

photoworld



2008/#2

In a review of the Alpha 350 elsewhere, I commented on the missing feature which means you can keep shooting (and seeing review images) without a card in the slot. I've also commented on the small optical viewfinder.

Well, tonight, as I write the final page for this edition, I put my Alpha 700 down to pick up something else before going out for the evening. It was safely loaded with a memory card and I'd been using it earlier. A minute later I nipped back and picked it up.

Later on, I took a few pictures when walking outdoors. Then I wanted a family shot before leaving. After taking five or six pictures, I decided to show them – and realised it had no memory card. It wasn't even the Alpha 700!

I had picked up the Alpha 350, card not present, with 16-80mm lens instead of the Alpha 700 with 16-105mm. No doubt about it, not having a shutter lock 'without card' is an omission. But, I had just been handling the 350, looking through its small viewfinder, and had not noticed that it wasn't the 700! In other words, it was just as familiar and the view was not suddenly looking small.

As for having no memory in the camera, I clearly didn't have much in the cranium either. In future, never leave a camera unloaded! I took the shots on my brother's excellent £110 digicam purchased from Aldi...

– David Kilpatrick

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Photoworld magazine is an independent quarterly from Icon Publications Ltd which provides free membership of the Photoworld Club UK/Photoclubalpha. The aim of the Club is to provide support services, information, inspiration and activities for owners of Minolta, Konica Minolta, Seagull, Sony Alpha and other equipment compatible with the Minolta SR, MC, MD, VS, AF, AF-xi and AF-D mounts. Membership of the Club is not dependent on subscription and you may also sign up, receiving emailed information only but no magazine, through www.photostore-uk.com, www.minoltaclub.co.uk or www.photoclubalpha.com. Subscriptions cost £19.95 for four issues (UK/Europe), £23.95 (Rest of World), payable to Icon Publications Ltd, Maxwell Place, Maxwell Lane, Kelso, Scottish Borders TD5 7BB. This publication has no connection with Konica Minolta Holdings or Sony Corporation, or the brands mentioned. The logo typeface is 'Minolta Classic' designed by Justin Bailey.

HELPLINES AND INFORMATION

Authorised & warranty repairs, assistance and enquiries

OUR website www.photoclubalpha.com is now packed with detailed features on the Minolta and Sony Alpha systems, has a busy Forum and you can search the site for help on topics. It has a full directory of useful links for downloading software or obtaining help. For personal advice from the Club, use e-mail only please, to david@photoclubalpha.com. Letters can not be answered by post.

A **DEDICATED** helpline is available for Konica Minolta Dynax and Dimage digital system owners, and also for film camera owners. The helpline phone number is **0870 0104107**.

ALL REPAIRS for Konica, Minolta and Konica Minolta branded photographic products are handled by;

JP Service Solutions
Johnsons Photopia Ltd
Hempstalls Lane
Newcastle under Lyme
Staffordshire ST5 0SW
Tel: 01782 753366 – Fax: 01782 753340
Email: kmsupport@jpss.co.uk

SONY may announce further firmware upgrades or indeed products. Your first step should be to check Sony's website regularly:

www.sony.co.uk

Their general helpline, which will have information on any other numbers, addresses, departments or offices which Konica Minolta owners may need to reach in future, is: **08705 111 999**

For downloadable printable manuals, legacy firmware and software updates, visit:

<http://ca.konicaminolta.com/support/americas/>

For the Sony European user service – there is still no UK user club:

<http://www.sony.co.uk/nextlevel>

To order KM/Sony parts, accessories, and new Sony flash components etc, visit the Photoshore, where Bernard Petticrew also hosts an advice forum:

<http://www.photostore-uk.com/>

MINOLTA REPAIRS

by specialist workshop in Milton Keynes

FOR MANY years **Camera Repair Workshop**, based in Milton Keynes close to the original Minolta UK service department, handled the repair of classic SRT, X, Vectis and later film cameras for Minolta UK.

They have obtained many of the spare parts and KM's stocks of older 'cannibalisation cameras' like 7000 and 8000i. Their proprietor is David Boyle, and his two technicians are Minolta trained. As an independent repairer they will specialise in film and digital, and hold parts going back to models like the XM. The Dynax 9 is an exception, previously serviced by a special European centre, and must be sent to JP (see right). No VAT is chargeable at present, and they offer Photoworld Club members a **10 per cent discount** on prices which they say are already better than former retail repair charges. This enables the Club to continue with its 10 per cent service and repair discount offer.

The **Photoworld Club Camera Check** scheme will be operated by Camera Repair Workshop, though in absence of Konica Minolta's former bulk shipping arrangements, the return carriage costs have increased and a charge of **£25 per camera/standard lens** combination is now required.

Your equipment is bench-tested for shutter speed, metering, focusing and aperture accuracy, externally cleaned and adjusted (this includes mirror box and film track, and all accessible parts or adjustments). If performance is below standard, a quotation will be issued for optional servicing. A certificate is completed showing the test results and functions checked, and returned with the camera. Camera Repair Workshop were actually responsible for most of the Club Camera Check work, and hold a stock of original 'Minolta Club' certificates along with all the necessary bench testing equipment.

They are based at:

Unit 9, Wharfside, Bletchley, Milton Keynes MK2 2AZ.

Telephone 01908 378088, fax 08712 427677.

Email: cameraworkshop@tiscali.co.uk

Alpha 700 scales landmark heights

Never seen before images of Britain were unveiled at an exhibition at La Galleria, Royal Opera Arcade, London from Thursday 27th – Saturday 29th March 2008. As part of the Sony Alpha Unseen Britain campaign climber and photographer Mike Robertson toured the country scaling new heights and legendary landmarks to create totally new and exciting photographic images using the Sony Alpha 700 Digital SLR camera.

In conjunction with *Enjoy England*, *Visit Scotland* and *Visit Wales* six structures across Britain were selected by Mike, based on the challenge of the climb, the geographical location, the visual impact of their surroundings and the opportunity to capture a never seen before image. These were Spinnaker Tower (Portsmouth), Blackpool Tower (Blackpool), Newport Transporter Bridge (Wales), Snowhill Plaza (Birmingham), Glasgow Tower (Glasgow) and the Park Plaza Hotel (Leeds).

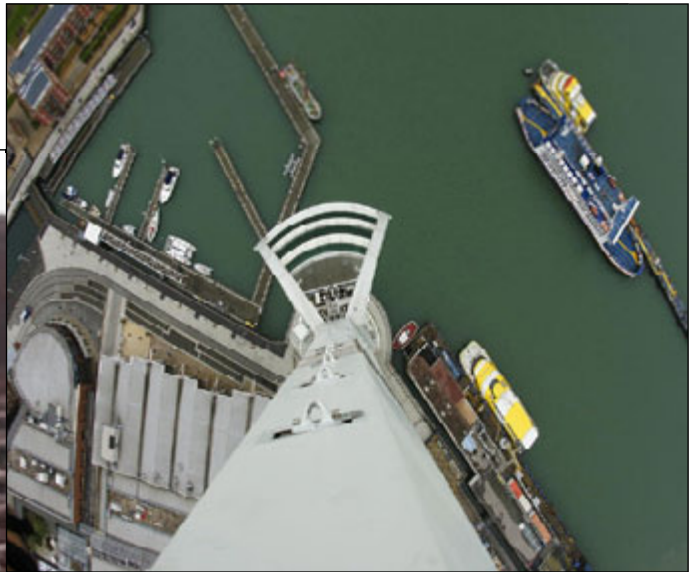
“Whilst I am used to embarking on difficult climbs, the unusual building structures and the unpredictable weather conditions made the Sony Unseen Britain an amazing challenge” said Mike Robertson. Using the Alpha 700 Digital SLR camera and range of lenses allowed me to capture some fantastic and unique shots of Britain.”

As part of the campaign Sony also invited enthusiast photographers to get shooting (with their feet firmly on the ground) with their own original and eye-catching images of Britain. The winning entries were also be on display at the exhibition.

Chris Bowen from Sony said: “The Sony Alpha 700 DSLR camera has advanced features which were put to the test on this challenge. The resulting photography not only depicts a unique view of Britain – but also an inspiring look at the capabilities of Digital SLR photography and the Alpha range in particular.”

To find out more about the Sony Alpha Unseen Britain challenge and the exhibition visit:

www.sony.co.uk/unseenbritain
(News item from Sony UK)



Above: sitting on the top of Blackpool Tower, or at least, near it... top right, Spinnaker; right, Glasgow Tower; below, Leeds Park Plaza Hotel.



Zeiss and G lenses ready for full frame 24.6 megapixels

The Sony Alpha 900 – though this name is said to be not the correct one – is expected to be launched later this year.

Sony has announced details of the image sensor to be used in the new full-frame digital camera. It is a 24.6 megapixel CMOS type, putting Sony in the lead over Canon whose £5,000+ 1Ds MkIII has a 21 megapixel sensor.

This does not mean that the Sony camera, seen here in its latest restyled form (compare to the pictures shown as 'Alpha 500' in the Summer 2007 issue), will be more expensive than the Canon.

Expected US prices are around \$3,000-\$3,500 for the body only. We can expect this to translate into £2,000-£2,500 including VAT for the body in the UK. However, this is based only on rumours leaked by European journalists.

No other details of the '900' are known except that it will incorporate SSS anti-shake, despite the sensor being a full 24 x 36mm size. Additional space has been allowed in the camera body to fit the stabilising carriage.

The sensor itself will have 12-bit A to D, and a maximum readout of 6.3 frames per second in full frame mode. This probably means an actual shooting speed more like 4 frames a second. There will also be cropped modes possible, probably including 1.4X or 2X factor views, which may mean faster sequence shooting.

Nikon is already thought to be using the sensor for a model known as the D3X, which might appear on the market before the new Sony.

New full-frame lenses are now appearing in the shops, starting with two zooms.

Zeiss and G

The first, already on sale and being used by Alpha owners with superb results, is the **Carl Zeiss SAL 24-70mm f2.8 ZA SSM**. This lens was predicted right from the Alpha 100 launch in 2006 because its name appeared on a screen of information.

What was not known was how ambitious the lens would be in quality and size. It is a very substantial lens, like the Nikon with the same



The new look for the forthcoming 'flagship' DSLR – now known to have a 24.6 megapixel full frame sensor – has been improved with more rounded lines to the prism.



The SAL 70-300mm f4-5.6 G SSM will be available in shops from May, with a recommended price of £699. This may seem a lot for a tele zoom, but with Super Sonic Motor focusing and the G label, it should be the best ever made.

specification, costing £1,200 retail and incorporating a Super Sonic Motor focusing mechanism (SSM) which is fast and near silent.

It takes 77mm filters and weighs almost one kilo, focusing close enough for 0.25X size reproduction. It has a circular iris with 9 blades, and uses 17 elements in 13 groups. With T* coating to handle the challenge of this complexity, it produces a good contrast without any tendency to flare.

The second full-frame lens to be launched does not carry the Zeiss label, but the Minolta-style G designation meaning a superior design. It is the **Sony SAL 70-300mm f4-5.6 G SSM**, and as you will guess, it also uses a sonic motor. This lens is the long-awaited replacement for the 100-300mm Apo macro, and also looks like keeping enthusiasts for the original 'beercan' AF 70-210mm and 75-300mm models happy with its mainly metal construction.

It takes 62mm filters, focuses down to 1.2m (though internal focusing means this does not produce a larger image scale than the 75-300mm f4.5-5.6 SAL) and weighs a comfortable 760g. The 75-300mm is only 460g, which may indicate how much more glass and how much more robust a mount the G-series uses.

This lens is already being offered for sale at £699 retail with some shops down to £599, but deliveries are not scheduled into well into May, and Sony Japan has reported a worldwide shortage will be inevitable as orders exceed their capacity to produce it.

We have placed an advance order for a 70-300mm, which will mean selling any other tele zooms short of the 70-200mm f2.8 G SSM to pay for it. The theory is that this lens proves to be so good it replaces the need for any other long lenses in daily use.

What's next?

Tamron has announced the development of a 10-24mm f2.8-4 ultrawide for the 1.5X digital format. Sony has made no announcement of anything similar, but we suspect it will appear in Sony garb. And more full-frame lenses are on the way for certain.



The A200, 300 and 350

Testing the A200 and A350, we look at the new choices open in the Sony Alpha DSLR range including Live View and 14.2 megapixel options

For a brief period late in 2007, there was only one current Sony DSLR product – the Alpha 700. The 100 has already been discontinued and a replacement was promised.

When the replacement turned out to be three cameras launched in rapid succession, there was almost no time for a photo press or the dealers to react. The **Alpha 200, 300 and 350** were revealed without elaborate press conferences despite the ground-breaking specifications of the 350 in particular. Very little has been said by Sony about the technology. They just went ahead and put three new models on sale as fast as deliveries permitted.

One model, the Alpha 300, is exclusive to Jessop in the UK at the moment. Since it is essentially a blend of A200 and A350 features, anything you need to know about it can be covered by looking at the 200 and 350. We have had both cameras since their earliest availability.

The Alpha 200

The effective replacement for the Alpha 100, the 200 has an improved body design which is more like the A700 in control layout. It is not reduced in size, and has a chunky right hand grip.

Some features of the 100 are omitted, other new features are added and these are mostly connected to performance.

The criticism levelled at the 100 for poor high ISO noise levels is corrected dramatically; the top ISO limited is raised to 3200, and image quality at ISO 1600 is now equal to the A100 at ISO 800. Some reviews claim the noise reduction is about half a stop, I would dispute that – it is much better. You can shoot at night using ISO 3200 and get fine results. Otherwise, the sensor remains the same 10.2 megapixel CCD.

While the focusing screen, hollow mirror prism and viewfinder remain identical to the 100 along with the AF module itself the assembly has been improved for more accurate focus and the AF motor which drives the lens now runs 1.7X faster. There is no gain in sequence shooting speed or the number of raw frames or JPEGs you can capture continuously but autofocus on moving targets is improved.



The Alpha 200, above, is the closest replacement for the Alpha 100 and sells for around £350. The Alpha 350, below, has a Live View function shown here in use with the screen angled up towards the viewer. It is a 14.2 megapixel model and sells for around £450 (prices are quoted for body only).



White balancing has been tidied up so that AWB is less likely to show colour casts, and auto exposure seems to have been made less sensitive to small highlights. Flash exposure with D-compatible flash-guns is more reliable and consistent.

