

photoworld



A changed landscape

Looking back over 2010, I do not think we have ever seen a year with greater change for camera systems – at least not since 1985 when Minolta pipped everyone to the post by launching a complete autofocus SLR system. We know, now, how that changed photography.

Perhaps 2004 was also one of those years, as that was when every single SLR maker finally went digital for the consumer market, rather than just making a few special models for professionals.

But 2010 saw the introduction of the NEX system by Sony alongside the similar NX concept from Samsung and the takeover of the FourThirds market by mirrorless compact MicroFourThirds models. Barely weeks after NEX reached the market the SLT design – electronic viewfinder and AF via a semisilvered mirror – was introduced by Sony.

We may have to wait until 2012 to see exactly how much change this causes, but my guess is the effect will be much the same as the 1985 arrival of AF, or the 2004 explosion of affordable digital SLRs. Five years from now most 'reflex' system bodies may be like the A55.

– DK



Award-winner to speak at Edinburgh open day

The main speaker at the Edinburgh club open day on March 20th will be Kenneth Martin, "photographer of people and master of light". He is a past president of the Master Photographers Association and has won every national portraiture title at some point including UK Portrait, Wedding and Pet Photographer of the Year.

Kenny runs Infinity Gallery and Photo Training School in his home town of Peebles.

Duncan McEwan will give a talk on his experiences as an official photographer with the Scottish Team at the Commonwealth Games in India (see this issue) and David Kilpatrick will be looking at the differences between the Alpha 55, 580 and the NEX-5 including video presentations.

For more details of Duncan's events for 2011 see page 27.



Digital editions now on line – we now have paid access to all back issues and digital PDF 'Reader' editions at www.photoclubalpha.com



Cover: by Shirley Kilpatrick

Before trading up to the new Alpha 580, Shirley used the Alpha 550 for a week's shooting to see whether the viewfinder and focusing could match the Alpha 700 she has been used to. This grabbed shot of a boopoe, taken at 250mm using the Sigma 18-250mm OS zoom which is her everyday lens, gives the answer. With the lens set to f8, a metered 1/500th at ISO 200 gave a dark image which brightened up well from raw. It's perfectly focused and a one-off frame.

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Shoot the future

At the Las Vegas Consumer Electronic Show in January, Sony unveiled a whole new generation of compact digital cameras using technologies which point to fascinating future possibilities in DSLRs.



16.2 megapixels, Zeiss lens, full 1080p HD, new CMOS Cyber-shot TX10. This pocketable camera can be dropped from 1.5m (eye level for most people), submerged up to 5m depth, shoot 10fps bursts, and survive British winter temperatures.

Sony unveiled four new Cyber-shot digital still cameras at the US Consumer Electronics Show, incorporating new technologies that make these cameras capable of capturing spontaneous DSLR-like quality still images, stunning 3D photos and high-quality Full HD videos.

Sony has designed four new innovative 16.2-megapixel EXMOR R rear-illuminated CMOS Cyber-shot cameras (models DSC-TX10, DSC-HX7V, DSC-WX10 and DSC-WX7) that are the world's first compact digital still cameras to include 3D Still Image™ mode, for taking 3D images using only one lens and imager (*the method uses a kind of focus bracketing – see below*). In addition the WX10 is one of the only digital still cameras to include a high-speed linear focus feature that provides quicker, more precise focusing comparable to the speed of a DSLR camera.

The DSC-TX10, DSC-HX7V, DSC-WX10 and DSC-WX7 cameras record movies at 50i in 1080 AVCHD (the same as the NEX-5, A55, A580). Separate buttons are provided for shooting video and stills, and 'Dual Rec' mode allows simultaneous capture of crisp still images *without* interrupting video recording (not supported in 50p mode.)

3D content can be viewed on a 3D TV home theatre system, whether captured using 3D Sweep Panorama™ mode or the new 3D Still Image mode.

In 3D Still Image mode, the

camera takes two consecutive shots in different focus positions to calculate the depths, creating left-eye and right-eye images to produce a 3D effect. Images can be viewed in 2D or 3D on compatible 3D televisions like the new BRAVIA KDL-HX820. 3D-compatible HDMI cables and 3D active shutter glasses are also required.

The cameras also include the **3D Sweep Panorama** feature, which lets you take panoramic pictures in one press-and-sweep motion. The high-speed burst of frames is stitched together to automatically create detail-packed 3D panoramas. This is now familiar from the NEX, A55/33, A580/560.

These cameras will also let you view images in a whole new way. Unlike 3D Sweep Panorama mode, which lets you view your 3D images on compatible 3D television systems, **Sweep Multi Angle** lets you view images moving in simulated 3D on the camera screen simply by tilting the camera back and forth. This shooting feature captures 15 images at different angles, compiling them to create a 3D-like effect on the display.

With improved *Superior Auto* and *Intelligent Auto* modes, all new Cyber-shot models can automatically recognise a wide range of common shooting situations, combining up to six high-speed exposures of the scene to produce a single image with greater clarity, optimum dynamic range and lower image noise. (*contd*)

See the big picture – new 5" monitor



A new clip-on LCD monitor from Sony gives DSLR camera owners a bigger, better view of their footage while shooting HD video. It is ideal for composing shots in the studio using live view and manual focus, presenting a larger view of the focusing image. The monitor is also an accessory welcomed by disabled photographers and anyone with impaired vision. It will work with any DSLR or video camera that can feed the viewing screen output through the HDMI socket, including Canon and Nikon models.

The CLM-V55 is a portable video monitor featuring a high-resolution WVGA (800 x 480 pixels, 5") LCD panel. Attaching easily to most interchangeable lens digital cameras and compatible HD camcorders via the supplied min-HDMI to HDMI short cable, it displays video footage during shooting/playback with excellent clarity and a wide viewing angle.

The clip-on screen tilts and swivels to any angle for comfortable framing in any position – even self-shooting when you're in the picture.

Pixel magnification mode assists with accurate focus confirmation, giving an enlarged pixel-perfect view of a selected portion of the Full HD image. It's complemented by a colour peaking function that highlights the edges of accurately-focused areas of the video image.

A control wheel allows quick, positive adjustment of a wide range of monitor settings without interrupting shooting. Adjustable parameters include aspect ratio (16:9/4:3), volume, brightness, contrast, colour tone (phase), colour temp and auto dimmer. On-screen markers aid precise framing by giving precise indication of a TV's 16:9 or 4:3 actual display area. The LCD monitor's on-board mono speaker is complemented by a headphone jack for accurate audio monitoring during shooting.

The CLM-V55 attaches easily to a wide range of cameras from Sony and other manufacturers that support HD video shooting or live view functions. The supplied adaptor simplifies mounting on any camera or HD camcorder that features an auto-lock accessory shoe (Minolta/Sony type) or ISO shoe (standard pre-WWII fitting).

Signal connection from camera to monitor is via the supplied HDMI cable, while power can be supplied using a normal Alpha larger type NP-FM500H battery pack (for A580, A700 etc) or AC adaptor (both optional). The CLM-V55 comes with a detachable LCD hood for more comfortable viewing when shooting outdoors in bright sunlight.

The CLM-V55 LCD video monitor by Sony is available from March 2011. Price has not been indicated but at the launch in the USA, \$399 was indicated. This is likely to mean a UK price including VAT around £299.



Alpha 900 and 850 get firmware upgrade

A firmware upgrade that fine-tunes shooting responses and creative options for the A900 and A850 35mm full-frame DSLR cameras was released in December. All new and existing customers are advised to install the upgrade, available to download from the 'Support' area of the Sony web site.

Autofocus is quicker and more responsive, thanks to improved AF motor control and better distance detection of out-of-focus objects.

Creative options are extended by a broadened range of exposure value (EV) compensation settings, now increased from $\pm 3\text{EV}$ to $\pm 5\text{EV}$. Selected compensation value is displayed in the navigation display on the main LCD screen of both cameras. This boosted EV compensation range gives extra headroom when composing extremely high- or low-key images.

HDR bracketing range is increased from a maximum of 4.0EV (three shots at -2EV, 0EV, +2EV) to a maximum of 6.0EV (-3EV, 0EV, +3EV). This wider range gives added flexibility when capturing multiple frames at different exposure values – for example when acquiring images for the creation of powerful post-shooting HDR effects. But bracketing still does not include 1EV steps as an option (the widest range of 'normal' bracketing is 5 frames at 0.7EV) and the +/- 2 or 3 EV options remain as wide-spaced three shot sequences only; there is no provision for the most desirable HDR settings such as -3 to +3 in 1EV intervals, a seven-frame set.

A new menu option enables shutter release without lens attached, in modes other than Manual (putting the 900/850 in line with the A700).

The upgrade links for owners in different parts of the world are all provided on the Photoclubalpha website – see:

www.photoclubalpha.com/2010/12/02/alpha-900850-firmware-upgrade



The J10 (left) with USB arm and the W510 (below)

New lower cost CCD models

Innovation, style and advanced technology come at a lower price with the newest Cyber-shot CCD-sensor based digital still cameras from Sony. We thought there might not be any more CCD models, but there are – this technology is being positioned below the high sensitivity, low noise EXMOR R sensor range.

The 12.1 megapixel Cyber-shot W510, W530, W560 lack video or 3D functions, but do feature Sweep Panorama, Plus Intelligent Auto mode that automatically adjusts settings for good results in most shooting situations. Simple operation of all cameras is enhanced by an improved In-Camera Guide for helpful on-screen advice without the need to leaf through paper instruction manuals.

With a large 7.5cm (3-inch) LCD touch screen, the Cyber-shot T110 features a 16.1-megapixel CCD sensor, Sweep Panorama and 720p HD movie capture.

The Cyber-shot H70 also has a 16.1-megapixel CCD sensor. A 25mm wide angle lens with powerful 10x optical zoom is complemented by Sweep Panorama feature, 720p HD movie recording and Optical SteadyShot.

The same 16.1-megapixel CCD sensor powers the colourful Cyber-shot J10 which has 4GB of internal memory to store shots, plus a folding USB connector that stows inside the camera. Connect to any PC and on-board PMB Portable software launches for quick uploads to image sharing sites and social networks.

Featured on all new models, Sweep Panorama automatically stitches together a burst of images to create one seamless panoramic photo.



WX10 – with 7X 24mm f2.4 super fast linear motor focusing lens

HX7V – built in GPS with compass function and 5X zoom

(from p3) Easily accessible from the cameras' menu button, an In-Camera Guide lets users get on-screen help without thumbing through paper instruction manuals. In-Camera Guide is not available for W510 and W530 models.

Background Defocus mode rapidly shoots two frames at different focus settings, combining them to create a single DSLR-style image with your subject in sharp focus against a smoothly defocused background (which is created by a blurring process in the camera).

Soft Skin mode reduces visible blemishes and wrinkles, while **Natural Flash** corrects colour balance for more natural shots.

