many achievements of the club and also feel a sense of fulfillment that comes with the creation of a club that embodies the traditions that the old Victoria Camera Club were built on.

As members, we share a passion for our club and the great journey we are taking together.

It a matter of great satisfaction that over the years, we have built a club that will continue to create growing value for all our members today and into the future.

Lois Burton, President

by John Ducker

As a picture-taking venue, the Dallas, TX, police garage on the morning of November 24th, 1963 was far from ideal. It was dark and packed with reporters, cameramen, police officers and looky-loos. They were all there for one reason: to catch a glimpse of Lee Harvey Oswald. The day before this spindly, unlikely loser had assassinated U.S. President John F. Kennedy and murdered a Dallas police officer. It was Sunday; Dallas Times-Herald photographer Bob Jackson was assigned to cover the event. Despite the challenges of the venue, Jackson spent time and effort positioning himself against the jostling crowd, pre-focusing his Nikon S3 with a 35 mm lens at the point where he felt Oswald would emerge from the police lock-up and enter the garage. This extra effort would earn Jackson a Pulitzer Prize.



Shoot often. The magnificence of the Japanese cruiser "Akebono" is enhanced by eventually capturing the crew at the correct angle. The line of sailors adds dimension and tells a story.

As Oswald and his police escorts moved into the garage Jackson caught a glimpse of a man wearing a grey fedora stepping out from beside him. After working so hard to manoeuvre into an ideal position, a frustrated Jackson thought: "This guy's getting in my way." The man was local nightclub owner Jack Ruby. Lunging forward he brought his .38 calibre Colt revolver to waist height and fired once into Oswald's stomach. Bedlam ensued. Despite the uproar Jackson kept mental focus and instinctively clicked his Nikon, not knowing if he was too early or too late. But a couple of hours later in the darkroom he held the wet film up to the light and knew "it looked good."

"Looked good" was a momentous understatement. The frame would become iconic. It showed the gunman

Ruby lunging forward, pistol in hand. Oswald's face is contorted with a mixture of agony and horror. The president's assassin was handcuffed to the wrist of Dallas police detective Jim Lavelle who stares at the scene unfolding to his left, stunned and helpless. Although many other photographers were there, no other photographers had a shot timed to that exact moment which would go on to define a generation of event photography.

Eighteen years earlier, on April 13th 1945, Life magazine photographer Ed Clark was assigned to capture President Franklin D. Roosevelt's funeral cortege passing through the president's home town of Warm Springs, GA. There were scores of photographers trying to capture the passing hearse. In the midst of the clamour however, Clark's attentiveness caught the notes of an accordion playing behind him. Swinging his bulky Eastman 8"x10" camera around from where everyone else was shooting he snapped a shot of Gordon Jackson. It showed the navy bandsman overwhelmed with grief, tears streaming down his cheeks, while he struggled to play "Goin' Home," the president's favourite song. That photo forever characterizes Roosevelt's death.



Scout the environment. A small gap in the security fence provided a nice wide angle closeup of the 2013 Bastion Square Grand Prix.

It is important to illustrate the concepts of event photography with such stories, because telling a story also lies at the heart of event photography. The Clark and Jackson stories hold the three most important aspects of event photography: 1) surveying or pre-planning your site; 2) constantly scanning your environment and; 3) maintaining mental focus. There are other things to consider but prioritizing these three principles will support everything else you do in capturing events.

Pre-planning allowed Bob Jackson to calculate a zone between the police lock-up hallway and the garage which would frame his picture correctly. Having found this zone he maintained his mental focus and physical positioning, even when Ruby barged forward, which enabled the perfect shot. Ted Grant, the pre-eminent Canadian photojournalist, would probably agree. He religiously practiced the principles of: "arrive at the site earlier than anyone else" and "stay to the last possible moment." These habits gave Grant two legendary shots: Trudeau sliding down the banister, and Canadian sprinter Ben Johnson defeating American Carl Lewis at the 1988 Olympics. Knowing your venue and then maintaining mental focus is crucial.



Constant scanning. Moving out of the bleachers gave a much better view of this Tae-kwon-do 2nd degree black belt making kindling.

Event photography's great advantage is that generally people don't mind having their pictures taken. They are already being candid in public. The celebrated combat photographer Robert Capa understood this in applying his principle criticism: "If your picture was no good, you weren't close enough." Masterful storytellers don't usually shout a tale across a room. The best stories are told close up, descriptively, perhaps intimately, drawing in the listener and evoking an emotional reaction, good or bad. Similarly, event photography needs to offer us a close-up of an incident or a circumstance which we often don't see as a casual observer. Ed Clark saw this in Warm Springs. Fill your frame but don't lose sight of the bigger picture. Event photography is capturing interaction and activity on a wide scale. Shots of a soccer ball or a puck in the back of the net, even if it's the winning goal, doesn't tell us anything. Players or fans leaping for joy are the story.

Event photography is a learned skill which requires patience, practice and repetition. One of the best ways to learn is to start out with smaller, less threatening, "non-event events" such as birthday parties, or your daughter building a gingerbread house. Don't stress over the perfect shot. Shoot often but naturally and move on. Scan, think and have fun.

Topic research is also vital. Successful writers read a lot. A successful event photographer should read as many books, blogs and websites as possible to learn trends and techniques. Overcome shyness by going out with others you're comfortable with, pre-visualizing success for your project, working at telephoto range to start and improving gradually.

Try to keep your gear light and manoeuvrable. I do break this rule myself, as I prefer two cameras, one with a wide-angle lens and one with a long zoom capability. Things happen across the street or right in front of you, but until the 10-300 mm f2.8 zoom is created I need the widest focal ranges possible. I also prefer a shoulder strap for my main camera as it leaves both my hands free for using the other camera or equipment. Remember Jackson in Dallas and pre-set as much as possible. Fumbling with modes, apertures or shutter speeds will cause missed opportunities. Try to keep a shutter speed above 1/100 even if it means raising ISO. Grainy event shots are better than blurry ones and the perfectly composed shot is secondary to the shot which tells the best story. *(Continued opposite.)*



Small piece in a larger story. Arriving 8 hours early allowed for this "flashes in the pan" shot of British infantry holding the line at the "Battle of Queenston Heights," Nat. Historic Park, Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON.