The lens mount is improved, with a wider flange (and an orange ring like the A700) giving better dust and moisture sealing. The lens release button is restyled and a little larger to find and press. There is no depth of field preview button on the mount surround now. This is one of the key omissions from the specification of all three new models – you have no stop-down preview.

The battery is changed for the new type **NP-FM500H** InfoLithium used by the Alpha 700, and this also is shared by all three new models. This means the entire current range shares on battery type. It can also fit the Alpha 100, but the original A100 cell can not be used in any of the new bodies.

The CompactFlash card slot is turned round to match the 700, so the card is inserted with the label facing you, the 'right way round' as far as most users see it. This will avoid the damage sometimes caused in the 7D, 5D and A100 which had the slot reversed when unthinking users tried to force a card in.

The Alpha 200 will accept a vertical grip, **VG-B30AM**, which is shared with the 300 and 350. This offers dual battery capacity with auto switching, the remaining power only being shown for the battery in use. It has fully duplicated controls for portrait format shooting.

The shooting setting and menu control are simplified, compared to the Alpha 100, but are not as fast to use as the **Quick Navi** functions of the 700. It's easy navigation but a bit slow. On average you will need one button press *more* to make any given change with the Alpha 200 series cameras, compared to the 100.

The rear LCD viewing screen is larger, but still normal in resolution, not the ultra-high res of the 700. There are no improvements made to the wideness of auto bracketing range (it remains limited for High Dynamic Range multi shots).

Apical's Dynamic Range Optimisation – **DRO+** – is continued

in the Alpha 200 and its brothers. The type of DRO resembles the Alpha 100 rather than the 700, but it's made a little more effective. You can now have DRO active when shooting RAW+JPEG.

The 2-second mirror lift self timer function has been altered so it is just a plain 2-sec timer, with no pre exposure mirror up. This is bad news for some types of tripod and macro photography at speeds like 1/15th or 1/30th where mirror vibration can affect sharpness and Super Steady Shot is not recommended.

In compensation, the whole mirror and shutter action has been improved. The camera now has a very slick action – noticeably more responsive and faster than the Alpha 100 – and loses the rather tinny shooting sound. Instead it becomes smooth and unobtrusive.

SSS has been improved too, by around half a step over the 100, falling slightly short of the superior version fitted to the 700, at 2.5-3.5 stops.

The menus have been simplified so that you no longer have the ability to prevent shutter release with no card inserted, or to enable release with 'no lens'. Since 'no lens' also means T-mount lenses, bellows, adapted lenses and so on there has to be a workaround.

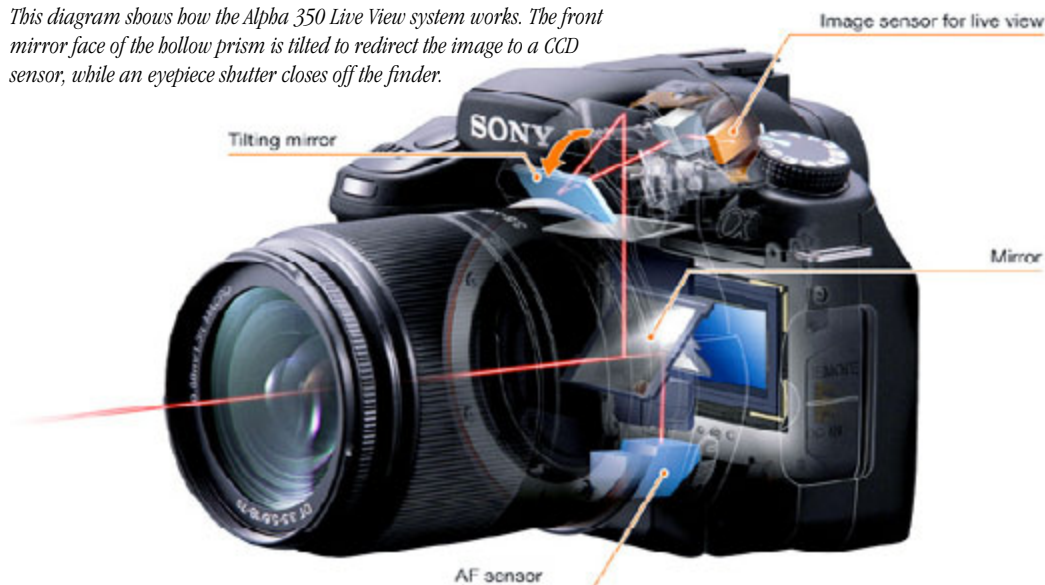
This is provided by Manual exposure mode M automatically enabling release with no lens. It is the only mode in which you can use non-Alpha lenses with any of the three new cameras.

One missing function that may affect your choice with the 200-350 series is the AE Lock function. This can no longer be set to provide Spot Metering, which must instead be set as a full-time option via the menus. It is possible to hold and compare readings when using evaluative metering. AE Lock can still be set to toggle or hold, as before.

Finally, the onboard flash now has an auto popup function which you can disable very easily, and a manual popup button rather than the recent tradition of manually lifting it. There is a new no-flash Auto mode added. The flash has the familiar GN of 12, but less rise above the prism top. The reasons for this are explained in the A300/350 section. The A200 clearly shares components so ends up with the flash close to the lens axis.

The improved picture quality, focusing speed, exposure accuracy and white balance more than make up for the loss of some of the Alpha 100 functions. Handling will be a matter of personal taste, but we found the A200 had a better handgrip and button positions. It is a bargain replacement at around £350.

This diagram shows how the Alpha 350 Live View system works. The front mirror face of the hollow prism is tilted to redirect the image to a CCD sensor, while an eyepiece shutter closes off the finder.



The Alpha 350

The 300 and 350 are essentially 200 bodies with **Live View** added. This means you can compose your shot on the 2.7" rear LCD screen of the camera instead of looking through the viewfinder. The rear screen folds out on a double hinged frame to allow waist-level, tripod or chest-level viewing as well as overhead 'above the crowd' camera positions.

The A300 has the same 10.2 megapixel sensor as the A200, but the 350 uses a brand new 14.2 megapixel CCD. Had Pentax not launched their K20D with a 14.6 megapixel Samsung CMOS sensor at the same time, Sony would have been claiming the highest pixel count of any sub-£1,000 DSLR.

They end up claiming the highest pixel count of any sub-£500 DSLR instead, because the A300 is priced at only £50 more than the A200 (for the Live View) and another £50 gets the 14.2 megapixel sensor. This is highly competitive pricing and the A350 has been selling out as a result.

Live View in the Sony models is not the same as anyone else's, though it is most similar to the Olympus E-330 Mode A in design. It uses a

small CCD camera positioned near the viewfinder eyepiece, which can focus on the viewing screen and relay the image to the rear LCD.

You are not seeing the image from the shooting sensor, but a sort of CCTV view of your groundglass complete with its focusing marks. The optical finder only covers 95% of the picture, and the Live View camera does not quite cover the whole screen, so what you get is only a 90% view.

The good thing about this system is that normal fast-action autofocus, including continuous AF, still works. The LV screen shows multiple focus points when you use Wide Area AF and can highlight all the correctly focused sensors.

With other Live View systems there is a clumsy sequence of mirror-down, AF measure, mirror up, shoot then resume sensor-based screen viewing. I have tested the Canon EOS 450D, Pentax K20D, Nikon D300, and Olympus E-510 all of which have 100 per cent field, off the shooting sensor LV. Generally, LV with all these cameras is not practical to use for every shot. You could not treat them like consumer digital cameras where the screen is



The Live View switch is mechanical, and very fast to operate.

your main method of composition.

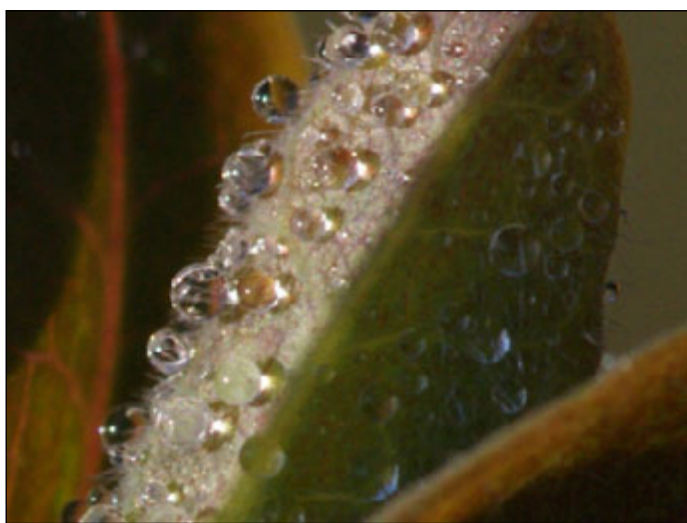
The Sony QuickAF Live View is totally different and can be used at any time, with just a light touch to a small mechanical switch on the camera top changing over from optical finder to live view.

Live View reflects exposure changes if you work with compensation or use Manual. It also shows white balance changes. When you use evaluative (multi zone) metering, LV switches from using the 40 zones in the prism to taking a 1,200 zone reading from the LV CCD. This is extremely accurate. You also get a preview histogram.

What Sony LV does not permit is manual focus on an enlarged image. Since the LV is from a low res CCD in



Four positions of the Alpha 300/350 rear screen – intermediate angles are possible. It can not turn round to face the front, or be angled out to the side for portrait format shots.



Alpha 200 – great for higher ISO shooting

UNLIKE the Alpha 100, the 200 has 'improved light gathering ability' according to Sony. There is more to the enhancement than just a change of in-camera processing. We think they may have improved the microlenses on the sensor.

The top photograph was taken hand-held, at night, at ISO 3200. An exposure of 1/125th at $f2.8$ was possible by sodium street lights. The focus with the 50mm $f1.4$ is better than with our Alpha 700 under similar conditions but it still back-focuses a touch into the shop windows, rather than hitting the masonry and window frames as aimed.

Above, ISO 400 is almost as good as ISO 100 for macro and close-up work. Here, the 100mm $f2.8$ AF Macro lens was used at $f8$ hand-held for a 1:1 close up later closely cropped.

Right, the improved SSS allowed a 0.4 second hand held exposure with the CZ 16-80mm at 16mm and $f8$ (a good aperture to ensure dead sharp branches right into the corners). ISO 400 gave very clean results with high sharpness and little visible noise even in the blue sky area.



prism, there's no possibility of using the same 10X (A200) or 14X (A350) zoom you can activate for review images after they have been shot.

Instead, there is a **SmartConverter** mode. This is a digital crop – a zoom, without interpolation, just as if you were cropping in on a JPEG. It only works in JPEG mode (not even JPEG+RAW) because raw files can not be cropped in camera, and you can just do that later when processing.

Both LV models have 1.4X and 2X SmartConverter settings, which you get by pressing a new button on the right hand top end of the camera near your thumb tip.

The resulting JPEGs are equal to the camera's M size (Medium) at 1.4X or S (Small) at 2X. These are, with the Alpha 300, 5 megapixels and 2.7 megapixels; with the A350, 7.7 megapixels and 3.8 megapixels.

When tested, we found that composing a Live View shot with a lens at a focal length like 300mm – the time you might want to use the 1.4X or 2X crop for shots of garden birds or similar small targets – was next to impossible. LV does not reflect image stabilisation, which happens only during exposure. The LV CCD has no stabilisation.

I suspect most of our readers will realise it is better and safer to shoot a normal size JPEG than use SmartConverter. There's less risk of moving subjects being cut off!

Live View takes space in the prism housing. To leave room, the A300 and A350 use smaller mirror-prisms and have a 0.74X view in place of the 0.83X view of the A200. They do have a slightly more distant eyepoint meaning that spectacle wearers will be better able to see this view. The space taken also dictated the design of the new flash.

Alpha 350 quality

As for 14.2 megapixels, if you think this will be a noisy image pushing the limits of design, try one. The image is just as good as the 10.2 megapixel up to ISO 800, fractionally more noisy at 1600 but more detailed as well, and more useful at 3200 than the same setting on a Dynax 7D.

This camera does demand the best lenses, and loves our CZ 16-80mm. The extra image size means you can crop and still make large prints (*see right hand photo*).

There is a slightly flat look to the images, because the A350 has a surprisingly good dynamic range. It's very much worth shooting raw with this camera. Treat it like medium format and you can't go wrong!

What's missing in the A200-300-350 basics?

- * Depth of field preview button, or any menu dedicated alternative.

- * The AE Lock button no longer functions as a Spot metering button. If you want Spot metering, it must be set using the Fn button and screen interface first, otherwise the AE Lock just holds the reading from whatever metering mode you are using.

- * There are fewer 'effective' buttons because of the change from one assignable Fn button in the middle of a dial with seven function choices. The most noticeable effect is no direct WB button. A good range of WB settings including Kelvins and Magenta/Green CC correction is retained, along with a rapid custom white balance method. You access this through the Fn button menus. The Alpha 100 had one PASM plus scene mode dial, and one Function dial for setting White Balance, Dynamic Range Optimisation, ISO, Metering, Digital Effect, Flash Settings and AF behaviour.

- * There is no menu item to disable shutter lock when 'no lens' is detected or enable it when 'no card' is inserted. Manual exposure permits use of 'dumb' lenses.

- * There is no Direct Manual Focus mode at all, and no quick AF/MF toggle button. On the A200-350 you must use the AF/MF switch on the lens mount if you want to make any manual adjustment to focusing.

- * There is no mirror pre-lift when using the 2-second self timer.

- * You can not decide bracketing order.

- * You can not link or unlink flash and ambient over-ride by default (the main over-ride always affects both).

- * The special high key and low key settings pioneered by Konica Minolta (Lo80, Hi200) are omitted.

- * Custom buttons on certain lenses can not be assigned different functions (they only operate as Focus Hold).

- * No MemoryStick Duo Pro to CF slot adaptor is provided; this £30 Sony accessory came free with every Alpha 100 sold.

- * Colour rendering appears to be slightly less vivid than the A100.

- * The A300 and A350 optical viewfinders are much smaller at 0.74X magnification instead of the 0.83X of the Alpha 100, or the 200.

- * No flash shoe cover is provided with any of the new cameras.

What's added compared to the Alpha 100?

- * There is a dedicated ISO adjustment button.