All five cameras also offer super-fast 10fps bursts at full 16.2-megapixel resolution, but they do not feature raw capture – a factor which may put off higher end buyers despite all the other benefits.

The DSC-TX10, DSC-HX7V, DSC-WX10 and DSC-WX7 cameras are the first Sony Cyber-shots with the improved HDR (High Dynamic Range) feature that compiles highlights, mid-tones and shadows from three separate shots to create one realistic-looking photo, even in difficult lighting conditions. This was first seen in the NEX models as a two-shot mode, and then enhanced in the A55/33 and 580/560 to use three exposures.

With a Sony G lens with 10x optical zoom in a compact camera body, the Cyber-shot HX7V offers built-in GPS and Compass which records the location and direction of where photos were taken (the A55, contrary to early rumours, does not have the compass feature).

The WX10 features a 7x zoom, bright f2.4 24mm wide angle setting and the high-speed linear focus feature, and the DSC-WX7 camera has

a 5x with 25mm wide angle view for capturing the perfect group shot or landscape.

With the new high-speed linear focus feature, the WX10 makes it easy to focus on your subject with DSLR-like speed. Instead of a mechanical gear to drive the focus, the DSC-WX10 has a magnetic coil (like those used in an audio speaker) to move the lens linearly and achieve focus in a straight back-and-forth motion – not rotationally. At its widest setting it is similar to the 16mm f2.8 of the NEX system, and will no doubt be criticised for too wide a coverage...

The top of the line 16.2 megapixel Cyber-shot TX10 is waterproof, shock-proof, dustproof and freeze-proof, and has a 7.5cm (3-inch) touch screen (but does touch work underwater?).

Waterproof for subaquea shooting up to 5m below the surface, the TX10 lets you take high-quality photos, including panoramic pictures, and Full HD 1080i videos underwater. From the tropics to the top of the mountain, the camera is also freeze-proof down to minus 10°C, so you can take pictures in Britain between mid-November and late April without worrying about burst pipes inside your camera.

It is also durable enough to withstand an accidental drop from up to approximately 1.5m (a drop from only 40cm was enough to put one Ricoh camera we tested a few years ago out of action). Additionally, it is dustproof thanks to its airtight construction, so you can take it with you wherever the dust might kick up.

To go with the high data transfer rate of these 16.2 megapixel compacts, Sony has introduced a new range of Expert Class 10 SDHC cards.

All new Cyber-shot models will be available in various colours from March 2011.



Three new Bloggie models – 360° pans and web sharing

Sony's latest Bloggie HD cameras include some unique features while offering simple, high quality MP4 video and still photo shooting, with easy web sharing capabilities.

The new Bloggie, Bloggie Duo and Bloggie 3D models capture full high definition 1920x1080 MP4 video and 5-megapixel still photos, with the introduction of 3D and dual screen capabilities.

Dual Record enables photo capture while shooting video. "Share it Later" tags the clips and pictures you want to post for easy upload next time you're online, PC or Mac.

SteadyShot image stabilisation, Face Detection, a built-in USB arm for easy charging and uploading, internal memory, built-in rechargeable battery, embedded Bloggie software, and HDMI output are included.

The Bloggie 3D (MHS-FS3) is an innovative model with two lenses, two image sensors, stereo microphone and built-in LED light to capture 3D or 2D video and photos.

The Bloggie Duo (MHS-FS2) offers a dual-screen option, 2.7-inch on the back and 2.0-inch on the front underneath the lens.

Duo



A new entry level model completes the trio. The MHS-FS1 sports an ultra compact, lightweight design, with a large 2.7-inch wide LCD screen.

Friends and family can also view shared photos and videos away from the PC with apps for iPhone or Android. BRAVIA support will be added later this year.

The MHS-FS1 and MHS-FS2, both with 4GB of internal memory, will be available in March 2011. The MHS-FS3 with 8GB of internal memory will be available in April 2011.



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Man Utd Football Stadium
17th May 2011

COVENTRY



Ricoh Arena
14th June 2011

WINDSOR



Royal Windsor Racecourse
29th June 2011

BRISTOL



Ashton Gate Stadium
19th July 2011

DUBLIN



Croke Park Stadium
6th September 2011

KENT



Brands Hatch Circuit
18th October 2011

LONDON



Royal Horticultural Halls
15th November 2011

Indian Summer

Duncan McEwan was an official photographer at the 2010 Commonwealth Games in India. He got amazingly close to some great action – and added a few days to explore the tomorrow's First World nation.

It all began in the Millennium when I was invited to cover the inaugural Commonwealth Youth Games in Edinburgh together with professional photographer Steve Lindridge of Ideal Images. Little did I realise that ten years later it would lead me to Delhi, via the 18th Games in Melbourne in 2006, making it the third occasion Steve and I had worked together.

Delhi 2010 proved to be a much more challenging experience than Melbourne. Airport level security checks were applied at hotels, metro stations and, most stringently, at venues. Soldiers, armed police and security personnel were everywhere. At first it felt intimidating, although reassuring, and after a couple of days it became accepted as part of the scene. That no incidents occurred during the Games period is a great credit to the vigilance and efficiency of those people.



Above: there is always a call for set-up shots for press and PR. Here Jennifer McIntosh, 19, displays her three medals in front of the famous India Gate in Delhi. A900, 24-70 at 50mm, ISO 400, 1/13 @ f4. Below: taken in practice allowed this ground level view of an archer in action, a viewpoint impossible during competition. A900, 24-70 at 30mm, ISO 200, 1/1600 @ f5. Top right: shooting between the ropes from a ringside position gives a worm's eye view of a boxer in action. A900, 24-70 at 28mm, ISO 1600, 1/1600 @ f3.2 (+0.3). Bottom right: A floor level view of women's wrestlers by both referee and photographer gives an insight into the detail of the action. A900, 70-400 at 200mm, ISO 800, 1/320 @ f5.6 (+0.3).

Equipment consisted of two Alpha 900 bodies together with Sony 24-70mm f2.8 CA, Sony 70-400mm f4-f5.6 SSM G and a Minolta 70-200mm f2.8 SSM, plus a Minolta 5600 HS(D) flash. It was anticipated that for focal lengths less than 200mm, the 70-200mm had the advantage of f2.8 throughout, allowing faster shutter speeds or lower ISO settings. In outdoor daylight conditions, ISO 400 was mainly used, while in indoor arenas, or outdoors under floodlight, ISO was increased to 800 or 1600, with a Manfrotto monopod being used throughout. Images were shot in RAW+JPEG to satisfy the requirements of sportsScotland, Commonwealth Games Scotland, and Glasgow 2014, the three interested partners.

Going out a week prior to competition commencing, was aimed at building up stock images of Scottish athletes during training





sessions, allowing photo opportunities that would not be available during competition - particularly applicable to archery and the various shooting disciplines. Despite having full accreditation to do so, gaining access to venues proved well nigh impossible. The fact that I succeeded in getting into four venues was down to persistence and not taking 'no' for an answer. Negotiation was not an option - but asking someone else was. It was one of the most frustrating weeks I have ever had.

Equipment consisted of two Alpha 900 bodies together with Sony 24-70mm f2.8 CA, Sony 70-400mm f4-f5.6 SSM G and a Minolta 70-200mm f2.8 SSM, plus a Minolta 5600 HSD flash. It was anticipated that for focal lengths less than 200mm, the 70-200mm had the advantage of f2.8 throughout, allowing faster shutter speeds or lower ISO settings. In outdoor daylight conditions, 400 ISO was mainly used, while in indoor arenas, or outdoors under floodlight, ISO was increased to 800 or 1600, with a Manfrotto monopod being used throughout. Images were shot in RAW + JPEG to satisfy the requirements of sportscotland, Commonwealth Games Scotland, and Glasgow 2014, the three interested partners.

After a spectacular and colourful Opening Ceremony, it was a relief when competition finally got



Opening and Closing Ceremonies make extensive use of colour, light and theatrical performances to create a fantastic visual spectacle. A900, 24-70 at 40mm, ISO 400, 1/30 @ f2.8.



Poise, balance and concentration are well captured with the added bonus of having the shuttle included as well as the Delhi 2010 board. A900, 70-200 at 80mm. ISO 1600, 1/1000 @ f4.

underway. High profile events are more restrictive and regimented when it comes to shooting positions and the freedom enjoyed at smaller events cannot be expected. Many of the media photo positions were poorly thought out, with partially obstructed views in some cases, but you just got on with it and made the best of the prevailing situations.

Perhaps the most exciting photo position encountered, partly because it was new to me, was being allocated a ringside position at boxing when a Scottish boxer was in action - you don't get much closer to violent action than this. A few of the squash courts had a pit giving a view through a plate glass window at floor level on the front wall. It wasn't always practical to have the lens against the glass to minimise reflections and the glass itself was not exactly clean - I wonder what the reaction of security would have been had I tried to smuggle windolene into the venue!

There is no substitute for past experience when photographing sports. Familiarity with a sport, through having played it or photographed it many times, will greatly increase success rate by being able to anticipate key moments or potentially dramatic action. For these reasons, I felt comfortable with badminton and in a match lasting 30 minutes or more, lots of opportunities do arise. By comparison, women's wrestling

Coming off the bend at the top of the bank is a good place to capture the speed and effort of velodrome cycling events. A900, 70-400 at 400mm. ISO 800, 1/500 @ f5.6.



was new to me. The action may be confined to a 9 metre diameter mat, but for a lot of the time the contestants are wrapped up in each other's holds, with faces obscured or deeply shaded. Also, as I found out to my cost, a bout, as in boxing, can be over in seconds - a reminder that in some sports it doesn't pay to be hesitant at the start of a contest. Even in rugby 7's, seven minutes each way may not give that many opportunities if all the action is at the other end of the pitch.

I was involved in 15 of the 17 sports in the Games, the exceptions being athletics and netball. Each sport is different, with its own characteristics. Some like athletics, hockey, rugby, cycling, boxing, table tennis and swimming provide action in abundance while lawn bowls, shooting and archery offer studies in concentration. Different disciplines within gymnastics display a range of attributes - action, acrobatics, concentration, poise, grace and elegance. Weightlifting combines concentration, effort, expression, strength and emotion, while the high proportion of extrovert characters adds interest.

In some venues, it was possible, with a small shift in viewpoint, to control what appears in the background - a Games logo or Delhi 2010 was always preferred to advertisements for Indian Railways or other commercial companies. Out of focus crowds and clean, uncluttered backgrounds were also favoured, where available.

After the stress of spending 17 days rushing between venues photographing sport, it was somewhat more relaxing to spend a week travelling to Jaipur, Agra and Varanasi, taking pictures purely for pleasure and getting to see something of the real India. Stress-free, that is, apart from a planned overnight rail journey where the train was 12 hours late and then took another 12 hours to complete what should have been a 7 hour journey ...and there was no snow to blame!