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Once you become more comfortable, don't be afraid to experiment. Try high, low and jaunty off-camber angles as these make your photo seem alive and dynamic. In the digital era you also have the advantage of being able to shoot a lot.

The difference between a good shot and a superb one is often about seconds or inches. Catching that right expression or action may only exist in one frame out of dozens. Don't, however, be a paparazzo. It's better to be semi-visible and work calmly, deliberately, taking a variety of wide, intimate and unusual shots in order to tell your story. One technique I quite enjoy is framing the subject image with foreground elements. This makes it look like the photographer is right in there, part of the action. I recall an excellent Sports Illustrated magazine photo of LPGA golfer Michele Wie caught in a splendid follow through position, shot through a momentary gap in a sea of spectator umbrellas.

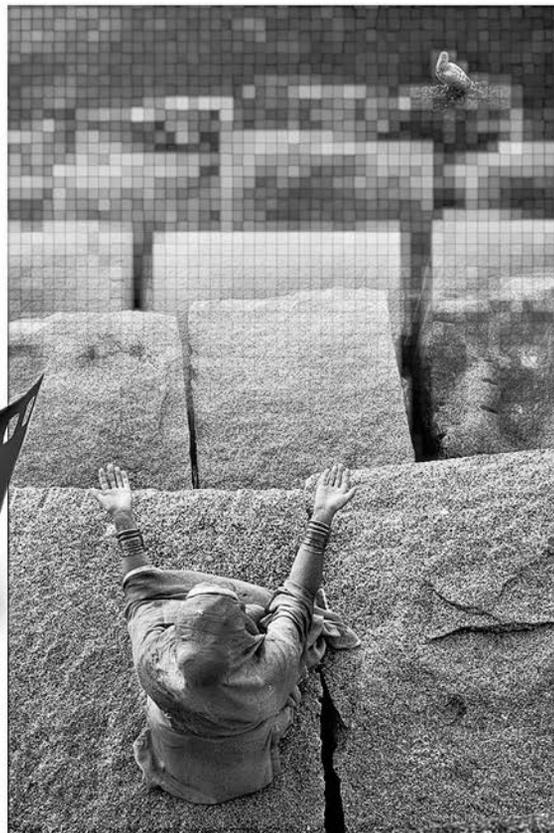
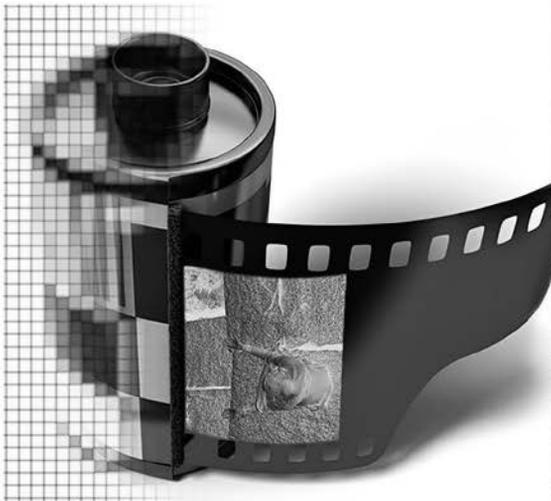
Event photography is a challenge but highly rewarding when "that moment" is captured. Practicing with some easy techniques will increase your skill and confidence. These techniques can include, mentally developing your story line as earnestly as your photographic composition by noticing the mood, tone and texture of the event as much as aperture, shutter speed and light.

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Bridging Photo Technologies

by Terry Zlot

Do you have a box of slides just begging to be scanned back into usefulness? Or perhaps a masterpiece on film destined for greatness? Lets take a look at a range of equipment and techniques, to find out what some of your options might be.

Types of Scanners

If you have a decent camera with a 1:1 macro lens, you already own a pretty good slide digitizer. Modern DSLR cameras will give you files good enough for all but the most demanding applications. If you're lucky enough to own a 24 or 36 mp full frame camera, like a 5dIII, D3X or D800 you'll be giving semi-pro scanners a run for their money. All you need is a film holder and light source, which can be as simple as a bulldog clip, a sheet of paper, and a lamp (figure 1). If you have a large collection, spending a bit of time to make a sturdy film holder will speed things up considerably and let you digitize a few hundred slides an hour, much faster than any traditional film scanner.

When comparing a slide scanned on an Epson v750 to a slide shot with an 18 mp Canon 60d+60 macro (figure 1), the results are virtually on par. The 60d required a bit of extra effort to colour correct, and had more difficulty with brightly saturated colours, but produced less flare, better shadow detail, and exhibited excellent corner-to-corner sharpness.



Figure 1: This simple setup works perfectly for digitizing a few slides.

Tip: Make a mask around the slide so that the light source doesn't cause as much flare. Use a daylight balanced bulb for best colour, and shoot in RAW not JPEG to save as much shadow and highlight detail as possible.

Flatbed scanners are the most versatile option, able to handle prints as well as 35 mm, and medium or large-format film. While prints are reasonably easy for even inexpensive scanners, film scans are more demanding and require spending a few hundred bucks on a scanner with a proper transparency unit (something like an Epson v600). A semi-professional flatbed like an Epson v700 or v750 will be a better choice for more discerning users; the extra dynamic range and superior optics make a big difference. Flatbeds are a great choice for medium or large format film, but for critical 35 mm work, they require a bit more effort on the part of the operator to perform at their best.

Dedicated film scanners will only scan film, start under \$100 and typically will outperform a flatbed scanner at the same price point. Don't expect a \$300 film scanner to outperform a \$600 flatbed, but if you're really serious about your film, spending a bit extra on a good dedicated film scanner may be the way to go.

You will get reasonable scans without spending a fortune from your local 1hr photo lab. While not well suited for critical work or larger prints, these scans are very fast and provide automatic correction that should give you scans that are mostly ready-to-go if you're not too picky. If you want every last bit of detail out of a tack-sharp 35 mm transparency, you're looking at commercial scans from very high end gear. Be prepared to pay handsomely for the privilege.