- * Noise levels are improved at all ISO settings without any loss of fine detail recording ability, amounting to about a one stop gain.

- * The ISO range now extends to a usable 3200.

- * AF motor speed is improved by 1.7X and offers faster focus with most lenses.

- * The mirror/shutter action is faster and sweeter in sound.

- * Auto pop-up flash is added along with button-press manual pop-up, and autoflash operation in most modes (with 'no flash' option)

- * DRO and DRO+ work when shooting RAW+JPEG and will also tag plain RAW shooting so that Sony IDC uses its own software version of DRO.

- * Anti-shake SSS is improved by around half a step to 2.5-3.5 stops.

- * High ISO Noise Reduction at 1600 and 3200 ISO can be turned ON or OFF and is not mandatory (but the results are much better with it on).

- * 16:9 ratio JPEG shooting is added and the focusing screen marked to indicate this – the marks are also very useful for aligning horizons.

- * The LCD screen is larger at 2.7 inches but still the same standard 230,000 (960 x 240 vertical pixels) resolution as the A100, so slightly coarser in pitch.

- * Separate R, G, B and overall luminance histograms are provided for review and playback modes instead of luminance only.

- * The lens mount is improved, weather-sealing appears to be a step up from the A100, and overall build quality is tangibly better as well as looking rather neater (there are no metallic-plastic bluish components any more).

- * Buttons are separated, made larger and simplified in uses.

- * Magnification scale can be displayed during zoomed-in reviewing.

- * Battery Percentage Life is indicated and the InfoLithium cell performs better when recharged after partial discharge, especially with the optional twin charger ACVQ-900AM.

- * Flash exposure is improved, and slightly faster operation reduces the risk of shut-eye.

- * White Balance appears to be improved.

- * The 300 and 350 have, of course, all the new functions associated with Live View.

- * The Alpha 350 has a new 14.2 megapixel ultra high resolution sensor.



All photographs by David Kilpatrick. For more reports on the new Alpha cameras, visit our website – plenty of photo examples and much more detail can be found on-line!
www.photoclubalpha.com
Search for Alpha 200, Alpha 350 or any topic of interest to find articles.



The benefits of 14.2 megapixels

This shot is used at around the correct size for 300dpi printing (it will print 50% larger than this on a typical inkjet printer). The full image is a 14.2 megapixel shot on the Alpha 350, taken as raw, and composed using the 11-18mm f4.5-5.6 Sony SAL wide angle zoom at 11mm. The extra foreground has been included to avoid angling the camera upwards. This keeps the church architecturally correct, with parallel verticals. The wasted foreground space can be cropped off, leaving 8 to 10 megapixels (depending on the amount cropped). A square crop from the full frame is 9.5 megapixels. You can also crop for panoramics and end up with a good size of file for printing – 4592 pixels wide.

Walking to Land's End

Vaughan Brean guides you on a photogenic 14-mile walk, easily split into three stages, from Penzance to Land's End

Regular readers of *Photoworld* may remember a feature in the Summer 2007 edition in which I described my love for the South West of England Coastal footpath, along with the story of how I became so fond of this wonderful treasure. In the summer of 2007 I completed almost 500 miles of the 640 mile route, falling just short of my target distance due to severe flooding. I now feel

fairly well qualified to recommend to you one of my favourite routes.

The route Newlyn to Land's End is incredibly varied, taking in several fishing villages, with an opportunity to buy refreshments. There are stretches which encapsulate the raw beauty of the Cornish coastal landscape. With wildlife, landscape, picture postcard villages and seascapes this route has it all.

There are two "I give up points" along the way, where a bus can be taken back to Newlyn. The first is at Lamorna turn (about one third of the way) and the second is at Porthcurno (about two thirds of the way). This also means that the route can be tackled in anything between one and three days, with plenty of places to stay along the way if you wished to extend the adventure.

Route in a nutshell

This route is a fairly challenging 22.5Km or 14 miles, but I feel that moderately fit individuals can tackle the entire length, and the less fit if split into two or three sections. There is nothing that requires any particularly high level of fitness – no climbs or rock scrambles – and the coastal footpath is well marked and well trodden. It is difficult (but not impossible) to get lost, and the opportunities for the photographer are just unlimited. Walking at a very modest pace and taking plenty of pictures, I completed the hike in eight hours.

If you are in a car I recommend that you start from the fishing port of Newlyn, as the official first mile and a half from Penzance is rather tedious. I parked up just outside Newlyn in an all day Pay and Display for £4.20; there is a Co-Op supermarket directly opposite this car park which enables you to stock up for the journey.

Newlyn is instantly appealing, a real working fishing port with no pretence. Assuming you will be starting early, the port will be busy with fishing boats, gulls screaming and fresh sea air. The coastal footpath is well signed, just follow the Acorn emblem way markers out past the original Penlee lifeboat station. Stop for a moment to pay your respects to the eight Penlee lifeboat men who came to grief in on December 19th 1981 whilst offering assistance to a stricken ship the Union Star in severe gales. There is a cycle/ footpath that takes you for about a mile to the outskirts of the lovely village of Mousehole. This is a place that you will certainly want to linger with plenty of great photo opportunities, a classic Cornish fishing village with a great circular sea wall and a small sandy beach – just lovely.

Follow the Acorn waymarkers out of the village and up the hill; take a little care here, the path seems to go to the left, this is not correct, just continue up the hill and look for the way-marker. I have made the same error here twice now! Just out of Mousehole we are on our way, with the true wild coastal footpath stretching ahead. The path here is easy to follow, just keep the sea on your left and keep walking, you will soon have a clear view of the lovely Lamorna Cove.



Above: the bay at Porthchapel with clear blue waters in April this year. Below: Newlyn is a lovely fishing port but you must choose your viewpoint carefully. The derelict boats and rubbish in the harbour spoil the attractive perspective and eye-leading line of ropes and vessels. See the next photograph...





Above: a change of viewpoint masks the mess in Newlyn harbour with wildflowers. Always look for foregrounds! Below: an upturned boat adds a splash of colour to the foreground for a view of Mousehole, one of the prettiest fishing villages along the route.





Follow the path down into the village, and you will find a tea and snack shop which is a great place for a break. This is our first “I give up” point – catch a bus at “Lamorna turn”.

To continue, leave Lamorna and after about half a mile just past the outcrop of Carn Barges you will pass the steep steps down to the splendid lighthouse. We are into a stretch of delightful woodland leading to

huge bouldered Loy Cove. The path runs along the top of this beach behind bushes – if you are walking on boulders for more than about 50 metres, you have missed it. Here there is another teasop to take a break as there is a strenuous climb up some steps ahead after the lovely coves of Porthguaron. Descending into Penberth Cove just follow the Acorn signs ahead to the fabulous

port of Porthcurno, the next “I give up point” as there is a bus service from the village or a taxi if required.

The village also has historical interest as in 1870 its remote beach became internationally famous as the Brish termination of the first submarine telegraph cables, part of an international link stretching all the way to India. There is a fine telegraph museum here, and a

splendid unspoiled sandy beach. Bed and Breakfast is available here also, but it would be wise to check availability in advance.

Climbing up out of Porthcurno village you will come to the unique Minack open air theatre. Nowadays the theatre is used from June to September for a full summer season of 17 plays, produced by companies from all over the UK and visiting companies from the USA. You can explore it at any time of year. Watching a production under the open sky on a summer evening here is an amazing experience, but this would of course require forward planning, I strongly recommend it though if you get the oppourtunity.

We are now at the two-thirds point. We follow the coastal path across crop and flower fields, past the ancient church and across open farmland, all the time following the waymarkers to the clifftops again and down into quiet sandy cove of Porthchapel. After this is the last opportunity to grab some refreshment at the village of Porthgwarra, with another teasop, a few houses and a picturesque beach bordered



Top: Tater Du Lighthouse between Carn Barges and Loye Cove, a dramatic perspective. Left: fisherman's cottage at Porthgwarra.



Above: look for strong perspective views when the landscape is flatter. Here, the daffodils had been picked from a flower field near Porthchapel.

Below: looking eastwards from the cliffs above Porthcurno. Watch out for basking sharks in the blue waters.



by cottages and some really great caves. We are on the home run now, but some of the best cliff formations I have ever seen are to greet us on the final three miles. It is level terrain now with a well-marked route. From high on the clifftops it is quite common to spot basking sharks in the early summer months, clearly visible in the blue waters against the white sandy sea bed. Soon the buildings at Land's End are visible, and you know you are nearly there.

The tourist features at Land's End are somewhat tacky but the place has its uses for the weary hiker. Refreshments and toilets are available, and just at the other side of the car park is the bus stop which has an hourly bus service back to Newlyn or Penzance. The last bus is at 19.30.

Of course, the route doesn't end here. You can continue past Land's End and hike the 17 miles to Zennor, another of my all-time favourites, somewhat wilder and more remote. This is a real challenge and one that needs to be treated with respect. Then you can push on to St Ives... and on it goes.

I am now shooting with a Sony Alpha 200 with a Carl Zeiss 16-80mm lens; I am completely happy with this great combination, this lens is well suited to my needs, I don't change lenses en-route due to the risk of contamination in the often windy environment. I have found this new Alpha to be a consistently good performer.

I hope you will feel inspired to tackle this route yourself someday!

Useful information

OS grid reference: SW468 295 (Explorer Map 102)

Bus Service: Local Devon and Cornwall First Bus Group (No.1) serves Penzance to Land's End via Newlyn, Lamorna and Porthcurno.



gallery

Novak Rogic moved with his family to Canada from Belgrade in the 1990s and lives in the attractive little community of Hawthorn near Vancouver, which is seen as 'Planet Hawthorn' in his spherical panorama below and the linear panorama it is created from. It was shot on Alpha 700 using DRO+4, 16-80mm CZ at 16mm, ISO 100, 1/10th at f4.5, DRO+4. See: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/rogic/> for funny, clever, colourful and very human images from Novak.

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Above: how black and white works best — observed contrast and the play of light and shade. By Ryan Holloway, Alpha 700, 18-250mm lens at 18mm, 1.6 seconds at f6.3 — this shot is taken at night, at ISO 800! See www.flickr.com/rsplatpc. Below: for art monochrome shots, toning is appropriate and used well here with a dramatic increase in contrast and deepening of shadows. By Justin Harding; Alpha 700, 17-35mm lens at 17mm, 1/4s at f8, exposure compensation set to -1.



gallery



A beautiful glacial valley landscape from Mark Van Bergh, taken in Montana. Alpha 100, ISO 200, 35mm lens, f8. Below: Colesia photographed by Peter Karry, and given soft focus in Photoshop. Dynax 5D, 90mm Tamron macro, f22.



Above: by Iban Etxezabal Oianguren – 1/4 second at f14 using the 17-35mm f2.8-4 D lens set to 30mm on the Dynax 5D, +0.3 exposure compensation and an ND4 graduated filter, ISO 100. Reservoir near Nuarbe, Northern Spain.

Below: Giants' Causeway by Brian Curran. Brian used the 18-70mm kit lens stopped down to f18 for this shot on the Alpha 100, to get maximum depth of field.

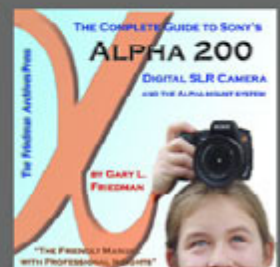
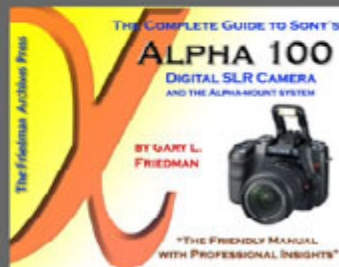
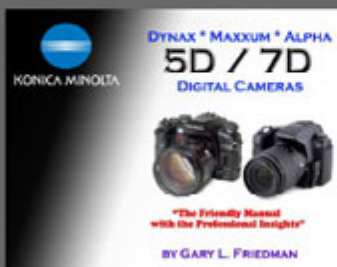




The birds and the bees – or one bird, and two enthusiastic pollinators. Top left, by Olivier Parent of Grenoble – ‘Bombylius Major pollinating’, Sony Alpha 100 + Tamron 180mm macro f3.5, 1/320th at f10 at ISO 200. Bottom left, by David Akirtava – Alpha 700, Minolta 1200AF Macro flash, 100mm Macro at f6.3, 1/250th at ISO 200. Right – by Philip Sharp of Liskeard, robin photographed using the 80-200mm f2.8Apo G lens on Alpha 700, 200mm, 1/250th at f6.7, ISO 200.

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Panoramas come full circle

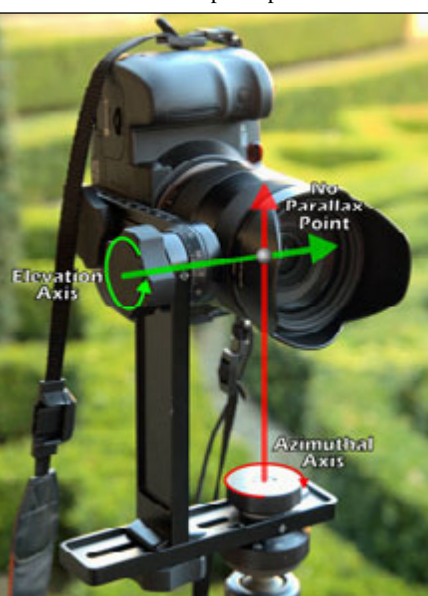
Daniel K L Oi looks at spherical panoramas and 'Virtual Reality' shooting

Digital photography has opened up possibilities either difficult or impossible to achieve traditionally. One example is panoramic photography, the creation of an image which encompasses the entire view surrounding a point in space from separate images. These images can then be displayed on computer as an interactive virtual reality movie or else presented as a still image using a variety of cartographic projections.

The process for the creation of spherical panoramas starts off with the acquisition of the source images. These images should be in all directions looking out from a single fixed point in space or the point of perspective:



This is achieved by rotating the camera and lens around the no-parallax-point (NPP) of the lens, usually by means of a special panoramic head:

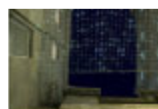


The position of the camera and lens is adjusted until the horizontal and vertical axes of the panoramic head coincide with the NPP.