Travelling in a small group led by personal guides, a different one in each city, helped make the most of the short time available. Guides tend to want to take you to every fort, palace and temple, all of which India has in abundance but, fortunately, ours were very receptive to our photographic desires to get behind the iconic locations and see a bit more of people going about their way of life. Of course, nobody comes to this part of India without visiting at least some of the exquisite works of architecture such as the Taj Mahal in Agra and the Amber Palace in Jaipur. They attract such vast numbers of visitors that people-free pictures are



A high viewpoint above the traffic, allowed a view across a very busy street to this rickshaw passing a colourful market stall in Jaipur. A900, 70-200 at 180mm. ISO 400, 1/160 @ f6.3 (+0.3).



While photographing blue stone steps, these two Indian lads appeared on the scene and posed naturally. A900, 24-70 at 40mm. ISO 400, 1/160 @ f6.3 (+0.3).



almost unattainable, unless you shoot details. An attempt to photograph the Taj from across the Yamuna River at dawn would have achieved this, but was thwarted by cloudy skies. That is one of the pitfalls of travel photography - you often only get one chance, unless several days are spent at the same locality.

The city of Varanasi is one of the holiest destinations in India. Hindus flock here to bathe in the holy water of Mother Ganga as an act of sin cleansing and attaining salvation. Peak time for this ritual is at dawn, when the ghats leading to the river become crammed with very excited people, most dressed in colourful traditional clothing. The more muted colours of the ancient buildings add further to this colour. Viewing is least intrusively done from one of the multitude of small boats that slowly ply up and down the river, close to the bank. Even so, it was difficult not to have feelings of intrusion into what were very personal religious moments for the bathers, but nobody shied away from the camera. Close up views of the many smoking funeral pyres were rightly discouraged. Another cloudy dawn meant no warm light and the low level of light meant using ISO 800, even with fast lenses. Fortunately, the boat moved slowly on the calm water and with the assistance of Steady Shot it was fairly easy to handhold. In fact, a tripod was only used once during the week for a floodlit building shot. Busy streets and markets are not places for a tripod and in all of India's historic sites, they are banned.

India is a wonderful country to visit, full of colour, history, culture and very friendly people - I would certainly go back.

As for Glasgow 2014, I will definitely be there... but more likely as a spectator.



α gallery



Above: night shots can extend your photo activities at this time of year, when evenings are still dark and long and you have a chance to shoot in darkness earlier on. The Lowry Theatre, Salford Quays, by Lawrence Englesberg. Alpha 100, 18-70mm lens at 18mm, 8 seconds at f11, ISO 100.

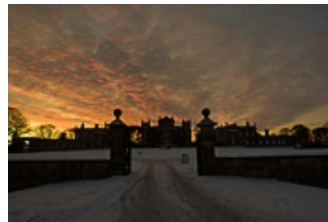
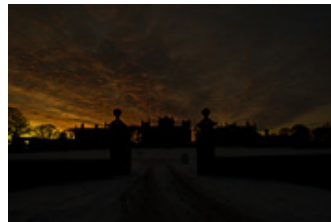
Left: Mallard duck and drake puzzling over the frozen waters which Britain now seems set to enjoy every winter. At Killingworth Lake, by John Gilkerson, Konica Minolta Dynax 7D with 400mm f5.6 lens, 1/200th at f8.

Right: a great red rock Mesa Arch sunrise from Utah photographer Lonnie Shull. Taken using the Alpha 900 with 16-35mm f2.8 CZ lens at 16mm, 0.8 seconds at f22, ISO 100. Lonnie has a website featuring some great views of his region – www.landsbapephotography.com





Paul Murphy photographed the recently re-opened National Trust Delaval Hall, Northumberland, using a three exposure High Dynamic Range method, blending the -2, 0 and +2 frames using HDR Darkroom and Photoshop. Alpha 700, 17-35mm lens.





To enter your own pictures for future *Gallery* pages, just send digital files. Images should be no larger than 2000 x 3000 pixels or the equivalent data size for panoramas (6 megapixels). They should be saved as AdobeRGB or sRGB JPEG files, with embedded ICC profile and intact EXIF data, to level 8 quality (High) or better. Your details, caption, copyright information, website URL, email address etc should be written into the file EXIF or IPTC fields – use 'File Information' in *Photoshop* **File Menu** to view and edit these text fields.

You may also put caption, website, etc information in a separate text document attachment or in the body of your email.

The pictures must have been taken on Minolta, Konica Minolta, Sony or Sony Alpha equipment. Scans from slides, negatives or prints are accepted and full details must be provided of equipment used. EXIF data will be used to confirm the origin of digital entries.

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Left: a kookaburra with snake, taken in the Australian autumn by Robert Lawton, using an Alpha 100 with 70-210mm f4.5-5.6 zoom at 210mm, full aperture, ISO 400.

Below: in Istanbul, Yildiz Ucak photographs the regional cuisine she makes in her kitchen, using natural light. Baklava, Alpha 100, ISO 100, 1/8th at f7.1 at 60mm focal length.



F5.6 AT F5



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Alpha in the studio

Before longer days and more photogenic conditions return – at least to the Northern hemisphere – creating a studio setup at home can extend your range of subjects and skills.

Studio photography has been made much easier by the introduction of low-energy light bulbs in homes, and LED battery lighting for everything from video to your car emergency torch. Though not all these new light sources are matched in colour or truly identical to daylight, they are far superior to the tungsten lighting in practice.

Once, to get a usable exposure on the kind of film chosen for studio shots you needed about a kilowatt of over-run tungsten filament light. Over-run just means that the bulbs were made to run normally at (say) 180 volts but were plugged in to our 220-240V supply, knowing that they would burn extra bright, extra blue and for just a hour or two.

Today you can get 150W of equivalent tungsten light output in a 32W energy saving fluorescent tube with daylight colour balance, running relatively cool though the tightly coiled high power lamps do generate some heat. Five of these mounted in a single lighting head produce more output than the old 500W large Photoflood bulb, though each head is likely to cost over £100 because of the chassis and wiring involved.

Even one of these bulbs in an angle-arm desk lamp (as sold by IKEA) will provide enough light to be a main source for small objects or a portrait at a wider aperture, given the superb noise-free performance now possible with cameras like the Alpha 580 at high ISO setting such as 1600. There is no longer any need to try to keep the setting to ISO 400 or lower.

All you have to be sure of is that you buy similar colour temperature bulbs, as there are countless variations out there. Two different makes claiming 'daylight' colour may be very different when switched on side by side. Some are described as 'full spectrum daylight' and cost a lot more than regular energy-savers of the same output – these are the best for photography.

As long as the lighting is not too mixed, Custom White Balance on your Alpha will produce a perfect result. Just use the Custom WB setting to photograph a light grey or white



Elinchrom's D-Lite 2iT and 4iT kits are an ideal starter package for a mains powered studio. The included Skyport wireless trigger does not fit directly to the Alpha accessory shoe, but works perfectly with an inexpensive adaptor. It is seen (right) mounted on an Alpha 700 via a Seagull SC-6 adaptor which is a copy of the Minolta FS-1100, and also provides a coaxial flash socket. Shooting note: we used a green background sheet. Note the cast in the dark tones, and read the article!



target and store the setting, and every time you return to Custom WB the camera will remember this until you take another reading. A equi-energy spectrum grey card such as the Douglas Grey Card (which Shirley Kilpatrick helped Douglas West develop back in the 1990s, and has also been sold as the Paterson Grey Card) is the ideal tool for getting perfect WB as well as perfect exposure.

You can also mix flash in with most daylight temperature energy-saver lighting, even if the mix is not exact. Flash is after all not a perfect match when used for daylight fill in, either. One very good way to improve studio shots is to bounce your flash off the ceiling to create a general level of lighting, which establishes good shadow detail. Your camera will be working at 1/60th, a suitable speed for most portraits or still life subjects. Then add a bright level of direct continuous light to provide accents or highlight the subject.

Using on-camera flash combined with continuous light in this way avoids any problems with live view modes on all Alpha models (there are no issues at all when using just continuous light). Working with flash alone needs a little more thought.

The Live View problem

Both the Quick Focus LV and Focus Check LV* mode in Alpha DSLRs (300, 330, 350, 380, 450, 500, 550, 560* and 580*) and the normal Live View mode of the Alpha 33, 55, NEX-3 and NEX-5 use auto brightness gain in normal lighting. This has obvious benefits, such as the Alpha 55's ability to show a bright clear viewfinder image in an almost dark room.

When exposure compensation is used (the +/- over-ride function) the gain of the image is adjusted to show the effect, another useful function. When Manual exposure is used, the automatic gain is turned off completely and replaced by exposure simulation. This means the image on the EVF or LCD screen is only at normal brightness when the camera controls are set to give correct exposure for the lighting condition.

If you then pop up the camera flash, fit an Alpha dedicated flashgun to the hot shoe or use wireless dedicated flash the auto brightness is restored. So you can set your camera manually to 1/60th and f16 in a darkened room and it will show an almost black viewfinder or screen but once you have a flash connected this brightens up so you can compose and focus.

However, not all flash guns are dedicated Alpha system compatible guns – most notably manually set macro ring flashes, large older press-type flash packs, and all the mains or location battery pack powered studio flash units ever made. Some dedicated units may also fail to sync with the Alpha 55 and 33.

There has never been a single studio flash which ‘talks’ to the Alpha body, and so far, not even a single flash trigger. These days most studio flash is fired using small wireless transmitters, not linked up with cables. Wireless is safer and gives the photographer freedom to move. There are dozens of triggers made for the ISO hot shoe, and none at all made for the Minolta-Sony iISO intelligent flash shoe despite its history of over 20 years in use.

Sony makes an expensive adaptor to fit between ordinary hot shoe flashes or triggers and Alpha cameras, and another expensive adaptor to use sync cables. Despite being powered by a small battery, these adaptors are completely dumb. They do not signal to the camera that a flash is fitted, and do not activate the live view auto brightness. Nor do they tell the camera to set its flash sync shutter speed.

What this means is that even if you fit a sync cable or wireless trigger using a hot shoe adaptor – no matter whether it’s Sony or a third party – the live view screen remains dark using the manual exposure setting required for studio or purely manual flash. In some conditions it may be just bright enough to pick out your composition, but studio flash normally has enough power to require apertures between f8 and f16. Even with the modelling lights incorporated in this type of flash you can’t compose your shots.

This is a major failing on Sony’s part; Konica Minolta enabled an over-ride on the Dimage 7 and A series cameras, the last models to use live view or EVF, with a menu option to have auto gain all the time or to simulate manual exposure and over-rides. The Dimage A2 and A200 were arguably better suited to the enthusiast or professional user than the current Alpha 55/33 design, and even had a coaxial sync cable terminal showing that the designers had manual flash in mind from the start.