Using Your Scanner Effectively

Learn to use your software, if you are hoping to simply push a button and have a great scan pop up on screen, then you will be in for disappointment. Film is very tricky to scan well, and each image will need some serious tweaking to make it look its best. Even expensive scanners will often produce off-colour scans with clipped highlight and shadow detail at their default or auto settings. Spend some serious time with your scanner's interface learning how to get the most from it. If you're not getting the control you need, consider upgrading to professional scanning software like Silverfast, or try making 16-bit full range scans (no adjustments whatsoever), and using Lightroom for your processing.

Tip: Keep a close eye on your histogram while scanning. A flat scan can be easily corrected later, but any detail lost due to an aggressive auto-correction is gone for good.

Scanning negatives can present quite a challenge: scanner software will frequently produce poor colour, or clip too much shadow/highlight detail. If you are feeling adventurous try the following: scan your negative as a 16-bit positive instead. Open it in Photoshop and invert it. You will now have a very flat and off-colour scan that will be difficult to color correct, but if you succeed it can give you vastly superior results. This works very well for B&W negatives, where the lack of a colour cast makes the correction substantially less complex.

Scanning Terminology and Tips

Resolution: how many pixels the scanner can resolve per inch (ppi). A 3200 ppi scan from a 35 mm slide is roughly the equivalent resolution of a 16 mp camera. Manufacturers overplay their capabilities so don't believe their specs. As a general rule for consumer scanners, take the maximum optical resolution and cut it in half. For example a scanner with a 6400 x 9600 "optical" resolution should give you a reasonable 3200 ppi scan.

If you were to compare detail in scans from the same unit at 3200 dpi and 6400 dpi, there is typically little benefit at 6400 ppi, and the 12,000 ppi "interpolated" resolution listed on the box is a complete fabrication. When you double resolution you actually quadruple the file size, so you'll pay a big price in speed and storage for the extra resolution. Test your scanner carefully to find its sweet spot before cranking up the settings.

Dynamic Range: This is a measure of a scanner's ability to resolve dark detail, particularly important for dark slides, or dense (overexposed) B&W negatives. The higher the dynamic range, the cleaner your shadows will be, and the more shadow detail you will be able to reproduce. This is a key differentiator between cheap and expensive scanners.

Consumer models rarely list their range. Semi-professional scanners might get a range of 3.5 or 4, while high-end professional scanners might have a range as high as 4.9. Some scanners (like the v750) when driven by Silverfast software have a special multi-exposure mode similar to HDR photography to push scanners beyond their normal range.

Flare: Just like the lens on your camera, the lens in your scanner is subject to flare, a halo effect around bright areas that lowers contrast. Inexpensive scanners use cheap optics that show much more flare than expensive scanners.

ICE, Dust and Scratch Removal: First of all, make sure that the slide or negative is clean of all dust! Clean it carefully with a blower brush. Some scanners use a second infrared scan pass to find and remove dust from your image. This "ICE" feature takes more time to scan and can save hours of retouching, but bear in mind that it won't work on Kodachrome slides or B&W negatives, and can also destroy fine high-contrast details in high resolution scans. Software dust and scratch removal touted on cheaper scanners is almost certain to destroy detail in your image and should usually be avoided.

Depth Of Field: scanners and macro lenses have very limited depth of field, meaning they can only scan a tiny amount of depth before the scan goes out of focus. This can push sections of curved film out of focus and can make flatbed scanners very finicky. Professional scanners use auto-focus and/or require that film be removed from holders and arced, taped, or even wet-mounted using fluids to a sheet of glass for best results.

Tip: If your flatbed scanner's film holder is causing problems tape the film carefully to the glass itself, and scan using a "full area transparency" mode.

Post-Processing

You will likely need to refine the image to get the best results. This could include: adjust exposure and contrast (levels/curves), removing colour cast (colour balance), adjusting saturation, and fixing defects such as large specks or stains and scratches.

Conclusion

Scanning, like anything else in photography, is a blend of art, technique, and the depth of your wallet. While some will find much enjoyment from basic gear, others will go the extra mile, and sometimes the extra dollar, to wring every last bit of detail from their work. The most important thing to remember: when you get it right, your first scan is your last.

Investing a bit of extra effort upfront to make your scans look their best will save you lots of time and frustration in the long term. Happy scanning!

Architectural Photography

by Richard Webber

The theme competition for March is "Architecture." The challenge is to create images that reveal the essence of a structure. This could include emphasizing the practical function; showing humans interacting with and using the building; or the shape, details and the design elements, portraying a building much like a piece of art.

Equipment: a tripod; a wide-angle zoom lens (anything less than 35 mm) and a wide angle to telephoto lens (e.g. 24-135 mm), a bubble level that mounts on the camera hot-shoe, and a polarizing filter are recommended.

Lighting: the best type of lighting for photographing architecture is generally side-front lighting. It also offers long and interesting shadows to provide contrast and highlight the repeating elements of the building. It creates a 3-dimensional appearance so detail and texture are more visible. The only way to find the best light for a subject is to experiment repeatedly. Consider waiting until just after sunset for the "blue hour" and your sky will be darker and bluer for more dramatic and appealing results.

Think Outside the Box: take time to explore the building. Try to find intriguing and unusual viewpoints and different perspectives and areas to photograph. Think about the "rule" of thirds, then how you can break it. For example with a spiral staircase, rather than composing the photo from the ground, why not climb to the top.

Composition: keep the composition as clean as possible and try to avoid distracting elements. While the overall appearance of a structure can often be fascinating, taking shots of smaller details can convey a lot about the character and type of architecture. Consider shapes, shadows, light, colour, reflections and texture etc. Converging lines can be used creatively, but can be avoided by keeping the camera vertical and level.

Black and White: think about strong lines and patterns as this will create an abstract effect. Look for lines that draw the eye towards a centre or focal point.

Post-Processing: Besides the "normal" post processing, remember to consider lens and perspective distortion which can be eliminated with software such as Lightroom, Photoshop, DXO and PTLens.