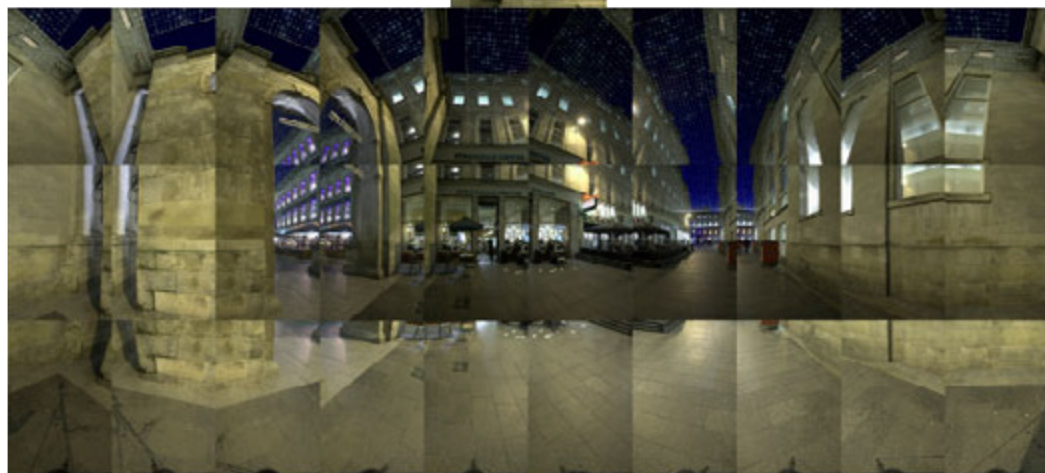
The number of shots required to cover the whole sphere depends on the angle of view of the lens and camera combination. For convenience, fisheye lenses are often used, though any wide angle lens may be suitable.

For instance, an 8mm fisheye lens on an APS-C camera requires 4 horizontal shots, 1 zenith shot (taken straight up) and 1 nadir (taken straight down) shot. In comparison, a 17mm rectilinear lens on the same camera requires 3 rows of 10 shots each, one zenith shot (straight up) and one nadir shot (straight down) – see the montage below.

Special care is needed when taking the nadir shot as the tripod would otherwise be in the way. The nadir shot can be taken handheld with the camera as close to the original position as possible and the photographer stepping back. This resulting shot can then be used to patch the hole at the bottom of the sphere.

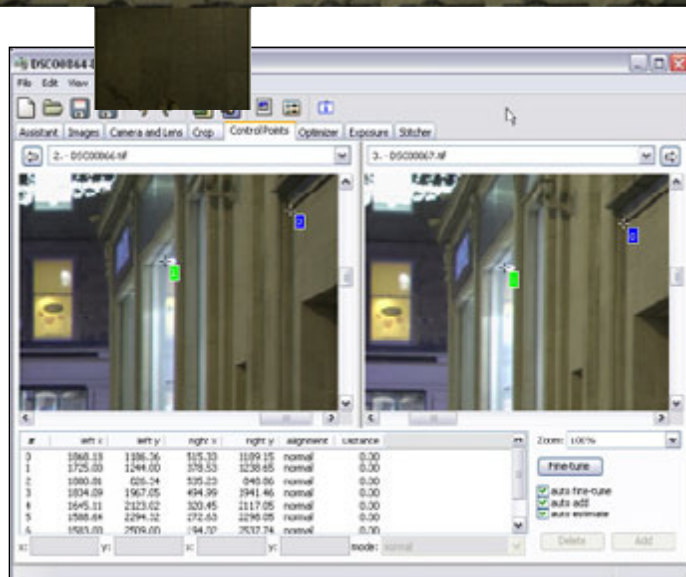


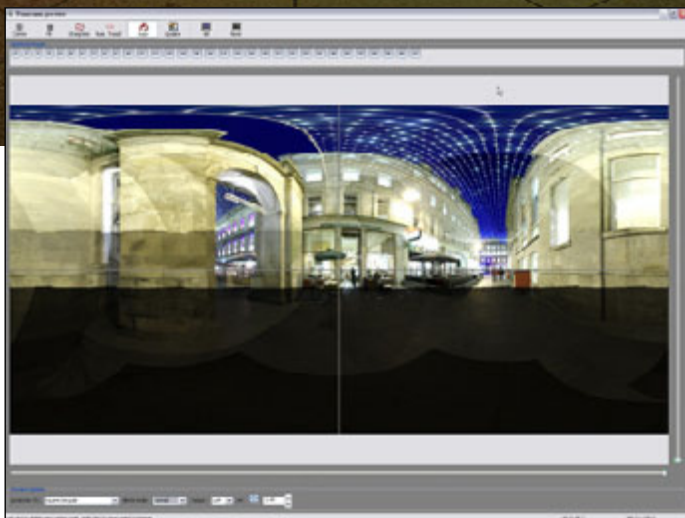
A sequence of 32 images covering the sphere. These were taken using a 17mm lens on the Alpha A700 mounted on a Nodal Ninja 3 panoramic head.



After the full set of images (above) has been taken, they are imported into the computer and loaded into the panoramic stitching software. The software works out from overlapping images their relative position and the distortion characteristics of the taking lens in order to assemble the images upon a virtual sphere surrounding the point of perspective. This is achieved by identifying common features, called control points, in overlapping regions of pairs of images. This can either be done manually by the photographer picking out corresponding pairs of points, or automatically by the software (screen shot, right).

After the images have been aligned and assembled (see

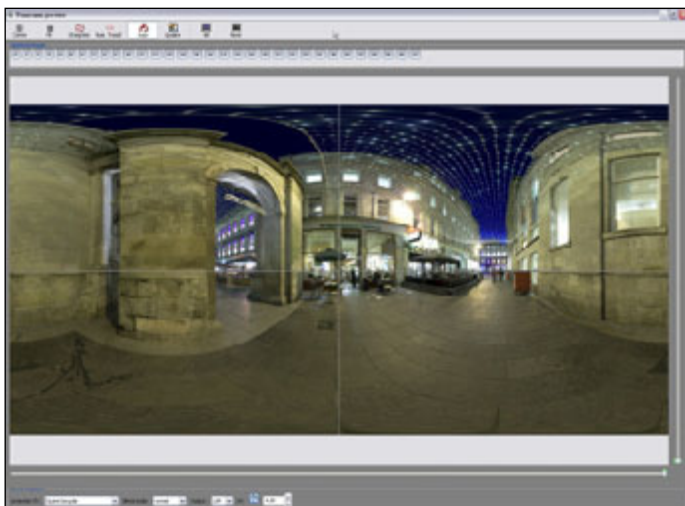




Lower left: Each overlapping pair of images is compared and corresponding features are marked with control points. This allows the software to place each image on the sphere taking into account the true focal length, barrel distortion, tilt and shift.

Above: After alignment, the images can be assembled and previewed. The images have been taken with a range of exposures so the seams are visible. An equirectangular projection has been used to view the spherical image.

Below: Photometric optimisation matches the exposure and white balance between overlapping images, and corrects for camera response function and lens vignetting. Even without blending, the seams are not apparent.



The final panorama after some editing. The image has been cropped to eliminate the uninteresting wall and paving stones.

next screen shot, above centre) the software remaps the images according to the desired cartographic projection and then these are individually adjusted and blended to eliminate seams (below centre).

The final image can be adjusted in the usual manner for brightness, contrast, colour and sharpness before final presentation as a "flat" image or else being converted to an interactive "virtual reality" panorama (e.g. QuickTimeVR or Flash). A partial crop of the panorama can be effective, as above. The main picture on this page is cropped top and bottom.

Cartographic projection

An image usually consists of a rectangular array of pixels but for a spheri-

cal panorama, these have to represent the surface of a sphere, partial or whole. This problem is well-known to cartographers who have invented many different ways of achieving this.

Each different cartographic projection has its own advantages and disadvantages depending on the desired properties of the spherical image one wants to preserve. A common choice for spherical panoramas is the **equiangular** projection where the horizontal axis on the image represents the azimuthal co-ordinate of a point on a sphere, and the vertical axis represents its elevation.

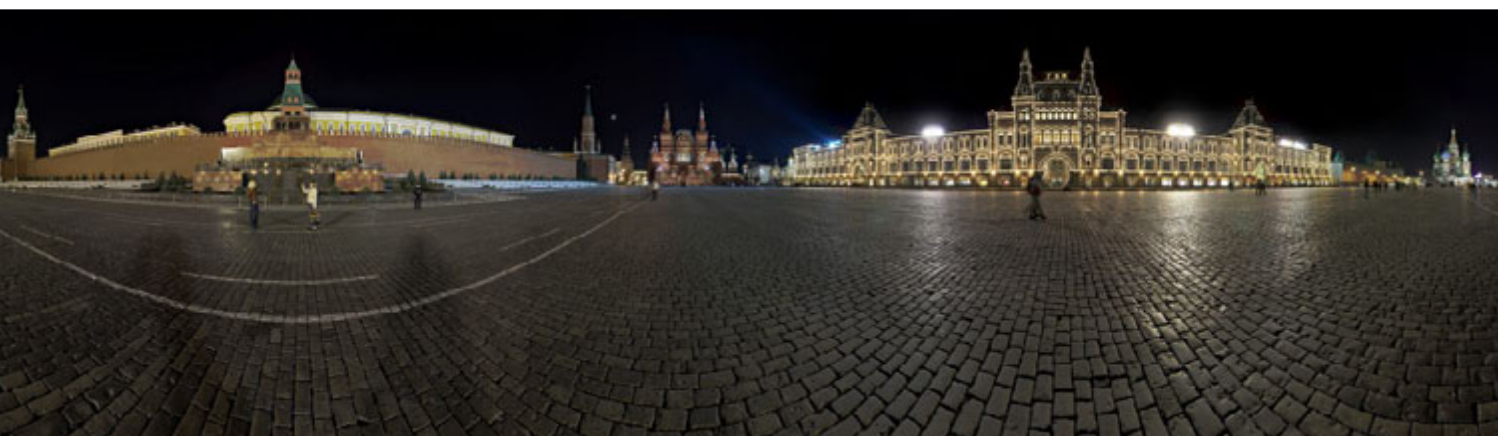
Equirectangular projections of the sphere are characterised by a width:height ratio of 2:1 representing 360 degrees horizontal and 180

degrees vertical angle of view, as shown in the shot of Red Square (right). A spherical panorama can also be converted into 6 cube faces for use in a QuickTime VR (QTVR) interactive movie or similar; this is shown below, and you can work out how it would fold into a cube.

For partial panoramas, either a



Equirectangular projection of a spherical panorama of Red Square at night. A combination of a 17mm rectilinear lens and an 8mm fisheye were used to capture the entire scene. The lower hemisphere was taken with the 17mm lens in 21 shots, whilst the sky was captured using two shots at 0° and 90° yaw using the fisheye lens.



rectilinear or cylindrical mapping can also work depending on total angle of view. Interesting effects can be created using the 360 degree fisheye or Stereographic projections which are often used to produce "Small World" panoramas.



Above: A 360° horizontal cylindrical panorama. The cylindrical projection cannot display the entire sphere as the poles are infinitely stretched. The panorama has been cropped to show a central belt of the cylinder.

Facing page: Small World Panorama. The entire panorama has been remapped using a 360° fisheye pointing at the nadir. Barrel distortion has then been used to stretch the details at the equator. Seen aiming down.

Right: Stereographic projection. Similar to the 360° fisheye, the stereographic projection naturally stretches objects which lie further from the centre.

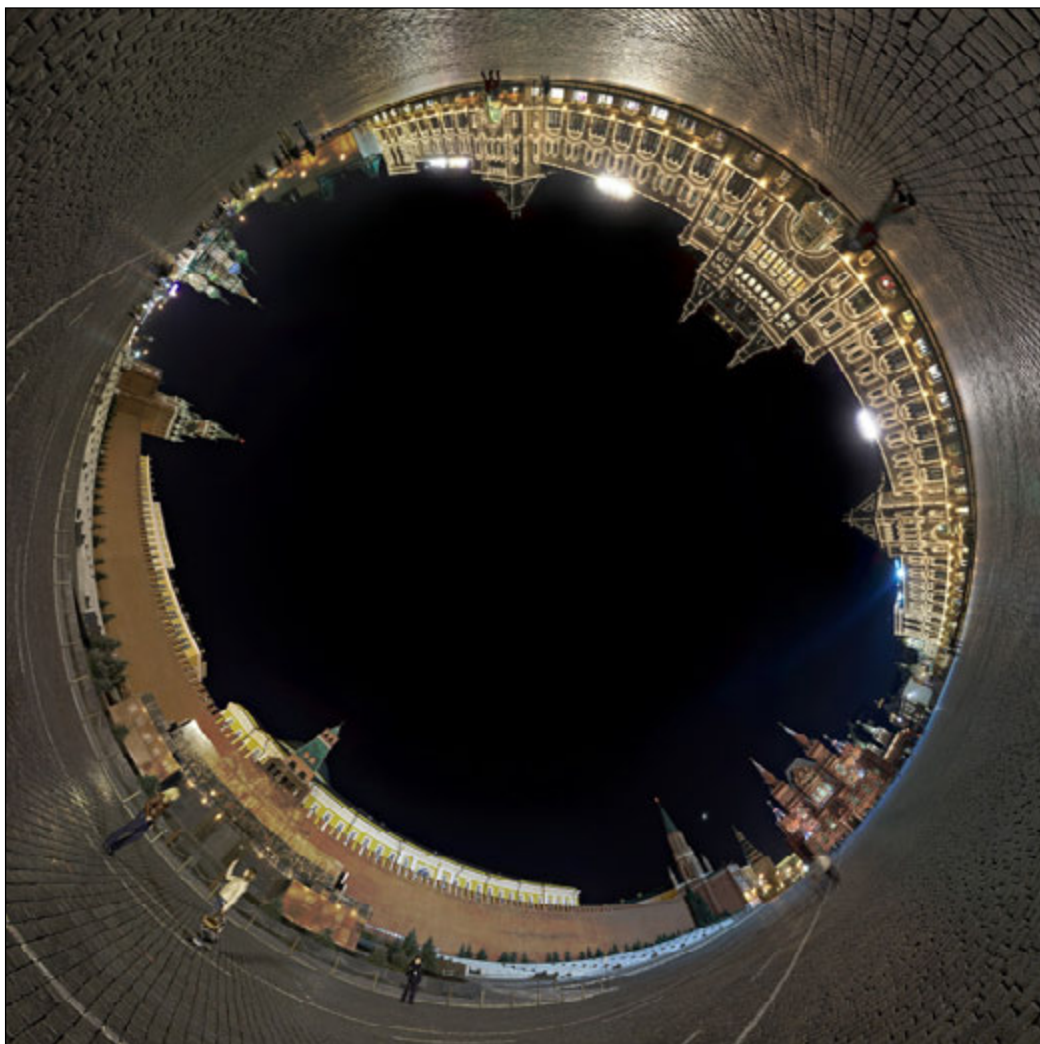
However, unlike the 360° fisheye, the stereographic projection cannot map the entire sphere. Seen aiming up.