The Live View solution

There are two answers to using studio flash with live view. One is to use the pop-up (or add-on for NEX) flash as a trigger, which requires a special type of flash or a special slave cell and some steps to prevent the on-camera flash hitting the subject. The second, which applies to the A55/33 and also to the other models with live view if you want to use this instead of the optical finder, is to use an Alpha flash which offers a combination of manually-set power output and a bounce head. This will work with any ordinary studio flash or slave cell made in the last fifty years.

The built-in flash always produces a double or pulse, whether the camera is set to ADI or pre-flash TTL. The first (measurement) pulse will trigger the external flash too soon. Some flash units can be programmed to recognise this, and fire only on the main flash from the camera. I use Elinchrom BXri and D-Lite iT heads, which have this function. All I need to do is hold a button down for a couple of seconds to set the ‘learning’ mode, fire the camera, and the flash has then recorded the number of bursts and the timing. Then, when I fire the built-in gun or the NEX flash, synchronisation is correct.

To avoid the small flash illuminating the subject (even just a little) I make a reflector using adhesive tape and white paper which deflects the flash up towards the ceiling. It is still enough to trigger the studio heads.

With the Alpha 55 or the Alpha 350/580 and similar cameras used in Live View modes, I can fit an external flash instead of using the pop-up. The flagship flashgun of the range, the HVL-F58AM, can be set to a low manual power (1/32nd) on these cameras but not all guns can. For example, the HVL-F42AM has no access to its manual power setting when attached.

My solution is to use a much older flashgun from the Minolta range. Several models allow manual power to be set, including the 5200i and 5400xi. My 5200i cost about £20 secondhand, it has a bounce head, and although it is a very bulky flash to use just for synchronizing studio heads it works perfectly. There is no pre-flash when used in manual mode, so any type of head or slave cell can be used, not just the latest ones with the ‘learning digital flash’ function.

The manual gun on 1/32nd power will trigger even in a large room when aimed at the ceiling. The light has no effect at all on the setup. It recycles instantly and gives thousands of flashes for each battery set. It also has the function of setting the camera



Nicole by Gary Friedman – a great example of how a single light, which can be anything from a flash to a bare light bulb, can be used to create a great shot.

Single light technique



Even without any kind of diffuser or reflector, a single direct flash can be effective. If placed behind a subject in a dark situation like Gary Friedman’s shot (top) you either need a very large room and some black paper or fabric, or a conservatory or doorway that lets you use night-time outdoors. For a silhouette, a projector screen or sheet makes a good background – light this, from behind the sitter, and test the exposure. Spotlight effects (right) just need some experiment to find the best angle and height for the flash or light.

to the correct flash sync speed (normally 1/60th indoors) which means I have the choice of using either Manual or Aperture Priority control. This is useful because with the latest Alphas, Manual control always has

the shutter speed adjusted by the front control wheel alone, requiring the +/- over-ride button to be pressed while turning to adjust the aperture instead. With flash, the only setting you need to adjust is the aperture.

Using A mode, with a flash mounted in the shoe as a trigger, the front control wheel works directly to change this with no need to press the button.

The menu flash set-up for all this should be 'Fill-In' flash rather than second curtain sync as there can be tiny delays in slave triggering combined with longer flash durations from mains powered units. It's best to have the flash triggered as the shutter opens, not just before it closes.

Previewing the light

With all other Alpha cameras – Dynax film models, Dynax 7D and 5D, Alpha 100, 200, 230, 290, 700, 850 and 900 – your only viewing method is the optical finder so the live view option is irrelevant. These cameras either have a coaxial sync terminal (Prontor-Compur, known as PC) or can be used with a simple adaptor for wireless hot shoe mounted triggers or cables. The Alpha 700 pop-up flash also has controllable manual power down to 1/16th which can trigger slave sync flash.

If you have Alpha system wireless flash guns, each one is supplied (in its pouch or case, in a small pocket) with a tripod-threaded foot. You can stand the flash on any convenient surface using the foot, or attach it to a clamp, lighting stand or tripod of any size. The Gorillapod flexible 'grippy' tripod is great for mounting the flash on the top of an open door, or on a lamp standard.

Wireless flash works up to 10m away from the camera, which must either be able to control and trigger the flashguns, or be fitted with a flash which can do so. There must be line of sight between the trigger flash, and the remote flashes. This is one big difference between Alpha wireless flash and the slave or wireless triggers used with studio flash. They can be much further away, and depending on the type can even be in a different room.

You can obtain mounting units from Lastolite or Jessop which hold the Alpha flashgun and a reflective umbrella, diffusing softbox or other 'light shaper'. From Honl, you can buy affordable easy to fit flexible shapers to concentrate the flash beam more like a spot and shield it from parts of the subject you don't want to light.

When using wireless remote flashguns like this, you have no way of judging the effect of their power setting, distance and angle to the subject unless you can mount a modelling lamp of similar general coverage angle beside the flash. The mounting kits from Lastolite, in particular, allow both modelling lights and multiple flash

units to be rigged up together.

There are now so many affordable small LED lights on the market that you can easily enough, for hardly any outlay, attach one or two light and powerful LED torches to your flashgun or its mounting. More powerful LED lights with arrays of 126 or more tiny bulbs can be used on their own as the main source, like low-energy daylight bulbs, for many subjects.

Of course, with the Alpha 850 and 900 you can also just use flash and the Intelligent Preview function to shoot a test – and with any other digital camera, taking a shot and reviewing it does the same for you. This costs nothing if you have rechargeable batteries in your flash. I do not advise using ordinary AA alkaline cells in flashguns now, after some bad experiences with leaking cells of a good brand. I've never had rechargeable cells leak, and I have been hunting down anything containing alkalines and removing them. My HVL-F58AM flash was caught only just in time, with traces of telltale white crystal appearing on the end of one AA cell, about to corrode the contacts if I had not checked it.

Basic setups

The object of studio lighting is to reproduce the effect of natural or artificial light which we find attractive. There are many types of light which look great and happen by accident. Everyone likes the feel of a sunny day, and the look of face tones lit by afternoon sun. We associate this kind of direct light with good weather and summer! For other reasons, the look of evening sun (warm colour, low angle) is evocative and so is the appearance of light from behind the subject. Photography has always been good at capturing something painters find difficult, the rim of brilliant light when the sun catches hair or leaves from behind.

We also like the look of reflected light, when it is bright. A ray of sunshine falling into a room and striking a wall can illuminate the other side of the room with a bright, diffused glow. Someone standing on the shady side of a street can be lit up by reflected light from full sunshine hitting the opposite side. We like the way that the sun reflects up from snow, or sand, or water and illuminates faces from underneath.

Then again, we also like to see direct sun graze across any textured surface casting shadows and bringing out relief – and we like the effect of spotlights in the theatre, including coloured spots. Then there's the look of 'footlights' on the stage, a



Above: a typical small lighting kit, the D-Lite 2 iT outfit with 60cm softboxes from The Flash Centre. This kind of light-shaper is much more effective than reflex umbrellas. Below: the Douglas West Photographer's Grey Card, more accurate than older types.

The most popular use of white backgrounds, light tents or shooting tables is to produce pictures for eBay. Some kits as sold just for this. My set-up, top, uses two flash heads fixed to the frame of a Tre-D studio table (you won't find these excellent Italian products for sale any more in the UK). The large softbox is held by a compact boom arm to suit a small room. Most boom stands require too much space. All of this is provided by The Flash Centre, except the table – their Elinchrom model is a clever design costing over £1,000 and folding to stow away neatly in a corner.



Better than bounce flash



A standard bounce flash result – flash on top of the camera, bounced off the ceiling. This produces heavy shadows round the eyes and is rarely very flattering. The subject may be less well exposed than the background if the ceiling is fairly high – the light tends to ‘overshoot’ the sitter.



Removing the single flash from the camera and holding or positioning it above and to the left of the photographer, not too high, produces a more deliberate quality of light similar to classical paintings. Depending on the face shape and subject, this may work well on its own. A softbox is used.

Adding reflector fill-in and a hair light



It is not necessary to have a second light source to remove the heavy shadows created by a single light. Here is the result of positioning a large white reflector panel (similar to a projector screen, which makes an ideal substitute) to the right of the sitter, slightly ahead of the camera. The reflector is positioned to use stray light from the main flash, and fill in the shadows resulting in very even lighting.



The finishing touch to a portrait like this is a hair light. Normally, a direct light about a quarter of the power of the main light. Unlike the main light, which uses a softbox or a diffusing umbrella, this can be direct. If there is a problem with light aimed towards the lens, a Honl or similar ‘snoot’ attachment can limit the spread of light. You can often clip a hair light to a door top using a tripod threaded clamp.

bit like the sun reflecting off bright ground, but much stronger. And I can go on to add candlelight, firelight, moonlight; light through slatted blinds casting shadows; light coming through foliage; the glowing soft light from dawn or dusk sky...

The object of studio lighting at its very best is to draw on all these evocative moods and types of existing light, which we see through the year outdoors and in. When a commercial photographer shoots silver or jewellery, enveloping the subject with big diffused sources and many white reflectors, the studio is replacing a perfect twilight beach with open sea and sky.

Some lighting is purely functional – I photograph cameras for magazines and all I am trying to copy is a bright overcast day outdoors which shows maximum detail without hard shadows. For this I use one or two softboxes, ideally 1m square by sometimes 60cm as they are easier to handle. Paintings and artwork are best copied using two undiffused, fairly small light sources located either side of the camera and the artwork, at about 30° to the surface being copied.

For other subjects like still life, flowers, people or pets you should LOOK at your lighting and experiment freely. In the workshops I used to give for the Minolta Club in the 1980s, one of the demonstrations was to take a single lighting head and walk it round with its modelling lamp, aiming it at different parts of the room; floor, walls, ceiling, even at coloured surfaces like a sheet of background paper. While I moved the light around, the photographers attending were asked to look at the lighting effect on a portrait model sitting in the middle of the studio.

There were some positions for the light which produced an immediate murmur of approval. Everyone could understand, quickly, that even with a single flash or a single lamp a huge range of lighting effects could be achieved in any normally decorated and furnished room. The key to this is the modelling lamp, but you can work out the position for a flashgun which lacks one by using a desk lamp.

Let's say you have a natural stone wall or even bricks in a room. Though they may not reflect much light, you can bounce flash off them to create a glow as warm as any coloured filter but far more natural looking. Old plaster, with its pinkish or peach colour, is a great surface to reflect a main light from. Pine floorboards are good, too.

If you do this, take care with blue and green surfaces. Green carpeting

will rarely cause problems as we are used to seeing a hint of green in the shadows of outdoor photographs taken in gardens. Blue carpets, a favourite in many hotels (Hilton being the main offender!) create entirely the wrong colour cast in shadows if much light is reflected off them. When photographing groups in function rooms with dark blue carpets, it can be useful to spread an old white sheet all the way between the camera and the group as it makes a big difference to the quality of light. It even improves the simplest bounce-flash shots.