Constantly challenge yourself by striving to take that unique shot, the one with the Wow factor!

November 2013 Competition Judges

We would like to thank our judges for the Intermediate and Advanced categories; Robert Laramée, Neil le Nobel and Frances Litman. We also wish to thank our in-house Novice category judges; Caspar Davis, Paul Ross, Willie Waddell, Suzanne Huot, and Pam Irvine.

Robert Laramée (Theme and Creative) Robert was born in Montréal, PQ, and started photographing in high school. After a successful career first as a teacher and then as a geologist and computer scientist with the federal government, he retired in 2006. Yearning for more knowledge, Robert pursued his lifelong passion, photography, at the School of Modern Photography at Algonquin College and at the School of Photographic Arts in Ottawa. As an active member of two photo clubs (RA Photo Club, Ottawa, and Club de Photographie Polarisé de l'Outaouais), Robert has also lectured, run workshops and judged competitions. He also teaches his skills in photography on a part-time basis for the City of Ottawa and at Académie des Retraités de l'Outaouais. Robert is a true practitioner of both digital and analog photography from small to large format.

Neil le Nobel (Digital Nature and Open) Neil has been a photographer, off and on, for thirty-five years, uses Canon and Nikon equipment and enjoys macro, still life and location photography. Lately, a special interest has been honing his skills in B & W photography. Neil is a member of the Richmond, BC, Photo Club where he is the past Chair of External Competitions as well as the Field Trips Coordinator for CAPA's Pacific Zone. He has been one of three judges for the CAPA Four Nations competition and also judges competitions at clubs in the Lower Mainland and on-line for clubs across Canada. Neil is retired and now devotes much of his time to photography. Some of Neil's photos are on his website at www.neillenobel.com

Frances Litman (Prints) Frances has earned her living entirely from her creativity. For more than 20 years she has enjoyed a career as an international, award-winning professional photographer. Prior to this she was a journalist at the Times-Colonist. Frances runs a photography studio in Victoria, offers private photography lessons, teaches group creativity workshops and leads international photo tours. Her love and concern for the natural world has resulted in her founding and running two not-for-profits: www.creativelyunitedfortheplanet.org and www.vancouverislandgreenscene.org.



Advanced Digital Nature - 1st
“Saffron-Winged Meadowhawks Mating”
by Mike Wooding

Judge’s comments: superb detail, no reflections on the wings, lovely out of focus background, nice triangular arrangement of elements.



Advanced Mono Print - 1st
“Morning Flight” by Gordon Griffiths

Judge’s comments: Lovely print. Very dramatic and eye-catching. A moment caught beautifully. (See "How I did It" in the January 2014 issue.)



Advanced Digital Theme Print - 1st
“The Cappuccino Incident” by Brian Asmussen

Judge’s comments: Excellent photo! Great colours, tight composition, very good subject matter. Beautiful expression on the dog’s face. Great work, well done.



Advanced Nature Print - 1st
“Bull Roosevelt Elk” by Lois Burton

Judge’s comments: Wow! What a beautiful image with everything from highlights to blacks expertly handled in a potentially challenging and distracting situation. Good use of cropping to enhance the strength of the subject with the background remaining in focus just enough to make it completely believable and transport the viewer into the woods with the animal.



Intermediate Digital Nature - 1st
 "Sandhill Crane Preening" by Chantal Jacques

Judge's comments: an effective tight crop on the crane with excellent feather detail throughout; nice eye capture and beautiful unobtrusive background; the lay of the neck and the position of the feathers at the right make for a lovely triangular composition coming together at the eye; effective DOF right at the eye.



Intermediate Nature Print - 2nd
 "California Quail Calling" by Don Peterson

Judge's comments: Brilliant execution, clarity, tonality and handling of subject matter and background. Good work on keeping detail in the highlights and shadows. Way to go!



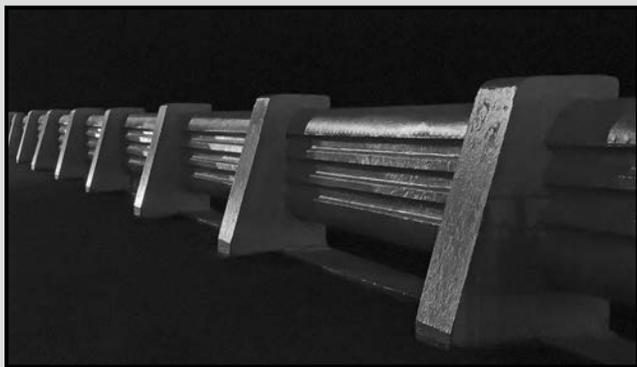
Intermediate Digital Theme - 1st
 "Life of the Party" by Doug McLean

Judge's comments: Very good technique and composition; the panoramic format of this photo was a wise choice. The progression from laughter through distraction, doubt and boredom makes a great story. A very good interpretation of the theme. Bravo.



Intermediate Digital Creative - 1st
 "Incoming Storm" by Simon Henson

Judge's comments: A superb low-key photo, very well executed. Good sharpness overall, nice palette of tones and colours. Great composition with the converging diagonals of the table leading to the window. The picture frame on the wall at the upper left populates that vast empty area. Very good work, congratulations.



Novice Open Print - 1st
“Night Lines” by Richard Marshall

Judge’s comments: Stunning and artistic image.



Novice Digital Theme - 2nd
“All dressed up and no place to go”
by Judy Bandsmer

Judge’s comments: What a cute guy! Eyes are sharp and catch-light is there. Flesh tones are spot on.



Novice Digital Open - 1st
“The Challenge - Take Charge” by Del Lucas

Judge’s comments: Perfect capture of the action. Players & ball are in perfect focus so maker chose the right shutter speed. Background nicely out of focus.



Novice Digital Nature - 2nd
“Milk Cap Mushroom” by John Schilling

Judge’s comments: Beautiful lowdown shot. Sharp and well lit with gills getting enough light to show nicely.