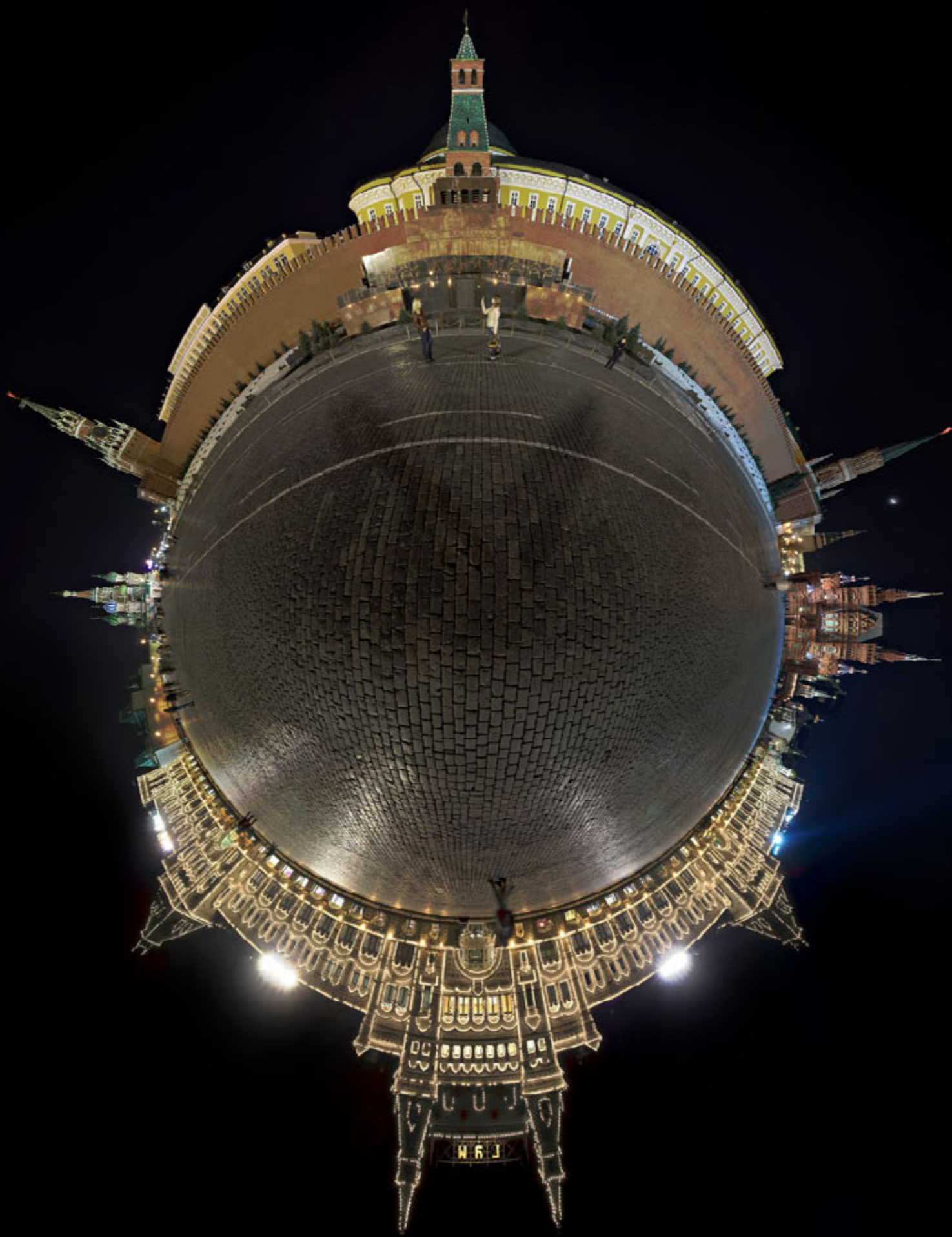
All photographs © Daniel KL Oi.

You can view Daniel's QTVR versions of panoramas through his website:

<http://cnqo.phys.strath.ac.uk/~daniel/Panos/>

These may require special plugins or viewers which are free to download.





Sony HVL-F42AM flash fills middle of range

Selling for street prices between £169 and £199, the new Sony HVL-F42AM combines the best features of the Minolta-legacy 5600HS (D) (HVL-F56AM) and 3600HS (D) (HVL-F36AM).

The key benefits over the 36 model include a rotating, tilting head for bounce flash work (the 36 model only tilts), a pull-out diffuser for wide angle shots, the ability to set fractional powers from 1/32 to 1/1 on the flashgun, and a zoom coverage which extends to 105mm (full frame) from a very wide 16mm (full frame) with the diffuser.

Benefits over the 56 model are limited to ease of operation, with an illuminated display panel similar to the 36, and a correction to the rotation of the bounce head. It now turns the opposite way before hitting its extreme, and this orientates the head correctly when using a vertical grip. The 5600/56 can not be angled to the optimum for many bounce shots unless you hold the camera upside down for portrait compositions.

Custom functions allow you to set Wireless Channel 1 or 2, change display brightness, enable Manual power when using modes other than Manual on the camera (its default locks out using fractional settings with auto modes), and change power-save shutdown time.

There is no provision to attach the cabled flash remote system directly, or external battery pack/main adaptor. The head does not have a downward tilt setting for close-ups.

Tested in a closed room using bounce flash at full output, we found that the overall output of the HVL-F42AM is two thirds of a stop below the 5600HS (D). Flashmeter readings were 22.8 for the 5600, 22.3 for the 42, and 16.8 for the 3600.

The HVL-F42AM has a physical, manual on/off switch and it has a Test button which can also check for Wireless flash range – press it on the flash, and it communicates back to the camera to confirm operation. The 42 can not be used as an on-body wireless flash commander, only as a remote. It works in combination with the earlier flash models.

With most of the features of the 56, this new model is at last reasonably priced!



Top: the 36, 42 and 56 models (outer two Minolta branded) compared. Above: the rear screens and controls. The 36 is easiest to use in daylight, the 42 has illuminated lettering. The 56 is dauntingly complex to set up and adjust. Right: 42 case, and pull-out diffusers of the 42 and 56 (these can be used as shown, to create a bounce reflector). Below: head positions – no c/u setting for 42, but better rotation.



Make your finder view a finer view – magnify

Minolta used to work with Shanghai Optical Company in China, and passed on many designs to them, including the X-series MD mount cameras. The X-300 model, in various modified forms, is still made in China under Shanghai's well-known Seagull brand name. You can buy new ones in the UK to use with MD mount lenses, and there is even a Chinese 17mm f4 for the system.

One of the designs which Shanghai Optical may have manufactured for a period was the right-angle finder Vn MkII, with its 1X or 2.5X view switching and rotating mount. The Vn versions of the angle finder use a pentaprism instead of a single mirror to perform the 90° angle, which keeps the image the right way up and way round visually no matter where you rotate the eyepiece to. The very earliest angle finders, like a Pentax model I used for many years, only worked when the unit was aimed upwards and reversed the image left to right.

Pentaprism angle finders were costly, up to £200 each, as well as heavy. They used solid glass components. Recently, a spate of new low-cost angle finders clearly based on the Minolta Vn MkII design has appeared from China. The Seagull, made by the people who know this design best, is my choice as most suitable for the Alpha system.

There are 1X-2X and 1X-2.5X variants, and also a 1.25X-2.5X which sounds interesting if you can see the whole screen at 1.25X – but I've not been able to try one of these. Typical costs from Hong Kong based eBay sellers like Link-Delight are around £30-35 including postage, and this particular vendor is totally reliable. My Seagull angle finder cost a little less at the time, and arrived within three days by airmail.

The whole thing is made of plastic, and the prism is obviously made using mirrors. It is light, but like many new plastic products, everything operates smoothly from the rotating joint to the 1-2.5X switch and the wide ranging dioptre correction adjustment. It comes with a soft case and a free blower brush for keeping the glass clean.

The Seagull angle finder has the Minolta/Sony Alpha viewfinder fit as its native design. Other cameras need stepping adaptors to fit their



The Seagull 1-2.5X angle finder



The ME-1

slightly different oculars. Because no adaptor is needed for Alpha, the fit is more secure and the glass is closer to the eyepiece of the camera.

To fit the finder, you must first slide the rubber eyesurround off your camera. This can show resistance when it has never been removed. Do not push it by the rubber, get a fingernail against each side of the hard frame this is glued to, and push it up using balanced pressure. Once removed, it will easily fit back and slide off again in future.

When you switch from 1X to 2.5X you see a much enlarged centre of the focusing screen, and you need to adjust the dioptre correction (middle right hand picture). To focus your eyes, you need to have a reference. This should be the half-circle metering area marking which is on the focus screen. Do NOT focus on the focus markers! They are on a separate overlay, which is not necessarily in contact with the focus screen, or in the correct focus plane. If you want to use manual focusing you must set the eyepiece for easy sharp focus on the metering circle marker.

Eyecup magnifiers

The second item we show here is actually made by Olympus, and it's called the **ME-1** Eyepiece Magnifier. It is designed to fit their E-400 and E-500 series camera which have tiny viewfinders, and enlarge the view by 1.2X for anyone with good eyesight.

I found that this device could also be used on the Alpha cameras by just pushing it into the rubber surround for temporary viewing. Following on, I found that both Pentax and Nikon make similar devices in 1.18X and 1.17X magnifications, with a better direct fit the Alpha viewfinder slots. There is also a 1.3X model made by KRD which is not sold in the UK.

The improvement to the already large Alpha 700 viewfinder with the ME-1 in place was well worth the trouble of testing this £35 accessory. Sony needs to make a proper Alpha version, shaped to allow the eye-start sensors to work. The Alpha 350 benefits in a big way, restoring its small 0.74X finder view to a big 0.89X. Sony – please make this!

–DK



Which wide-to-tele zoom?

There are five choices of 'kit' lens available for Sony Alpha DSLRs – 18-70mm, 16-80mm, 16-105mm, 18-200mm and 18-250mm.

No other DSLR maker offers such a wide choice of possible standard or kit zooms as Sony. Two of the lenses, the 18-200mm and the 18-250mm, are close cousins of Tamron models with the same specifications, and in discussing them here some of our opinions are based on using the Konica Minolta 18-200mm and Tamron 18-250mm.

Users have different requirements. Shirley and I shoot with a different eye. I have loved extreme wide-angles since discovering 17mm on full frame film back around 1974. Shirley prefers to be able to isolate small close-up details of people, plants and animals and often ends up at the long end of any lens.

This is no bad thing when you travel and shoot side-by-side. Of course we often get a similar shot, but most of the time our angles of view are different extremes.

When we last used film, Shirley's normal lens on a Dynax 7xi was the 35-200mm f3.5-5.6 xi zoom while I shot with a pair of Minolta CLE rangefinder cameras using 20mm, 28mm, 40mm, 90mm and 135mm lenses. We replaced the 35-200mm with a Tamron 28-300mm f3.5-6.3 XR for travelling but the optical quality suffered. Moving to digital, I bought a Tamron 11-18mm ultrawide zoom as soon as they were available and used it with a 24-105mm and 100-300mm. Shirley got a Konica Minolta 18-200mm, the digital equivalent of the 28-300mm but much improved in performance.

When the Tamron 18-250mm arrived, with even better optics, the 18-200mm was replaced and sold. Much the same happened with the 24-105mm when the 16-80mm Carl Zeiss became available, but we kept the 24-105mm for a possible full frame body.

Along the line we acquired (and sold) at least three of the 18-70mm f3.5-5.6 KM or Sony kit lenses, because the only cameras available were in kits. Recently, we bought a 16-105mm f3.5-5.6 Sony SAL from London Camera Exchange Colchester, who had them available separately when even Sony themselves were unable to supply a review sample on its own.

So, since the launch of the Dynax 7D four years ago we have used all of



In our studio, a CZ 16-80mm with a year's use and a brand new 16-105mm. The scruffy ribbed grip of the Carl Zeiss is inevitable; you can't handle these lenses for five minutes without the grip picking up particles or dirt from the cleanest hands. These rubber grips are surprisingly thick and could not be removed and replaced with leather or any similar new skin. They are part of the lens barrel.



The Tamron-based 18-250mm (left, highly recommended) and 18-200mm (best ignored unless you already have one, as the 18-250mm is so much better). Note the focusing scale. These slow-focusing zooms have exceptional long distance accuracy with even 100ft marked on the 18-250mm. Note the zoom lock too.



The humble 18-70mm kit lens is a mixed bag. On the one hand, it offers second-best close up ability, matching any other non-macro lens in the Sony range except the 18-250mm. It weighs very little and costs less. But it's an f5.6 lens for most of its focal length range, and the f3.5 only applies to use at exactly 18mm, a mere token to make the lens appear faster. Would you ever have imagined buying a 35mm f5.6 lens for an SLR in the past? Of course not! Well, that's what you get here. Any of the lenses above will be a big step up in speed and versatility.

the five focal length ranges of zoom offered currently under the Sony label with – or without – bodies in kits.

Which would be the best choice for you?

Cost

At the bottom end we get the basic SAL 18-70mm f3.5-5.6 DT kit lens, with a nominal price of £129.50 but an actual price of around £50 when included in a kit. This lightweight lens takes 55mm filters but the front rotates as it focuses, making polarisers difficult to use. It has no focus scale, just a skinny ring behind the minimal clip-on lens hood for manual focus; when you grip this at 70mm, you can feel the entire front unit wobble freely.

The 18-70mm is actually surprisingly good by kit lens standards, preferable to the low-cost 18-55mm models offered by other makes not just because it has a better range and wider apertures at middle focal lengths. It performs better.