Reflectors are almost as good as owning extra lights, especially with small subjects. I use large white polystyrene foam ceiling tiles, white paper, custom-made reflectors but also that forgotten photo accessory, the old slide projector screen. I do not use this often for digital projection as I've rigged up low cost white IKEA roller blinds for that. My projector screen is a very large, highly efficient white reflector with its own support. Those white discs which come with large pizzas make great small reflectors too!

You can buy sets of flash filters (Honl and other makes) designed to fit battery flashguns, or packs of coloured heatproof gels from studio flash makers (Elinchrom, The Flash Centre). These can be taped temporarily over the front of any flash. It used to be fashionable to use strong coloured lighting in the studio and I remember my own first attempts in the 1960s featured Kodachrome and red gelled floods. It is no longer popular to use theatrical colours, but subtle ones can add something to skim and accent lights.

I do not particularly subscribe to fixed lighting positions, but they are useful starting point. For portraits something resembling the light in old master paintings – generally from a window above, behind and to one side of the artist – works well. Photographers often place the main light ahead of the camera, typically off to the left where if you leaned forward and to one side you can grab the light stand. This is because space dictates you really can't have a much bigger and more powerful light coming from further away. The disadvantage of a closer light is that contrast between the sides of a face (or group, or parts of an object) is increased.

Often it is the closeness of the main light which forces the use of a fill-in light, which is not a very natural way of lighting. If the main light can flood a wider area, using a reflector for fill-in will work better and both subject and photographer have more freedom to move. Let's say a portrait



Underlighting – using a light aimed at a reflector – is not always a ballroom kind of effect. It looks like theatre footlights, and can be a flattering light.



Very large white reflectors positioned either side of the camera, like wings, produced this lovely glowing even light with the flash aimed back towards them, from either side of the sitter. This is one of my favourite lighting methods for beauty shots and can be combined with hair lighting (not used here).

subject moves 30cm when the main light is only 1.5m away – the angle or distance of the light to the face will change a lot. If a much larger light is placed 3m away, that 30cm shift of the head becomes much less in proportion. This is how Hollywood lit films, with big powerful lights from a great distance so that when actors moved around the exposure didn't change, or the way shadows form on the face.

You can not easily do this at home, but the old press photographer's trick of using a corner with two walls and the ceiling as a sort of focusing reflector for bounced flash comes close. Your subject sits in the middle of the room, you stand with your back to the corner of the room and aim the bounce flash back and up over your head into the corner formed by the walls and ceiling. As long as these are bright and neutral in colour, the result is an effective large diffused light source with not much light loss. The subject can move round freely with good lighting. It's a great way to photograph pets or children and gives more 'modelling' than bouncing just off the ceiling over your head. Usually it also means you can stop down more too, using say f8 instead of f5.6.

Start the journey

All said, the best lighting is often not from behind the camera or beside it. It will be from an unexpected position, to the side, below or even behind the subject. Both wireless Alpha system flash and studio flash allow you to experiment freely with lighting position – and continuous lights of the type I started off with, low-energy daylight bulbs or LED units, can be safely moved into spots where old tungsten lighting would have been a fire risk.

We have the benefit of more useful types of daylight quality artificial light now than ever before, combined with the superb performance of the current DSLRs, DSLT and ILC Alpha models at ISO speeds like 800 or 1600. All this adds up to more freedom to experiment with home studio ideas, with or without investing in special equipment.

So, in the run up to longer and brighter days, have a go with indoor shots and add your own light.

– David Kilpatrick



If you are looking for a studio lighting workshop or tuition, see:

www.learninglighting.co.uk

Chris Burfoot AMPA ARPS now runs independent tuition based at Lacock in Wiltshire, the historic home of photography itself. Chris teaches with the same systems used to produce this article.

Kipon tilt adaptor

The most affordable Scheimpflug-effect tilt adaptor – able to create zones of extreme defocusing, or bring the depth of a shot into sharp focus – is the Chinese Kipon for NEX E-mount. We tried an M42 thread version.

The main problem with lens adaptors for the NEX system is that you end up acquiring secondhand glass much the same as stuff you sold decades ago.

To go with a Kipon Tilt Adaptor, we needed Pentax thread M42 lenses. These used to cost a tenner each, but it's amazing how times changes. Any old Praktica glass with the magic word Zeiss written on it (however cheap when new) now commands a three-figure sum.

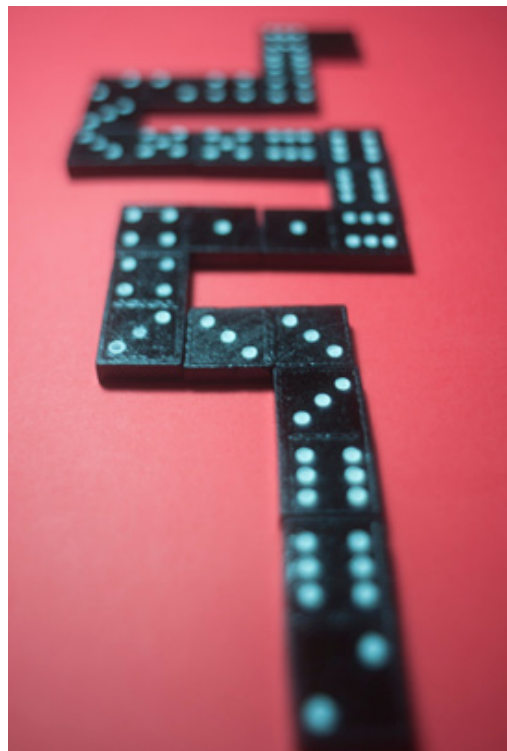
Eventually I was able to find a battered 20mm *f*4 Flektogon, a nice enough old Sigma 24mm *f*2.8 Filtermatic, a legendarily low cost 30mm *f*3.5 Meyer Lydith under its later Pentacon name, a really nice 50mm *f*1.4 Super Takumar, and a Zenith B with a 58mm *f*2 Jupiter and not quite break into three figures.

After spending considerably more on a mint 50mm *f*4 SMC Macro Takumar for use on bellows, I might not have needed the *f*1.4 but this offers the most extreme defocus effects and the *f*4 doesn't. However, the *f*1.4 as I found is limited in its close focus by modern standards. All the lenses had this problem for studio shots.

Because of the way a tilt adaptor moves the lens axis, putting an extension tube between adaptor and lens is actually better practice than adding a close-up lens to the front filter rim. Putting one between the adaptor and camera body is a bad idea, but there are no extension tubes yet made for the NEX E-mount anyway.

The Kipon adaptor costs around £90 including postage depending on the vendor. It's a pity there is no Minolta SR/MD mount option, as this would also allow M42 lenses with a further mount converter. Adaptors like this were never made for rangefinder systems, as you could not focus the image. They have been made possible by the slim NEX body (18mm lens to sensor) and live view critical manual focusing. You can use the NEX almost like a studio monorail camera. Kipon's website is:

www.dl-kipon.com/en/index.asp
– DK



Two results from the 20mm *f*4 Flektogon lens on the Kipon Tilt Adaptor. Left, with the tilt adjusted as shown below and the shutter release positioned to the top, the depth of field is aligned with the receding plane of the dominoes. A test at full aperture showed that depth of field was not sufficient even at full tilt, and also the lens performance was poor with chromatic haloes. Stopping down to *f*11 pulled in the focus sharply (which would not happen without the tilt) and removed the aberrations. Right, at full *f*4 aperture with the tilt in the opposite direction. This creates a very narrow plane of focus so the picture looks more as if it was shot at *f*1.4. You can also see the vignetting created by working wide open.



The very old and scruffy 20mm *f*4 Flektogon mounted on the Kipon M42 thread tilt adaptor for NEX. This lens has a stop-down lever. You can not use similar lenses without a stop-down method unless you tape the aperture pin down.



The Kipon tilt adaptor is a ball and socket based design with a clamping screw ring. The amount of tilt is not marked in degrees, but is very similar to dedicated tilt lenses. Kipon is also introducing tilt-shift adaptors for medium format lenses used on SLR bodies. C/Y, Leica R, and Nikon mount adaptors are also available.



Samyang 14mm

A full-frame true wideangle for under £300, the MF Korean Samyang $f2.8$ sells under several names. Armen Gharibyan tried it out on a tour to the USA.

After the successful launch of 85mm $f1.4$ and 8mm $f3.5$ designs, Korean lensmaker Samyang introduced its third – an amazing 14mm $f2.8$ IF ED MC Aspherical ultra wide angle lens – in 2009. After complaints about flare and a brief period of non-availability, a new model has appeared in the market with the designation UMC for better multiccoating. This lens is co-branded by many companies including Bower, Rokinon, Walimex and Vivitar. Although the lens is fully manual, lack of AF is no problem with a 14mm focal length.

The mount is mixed metal and plastic, like the 85mm. The aperture ring has positive half-stop clicks. The lens has an internal focusing (IF) mechanism so the physical size remains constant during focusing, and the big front element does not rotate. The huge convex aspherical front element rules out the use of filters. This lens is full frame, but my quality tests have been done on a Sony A550 body.

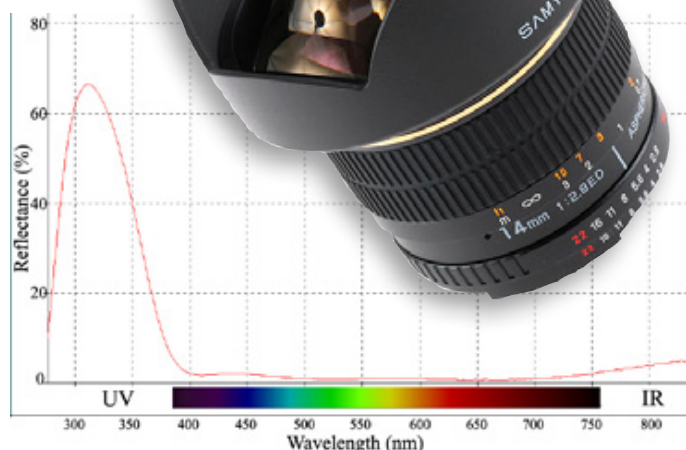
I knew from reports that even the multiccoated version could suffer from flare because of this large exposed front element. I love to capture the sun with a star-like effect, closing the aperture to $f22$, and I can always find an angle where the flare is eliminated or reduced to the minimum.

This lens is able to show good detail all over the image even with the sun in the frame. The amazing detail and contrast that this lens is capable to capture may surprise you. You might consider it a landscape lens, but it's also very good for close-ups and I think the quality is as good as the Sony 30mm $f2.8$ macro. The background bokeh is even better.