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2d Design & Composition: An Introduction,

Course starts Mar 6, with Tony Bounsall

Travel Photography: No More Snapshots,

Course starts Mar 19, with Mike Sroka

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Course starts Apr 1, with Mitch Stringer

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by John Roberts

If you have had the misfortune of ever having dust on your sensor, you know what a pain it is to remove it, or to edit out the specks from your images. Special coatings on the sensor that repel dust, or sensor vibration to dislodge the dust do help. However, we just do not live in a dust free environment, so I am going to give you a few tips to help reduce the risk of getting dust on the sensor.

Turn the camera off when changing lenses: Sensors are by their very nature an electrically charged device that will attract dust, think of your TV or your computer monitor, and how often those need dusting. With a quick flick of a switch, the charge to your sensor dissipates really quickly, and will not attract dust to it while you are changing your lens.

Point your camera down when changing lenses: When you are changing your lens, let gravity help prevent dust from landing on your sensor, by turning the body down towards the ground. This does take a little bit of practice to know where to make the mount fit correctly, but you will find your way to make it work.

Line up the dot on the lens with the tip of your thumb, just so you know where to make it click.

Vacuum out your camera bag regularly: I take everything out of my camera bag once every two weeks, and vacuum it out, and while I am at it I clean all my filters, lenses and camera body, just to make everything sparkly clean. Easy-peasy to do, it is just a matter of getting into the routine of doing it.

Do not change lenses in the fog: Just don't! Trust me on this one. Fog is the worst for getting dust on to your sensor, and since it is wet, it sticks to your sensor and it is on there good! This forces you to either wait for it to dry and be able to be taken off with either the sensor shaker or a sensor brush or, if you need it off right away, a wet cleaning swab. Be very careful if you choose to clean your own sensor; there are a lot of little things that can go wrong. But that will be covered in full in the next issue!

So there you have it, the quick and dirty (pun intended) guide to preventing sensor dust in your camera. In the next issue we will go into cleaning sensors. Until then, keep shooting great images.

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by Barbara Burns

Shooting smoke is a fascinating pastime for a rainy day or for creative play anytime. You need only a simple setup of equipment that most photographers own or intend to purchase. It can be put together in any well-ventilated area of your home such as a garage or spare bedroom.

Equipment

A camera with a 100 mm (or thereabouts) lens, preferably a macro lens; tripod (not strictly necessary); 2 speedlights on small light stands; wired or wireless triggers/transceivers for both speedlights and the camera or a sync cord; coloured gels and tape for the speedlights (I recommend the Strobist set available from B&H for under \$10); a black backdrop (approx. 8' x 6' black velvet works best) with a stand or flat upright object such as foam core board to clamp it to; 2 stiff black paper cards (approx. 3" x 5"); a shooting table with a dark top or dark covering; a desk lamp with a 60 -100 watt bulb placed on a second small table or nearby surface; a package of incense and 2-3 holders (putty will do well).



The Set Up

1. Set up your backdrop allowing for maximum shooting space.
2. Place your shooting table, with a dark covering to avoid reflections, about 3' - 4' in front of the backdrop; place the two incense sticks in holders so they are fully vertical in the centre of the shooting table approx. 2" apart; the table should be low

enough so that there is an adequate distance from the top of the incense to the top of the backdrop to ensure capturing enough smoke in your image for a good composition.

3. Put the speedlights on stands and set them up one on each side of the shooting table so as to side light the shooting area; tape the coloured gels you have chosen onto the flash heads so that the whole light surface is covered; tape the 2 black cards to the backdrop facing side of each speedlight with no more than 2.5" extending beyond the flash head.
4. Focus the beam of the desk lamp so it will illuminate as much of the smoke as possible without casting any light on the background; the lamp will not likely influence the exposure but it may assist auto-focusing and will enable your eye to better see interesting smoke details.
5. Position the camera (on a tripod if you prefer) 2' - 4' from the smoke area; vary the height and closeness for compositional purposes; a macro lens will make for interesting close-up images.
6. Ensure that there are no drafts, or movements that may disturb the smoke motion; stop and ventilate the room every 30 minutes; there is no need to block ambient light unless it is very bright.
7. Light both incense sticks and blow them out as soon as they are burning well; observe the smoke until you have a feel for the motion and direction; focus on the burning tip of the incense stick, lock the focus and move the camera smoothly upward to the area you wish to focus on, maintaining the same focal plane; waving your hand or blowing near the smoke will vary the patterns dramatically; shoot and enjoy!

Camera Settings

Shoot in Manual or Aperture priority mode. I prefer to shoot in RAW as it gives one much more post processing control. A fast shutter speed is necessary to freeze the motion and detail of the smoke so use the sync speed of your camera. (I use 1/200 for my Canon 5D Mk III.) Use the lowest possible ISO to avoid any possible noise. (I use ISO 100.) You will need a substantial depth of field to capture the details of the moving smoke so use f8 - f11. Use Automatic White Balance, although you can alter the colour of the smoke by shooting with differing White Balance settings. Use Partial or Centre Weighted metering and take a few test shots to ensure that the background is very black and the smoke is quite bright. If you are shooting in Manual mode you can vary the aperture to modify the exposure. Changing the power levels of the speedlights also alters the exposure but you should avoid shooting

at full power as they will easily overheat and may burn out. Shoot in single shot mode, not in continuous mode and ensure that you pause between shots to allow the speedlights to fully recharge and to avoid overheating. Focus in Manual Mode or in autofocus, depending on the capability of your camera's autofocus. I experimented with using autofocus with back button focus in Live View Mode and found it very effective.

Speedlight Settings

Set both speedlights to Manual Mode. Use $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ power to start with and vary this and the power ratio between them, depending on the amount of light that your coloured gels block. Different colours of gels block light differently. Set the zoom to 50 mm, which provides a medium light coverage. Anything wider or narrower will under light the smoke. Disable the Auto Power Shut Off as you will find it very frustrating to have to constantly reboot your lights. It is a Custom Function setting so check your manual.