If your interests mean you need a longer lens such as the 75-300mm f4.5-5.6 Sony SAL, the 18-70mm is an ideal choice to pair with it. Both are lightweight, both take 55mm filters, and they form an almost contiguous 18-300mm range. It also pairs well with the new 55-200mm f4-5.6 DT lens.

One reason for buying this type of kit might be that there are two of you – or two camera bodies.

Next up in the price group is the Sony SAL 18-200mm f3.5-6.3 DT. This lens is identical to the Konica Minolta model in a redesigned finish, and lacks the zoom lock which the Tamron variant has. This lock allows you set the zoom to its shortest 18mm parked position and fix it securely, so that it can not extend with the help of gravity. Although the 18-200mm has been offered as a very good kit deal with the Alpha 100, adding under £300 to the outfit despite its £399 retail price, we would not advise it unless the apparent extra cost is less than £200 over an 18-70mm combo.

The optical performance is acceptable at the long end and a superior to the 18-70mm within that range, but all the three of the alternative wider range zooms are better. Also, the zoom action will

become loose in time and you will regret not having the zoom lock!

The **SAL 18-250mm f3.5-6.3 DT** and the **SAL 16-105mm f3.5-5.6 DT** both sell for around the same street price of £399. They are very different lenses, and here your decision is most difficult. Finding an 18-250mm bundled at a lower true cost is harder than finding a 16-105mm, which is now offered with various bodies and may add less than £300 to the combination.

The 18-250mm is very sharp between its wide angle end and he mid-100s, and it has a slightly faster maximum aperture across the 18-105mm range which coincides with the other lens. See our table of aperture change points to understand this.

It has just as good a geometry and does not suffer from quite such a sharp falloff in corner sharpness as the 16-105mm, and it can do far better close-ups because of the 250mm reach. It has that vital zoom lock at 18mm.

The 16-105mm has a slightly crisper central image and a significant wide-angle benefit (2mm counts for a lot – it is about the same as the difference between a 24mm and a 28mm on full frame). At no point in its range does it suffer from as much edge sharpness loss or chromatic aberration as the 18-250mm does progressively from 150mm to 250mm.

This means it counts as a better lens optically. But – it doesn't have this range! If you restrict the 18-250mm to 18-105mm, it's probably a 'better lens' than the 16-105mm. We have bought the 16-105mm to become familiar with it, but with an 18-250mm around it is almost redundant before starting.

This brings us to the final kit lens – the ultimate in quality, the Sony **Carl Zeiss 16-80mm f3.5-4.5**. This costs £100 more than the last two lenses. It has the wide-angle range of the 16-105mm, and was launched earlier. The long end is not ambitious, but the maximum aperture figure is important. It is between 1/3rd and 2/3rds of a stop faster than the 16-105mm in the range 18-80mm, and the same amount faster than the 18-250mm in the 50-80mm zone.

This extra viewfinder brightness and low light capability is helped by

The 18-250mm is an extremely useful travel lens. Here are three pictures by Shirley Kilpatrick taken on the same day. Top, 18mm and depth of field for the burro and rock; centre, crop from a close-up at 250mm; bottom, wide open at 150mm for almond blossom and a landmark pinnacle.



superb full aperture sharpness. The other two lenses really need stopping down one stop from wide open to clean up the image; the CZ does not. It can achieve quality results at one to two stops wider aperture than either.

Having said that, by the time you stop any of these lenses down to f11, there will not be much between them. I'd say the CZ has a more luminous image with higher fine detail contrast. That's the Zeiss T* coating at work.

Neither the 16-105mm nor 16-80mm has a zoom lock. They don't need it. The 16-105mm feels paradoxically to be a better quality lens than the CZ. It is heavier, more solid and firm yet smooth in zoom operation, and the double extension barrel is rigid. The construction seems to be the same mix of metal and plastic (all the exterior being plastic) and the finish uses the same Sony fine ribbed grips which pick up dust and mark so easily they look second hand within five minutes of leaving the box.

Remember, our CZ 16-80mm was the third one received. Our first one had loose internal mechanisms and the image jumped when zoomed or focused, as did one further sample. Quality control on the CZ has been criticised because superb optics appear to have been put into a badly designed mount. The 16-105mm, a later design, has none of the QC issues and although it's a much slower lens aperture-wise and lacks the bite of the Zeiss glass and coating, it is a safe buy.

Finally, all these more advanced kit options (18-200mm, 18-250mm, 16-80mm, 16-105mm) use 62mm filters. This makes them excellent companion lenses to the new 70-300mm f4-5.6 G SSM tele zoom, which also uses 62mm; the same goes for the budget but good quality Tamron 70-300mm f4-5.6 LD Di Tele Macro. A polariser is the most obvious filter to share across your lens range, and it must be a wide angle or ultra slim type to avoid cutting off corners on the 18mm or 16mm wide-angle settings.

Summary

If you want zoom range in a single lens, with very good quality from 18mm to 150mm and more than acceptable results up to 250mm if not matching a dedicated tele-zoom, the Sony SAL 18-250mm is your best choice. No matter what deals are offered, it is a far better lens than the 18-200mm and has the zoom lock.

If you want a semblance of low light capability and sharp images at all settings, the Carl Zeiss 16-80mm offers real advantages. It is not just

a better lens, it is one you can use with at least a one stop advantage in wide aperture sharpness, and on average a half-stop gain in speed. It also produces better differential focus for portraits, especially if you use 80mm and f4.5.

The 16-105mm is a dilemma. You might imagine it would get better close-ups than the 16-80mm; 35cm minimum focus at 80mm versus 38cm at 105mm? No! Both cover roughly 4"/10cm wide at their closest focus and longest focal length. Both are beaten by the humble 18-70mm kit lens which covers 8.5cm wide at 70mm and its closest focus.

Well, of course the 18-250mm will do better... but it doesn't to the degree you would expect. What it gives you is a greater working distance and a little larger image scale than the 18-70mm.

The higher the figure, the better for close-ups in this list. We can also compare the weight, and you'll see that going for a shorter range does not save you grammes for travelling:

SAL 18-70mm	0.25X	235g
CZ 16-80mm	0.24X	445g
SAL 16-105mm	0.23X	470g
SAL 18-200mm	0.27X	405g
SAL 18-250mm	0.29X	440g

The different zoom designs, and the way they change focal length when focusing, are responsible. The super-tele zooms are also much the same size as the shorter models.

This situation applies to other lenses. The tele 55-200mm and 75-300mm low-cost kit lenses both manage 0.29X, the 75-300mm achieving this at 1.5m focus distance. You might imagine the new 70-300mm SSM would beat this comfortably with a 1.2m minimum focus. Not so – it only gets 0.25X, because it uses internal focusing which changes the real focal length.

If you want those flowers, insects, cat's eyes, coins, stamps or anything else close-up the 18-250mm is the best choice you can make short of buying a dedicated macro lens. No non-macro lens made in the entire Sony range – not the 135mm f1.8, 70-200mm f2.8, 24-70mm f2.8, 50mm f1.4 – can match the 18-250mm or the lower cost kit tele lenses for close-ups. Beware the 24-105mm, which has about the worst close-up capability of any standard zoom at 0.18X and will be less than impressive on a full frame DSLR when that arrives!

Hopefully, these comments and facts will help you choose the best kit lens or replacement for older lenses.

– David Kilpatrick

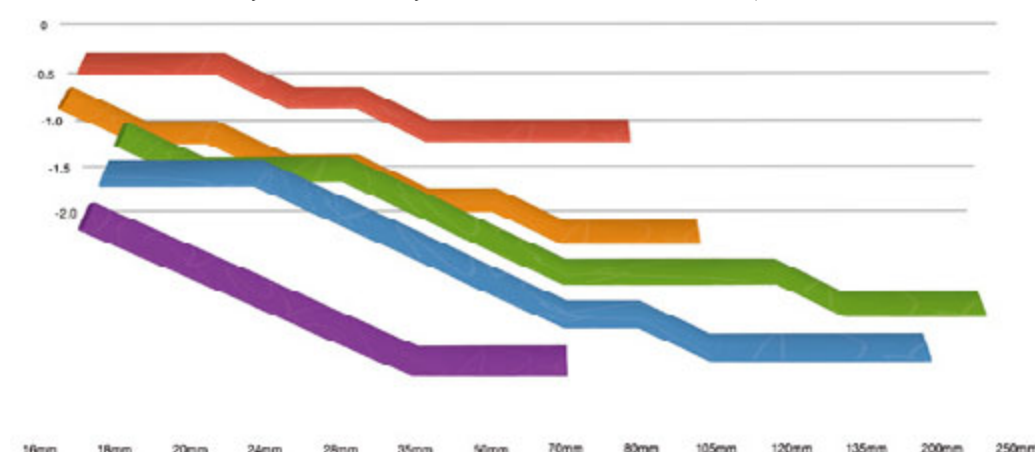


Practical aspects of your zoom choice: these photographs were taken from the seats of a calishe in Luxor, which drove us illegally through the busy market and got plenty of 'feedback' in return. Top: using the 16-80mm, David Kilpatrick was able to include the driver and architecture at 16mm. 18mm would not have been wide enough. Left: at 30mm, the CZ 16-80mm framed dyes and spices with a smooth depth of field focus transition at f5.6. Above: working with the 18-250mm zoom, Shirley Kilpatrick was better able to get shots of people. This trader was taken at 100mm focal length, beyond the range of the 16-80mm for such a tight composition.

Actual apertures of zooms across their range

This is a 3D graph and all the lines start at 0 which represents f3.5, the lowest actual value is -1.66 stops from full aperture. The real decrease in maximum aperture is a smooth transition, these are the values reported by the camera.

📷 16-80mm CZ 🟠 16-105mm SAL 🟢 18-250mm SAL 🔵 18-200mm SAL 🟡 18-70mm SAL



The Tamron 70-300mm f4-5.6 LD Di AF Tele Macro 1:2

Our cover photo for this issue was taken with a Tamron 70-300mm zoom costing less than £120 from most larger retailers or internet shops. The reputation of the lens meant we had to take a look at it, because the current choice in the Sony range is limited to one 'kit' 75-300mm costing £179, and the new 70-300mm G SSM lens costing £600.

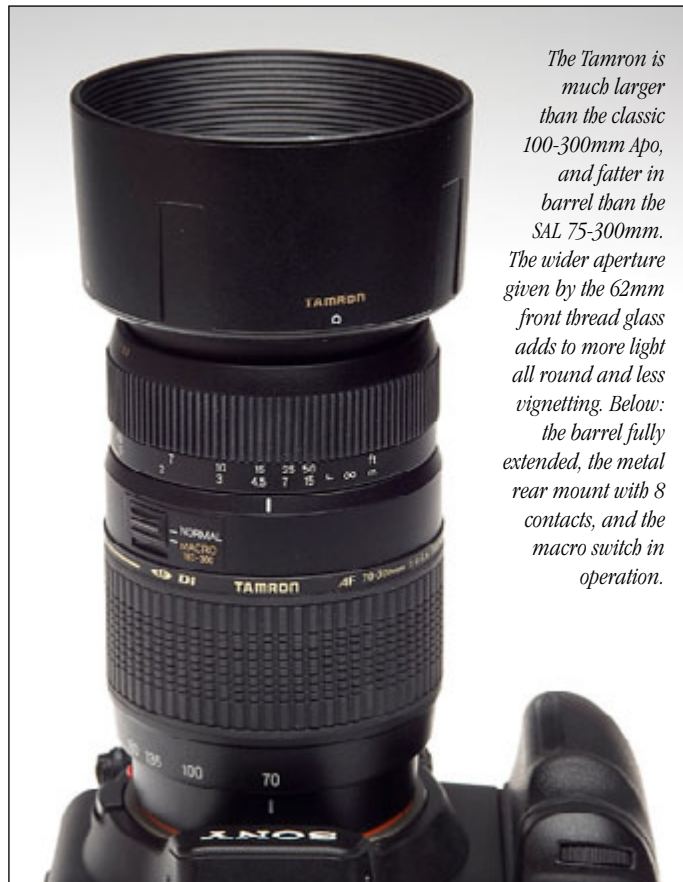
The Minolta 100-300mm f4.5-5.6 APO (D) was one of the well-respected lenses not continued into the Sony line, possibly because it is thought to be a model designed for Minolta by Tokina just as the 100-400mm was. Sony part-owns Tamron, and Tokina is part of Hoya which now owns Pentax. Though all the lens makers source components and special types of glass from each other, the facilities which built the 100-300mm may not have been available when Sony took over.

The big question is why Sony did not opt for the 70-300mm f4-5.6 Tamron Di lens instead of continuing the lower aperture 75-300mm. It would presumably have sold for about the same price in Sony guise.

The Tamron is a fairly unique design. It has a separate macro range, accessed by pushing a switch when you are between 180mm and 300mm zoom, and at minimum focus. You can not engage the macro range until you have these conditions met. Once you are in macro mode, the zoom is limited from 180-300mm, but the entire focus range is enabled from 0.95m to infinity with autofocus. It is a slow focusing lens and like other Tamrons with low gearing to drive the AF, appears to be very accurate on all the Dynax bodies.

This lens is of course suitable for film bodies, and unlike the new 70-300mm G SSM, it will work on models like the Dynax 9 unmodified, Dynax 800si, 7xi, 7000 and so on. Many owners have functioning film bodies of an older date and the move to SSM locks these out of AF functionality with all bodies prior to the 1999 Dynax 7.

The lens uses LD (Low Dispersion) elements, but it is not apochromatic and at full aperture displays some visible aberrations especially surrounding sharply focused light details. The image 'core' remains very crisp behind this veil of secondary



The Tamron is much larger than the classic 100-300mm Apo, and fatter in barrel than the SAL 75-300mm. The wider aperture given by the 62mm front thread glass adds to more light all round and less vignetting. Below: the barrel fully extended, the metal rear mount with 8 contacts, and the macro switch in operation.



imaging, and it only takes a little stopping down to tidy up the results. Our Bengal tiger cub (*one of triplets born in the crocodile animal rescue park near Ingenio, Gran Canaria*) was caught in movement, at full aperture, and despite the overlay of softness you can pick out eyelash-level detail on the 14.2 megapixel Alpha 350 image.



Zoom and apertures

You may have been reading the last article about kit zooms and note the graph showing that with cheaper lenses the aperture is likely to be cut early on in the zoom range. You might assume that £120-worth of Tamron would prove no different.