You can see this in the image of the sand crab with sea and sky in background. The only serious problem I met is distortion, mostly in capturing straight vertical buildings or similar subjects. In case of wide open shooting some roll-like bokeh effects can hit defocused. I would say aberrations are quite low – not visible at first glance even in case of bright backgrounds.

I got my lens when I was in the

The Samyang has very effective lens coatings and produces attractive iris starbursts



USA and just got on with enjoying it all the time. I decided to make some scientific tests as soon as I returned to Armenia. I measured the efficiency of the new UMC coatings using one of the best spectrophotometers (Ocean Optics HR2000+ES) at the Heliotechnic Lab of State Engineering University of Armenia where I am working currently.

The results are really amazing for a commercial low-cost photographic lens. From the absolute reflectance spectrum (see graph) it can be seen that the lens's reflectance is between 0.5-1% in the important wavelength range from 470-720nm. From 400-470nm reflection is around 1.7%, and in the near-infrared range it also demonstrate quite enough abilities to take nice and sharp IR shots (of course lens transmission is also a matter). In the UV region, coatings are reaching more than 60% reflectance values.

Now this is in my list of favorite lenses – and certainly my favorite wide-angle lens.



For information visit:
www.samyang.pl – the European distributors based in Poland are www.foto-tip.com



Armen's pictures with the Samyang on APS-C format have better levels of detail and contrast than any comparable lens we've seen. Because the lens has no chip, the image information does not record the aperture in use. It is hoped that Samyang will introduce chipped lenses for Sony, as they have done for Nikon. The latest Samyang design, due for release in February 2011, is a 35mm f1.4 full frame Aspherical. For more photography by Armen Gbaribyan, see www.atudio.com



The Alpha 580

It's not really the successor to the Alpha 700, but for the moment, it's the best that Sony has to offer in the APS-C format. Despite a lower specification in some aspects, it outperforms in others.

The Alpha 580 has the same 16.2 megapixel sensor which we saw in the last issue performing well in the Alpha 55. For those who don't like the electronic viewfinder of the A55, the 580 provides an optical finder similar in size to the earlier 100-200 series models. In most ways the overall construction of the body is in this class too, though the feel of the camera is a little more substantial. It's a couple of millimetres longer, 5mm or so higher, and the right hand grip though not much different is reshaped to feel larger. Overall, the camera feels much more like an A700-size body than an A100-size, and that's not all due to the larger rear screen with its hinge-out articulation.

The 580 also restores to the consumer Alpha range two features which went missing – depth of field preview, and 2 second mirror pre-lift. But for owners of earlier generation Alphas, even including the semi-professional 700, it's the overall internal mechanism which makes most difference. The feel and sound of operating the Alpha 580 is very far removed indeed from the 100, as holding the two in turn and taking pictures showed me.

The 580 and its 560 sibling (14.2 megapixels CMOS, similar to the NEX models) have a new mirror mechanism, a new shutter mechanism, new lens couplings and AF motor, and a new 15-point AF module with three cross-hair sensors.

While no more sensitive in low light, and no better with fast lenses than any earlier model in this class the new design is more accurate and performs much better when wide-area focus is used. It's also more accurate, lessons have clearly been learned from the front and back focus issues of the past. That's no guarantee that any one camera will not have an error with certain lenses, but our own use so far indicates that the accuracy is high.

Focusing tracking – a product of the computer program in the camera more than the hardware alone – is improved to the point where motordrive sequences of approaching wildfowl sometimes held perfect



The Alpha 580 restores the depth of field preview button (above) made even more useful by live view. The mode dial includes a sweep panorama setting, first seen on the NEX, which also shoots 3D pans or HD ratio images. On the end of the body there is a stereo microphone socket; the built-in audio recording is also stereo.



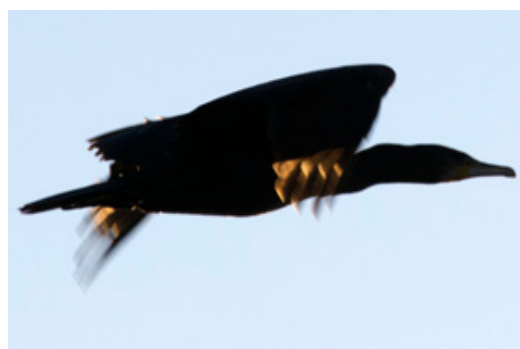
focus. This is a subject which defeats nearly all systems. If a good focus lock was not obtained with the first shot, there was also the chance of an entire burst of frames being out of focus. The system compares favourably with any competitor now.

To check out the results in both regular 5fps motordrive with AE and AF, and in 7fps Speed Priority drive mode with locked AE and AF on the first frame, I shot many grabs and bursts of ducks, gulls, heron and moorhen with difficult low sun across the river. I have done the same with Canon and Nikon, using lenses with a similar range to the 70-300mm SSM G, many times. The best sets from the Alpha 580 were more than I expected – grabbing a heron in flight, against a complex not plain background, the centre AF sensor correctly locked on. The bird may be tiny in my images and therefore not much use as a picture, but the sharpness was perfect.

A cormorant suddenly rose from the riverbank in front of me and the camera was aimed and fired at Hi continuous setting with AE and AF active – five frames taken, five frames sharp (but the final one just a crescent of wings with no head). One sequence taken as a gull flew straight into the sun shows beautifully sharp focus on the bird under conditions where I could hardly see what I was aiming at for the light.

Unfortunately, the Alpha 580 has been with us during two months of unbroken winter – there's only so much you can do when the landscape is snow, slush, more snow, melted snow, old snow or falling snow.

There was a chance to shoot a





I can't say whether this shot would have been possible with the Alpha 55 and its semi-silvered mirror – probably not. The Alpha 580 has managed to lock focus and follow despite the extreme lighting conditions; the generous exposure is typical of the camera's response to such lighting, which is to assume a backlit subject and 'go over'.

video using the snowfall and icy river, and a comparison video using the Alpha 55. In these conditions, using the stabilised Sigma 18-250mm OS zoom but either hand-held or with a monopod, the Alpha 55's ability to film video with the camera held to the eye and pressed to the face greatly improved the steadiness of shots. Though the video quality of the two cameras was well matched, the need to hold the Alpha 580 at arm's length to compose on the rear screen led to more shake once the operator's body temperature dropped to shivering point. . .

Working with wide angle lenses around 16mm, it makes little difference. The 55, 580 or NEX can be held out and waved around the same way people wave their mobile

phone. Stabilisation does not matter much at a wide angle. In contrast, no matter what I tried to do with the 18-250mm at the long end – in lens or in body stabilisation alike – it was not possible to guarantee usable video with panning. The special OSS of the NEX 18-200mm E-mount lens (a very expensive option) is supposed to work satisfactorily at 200mm. Just don't expect either SSS or any flavour of in-lens IS to be free from wavering or 'jello' effects at focal lengths over 150mm. The only good way to shoot video with long lenses is on a high grade tripod with stabilisation turned off.

The live view functions of the Alpha 580/560 make this design one of the most versatile ever created. It has three entirely

different viewing systems and all it is really missing is a rangefinder or wire frame sports finder!

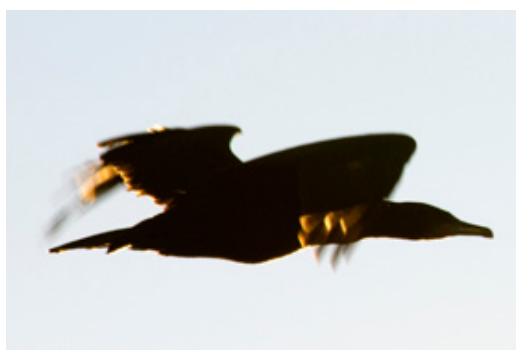
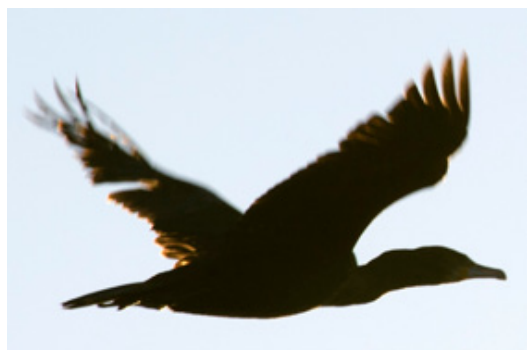
The optical prism viewfinder has a 0.80X magnification and 95% view which is substantially better than the A300 to 390 series which are only a 0.74X scale. There is no 'tunnel vision' effect and the eyepoint is comfortable. Only 11 of the 15 AF points are selectable in OVF mode.

The Quick Focus Live View method is identical to the earlier models in that you end up with a cropped frame – you see only 95% of the 95% screen, or about 90% of the whole image. But this viewing method allows 5fps with AE/AF, and supports Face Detection while also enabling all 15 of the AF points (four act as assist points and can not be selected). The image has

fairly heavy noise levels in low light.

The best feature of the Alpha 580/560 has to be the Focus Check Live View, which has not been renamed from earlier models despite offering a limited auto focus function. Where the A450/500/550 generation has no video and no AF from the main sensor, the new models have both but still lack AF during video shooting – you can only use it beforehand. If you want live AF during video the A55/33 or NEX models are your logical choice.

The contrast detect AF of the 580/560 works only with HSM or SAM lenses, and so far we have only been able to get it to behave properly with genuine Sony or Minolta. Despite the similarity of Sigma HSM and some Tamron lenses, they do



The cormorant sequence was grabbed with no time at all to think about settings, though the camera was preset to f8 and the 70-300mm lens was already at 300mm. Four frames from a burst of five, set to the Hi speed which allows AF but only at 5fps not the 7fps given by Speed Priority. These reproductions are from very small parts of the frame – this is the size the bird would appear on a double page spread.

not communicate with the focus control fast enough to prevent the focus overshooting and hunting. This only applies to attempts to use live view contrast detect AF, they work perfectly with regular AF.

CD AF is not going to produce anything more accurate than magnified manual focusing, but it can do so faster and without involving the need to magnify and lose sight of your overall composition. I tested CD AF with various lenses – the 30mm SAM Macro $f2.8$, 18-55mm SAM as supplied with the camera, and 70-300mm Sony SSM G. It always agreed with the best manually focused result, so I see no risk in using it.

The magnified Focus Check LV manual focus was valuable for checking up on the accuracy of normal (phase detect) AF. By focusing on a subject, switching to manual, then viewing the result on the rear screen the accuracy of AF could be seen. It was spot-on every time with all the lenses I was able to try. The new AF module does seem to have made a difference.

If you use Focus Check LV and take first pressure on the shutter with an SSM/SAM lens fitted, the camera will autofocus using the imaging sensor. If you fit a screw-drive Alpha lens, such as the CZ 16-80mm, it will flip the mirror and use the main AF sensor instead, then return to the live view mode.