Post Production and Creative Suggestions

For the smoke only images, such as the "Spirals" image on page 16, I use very little post production in Photoshop other than to darken the background and lighten the smoke (in Curves or Levels) and clone out bits of flying ash. Sometimes I enhance the saturation of one or more colours using a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer. However, I find that the smoke colours are far more interesting and subtle when gels are used during shooting. Pick two different hues that

work well together (e. g. blue/green, yellow/red, green/purple) and experiment. Sometimes the hues will blend and produce an interesting and unexpected third and even fourth colour. To get a white background and different coloured smoke using Photoshop, duplicate the background layer, select the new layer and invert it (Command I). Without gels the natural colour of the smoke is blue-grey. Inverting such an image shot on a black background will give you a white background with black or dark grey smoke.

Another creative suggestion that does not rely significantly on post production is to place a tallish vertical object on the shooting table positioned between the two incense sticks and photograph the smoke curling around it. Use complementary gels to enhance colour interest.

I experimented with placing a tall flower stem between two incense sticks and used a blue and green gel combination on the lights. My creative goal was to echo the look of the floral stem and leaves with the curling smoke columns. Although it took quite a bit of patience, I was ultimately quite pleased with the results.

Lastly, for a more complex creative approach, one can use a smoke image as the basis for a composite. (see the "Firebirds" image on left, that placed 1st in the November creative competition) and the "Dance on Fire" image on the cover. For "Firebirds," I started with a smoke image that was vibrant in colour and had an interesting three smoke column composition. It was shot with a red and yellow gel combination. For the compositing process, I chose three ballet dancer photos that had been shot on a black background so that they would blend more easily with the black background of the smoke image. I looked for images in which the hair and body positions of the dancers roughly approximated the shapes of the smoke spirals. I then selected each of the three dancers using the Quick Selection and Refine Edge tools in Photoshop and added them in separate layers onto the background image, using the Blend Modes that I thought worked best. I took care to arrange them at different heights and angles so as to enhance the composition. I then used layer masks on each dancer layer to creatively remove portions or vary opacity so as to blend them more subtly with the smoke. I applied a Dodge and Burn layer to strengthen the overall contrast and a Levels layer to enhance the mid-tones. Lastly I painted out some of the background smoke to give a cleaner, more dramatic composition.

The possibilities are endless. Enjoy!

Quiet Evening on the Corrib

by John McConnell

I can never sleep on the plane and I dislike air travel. So our trip to Ireland in August 2013 was, let's say, self-inflicted, pre-meditated agony! But, Ireland is always worth it! Six hours to Toronto and the plane to Dublin needed repair! So a 6 hour wait for a 7½ hour flight to Dublin was followed by an hour queueing for the rental car. I then drove from Dublin across Ireland, through Galway City and into the magnificent landscape of Connemara, my favourite place in the world to paint and photograph. Wild, remote and stunning.

In the village of Oughterard we found our gorgeous rented cottage at the end of a tiny lane on the shore of Lough Corrib, Ireland's largest lake, covering 176 km² and famous for its large trout and salmon. The evening light was stunning as the sun began to drop. In spite of 23 sleepless hours of travel, I grabbed my camera and tripod and ran, zombie-like, down the lane to the lake.

I wanted to capture the calmness and quiet of that moment, the amazing colours and the feeling of peace and tranquillity of this beautiful place. As I returned to the cottage the light changed, the sky darkened, and the blue intensified. So, once home in Canada, I did a little work in Lightroom to capture this intensified light. But I prefer to do as little of this post-production as possible. This image was a Honourable Mention in the October Intermediate Digital Open competition.

Canon 60D, Raw capture, Sigma 10-20 mm wide angle lens, ¼ second, f9, ISO 640, Aperture Priority.



Painting Nothing

by Harold Hildred

Whilst on a cruise of New Zealand and Australia, one unique port of call was Akaroa. This is a small village on Banks Peninsula in the Canterbury region of the South Island of New Zealand. Who knew what a very interesting port of call it would be! I was puzzled at first by the French street names and when walking along the shoreline I stumbled across this statue of a French artist at work "painting" the magnificent view of the harbour. I thought that this brought to life the presence of the first French settlers of this area.

Akaroa was founded in 1838 by the French Captain Jean Francois L'Anglois. He returned to France to advertise for settlers to come to New Zealand and left on 9 March 1840 with 63 emigrants bound for Akaroa. Imagine his complete surprise and disappointment when he arrived on 18 August 1840 to find the British flag flying. The English ship the "Britomart" had arrived only 2 days prior and claimed sovereignty for the Crown. As the French were the first settlers, this explains their strong influence, including street names. A famous son of Akaroa was Frank Worsley, born on 22 February 1872. He was captain of the "Endurance" on which Sir Ernest Shackleton sailed to the Antarctic in 1914. This image was placed 1st in the October Intermediate Creative competition.

Canon EOS 5D Mark III, Canon EF 24-105 mm lens, at 60 mm, f4.5 and 1/60 second, ISO 100. Apple's colour-enhancing app was used to create this look on an I-Mac.



Tuesday Shoots

by Garry Schaefer

February 11th: Windblown. The theme of the day provides two basic options, each dependent on the weather, past or present. A recent windstorm or one underway may offer subjects in disarray, tossed to their unseemly locations and positions. More powerful and challenging would be the opportunities provided by strong winds at the time of the shoot. Motion and action driven by the elements. Flags snapping, boats rocking in the waves, umbrellas reversed by the elements. But what if winds are light? Stand the theme on its head: drooping flags, slack sails in the harbour, mere ripples on the water. My hope will be for a windy day to challenge the hardy!

February 25th: Looking Down and Then Looking Up. One can sometimes spend too much time looking at the world from a favoured point of view, while ignoring other options. Do you habitually look down or look up? The theme of the day points us toward doing both. With that thought in mind, we will find many subjects to catch our attentions in either direction. A special challenge is to plant your feet and to take one shot down and one up. Seek locations both indoors and out to flex your creative eye in that way.

The example below is just one of many to be found out on the street. Beneath street level, the pit where a new tower will soon stand. Looking up, one sees the current residential neighbourhood. Those residents will experience the din of construction over coming months and then will have their views altered in the years to come. Just one example of things seen looking down and then up.