You would be wrong, and this is one of the unique aspects of the lens.

The Tamron holds its maximum f4 all the way from 70mm to 135mm, making it a full stop faster in this range than, for example, the 16-105mm SAL. It takes the same filter size and despite extending to 300mm, uses a single barrel tube and weighs only 435g. The aperture drops to f4.5 between 135mm and 210mm. Even this is impressive; it's as fast as the CZ 16-80mm at 80mm, all the way to 210mm.

Finally, at 210mm it does get cut to f5 and it only becomes f5.6 in the last 20mm of focal length, between 280mm and 300mm. The SAL 75-300mm becomes f5 at 90mm and f5.6 at just 125mm – the penalty for squeezing into a 55mm filter thread.

Minimum focus

The Tamron 70-300mm manages a repro ratio of 1:2 – half life size on the sensor. That means a subject just 2"/50mm wide fills the entire frame (3"/75mm wide for full frame or film cameras). In Sony's terminology, that is a 0.50X magnification at closest focus and 300mm setting. If you shoot macro on film right now, buying a digital body and this lens would give you the equivalent of your 1:1.5 mark on your macro lens.

No Sony or recent Minolta/KM zoom whether standard, tele or superzoom range offers better than 0.29X. It also stops down to a rather staggering f45 at 300mm, not advised as sharpness suffers but potentially useful for macro work.

A comparison

We found the 70-300mm to be a fair match for our discontinued 100-300mm APO (D) overall. wider in aperture, and much better for small subjects. The 100-300mm's repro ratio is just 0.25X, at 1.5m. It is f4.5 as early as 120mm and f5.6 from 150mm to 300mm. Both lenses have solid metal mounts; both have eight contacts for full D specification; the 100-300mm doesn't go down to 70mm, and it weighs 50g more.

The Tamron can be recommended as a bargain performer all round.

– David Kilpatrick



Fired up with smoke

Jim Miller's wireless flash technique – and pipe smoking – were followed up with Photoshop for firework-like colours in these experimental shots

Using my Alpha 700, I set up these smoke shots with flash in the darker days of winter but it's something you can try any time.

Each original shot has been cleaned up and any remaining visible background removed. I shoot these in a dark room with a black background, but you can still see details of furniture and walls before the black end of Photoshop 'Levels' is adjusted to lose this shadow detail.

My setup

The flash (a **Sigma EF 500 DG Super**, similar in power and functions to the Sony HVL-F56AM or Minolta 5600 HS-D) was in wireless mode and set 90° to the camera's right. You need to be careful about the distance between the flash and your smoke, or it will blow out parts of the image. Generally I had the flash about three feet from the smoke area.

It takes some experimenting to get the distance and timing right. Different flash position and angles can dramatically change the way the original image looks. I used f10-f13 with manually preset focus. I placed a bottle on the table, and pre-focused on it. Then I removed the bottle and put a piece of tape down where the bottle was. This is my "smoking zone". I used my Tokina 28-70mm f2.8, but any lens works fine. The subject was about three feet from the lens.

To make smoke I have used incense, cotton wadding, tapers and spills (used to light fireworks). In these cases I just used my trusty pipe! The smoke was blown across the focus-reference tape marker (toward the flash) or from the top down toward the tape. The wireless remote works well for this, but a wired remote would be fine as well.

Take lots of shots as the results are unpredictable.

Processing

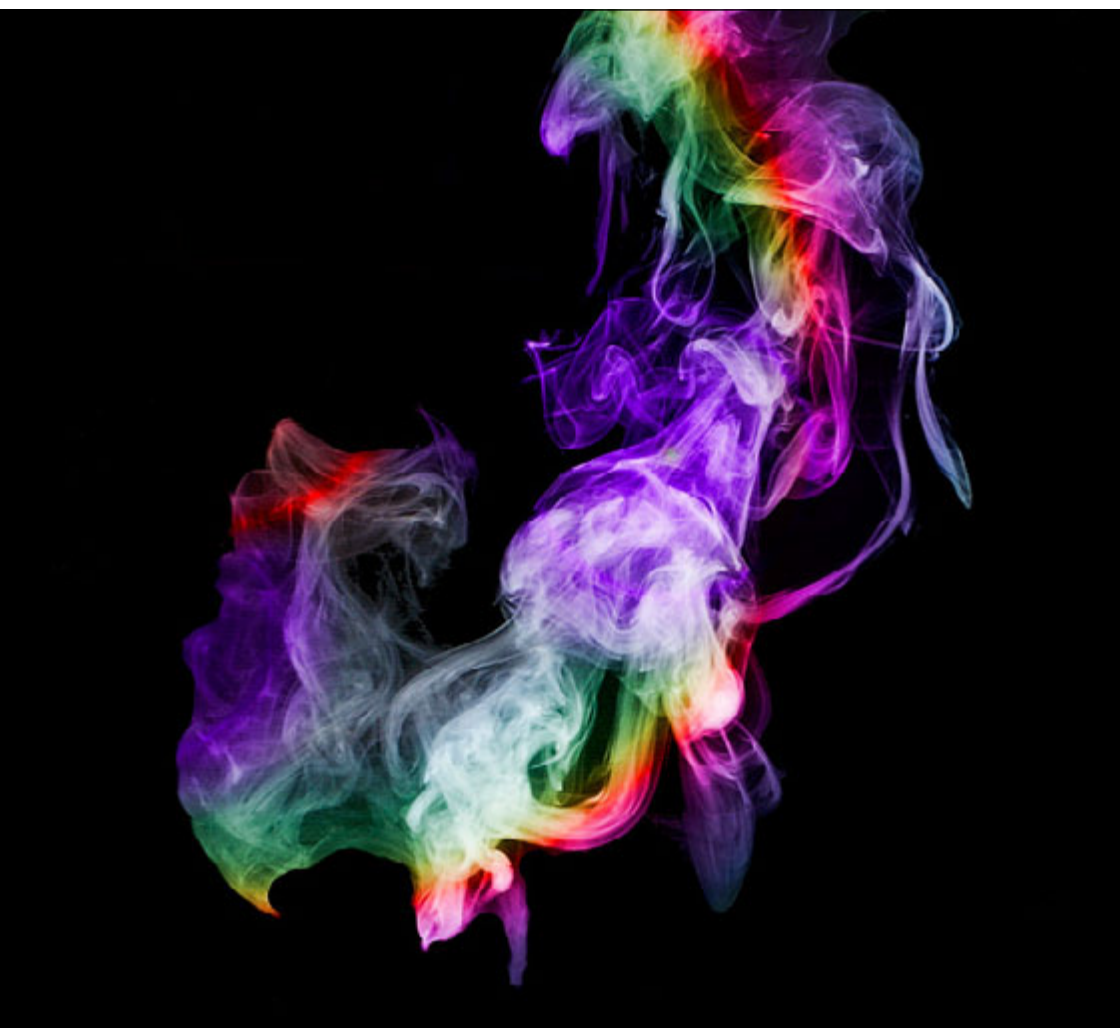
After the cleanup of the image is complete (removing anything you don't want to see) you just play with the image to see what works.

Take the example at the top of page 29. I duplicated the original layer, flipped it horizontally, set with the blend mode of the new layer to Screen, and then merged





Jim Miller used an Alpha 700 fitted with a Tokina 28-70mm f2.8 zoom, a lens no longer available in Alpha mount in the UK but with a good reputation and pedigree, being based on the earlier Angenieux 28-70mm f2.6 design which Tokina acquired. His wireless remote flash, triggered by the camera's built-in flash which has no effect of the exposure, was a Sigma EF 500 GT Super which is fully compatible (like the 530 model replacing it) with the Alpha digital TTL system.



the layers. Then I duplicated the merged layer, flipped it vertically, set the blend mode to Screen, and moved the new layer up to meet the one below. This has produced a four-way symmetry. The amount of overlap is done to taste, but at some point there is a "wow" moment if the image is going some place.

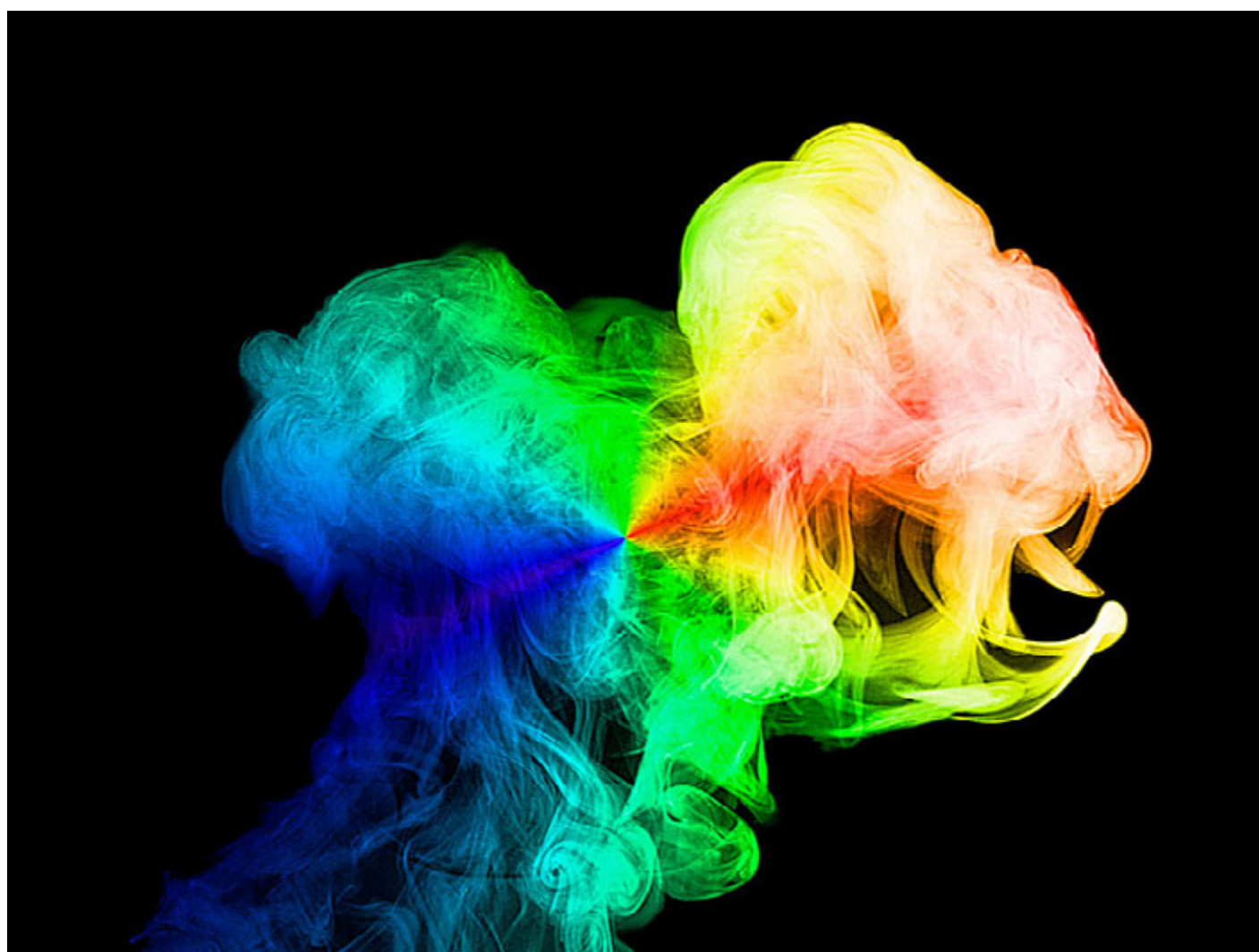
From there is just a matter of deciding what you want next. I like to play with colouring, so I created a new transparent layer, set the blend mode to Colour (so it doesn't effect anything but the smoke), and chose a radial gradient fill pattern and laid out several colors in the range. I went through several before I got one I liked.

You can do this multiple times if you want. Just create more transparent layers and paint on it or use gradient fills. You can adjust the opacity to taste.

Some rather heavy Unsharp Mask (radius 5, amount 50%, threshold 0), and you're done. These can be very complicated to do, or pretty fast and easy, it's all up to you.

The single shots are coloured the same way. You can see two more 'mirrored' examples and a further single shape on the following page.





QUEST

Colin Westgate's QUEST workshops, sponsored by Photoworld, have just moved to Coopers Cottage, 154 Coast Road, West Mersea, Mersea Island, Essex CO5 8NX. Telephone 01206 384315. Mobile 07887 887101. email questphoto@btinternet.com. See the new website www.questphoto.co.uk for details of photo trips and the full 2008 programme.

A Way of Seeing – Unlocking Your Photographic Potential

Tutor: Les McLean; 2 days, West Mersea, nr. Colchester; Wednesday/Thursday 23/24 July 2008

This workshop is designed to stimulate ideas and encourage you to think about your photography. During the workshop, Les will talk about his photographic philosophy by showing examples of his work, ranging from landscape to still life and documentary, but the core element will be to look at pictures from participants and discuss everyone's aims and desires. You will be invited to bring a selection of pictures, whether these are individual images or on a theme.

Les McLean is the author of the book 'Creative Black & White Photography' and the subject of a tutorial CD on digital techniques. He regularly teaches workshops in the UK and internationally, including the USA, Canada and Ireland.

*Price £145 (deposit £40)
10 places*

Thames Barge Race

Tutor: Colin Westgate; from Maldon, Essex; Friday evening to Sunday afternoon, 25/27 July 2008

Now a regular event in the Quest programme, this is a wonderful opportunity to sail in a genuine Thames barge! Quest has chartered 'Reminder', built in 1929, for our exclusive use. She will be taking part in the Barge Race from Maldon and will sail early Saturday, returning on Sunday afternoon. We will embark on Friday evening, returning during the afternoon on Sunday. All meals are catered on board. You are welcome to help the crewing if you so desire.

*Price £325 (deposit £100)
10 places (strict limit) Price is based on double or sharing a twin or triple berth. No singles are available due to the nature of the accommodation. In the event of severe weather conditions it may be necessary to change or curtail the planned itinerary. See website for full terms and conditions.*

Traditional Oyster Smacks and Winkle Brigs

Tutor: Colin Westgate; 1 day, at West Mersea, nr Colchester; Sunday 7 September 2008

Mersea native oysters are claimed to be amongst the best in the world and this event marks the opening of the season when a multitude of traditional vessels dredge for them under sail. There is a contest for the biggest catches, and there is plenty of action! The traditional vessels, known as smacks, together with the smaller winkle brigs, are often well over 100 years old, and are truly picturesque subjects for the camera. Quest will be chartering a small motor vessel in which we will be able to move amongst the smacks for the best views of the action as well as longer distance shots with the boats under sail.