The only problem I found was that the system identifies Sigma HSM and Tamron internal motor lenses as being SSM/SAM, but can not focus with them. It will not switch to use the main sensor either, it will try to focus off the imaging CMOS and fail. Therefore you can not use Focus Check LV in this way with independent lenses.

Focus Check LV

You may ask – why bother to use Focus Check LV at all? Phase detect AF is clunky (extra mirror action) and Contrast Detect AF is fairly slow and limited to a few lens types. Quick Focus LV works with all lenses and is fast.

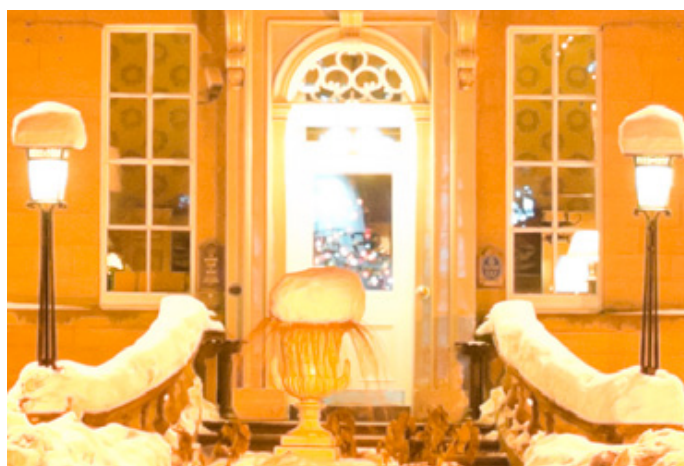
To find the answers, look at the column of facts set out for 'Viewing and Focusing'. You will see that Focus Check LV exposure metering is down to minus 2 EV, compared to 2EV when using the optical finder. That is a difference of four stops in sensitivity, or sixteen times.

Add to this the image gain function of the 920,000 dot RGB rear 3" screen – which has the best colour and brightness yet – and you will realise that Focus Check LV



Auto ISO – no worries from ISO 100 to 1600

The Alpha 580 restores a true ISO 100 setting, goes to 12,800 maximum and its Auto ISO function covers from 100 to 1600. You can not fine tune this, but there is no need to – 1600 is excellent (clip below, at 200dpi, equals a 16 x 24" print). Hand-held with the 28mm $f2$ Minolta AF lens at $f2.8$, 1/8th).



The new AF module is very accurate – I was able to use the wonderful 1600 ISO quality with my 1985 vintage 50mm $f1.4$ Minolta AF lens, and be sure of accurate focus even in lighting like this – 1/80th at $f2$.

allows shooting in light conditions where you can barely see the subject through the optical finder. This also applies to the NEX and the Alpha 55/33, which only have live view from the sensor as their options.

While Focus Check LV has enabled a similar benefit in the earlier A4/5xx models, it has been a mode intended for one-shot use. It self-cancels in these cameras, and extended viewing is limited.

With the A580/560, Focus Check LV becomes usable for as long as your battery can sustain it. After each shot, you are returned to live view again instead of the mode being cancelled. This makes it practical for shooting a series of pictures such as a concert or theatre performance where the low light metering, accurate focus with wide aperture lenses, and visible effect of manual or compensation settings on exposure.

You have, in effect, access to the same controls as the Intelligent Preview of the Alpha 900 and 850. Any image settings you select, like contrast and saturation, will be applied to the screen image.

There is one further benefit of the A580/560 Focus Check LV. With earlier versions such as the A550, macro photography has been helped by the LV function then hindered by a double mirror-shutter action required to make the exposure. The 2 second mirror pre-lift option has been restored to the selftimer options of the A580/560, and this also works in LV modes. Although it is still necessary for the shutter to close and open and this can only be achieved if the mirror also flips, the 2 second delay is added so that macro, astro or other vibration-sensitive shots can be protected against the immediate aftershock of the mechanism.

Depth of field preview has also been restored, and once again, this is particularly important when using Focus Check LV. Not only can you see the effect of stopping down, you can see it without any change in brightness (noise may appear if there's insufficient light reaching the sensor).

Pressing the magnify button once selects the area to be enlarged, which can be moved around using the rear controller. A second press enlarges this area by 7.5X and a further press to 15X, which is a magnified image using four screen pixels to show a single final image pixel. This works well as the screen is such a fine resolution, with a pixel pitch around 266 dots per inch compared to a typical computer screen at 96 to 120.

The 580/560 improve Focus Check LV to the level where it is in some ways better than the Live View modes we have seen in Nikon or Canon models. Canon's 60D, for example, is limited to a 10X magnification on a similar screen from an even larger image file – 1 pixel for 1. All that is missing for Sony now is a true 'quiet shooting' mode where the mirror does not operate.

Video benefits

Some photographers say 'why have video?'. You may never use it, but it is the development of video capable sensors which has brought all the other advances to help still photography. Low heat generation, low image noise, extremely fast readout and image processing, contrast-detect focusing, true live view – we owe most of this to video. Now we wait to see what the next model brings!

– DK



Viewing and focusing with the Alpha 580/560

Alpha 580/560 in Optical Viewfinder mode

- All AF lens types use Phase Detect autofocus, single, auto or continuous including sequence shooting
- 11 zones of the maximum 15 zones (3 cross sensor) AF are activated
- Focus modes Spot, Local and Wide Area
- Exposure metering uses 40 segments, honeycomb pattern. Sensitivity is from EV2 (not very good) in Matrix or Centre Weighted modes, from EV4 in Spot mode (very poor for low light). Can cope with extremely bright conditions up to EV20 (rarely found on Earth)
- Pressing the Movie button starts filming at the focus distance set; no AF during video. Optical finder blacks out, image is shown on rear screen
- 95% view of the composition
- Optical preview of depth of field using stop-down button, accurate from smaller apertures ($f4$ to $f22$) but not useful at large apertures ($f1.4$ to $f4$)
- Continuous shooting possible at 5fps with AF/AE, 7fps in Speed Priority with locked AF/AE
- No grid lines or Virtual Horizon display in optical finder

Alpha 580/560 in Quick Live View mode

- All AF lens types use Phase Detect autofocus, as for optical
- All 15 zones of the AF sensor are activated (four appear to be 'assist' type extensions)
- Focus modes Spot, Local and Wide area
- Face Detect and Smile Shutter modes can be used
- Exposure metering is from the QLV CCD sensor, in 1200 zones. Sensitivity from EV1 to EV17 (a moderate range, slightly better than the optical finder method for low light, OK up to sand or snow in sunshine) in all modes
- Pressing the movie button has the same focus effect as with optical viewing, with a rapid switch on the rear screen between the QV image and a sensor image
- 90% view of the final composition
- No depth of field preview, and no magnified focusing view
- Continuous shooting limited to 3fps with AF/AE
- Grid lines and Virtual Horizon display can be enabled

Alpha 580/560 in Focus Check Live View mode

- Screw-drive lenses focused by the mirror flipping and Phase Detect AF when first pressure is taken on the shutter release, even if CDAF is selected. Continuous AF is not possible either for still or video
- SSM and SAM lenses focus can use Contrast Detection AF from the CMOS sensor if this option is selected. Focusing can be slow and sometimes fails. AF is not possible during video
- All 15 zones of AF are activated if Phase Detect AF is selected, with Spot, Local and Wide area choices; if Contrast Detect AF is used, centre spot and a Flexible Point (movable on-screen) are the options
- Face Detect and Smile Shutter can be used
- Exposure metering is from the main CMOS sensor, in 1200 zones, with Matrix/Centre Weighted and Spot options. The sensitivity is far superior to the other modes, going down to EV minus 2 in all modes, and up to EV17 in the A580. *Note that the A560 is limited to EV16, which implies the sensor is saturated. This means its true ISO range has been curtailed by 1EV, by overexposing (and should really be ISO 200-12,800 with a 25,600 extension). The 580's true range is assumed to be a genuine 100 to 6400 with extension to 12,800*
- Pressing the Movie button smoothly transitions from Live View to the movie 16:9 crop, but you must focus first as it does not initiate refocusing in any mode with any lens. AF during video is not possible
- 100% of the final composition is visible, with 7.5X or 15X critical magnification to check focus, and very accurate previewing of colour, white balance, contrast, sharpness and exposure
- Very accurate depth of field preview shows precisely on screen what you will get, because the magnifier works during stop-down - you can even press the stop-down button while viewing the magnified image, and see the sharpness change without losing your selected magnification
- Continuous shooting at 5fps or Speed Priority 7fps possible, but no C-AF, and AE only at 5fps
- Grid lines and Virtual Horizon display can be enabled



Multishot modes. movie and real live preview

The right hand end of the Alpha 580 reveals much – HD AVCHD is the label for 1080p movie shooting, while the dedicated D-Range button next to it does not only mean DRO. It also accesses the menu options for HDR shooting with 3 frames in a rapid burst, with a choice of Auto, 1EV, 2EV or 3EV bracketing. This option can only be selected when shooting JPEG, not RAW or RAW+JPEG.

However, as with the Hand-held Twilight mode which shoots five frames in succession and combined them to make one fine-grain JPEG, you can select it simply by moving the mode dial to the SCENE mode which automatically sets JPEG. The Panorama modes also automatically over-ride raw, but you can't set the menu options until you have moved the mode dial to the Panorama setting.

Sony has made a real effort to remove menu options which are blocked off when certain settings are used – the famous 'not available' digital tele converter button has gone for good! One very strong feature of the current Alpha models and NEX alike is that no prior settings are needed to start shooting video. All cameras simply have a red Movie button – kept well enough out of the way to avoid accidental use.

Call the Photostore



Adrian Paul at the Photostore can obtain almost any accessory you need for your Alpha system camera. Lost a flash shoe cover? Or just want to get one for your new camera which came without? Call Adrian – the same goes for lens caps, body caps, flash 'feet', AC adaptors, battery packs, lens hoods, cases, straps, LCD protectors, eyepiece magnifiers, LCD hoods, hand grips... If it's a Sony accessory Adrian can obtain it for you. He also has stocks of Minolta and Konica Minolta items. Photostore has its own web forum with former Minolta expert Bernard Petticrew as resident guru.

01132 448664
www.photostore-uk.com



Improving your Landscape Photography

2 days, at Mersea Island, Essex
Saturday/Sunday 2/3 April 2011
with Colin Westgate and Hugh Milsom

Frequently landscape photographs are disappointing, perhaps because of unfavourable light, poor composition or lack of interpretation and/or shortcomings in printing. With the right approach, such problems can be overcome and this comprehensive workshop will cover methods of improving your landscape pictures from the moment of taking prior to the production of the final print.

The content will be a mixture of discussion, picture appraisal, and a field trip into the local area around Mersea Island. The in-depth discussion will cover the principles of landscape photography, both technical and aesthetic. Topics such as the characteristics of different lenses and filters, choice of subject matter, viewpoints, composition, exposure, use of light and more will be included.