Weekend Shoots

by Donna Robertson and Dave McLean

February 23rd: Butterfly Gardens. This field trip is designed specifically for those of us that have not had the opportunity to bask in the warmth of a southern climate over the course of the winter. Butterfly Gardens offers 80°(Fahrenheit), (that's over 26° Celsius for our younger members and transplants from Europe) temperatures with about 80% humidity. In addition to the tropical climate, Butterfly Gardens offers a variety of butterflies, tropical plants, exotic birds, and reptiles.

For this shoot it is important to protect your gear. When you take your camera from a cool to a warmer environment there is a risk of condensation; the greater the temperature differential, the greater the risk of condensation. While condensation on the outside of your camera or lens may be annoying and inconvenient it is condensation on the inside of the camera that is the greatest risk. If severe enough this could either ruin your camera, or lead to a costly repair. Cameras are computers, with micro-circuits and electricity. Subjecting your camera to severe condensation is like throwing your computer into the shower when it is still plugged in. To avoid the risk of condensation, you want to reduce the impact of the extreme change in temperature on your camera. To do this, place your camera and lenses in a sealed plastic bag prior to going to a warmer environment. Let them sit in the warmer environment until they have had time to acclimatize to it. The time you wait will be dependent on the temperature differential; for Butterfly Gardens, consider 15-20 minutes. Keep this in mind when you're outdoors in the winter with your camera and then enter a warm vehicle, or your home; as they say, an ounce of prevention is better than a pound (£ or \$) of cure.



Catch the Action

by Nancy MacNab

Whether you usually shoot animals or people, at some point most photographers find that they want to catch them in action. Sports or pets playing, racing cars or flying birds, wildlife on the move or moving water, they all present a challenge. So where do you start?

First of all, how do you want your subject to appear in the image? Do you want to freeze the action and have the entire photograph sharp, or do you want to show the motion blur? If the latter, do you want your subject sharp against a blurred background, or a blurred subject against a sharp background? Or should both be blurred?

While aperture is generally your first consideration for motionless subjects, controlling your shutter speed becomes your top priority for action. While it is easy to centre your attention on shutter speed to stop the action, in fact all three elements of exposure play a role.

The higher your ISO with any given aperture, the faster your shutter speed will be. However, you usually want to keep the ISO as low as possible to get the best quality (to minimize grain or noise). You will need to test your camera's ISO to learn how high an ISO you can use and still get good quality images. Most cameras nowadays will give you good results even at 1600 or 3200, and acceptable results at 3200 or 6400.

For your aperture, shooting wide open (f2.8 or f4 end of your lens) will give you a faster shutter speed at any ISO than using a small aperture (f16 or f32 end of your lens). Your choice of aperture also contributes to the sharpness of the background, as a large aperture (f2.8 or f4) will produce an out-of-focus background when compared to a small aperture (f16 or f32).

Your shutter speed is the third element in the triad that controls the exposure. When dealing with a moving subject, the shutter speed needed to freeze the motion will vary depending on the speed at which the subject is moving, its proximity (how close it is to you or how far away it is), and its direction (whether it is moving directly towards or away from you, moving directly across your line of vision, or moving at an angle).

Another element can be how smoothly the subject is moving. Trying to track a jackrabbit as it zigzags across a field will be more challenging than tracking a turtle making a bee-line for some food. You basically know where the turtle is going and at what speed, whilst the

jackrabbit's movements will be very unpredictable.

If you want to freeze the moving subject against a blurred background, you will need to pan, or track, the subject and follow through as you click the shutter. This is vital as stopping the tracking will result in a blurred subject. Squeeze the shutter release gently as hard pressure can result in an abrupt downward movement of the camera's lens at the vital moment. Or else use a cable release or remote release.

When setting up your composition, be sure to leave some space in front of your subject so it can "move into it"; otherwise, it can give the impression of being constricted as it "bumps" into the edge of the frame. Leaving space around the subject and showing the environment also means that it is easier to track with the lens!

A very general starting point for your shutter speed could be 1/250 second for a walking or distant subject to 1/2000 second for a racing car coming around the corner right in front of you. Take some test shots, check your results, and adjust your shutter speed accordingly (whether you do so by changing the ISO or the aperture is up to you). Your camera settings may need to change as the light changes during the event or the day, so keep checking your histogram and the image.

As with all aspects of photography, the theory will not help at all if you don't keep practicing. You are not going to suddenly get fantastic shots in exotic locations if you cannot get the same shots right here at home. So go down to Esquimalt Lagoon and practice photographing the birds as they swim and fly, take off or land. The park along Dallas Road is another great place to see walkers, cyclists, dogs running and playing, boats and vehicles driving past, as well as the ever-present birds. Go to local sporting events to practice event photography before you try it at the Olympics.



by John Coenraads

I've always marvelled at the efficiency with which the "fishes" propel themselves through water with a flick of the tail. Especially remarkable is the difference between sharks, who locomote by undulating their bodies horizontally, and dolphins who undulate their bodies up and down. It's clear evidence of the shark's evolutionary connection to the reptiles, whereas dolphins are descended from mammals.

Like sharks, horizontally polarized light waves travel through space with a horizontal undulation, while vertically polarized light travels with a vertical undulation like the dolphins. Now, if truth be told, light waves can also undulate at any angle in between (whale sharks?), but this doesn't detract from the usefulness of the shark/dolphin imagery. So now imagine sharks and dolphins encountering a grid consisting of vertically oriented bars as pictured in figure 1. The dolphins can pass through unmolested, while the horizontal motion of the sharks' tails will interfere with their passage. This is not a bad image to have in mind when visualizing how a vertically oriented polarizing filter transmits vertically polarized light but stops light that is horizontally polarized.