*Price £75 (deposit £25)
10 places Includes seafood lunch.*



London Camera Exchange Colchester Reader Offer – £12 off remote release



LONDON CAMERA EXCHANGE Colchester branch has set up a specialist department for the Sony Alpha system. To introduce their service, they are making a special offer to Photoworld readers – the Sony RM-S1am Remote Commander only £22.99 + Postage (usually £34.99). This electronic cable release works with all Alpha system cameras back to the original 7000.

To order, visit them or telephone and ask for the Photoworld Special Reader offer Sony RM-S1am.

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These are not connected with Quest.

All with Duncan McEwan, Scottish Regional Organiser for Photoworld Club.

Loch Lomond, Trossachs, Glen Coe (14-20 Sept).

This will be based at the Inversnaid Photography Centre within the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park. There will be a trip to Glen Coe and Rannoch Moor with an overnight stay at the Kingshouse Hotel facing Buachaille Etive Mor. *Inversnaid: 01877-386254; info@inversnaidphoto.com; www.inversnaidphoto.com*

Isle of Eigg (25-29 Sept)

Eigg is one of the gems of the Inner Hebrides and offers fantastic photographic opportunities in a small area. Based in the Glebe Barn at the southern end of the island. *Photo Adventures: 01665-830523; info@leefrost.co.uk; www.photoadventures.co.uk*

Isle of Arran (20-25 Oct)

Arran lies in the Firth of Clyde and is often referred to as "Scotland in Miniature" on account of its varied terrain. Travel by minibus. Based in the Kinloch Hotel at Blackwaterfoot on the West side of Arran. *Light and Land: 01432-839111; contactus@lightandland.co.uk; www.lightandland.co.uk*

Kintail, W. Ross (3-9 Oct) and (9-15 Oct)

Kintail is one of the finest mountain areas in Scotland and the Isle of Skye is only 20 minutes away from the Kintail Lodge Hotel where the trips will be based. A full day on Skye should be one of the highlights. Travel by minibus. *Full details from Duncan McEwan (details below).*

Below: Duncan McEwan discusses prints at the Edinburgh meeting in February. There was a 'packed house' attendance.



Torridon (27 Oct - 2 Nov)

Torridon has become a firm favourite with landscape photographers with wonderful mountains, glens, lochs and coast. There is no better time to see it than in late Autumn. The course will be based in Gairloch. Travel by minibus. *Inversnaid: 01877-386254; info@inversnaidphoto.com; www.inversnaidphoto.com*

Details of all the courses can be had from the individual organisers or from: Duncan McEwan, Dunarden, Horsewood Road, Bridge of Weir, Renfrewshire PA11 3AT Tel/fax 01505-612673; mcewan@dunarden.fsnet.co.uk; www.dmcewanphotography.co.uk

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Every issue contains reference pages and offers – Photostore (www.photostore-uk.com) for replacement parts and small accessories, hire service, insurance plan, special offers, members' sale and want ads, compatibility data, battery data, firmware and software updates, website addresses, contact phone numbers and more. Each edition is designed to be kept for future reference to help you understand your camera system.

You will learn about photo workshops and weekend breaks run by expert long-time Minolta users and sponsored by the Club... like the 'Quest' workshops (both digital and film based) organised by Colin Westgate based in South East England – and Duncan McEwan's Scottish Highland and Border gatherings.

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Inside you'll find dozens of pictures carefully reproduced. Captions tell you the digital processes and settings used, or the type of film and darkroom techniques. Friendly but authoritative articles and product tests give you insights and ideas you won't find anywhere else.

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We look forward to welcoming you as a new reader.

– David Kilpatrick FBIPP AMPA & Shirley Kilpatrick BA (Hons) MSc (Col. Science) Icon Publications Ltd

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Dundee Sony Centre	Angus	DD1 4BH	01382 228045	Kensington Sony Centre	London	W8 6BA	020 7938 3994
Sony Centre Belfast	Antrim	BT1 2BE	028 90236983	Sony Galleria at Harrods	London	SW1X 7QN	0207 730 1234
Sony Centre Galleria Lisburn	Antrim	BT28 1AW	02892 672305	Lewisham Sony Centre	London	SE13 7EP	0208 852 0011
Bristol Sony Centre	Bristol	BS1 3XD	0117 922 5850	Mayfair Sony Centre	London	W1K 6WL	020 7355 2040
The Cribbs Causeway Sony Centre	Bristol	BS34 5UR	0117 914 3477	Putney Sony Centre	London	SW15 1SU	020 8788 7444
Bath Sony Centre	Bath & NES	BA1 1UN	01225 460000	Sony Centre Galleria TCR	London	W1T 1BP	0845 634 0350
Luton Sony Centre	Bedfordshire	LU1 2LJ	01582 480320	Wood Green Sony Centre	London	N22 6YQ	020 8826 0633
Reading Sony Centre	Berkshire	RG1 2DE	0118 950 0350	Edinburgh 2 Sony Centre	Lothian	EH10 4BZ	0131 447 7000
Slough Sony Centre	Berkshire	SL1 1JQ	0845 634 0430	Edinburgh Sony Centre	Edinburgh	EH4 1HL	0131 311 7040
Windsor Sony Centre	Berkshire	SL4 1TF	0845 634 0440	Middlesbrough Sony Centre	Cleveland	TS1 5UB	01642 254450
High Wycombe Sony Centre	Bucks	HP11 2AZ	01494 521382	Enfield Sony Centre Galleria	Middlesex	EN2 6AZ	020 8367 5300
Milton Keynes Sony Centre	Bucks	MK9 3PD	01908 240500	Harrow Sony Centre	Middlesex	HA1 1BE	0845 634 0420
Cambridge Sony Centre	Cambridge	CB2 3ET	01223 351135	Ruislip Sony Centre	Middlesex	HA4 7AA	0845 634 0410
Alloa Sony Centre	Clackmannan	FK10 1DT	01259 724230	Staines Sony Centre	Middlesex	TW18 4BL	01784 469988
Carlisle Sony Centre	Carlisle	CA3 8RY	01228 542824	Uxbridge Sony Centre	Middlesex	UB8 1BP	0845 634 0400
Derby Sony Centre	Derbyshire	DE1 1EX	01332 205234	York Sony Centre	North Yorkshire	YO1 6JX	01904 624488
Plymouth Sony Centre	Devon	PL1 1LR	01752 251155	Northampton Sony Centre	Northampton	NN1 2EW	01604 626064
Bournemouth Sony Centre	Dorset	BH1 2BY	01202 293112	Mansfield Sony Centre	Nottinghamshire	NG18 1JN	01623 659632
Poole Sony Centre	Dorset	BH15 1AS	01202 771200	Nottingham Sony Centre	Nottingham	NG1 3FB	0115 947 4566
Sony Centre Ards	Down	BT23 4EU	028 918 27978	Oxford Sony Centre	Oxford	OX1 1NZ	01865 793937
Dumfries Sony Centre	Dumfries	DG1 2BD	01387 254374	Perth Sony Centre	Perthshire	PH1 5NU	01738 638806
Carmarthen Sony Centre	Dyfed	SA31 1QN	01267 235 378	Shawlands Sony Centre	Glasgow	G41 3XA	0141 649 4758
Brighton 2 Sony Centre	East Sussex	BN1 2HA	01273 735123	Cardiff Sony Centre	Cardiff	CF10 3FD	029 20 228020
Brighton Sony Centre	East Sussex	BN1 4JG	01273 696069	Penarth Sony Centre	Cardiff	CF11 8TW	02920 350 355
Eastbourne Sony Centre	East Sussex	BN21 3NW	01323 417017	Sheffield Meadow Hall Sony Centre	Sheffield	S9 1EN	0114 256 8620
Basildon Sony Centre	Essex	SS14 1DT	0845 634 0480	Lichfield Sony Centre Galleria	Staffordshire	WS13 6NG	01543 415486
Chelmsford Sony Centre	Essex	CM1 1XF	01245 490726	Stafford Sony Centre	Staffordshire	ST16 2AJ	01785 222 788
Colchester Sony Centre	Essex	CO1 1JT	01206 560652	Stirling Sony Centre	Stirling	FK8 2DG	01786 470750
Harlow Sony Centre	Essex	CM20 1XN	01279 426155	Bridge of Allan Sony Centre	Stirlingshire	FK9 4ET	01786 832246
Ilford Sony Centre	Essex	IG1 1AT	0208 514 0244	Falkirk Sony Centre	Stirlingshire	FK1 1HQ	01324 630064
Loughton Sony Centre	Essex	IG10 4BE	0208 508 4838	Ipswich Sony Centre	Suffolk	IP1 1DT	01473 216556
Romford Sony Centre	Essex	RM1 3HD	01708 746 600	Camberley Sony Centre	Surrey	GU15 3SG	01276 682000
Lakeside Sony Centre	Essex	RM20 2ZF	01708 862159	Croydon Sony Centre Galleria	Surrey	CR0 1TY	0208 688 7766
Cheltenham Sony Centre	Gloucestershire	GL50 1JZ	01242 226589	Epsom Sony Centre	Surrey	KT19 8DA	01372 727045
Cirencester Sony Centre Connect	Gloucestershire	GL7 2AE	01285 641456	Farnham Sony Centre	Surrey	GU9 7TX	01252 714 563
Gloucester Sony Centre	Gloucester	GL1 1PD	01452 500005	Guildford Sony Centre	Surrey	GU1 3QS	01483 533224
Manchester City Sony Centre	Manchester	M4 3AB	0161 835 3775	Kingston Sony Centre	Surrey	KT1 1SU	020 8541 0681
Trafford Sony Centre	Manchester	M17 8AR	0161 747 2108	Richmond Sony Centre Connect	Surrey	TW9 1AD	0208 948 7188
Lincoln Sony Centre	Lincolnshire	LN5 7DN	01522 544 464	Sutton Sony Centre	Surrey	SM1 1AX	0208 770 2040
Newport Sony Centre	Gwent	NP20 4Ad	01633 212900	Woking Sony Centre	Surrey	GU21 6XX	01483 766600
Basingstoke Sony Centre	Hampshire	RG21 7JR	01256 355777	Swansea Sony Centre	Swansea	SA7 9EH	01792 795161
Fareham Sony Centre	Hampshire	PO16 0DU	01329 286000	Gateshead Sony Centre	Gateshead	NE11 9YP	0191 460 1755
Portsmouth Sony Centre	Hampshire	PO1 1BQ	023 92 870222	Newcastle Sony Centre	Newcastle	NE1 4PW	0191 230 0313
Southampton (East Street)	Hampshire	SO14 3HG	02380 236 663	Sunderland Sony Centre	Tyne and Wear	SR1 1SE	0191 564 1398
Southampton (London Road)	Hampshire	SO15 2AD	023 80 339952	Leamington Spa Sony Centre	Warwickshire	CV32 4XU	01926 888511
Southampton Sony Centre	Hampshire	SO15 2AD	023 80 339952	Leamington Spa Sony Centre	Warwickshire	CV32 4XU	01926 888511
Bishop's Stortford Sony Centre	Hertfordshire	HR4 9EA	01432 343108	Nuneaton Sony Centre	Warwickshire	CV11 4DZ	02476 374 616
St Albans Sony Centre	Hertfordshire	CM23 3XG	01279 755322	Livingston Sony Centre	West Lothian	EH54 6NB	01506 439740
Stevenage Sony Centre	Hertfordshire	AL3 5DG	01727 790618	Birmingham Sony Centre	West Midlands	B4 6TB	0121 236 0679
Watford Sony Centre	Hertfordshire	SG1 1EG	0845 634 0450	Coventry Sony Centre	West Midlands	CV1 1DX	02476 559111
Welwyn Sony Centre	Hertfordshire	WD17 2RR	0845 634 0360	Merryhill Sony Centre	West Midlands	DY5 1SY	01384 486770
Inverness Sony Centre	Hertfordshire	AL8 6HA	01707 391044	Solihull Sony Centre	West Midlands	B91 3AT	0121 711 4145
Bluewater Sony Centre	Invernesshire	IV1 1QA	01463 222282	Sutton Coldfield Sony Centre	West Midlands	B72 1PA	0121 354 9646
Bromley Sony Centre	Kent	DA9 9SG	01322 427101	Wolverhampton Sony Centre	West Midlands	WV1 3QD	01902 714415
Maidstone Sony Centre	Kent	BR1 1HG	0845 634 0390	Crawley Sony Centre	West Sussex	RH10 1EG	01293 518786
Orpington Sony Centre	Maidstone Kent	ME15 6AR	01622 754746	Worthing Sony Centre	West Sussex	BN11 1QN	01903 214030
Tunbridge Wells Sony Centre	Kent	BR6 0LS	0845 634 0490	Huddersfield Sony Centre Galleria	West Yorkshire	HD1 2QT	01484 439 030
Glasgow Sony Centre	Kent	TN1 2SS	01892 522226	Leeds Sony Centre	West Yorkshire	LS1 6PJ	0113 242 2569
Bolton Sony Centre	Lanarkshire	G1 2PW	0141 248 7077	Wakefield Sony Centre	West Yorkshire	WF1 1PQ	01924 372704
Preston Sony Centre	Lancashire	BL1 1NB	01204 388111	Marlborough Sony Centre	Wiltshire	SN8 1HQ	01672 516444
Leicester Sony Centre	Lancashire	PR1 2NR	01772 252783	Salisbury Sony Centre	Wiltshire	SP1 2NW	01722 349 490
Baker Street Sony Centre	Leicestershire	LE1 6DN	0116 275 6015	Swindon Sony Centre	Wiltshire	SN1 1SD	01793 531039
Bayswater Sony Centre	London	W1U 6UB	0207 486 2526	Kidderminster Sony Centre	Worcestershire	DY10 1AA	01562 827100
Chelsea Sony Centre	London	W2 6LY	020 7229 9110	Worcester Sony Centre	Worcestershire	WR1 2RF	01905 613218
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