Vision and Interpretation are vital elements in succeeding with landscape photography. This includes 'pre visualisation' at the moment the picture is taken and post production prior to making the print. Both will be covered, the latter using Photoshop procedures, which will be demonstrated using digital projection. A selection of images taken digitally on the workshop will be used, but if you are a film worker, you are invited to bring negatives or transparencies with you.

Both Colin and Hugh have many years of experience photographing in the landscape and both will demonstrate and discuss their individual approaches to the subject.

Price £125 (deposit £40). 8 places.

South West Ireland

Saturday 9 April to Monday 18 April 2011. Guest House based, 9 nights, 6 at Inch and 3 at the Burren

Quest returns to Ireland after a two year gap, and for the main part of the trip we will, as before, be based at Inch Strand, on the Dingle peninsula. This is one of the most stunning locations in the country, with over 3 miles of sandy beach, and with mountains in the background. From here, we will explore the peninsula and surrounding area, including a visit to fascinating Dingle town itself. As well as landscape, there will be plenty of other subject matter, including the colourful shops and houses, and equally colourful characters!. For the second location,

we will move to The Burren, where we will photograph the extraordinary terrain and coastline. The friendliness of the Irish is renowned and we can be sure of a warm welcome. Travel arrangements will be to fly to Shannon, which is convenient for both locations, and thence by minibus.

Price £945 (deposit £150)
Single supplement £85. (8 places)*

Price includes B&B accommodation and minibus travel. It does not include the cost of flights, lunch and evening meals. The latter will be taken at the nearby Beach Restaurant, which is owned by the proprietor of the Guest House. Accommodation is on a shared room basis, but twins as singles are available, subject to a supplement of £95. Prices are based on an exchange rate £1.20 per £. Quest reserves the right to request a premium of not more than 10% should the exchange rate move adversely by a significant margin.

Iceland

Sunday 8 May to Thursday 19 May 2011. Hotel based, 11 nights. (8 places)

Iceland is a highlight in the Quest programme, with an amazing landscape full of unique and often bizarre features, including magnificent waterfalls, black sand beaches, lava fields, glaciers, icebergs, active volcanoes, mud pools, hot springs, geysers, and more. The weather can be exciting too, with everything from sunshine to snow storms. The tour will take in much of the island, with the exception of the interior, which is not accessible at this time of the year, or the remote north west, which would require an extra few days. We will travel round the island, staying for one, or sometimes two, nights at hotels en route. The itinerary has been arranged to allow ample time for in depth photography in selected areas, as well as plenty of impromptu stops.

With a population of a mere 300,000 the island is never crowded, even in the capital, Reykjavik. The climate will be similar to March in the UK, unlikely to be excessively cold – but temperatures can drop to below zero, so you need to be prepared.

The schedule is to fly to Keflavik, near Reykjavik, Iceland's interna-

tional airport, and then to drive east via Thingvellir, to Geysir, then to Gullfoss, along the south coast via Skaftafell and the astonishing glacial lagoon at Jokulsarlon, where we spend two nights. We will then head north, through the mountains before diverting to one of the east coast fiords. We will continue through the eastern highlands to Myvatn, where there are thermal springs. From there, we will head west and then south, ending near Reykjavik. The hotels are clean and comfortable, and if you like lamb or fish, you will enjoy the food!

Flights are normally available from Gatwick (Iceland Express), Heathrow (Icelandair), Manchester and Glasgow.

Price £1695 (deposit £400).
Single supplement £425. (8 places).*

*Price is for accommodation (B&B) in shared twin room and travel in Iceland. Single occupation is expensive in Iceland, hence a supplement of £425 is payable. Flights and cost of meals (except breakfast) not included. NB Prices are based on an exchange rate of 185 Icelandic kronur per GB£1.*Quest reserves the right to request a premium of not more than 10% should the exchange rate move adversely by a significant amount. Travel insurance essential.*

Thames Barge Race, Pin Mill, nr Ipswich

Friday 24 June (evening)
to Sunday 26 June 2011

One of the most popular events in the Quest programme, this is a wonderful opportunity to sail in a genuine Thames barge! Seeing these beautiful vessels at close quarters, under full sail, is a never to be forgotten sight. Quest has chartered 'Reminder', built in 1929, for our exclusive use. She will be taking part in the Barge Race from Pin Mill and will sail early Saturday, returning on Sunday afternoon. There could be as many as fifteen barges in the race and we will be sailing and racing with them for the whole of Saturday. On Sunday, the barge will cruise in the sea around the Orwell estuary. The barge offers a very special viewpoint with the possibility of some stunning photography of these magnificent barges in full sail, as well as activities on deck, the barge skippers and crew, and local

boats at anchor and under sail.

We will embark on Friday evening, when we will enjoy a superb seafood platter and wine, courtesy of Quest (an alternative will be provided for anyone not able to eat seafood). We will sleep on the barge Friday and Saturday nights, returning late afternoon on Sunday. All meals are catered on board, so you will not have to do anything on the barge except relax, enjoy the experience of a lifetime and, of course, take some photographs - although you will be welcome to help with crewing if you so desire. A wonderful way to get away from it all! All meals included.

*Price £365 (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 – this will be the decision of the skipper. In the extremely unlikely event that it is unsafe to sail, no refund can, regretfully, be given, but the barge, her crew and all food will remain at the disposal of the group.

East Anglia

Tuesday 20/23 September 2011
(Tuesday to Friday). 4 days

East Anglia is full of historical and picturesque villages and the landscape has a special character of its own, with 'big skies', tidal creeks, estuaries, and beaches. We will explore these at a leisurely pace over the four days, visiting such places as Dedham and Flatford ('Constable Country'). Southwold, Aldeburgh, Lavenham, and others. We will be based at West Mersea, with its fascinating frontage on the Blackwater estuary, where houseboats and occasional wrecks are subjects for the camera. Daily travel included.

Accommodation and meals are not included in the week, but Quest will be pleased to advise on B&B locally where this is required. There will be the option to take communal evening meals locally in the evenings. Seafood and oysters are specialities!

Price £225. (deposit £75). 6 places.



Quest Workshops 2010

Colin Westgate's QUEST workshops, sponsored by Photoworld, are based in Essex. Telephone 01206 384315 or email questphoto@btinternet.com.

Download a PDF programme for the full year from www.questphoto.co.uk

DUNCAN McEWAN's events

Scottish Region organiser Duncan's programme

PHOTO TALKS MARCH/APRIL

March 17th 2011 – Motherwell Photographic Society – “Southern Light”. At the Community Centre, Holytown, 7.30pm.

March 21st 2011 – Cowal Camera Club – “Summer in Svalbard”. Clubrooms, Castle Street, Dunoon, 7.30pm.

April 1st 2011 – Whickham Photographic Club – “Scotland: Land of Light”. At Whickham Community Centre, 7.30pm

April 17th 2011 – North East Midlands Photographic Federation Weekend – “Scotland: Land of Light”. At Bishop Grosseteste University College, Lincoln, 2.30pm.

EDINBURGH PHOTOWORLD DAY SUNDAY 20th MARCH 2011

A regional indoor meeting has been arranged for Sunday 20th March 2011 in the premises of the Edinburgh Photographic Society at 68 Great King Street, Edinburgh. Doors will be open at 10.00am with the programme starting at 10.30am and finishing around 4.30pm.

The cost is £4.00, inclusive of refreshments. No prior booking is required.

The main speaker is **Kenny Martin**, one of the UK's best-known professionals and tutors. Members on the registered list will receive full details of the programme nearer the time. Any newcomers requiring further information should contact Duncan McEwan.

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2011 LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHY COURSES and HOLIDAYS with Duncan McEwan

Isle of Mull (April 3rd-9th 2011)
Mull is one of the larger islands that make up the Inner Hebrides and offers wild moorland, freshwater lochs, sea lochs, burns and waterfalls, 300 miles of varied coastline plus several attractive villages including colourful Tobermory. Accommodation will be in the Pennyghael Hotel at the head of Loch Scridain on the Ross of Mull which

will be explored in depth. A day will be spent on the Isle of Iona and a trip to Staffa may be considered. Maximum number of photographers is 8. Travel during the course will be by 9 seat minibus. Cost: £870 (sharing), £1020 (single). Book directly with Duncan McEwan

The Far North West (May 1st-7th 2011)

Explore the most remote area of mainland Scotland and photograph the beautiful, wild, inspirational scenery of NW Sutherland. The trip will be based at the Eddrachilles Hotel, Scourie which lies 98 miles NW of Inverness from where minibus transfer can be offered. The area covered will include part of Assynt, all the way to the north coast at Durness. Only in the Outer Hebrides will you find beaches to rival the ones at Oldshoremore, Pollin, Balnakeil, Sango and Achmelvich while the rocks, both coastal and inland, are outstanding in their variety and beauty. Maximum number of photographers is 8. Travel during the course will be by 9 seat minibus. Cost: £687 (sharing), £837 (single). Book directly with Duncan McEwan

Orkney (May 14th-21st 2011)

Orkney is steeped in Norse and Viking history and has some of the finest Neolithic sites in Europe - Skara Brae, the Ring of Brodgar, and the Standing Stones of Stenness are all within easy reach of the Standing Stones Hotel, where the course will be based. The Atlantic coast offers wild, dramatic scenery – geos, caves, sea stacks, arches and high cliffs. Lochs, green fertile farmland and a hilly terrain give added variety while Kirkwall and Stromness still have narrow, flagstone paved streets. St Magnus Cathedral, folk museums and the Italian Chapel offer indoor opportunities. Visits will be made to the Churchill Barriers and the southern islands of Lamb Holm, Burray and S. Ronaldsay while crossing Scapa Flow gives access to the Island of Hoy where Rackwick Bay is renowned for its amazing boulders. Cost: £1260. Book directly with Light and Land: 01432-839111; www.lightandland.co.uk



Other locations being considered are: Isle of Skye with Lee Frost (early Sept) & Perthshire in Autumn with L&L (late October) – watch: www.dmcewanphotography.co.uk for details.

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 discussion **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.

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 Photostore, 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 above).* 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

SIGMA

CAMERA : SIGMA SD14 : ISO50, F4.0, 1/60sec | LENS: SIGMA 17-50mm F2.8 EX DC OS HSM : 50mm (17-50)

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www.sigma-imaging-uk.com/warranty

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F2.8
EX DC OS HSM

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A large aperture, f/2.8 standard zoom lens incorporating HSM and Sigma's unique Optical Stabiliser (OS) system. Offers superb optical quality, great handling and value for money.

Large aperture standard zoom lens, designed specifically for digital cameras with an APS-C size image sensor, providing high definition images throughout the entire zoom range. It has a compact and lightweight body with an overall length of just 91.8mm. The highest level of optical performance, with two FLD glass elements and three aspherical lenses, assures exceptionally sharp image quality.



www.sigma-imaging-uk.com

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