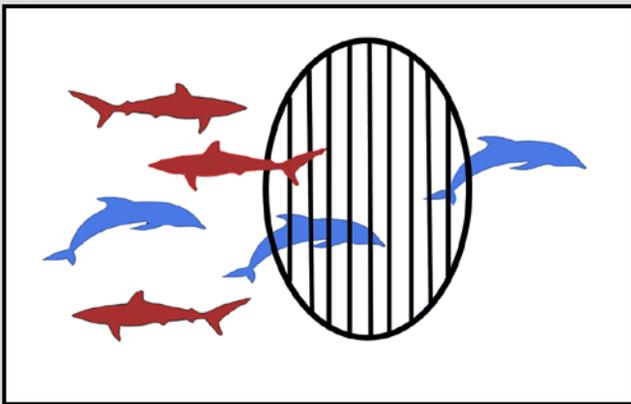


Figure 1: Dolphins pass through the vertical grid easily while sharks are stopped.

Polarization Around Us

Every light wave has a particular angle of polarization. When we say that light is unpolarized, we mean that the mix of light waves we are seeing has a completely random distribution of orientations. When light is polarized, waves with a particular polarization predominate. Unless you are a bee, your eye cannot detect light's polarization; for that you need a prosthesis. I have developed such a device in the form

of "Be a Bee™" sunglasses. You can make your own; take a set of Polaroid™ sunglasses, remove one lens, rotate it through 90 degrees and glue it back into place. Looking out through both lenses, the world will look unpolarized since you are seeing a mix of polarizations. Closing one eye and peering through the rotated lens will let you see the sharks, while peering out through the other lens will help you detect dolphin hot spots. Of course you can achieve much the same effect by holding a polarizer in front of one eye and rotating it through 90 degrees.

There are two naturally occurring cases of polarized light that are of special interest to photographers and we'll examine each one in turn.

Why is the Sky Blue?

I was about to launch into the arcane details of Raleigh scattering when I discovered the following website: www.warren-wilson.edu/~physics/PhysPhotOfWeek/20060421PolarizedSky/ which gives an explanation easily as good as anything I could write. The short of it is that blue light, having a shorter wavelength is preferentially scattered back to us when it encounters air molecules. But, and even more importantly, the light reflected back to us, at right angles to the direction of the sun, is strongly polarized in the horizontal direction. Thus this light can be stopped by a vertically oriented polarizer, such as your polarizing sun glasses. Removing this light from the scene makes the sky a deeper blue which is very pleasing from a photographic perspective. However, a word of caution: if you are stitching together a panorama, you'll never get the degrees of polarization to match and the use of a polarizing filter is best avoided. Similarly, wide-angle lenses will show unnatural variations in sky colour due to the large change in the sun angle across the lens.

If you have trouble visualizing what it means when we refer to light reflected back at right angles to the direction of the sun, I have devised the blue sky polarization finder pictured in figure 2.

Here is how it works. Aim the vertical pointer at the sun so that it casts no shadow on the circular shadow detector which sits underneath the pointer. Since the pointer is at right angles to the optical axis of the camera, you are now guaranteed that the camera lens points at a part of the sky that is maximally polarized. It should also be clear that if the camera is swung around the axis defined by the pointer (just loosen the



Figure 2: "PolaSun™" polarization finder mounted on hot shoe of DSLR camera.

camera's mounting screw), the lens will sweep through an arc of polarized sky light. Thus, as the sun begins to set, this arc of polarized sky light will rise higher and higher in the sky.

On an overcast day, the light coming from the sky has been scattered multiple times and any vestige of polarization is long gone. Therefore a polarizing filter will prove useless for improving such a sky.

Reflections

But even on an overcast day, there is still a good reason for carrying a polarizer. Reflected light is often strongly polarized and removing that reflected light with a polarizing filter will often benefit the image. Let me illustrate with a familiar example. It is mid-afternoon on a sunny day and you are driving west. There is a lot of glare reflected from the road ahead but your vertically oriented sun glasses do a fine job of removing that glare. Think of it this way. The sun emits a stream of sharks and dolphins onto the road ahead. The vertically undulating dolphins are absorbed into the road surface while the horizontally undulating sharks are reflected off the road towards you. (Sharknado anyone?)

The same technique works for reducing the reflections from the glass in windows and show cases, or from plant leaves. Although in principle tracing the reflected light back to its source should enable you to predict the direction of polarization and adjust your filter accordingly, in practice it is much simpler to just look through your view finder as you rotate the filter through 90 degrees and adjust it so as to minimize reflections. The same technique works for removing bright reflections due to wet or other reflective surfaces.

From sad experience, I have learned to be careful when rotating a polarizing filter. The actual filter rotates freely within the threaded ring that screws into the lens. Thus when turning the filter to screw it into a lens, it is sometimes difficult to determine if it is only the filter rotating or the screw mount. A dot of red nail polish on the threaded ring gives confirmation that it is doing the turning. When rotating the filter while peering through the view finder, I always turn clockwise (as seen from the front) so that there is no chance that I end up inadvertently unscrewing the filter.

A word of caution is in order when using a polarizer with a body of water. Unless you wish to photograph through the surface of the water, for example when photographing spawning salmon, the use of a polarizer may actually degrade your image. Here's why. The reason a lake looks blue is not because water is blue but because it reflects the blue sky. But remember that sky light can be strongly horizontally polarized. Like the sharks on the roadway, such horizontally polarized light is very efficiently reflected by the surface of the water. Eliminating this blue sky light with a polarizer will leave the surface of the lake looking grey and muddy. Someone should invent a split polarizer that lets you polarize the sky selectively. Although I suppose one could just slip a piece of polarizing material half-way down into a Cokin holder.

Do I Need a Polarizing Filter?

The resounding answer is yes! With Photoshop providing a cornucopia of filters, it seems that the need for actually screwing on a physical filter has disappeared. But there is a reason Photoshop does not provide a polarizing filter. The effect of such a filter can never be simulated despite the abundance of recipes available online which attempt to do exactly that. And the reason is that the camera's sensor is simply not sensitive to the angle of polarization of the incoming light. As a result, this information is never captured. The best you can do is to take two shots of a scene, one with a polarizer oriented vertically and one with the filter oriented horizontally. Then you would have actually "captured" polarization information and by merging these images as two layers in Photoshop, you could in some sense be adjusting the polarization.

So, if you are only going to buy one filter, make it a high quality polarizer. In next month's issue I will deal with some of the physics and technology behind polarizing filters.

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